

Liberty University

**How Evangelical Pastors Manage the Four Areas of the Greatest Commandment—Heart,  
Soul, Strength, and Mind—and Practical Applications for Obedience**

A Thesis Project Submitted to  
the Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Ministry  
Department of Christian Leadership and Church Ministries

by

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Liberty University Rawlings School of Divinity

**Thesis Project Approval Sheet**

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## THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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Liberty University School of Divinity, 2020

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The researcher was called to pastoral ministry at age fifty. Five decades of life outside ministry lends a unique perspective. The trappings of ministry were not unknown to the researcher, but living out a called ministry, combined with the determination and stamina needed for successful execution, was an unforeseen challenge. Senior pastors of evangelical churches lead busy lives personally and professionally. The pace of life in current culture, secular and religious, impede pastors from observing the greatest commandment with full effort (“all”) as Jesus directs every Christian to do. Obedience to the commandment is directed by Jesus as to employ the heart, soul, strength (or might), and mind (Matt 22:36-38, Mark 12:30-31, Luke 10:25-38).<sup>1</sup> The whole of human existence is to be utilized in keeping the commandment. Accordingly, the four areas of heart, soul, strength, and mind are to be used as conduits of love toward God. These areas of our being drive us emotionally (heart), spiritually (soul), physically (strength), and intellectually (mind). A research of the health of evangelical pastors in these four areas is being conducted and reported here. Data from scholarly writings, media, experience, and scripture; each researched to render findings, address the problems, and identify practical, proven strategies and applications. An IRB approved long term question/response survey for further research was launched March 1, 2020.

Word Count: 250

Key Words: Greatest Commandment, Pastors, Obedience, Heart, Soul, Strength, Mind, Love

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<sup>1</sup> (Matt 22:36-38, Mark 12:30-31, and Luke 10:25-38), New American Standard Bible (NASB). Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this thesis project will be from the New American Standard Bible.

## Acknowledgments

This research and findings are dedicated to several individuals and institutions which have encouraged, enlightened, and enriched the life journey shared. Scripture paints believers as heirs of the benefits provided by others. God reminded the Israelites they had received “. . . a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord 6:10b-12a NIV).

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<sup>3</sup> All LOGOS<sup>®</sup> Bible Software Word Study Graphics are from the LOGOS<sup>®</sup> software platform © Copyright Faithlife / Logos Bible Software (<https://www.logos.com>)

## **Abbreviations**

BeMIS	Personality Test
DISC	Emotional Intelligence Test
EI	Emotional Intelligence
ESV	English Standard Version
GC	Great Commandment
HSSM	Heart Soul Strength Mind
KJV	King James Version
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version
SBC	Southern Baptist Convention
SCOPES	Spiritual, Cognitive, Observable behavior, Physiological, Emotional, and Social
SPPR	Senior Pastor Primary Researcher
FSPRP	Future Senior Pastor Research Participants

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

This research is being conducted to identify the challenges senior pastors have in keeping the tenets of God's direction articulated in the Greatest Commandment and to posit solutions to better obey. Senior pastors of protestant evangelical churches in the United States are called by God and a local church to lead others to find salvation through a personal relationship with His Son Jesus. This relationship is elevated and enlivened by obeying God through keeping the instruction of His Word, and God's first instruction for relationship was loving Him properly as prescribed in the Greatest Commandment. The commandment first appears in the book of Deuteronomy, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deut 6:5). In the New Testament, Jesus and others repeat this commandment and emphasize its importance to keep and grow a faithful relationship with God (Matt 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-31, Luke 10:25-27). The historical context of the original passage in Deuteronomy is significant. The people of Israel, after all, they had gone through, finally reached the time and place for their entry into the Promised Land. "Here are the instructions for the new life awaiting Israel. Obedience is to flow out of and lead to the fear of the LORD, that is, a true recognition of all that he is and an attitude of deep reverence and respect. Obedience is to be a feature of succeeding generation (v. 2) . . . and it will lead to God multiplying the nation greatly (v. 3). Obedience and blessing go hand in hand."<sup>4</sup> Senior pastors face the same leadership position as Moses in the sense that they are leading others to a relationship with their Creator.

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<sup>4</sup> P. E. Brown, *Deuteronomy: An Expositional Commentary* (Leominster, UK: Day One Publications, 2006), 66.

The closer men draw to God through obedience to the Greatest Commandment, the more they will begin to lose their own nature through gradual transformation into the likeness of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

### **Ministry Context**

Senior pastors of evangelical churches in the United States are Christian leaders who must hear from God clearly and regularly so that they can lead in the church's mission of "making disciples of all the nations" (Matt 28:19). These duties to which they are called must be accomplished in the chaos of current culture distractions and resistance, and against the schemes and prowling about by the devil (Eph 6:11; 1 Pet 5:8) of which pastors are a prime target. Stan Toler notes six characteristics of great pastors as being that "They know how to pray. They have personal integrity. They have great flexibility. They are team builders. They have a sense of direction. They have a great commitment."<sup>6</sup> Each of these abilities and attributes must be rooted in the pastor's love for the God he serves and used in such a way as to maximize his ability to properly communicate that love to God; and lead others to do the same. Such time and attention given to loving God allows for better opportunity to hear from His Holy Spirit for guidance in life and ministry.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, a senior pastor of an evangelical church in the United States must principally be an avid follower of Christ. They are called by God to lead others in knowing God in a personal relationship through His Son Jesus, obeying God through keeping the instruction of His Word and loving God as prescribed in the Greatest Commandment. A senior pastor is

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<sup>5</sup> LaSor, et al. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 63-79.

<sup>6</sup> Stan Toler, *Practical Guide for Pastoral Ministry: Real Help for Real Pastors* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2007), 15-18.

<sup>7</sup> Gordon MacDonald, "God's Calling Plan," *Christianity Today*, 10/01/2003, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2003/fall/3.35.html>.

admonished to be an exemplary Christian, steadfast in his relationship and allegiance to Christ and His teachings. “When we see our ministry in its proper perspective, it is an extension of our Lord Jesus’ ministry: He is our model, and His strength is our resource. Those who walk most in His footsteps know most of His fellowship. All valid ministry is an expression of His ministry to people.”<sup>8</sup>

The Apostle Paul reminded his protégé Timothy to take care to be “constantly nourished” (1 Tim 4:6) through communion with God and His Word, and to “pay close attention . . . persevere” the aim being to “ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you” (v. 16). As leaders of the bride of Jesus Christ (Eph 5:22-33), it is critical for senior pastors to keep a good relationship with the bride, but it is *essential* that he keep a close relationship with the groom. “Loving people is important for ministering to people. But loving Jesus is more important.”<sup>9</sup> A flaw in human nature is putting the second “like it” (Matt 22:39) portion “love your neighbor” (Ibid.) as if it were a way to fulfill the first: “love the LORD your God” (v. 37) portion. But God demands to be first in the life of His children. “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut. 10:12). The “fear” is יִרְאָה *yare*, as in awe or respect, just as you would fear to be on the edge of a canyon, or viewing a large animal. You are in awe of its beauty, but respect what it is capable of.

Senior pastors must take care to listen to instruction from God. Such a practice, again, relies upon a right relationship with God, where communication flows freely and regularly. The

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<sup>8</sup> Derek J. Prime and Alistair Begg, *On Being a Pastor: Understanding our Calling and Work* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2004), 291.

<sup>9</sup> Dave Early and Ben Gutierrez, *Ministry is: How to serve Jesus with passion and confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 76.

starting point for this type of relationship is the commandment Jesus identifies as the Greatest Commandment. The command is first given in the Shema (Deut. 6:5-9). Verse 5 commands, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” As followers of Christ, a constant and earnest striving to keep this command is essential. As leaders of God’s people and the church, senior pastors must give even greater attention than most in keeping this command. Dr. John MacArthur asserts, “The biblical approach to keeping the church on track during the twenty-first century requires that the role of the construction supervisors (that is, God’s appointed shepherds who keep watch over His flock) be one of the first areas for review.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, how senior pastors fare at keeping the Greatest Commandment is certainly a metric to use in evaluating if they are on the proverbial track, MacArthur mentions. To “keep” is more than just hearing and understanding—even loving---the commandment. Listening is useless until what is heard is put into practice. James, the likely brother of Jesus, taught that Christians should “prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves” (Jas. 1:22). Senior pastors must properly hear, but this is useless until they effectively do.

For a senior pastor, keeping the Greatest Commandment is also important because it is, at its root, worship, and senior pastors must lead in worship. This does not mean to conduct a gathering for a “worship service,” though that is certainly a part of the duty. The worship the Great Commandment calls Christians to is a lifestyle. Wheeler and Whaley point out that “the simple and most accurate definition of worship is this: ‘Love God.’ Jesus said, ‘Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength;

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<sup>10</sup> John MacArthur, *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 272.

(Mark 12:30 NKJV; cf. Matt 22:37; Luke 10:27).’ . . . Our worship is then put into practice when we demonstrate our love by the way we live. We often call this lifestyle worship.”<sup>11</sup>

Christians, particularly senior pastors, must strive to avoid simply exercising a cursory reading of the Greatest Commandment on occasion and then move right along to commandments more easily defined, like do not lie, do not steal, do not commit adultery, or do not murder. Indeed all Christians are reminded by Jesus in Luke’s Gospel of the importance of the commandment and the prominent place it holds in their relationship with God and others. Not only did Jesus codify it as the *Greatest* Commandment, but the importance of the purposed practice is demonstrated in the promise Jesus gave the lawyer in Luke’s Gospel, “do this, and you will live” (Luke 10:28). Therefore, the importance of a senior pastor to fully understand the meaning and dynamics of the Great Commandment is paramount to success in both life and ministry, and for the lives of the people to whom he ministers.

For a senior pastor, his relationship with Christ, as the key component of lifestyle worship, must flow naturally into his leadership role. Christians are identified by their love, according to scripture. “By this, all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). Much more so for the senior pastor as they are held to a higher standard. “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such, we will incur a stricter judgment” (Jas 3:1). This relational position and identification of Christian love shown for each other must be prevalent in the senior pastor as this draws them even closer to God. The apostle Paul refers to this attraction God has for Christians as the “sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are

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<sup>11</sup> David Wheeler and Vernon Whaley, *The Great Commission to Worship: Biblical Principles for Worship-Based Evangelism* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 27.



being saved and among those who are perishing” (2 Cor 2:14-15). The fragrance is not applied to a blossom. The fragrance is developed and emanates from inside the plant. Such is true of the aroma for which a pastor must strive. He must develop the aroma and let it spill over into the world around him and teach his church to do the same. This, too, begins with the Greatest Commandment.

To conclude the context of ministry, it is appropriate to note that senior pastoral ministry as a vocation and calling is, at its core, a conglomeration of relational interactions with both God and men. This must be obvious in a senior pastor’s life. “Whatever else a shepherd and teacher provide for God’s people, he is to give them an example to follow. God’s people require examples if they are to be effectively shepherded and taught.”<sup>12</sup> Therefore, successful ministry is contingent on faithful and fruitful adherence to the Greatest Commandment. Adherence is not possible without proper understanding as to how these areas work in the human existence and how the senior pastor can monitor and better manage them for optimum worship of God. The Greatest Commandment must be understood, practiced, measured, and evaluated regularly and objectively. Discovering ways to best accomplish this is the central aim of this research.

### **Problem Presented**

The problem this research addresses is the difficulty senior pastors of evangelical churches in the United States have in meeting their desire to successfully show love to God with all of their heart, soul, strength, and mind as the Greatest Commandment instructs. Success in keeping these four areas vigorous and effective in life is difficult for all Christians. However, this research focuses only on those who are senior pastors, as the problem they face is compounded and perpetuated by the rigors of day to day ministry, particularly in managing to allow for the

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<sup>12</sup> Prime and Begg, *On Being a Pastor*, 36.

adequate time required for self-evaluation and caretaking. Furthermore, most people do not understand the rigor of pastoral ministry, or why pastors do not simply pray more and get over whatever maladies the busyness causes.

Many times, the pastor may have these same thoughts about themselves. “The conditions of modern-day living devour margin. If you are homeless, we send you to a shelter. If you are penniless, we offer you food stamps. If you are breathless, we connect you to oxygen. But if you are marginless, [sic] we give you yet one more thing to do.”<sup>13</sup> Because the Bible describes the process for keeping the Greatest Commandment as loving God with “all” of these four areas, a senior pastor, as the shepherd of the church, must keep these four areas of their life healthy and at optimum readiness and ability. Such obedience takes time, intentional focused effort, and a humble disposition toward learning new things. Bill Thrall asserts that senior pastors “naturally develop patterns and rhythms throughout our lives. This is a healthy thing. But the more ingrained these patterns and rhythms become, the less tolerance we have for disturbing them.”<sup>14</sup> As seen through the surveys outlined below (full surveys are attached as appendixes),<sup>15</sup> senior pastors are under tremendous stress in some areas of life and ministry.

### Surveys Used for Research

Two surveys have been selected for use in this research project, though other surveys are reflected in the excerpts of the works of the various contributors listed in the back matter. Further, the researcher is a senior pastor and approaches the topics as would be expected from one with an experiential perspective.

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<sup>13</sup> Richard A. Swenson, *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives* (Oklahoma, OK: Navpress Publishing Group, 2004), 13.

<sup>14</sup> Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and Ken McElrath, *The Ascent of a Leader: How Ordinary Relationships Develop Extraordinary Character and Influence* (San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass 1999), 149.

<sup>15</sup> See appendixes E and F.

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## FOCUS ON THE FAMILY Pastoral Ministries Survey

**SURVEY METHODOLOGY** Our 2009 Pastoral Ministries Survey was taken between January 19 and February 10, 2009. It was composed of 41 questions and was primarily offered to those pastors and ministry leaders who have had some experience with the Pastoral Ministries Department at Focus on the Family. Respondents accessed the survey by visiting our Web site, the Parsonage, and clicking on a link choosing to participate. Thus, this was not a scientific survey because the sample of respondents was not truly representative of the population of all pastors.<sup>16</sup> © 2009 Focus on the Family. Used with permission.

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Education Level	
Master's Degree	41.1%
Seminary Theological/Bible Training	44.7%

Table 1.1

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Less than 10% of the participants had a high school diploma only. The 41.1% of participants holding a Master's Degree was the largest group, followed by a Bachelor's Degree at 29.9%.

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Ages of Participants	
60 and over	22.8%
50-59	41.8%
40-49	25.3%
30-39	8.5%
0-29	1.6%
Under 20	0%

Table 1.2

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<sup>16</sup> Appendix E - Focus on the Family Pastoral Ministries 2009 Survey  
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The ages are skewed to older adults because this is the demographics of the parsonage.org participant group at Focus on the Family. As noted, this is not a scientific survey because this group may not reflect the overall statistics of solo and/or senior pastors in the United States. The survey, however, is informative in its scope as conducted, and conclusions (and particularly suggestions and recommendations) can be drawn and shared for the benefit of all senior pastors.

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Have you ever taken a sabbatical separate from vacation?	
Yes	15.2%
No	84.8%

Table 1.3

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A sabbatical is a time for a pastor to disconnect from everyone and everything except God. For the pastor, it should be the ultimate Greatest Commandment experience, as he can devote his full attention to his Creator—loving God with all of his heart, and all of his soul, and all of his strength, all of his mind. The rhythm for a senior pastor, and all ministers, for that matter, is different from other Christians. The day set aside as Sabbath for the congregation, is most assuredly a workday for senior pastors. Certainly, a lot of laypeople put in time preparing Sunday School lessons and rehearsing for participation in a praise team or choir, but the senior pastor is the one that feels the full weight of the day from beginning to end. The senior pastor needs the time away to hear direction from God as to what he should be doing for his personal relationship, as well as for the church he leads. Too often, senior pastors convince themselves that their presence at the church is more important than their presence alone with God. This isn't on purpose, but even though it engages overtime, the result is the same. "This could be an

indication of why so many pastors suffer from burnout. They're not getting away for an extended time of focused introspection, rest, and renewal.”<sup>17</sup>

Ruth Haley Barton writes of the danger of neglecting the rhythms God had structured into the world and us as humans. “Because we do not rest, we lose our way. We miss the compass points that would show us where to go; we bypass the nourishment that would give us succor. We miss the quiet that would give us wisdom. We miss the joy and love born of effortless delight. Poisoned by this hypnotic belief that good things come only through unceasing determination and tireless effort, we can never truly rest. And for want of rest, our lives are in danger.”<sup>18</sup>

The survey administrators at Focus on the Family notes that senior pastors cannot shoulder all the blame for not taking a sabbatical. “It needs to be said, however, that, if churches do provide for a sabbatical, it's normally after you've been on staff for 5-7 years. The average time a pastor serves in one church is 4.1 years. This begs the question: Are most pastors ‘moving on’ before they have a chance to take advantage of a sabbatical?”<sup>19</sup>

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**How much time do you spend in personal devotions each day (not including sermon or other teaching preparation?)**

Less than 30 minutes	45.6%
30-60 minutes	47.2%
More than 60 minutes	7.2%

Table 1.4

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives For Spiritual Transformation* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 139

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

Time alone with God is crucial to a senior pastor's life, and it is a practice which most would readily agree upon the necessity, as well as the benefits. The researcher played in his high school symphonic band. Being there together with all the other instrumentalists was only part of the equation. To make beautiful music, every one of the instrumentalists, both individually and collectively, had to focus their attention on, and take direction from the conductor. The same holds true for Christians. The dynamic that is the terror of pastoring is: God has designed to do His conducting through the senior pastor. Therefore, the senior pastor must make time to be alone with His conductor, God. The Greatest Commandment is the call for the kind of relationship that allows for this kind of communication. This communication is offered to all Christians, but the senior pastor is to lead in getting everyone there.

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Have you ever sought help for depression through medication or professional counseling?	
Yes	21.2%
No	78.8%

Table 1.5

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Depression would seem to be the antithesis of being a Christian. Shouldn't a Christian always be joyful that they are saved for eternity and have a loving Savior with whom they can have a personal relationship? However, depression is not simply an emotion but also a medical condition. "Affecting over 19 million Americans, clinical depression is one of the fastest growing and most common illnesses in our country. Though it is almost always treatable through medication, counseling, and in most cases, a combination of the two, many people forego treatment because they believe they can "deal" with this on their own. For others, it's often seen

as a sign of weakness”<sup>20</sup> This is particularly true for those who lead in ministry. A senior pastor who desires to lead his church in service to Christ, to lead in worshipping Him weekly, and be His hands and feet during the week, may become reluctant to even admit to themselves that they are depressed. But senior pastors are not the only ones affected. “Unfortunately, for many Christ-followers, depression is viewed as a spiritual failure. Even as pastors, we’re quick at times to tell someone . . . with depression, ‘Pray more. Read this passage of Scripture and memorize these few verses. Then, you’ll be okay.’ The reality, though, is depression happens. Martin Luther had it. Charles Spurgeon had it. Charles Stanley had it.”<sup>21</sup>

Medication is an appropriate approach as long as it is accompanied by counseling and an effort for a lifestyle adjustment. Aligning with God’s purpose so that you can be “transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom 12:2b), cannot be dismissed, but should rather be the central focus of using the medication and counseling. Getting the mind in shape requires effort from the mind itself, the heart for encouragement, and the body for exercise, which releases endorphins into the mind. Obedience to the Greatest Commandment is key. Senior pastors must lead in embracing the mind of Christ; “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things” (Phil 4:8).

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**Do you meet with an accountability person  
or group on a regular basis (at least  
once every couple weeks)?**

Yes 41.8%  
No 58.2%

Table 1.6

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<sup>20</sup> Appendix E

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

“We’ve all seen the headlines: ‘Another pastor falls.’ Over the years, we’ve learned that pastors can be prevented from being the next casualty. We encourage them to meet with someone. Ask one another some pointed questions. Respond honestly to one another. Speak the truth in love to one another.”<sup>22</sup> Accountability is a biblical practice. “Iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another” (Prov 27:17); “Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed” (Jas 5:16a); “Therefore encourage one another and build one another, just as you also are doing” (1 Thess 5:11). Surrounding yourself with good friends, colleagues, and associates are critical to successfully fulfilling the ministry to which a senior pastor is called. Friendship is when *hearts* connect, but it is also a coming together of the *minds* in agreement and interest, and a *physical* effort to assist each other; and an old and rather popular adage is, “A good friend is good for the *soul*.” Therefore, all four areas, which God requires men use to show love to him, are massaged by good friendship.

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<b>Do you have a close colleague/friend with whom you communicate on a regular basis?</b>	
Yes	71.3%
No	28.7%

Table 1.7

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A statistic within this survey notes that 8% of respondents said they were lonely. The Bible says, “There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Prov 18:24b). Some pastors are lonely because they chose the wrong friends, “Walk with the wise and become wise, for a

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.



companion of fools suffers harm” (Prov 13:20). King Solomon noted that “Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up” (Eccl 4:9-10). Keeping the mind sharp so that wise decisions on choosing and conditioning friendships can be intentional and productive for the senior pastor as well as his friends. Keeping the mind sharp, honors God, as does being a faithful friend. Upon observation of someone who complains that they do not have a good friend, a question to ask them is, “To whom are you a good friend?”

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<b>What one word best describes emotionally where you are today in pastoral ministry?</b>	
Energized	8.6%
Encouraged	34.0%
Fulfilled	15.8%
Apathetic	1.9%
Lonely	8.0%
Discouraged	14.7%
Exhausted	10.3%
Overwhelmed	6.7%

Table 1.8

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This question reflects heart condition. For 42% of pastors to have negative emotions and attitudes about their ministry, there is something afoot either in his or his family’s life, the church's life, or all of the above. Care and attention to cultivating a healthy heart. Confession is the side of the equation that belongs to men, and God provides forgiveness, which energizes the heart with the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:23). The fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control elicit encouragement, energy, and fulfillment. Paying close attention to the heart in obedience to the Greatest Commandment restores the senior

pastor, and by following his example, his family and church, making ministry more successful and delightful.

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How likely are you to be involved in the pastorate five years from now?	
Very likely	58.6%
Most likely	24.8%
Unsure	12.4%
Most unlikely	2.1%
Very unlikely	2.1%

Table 1.9

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Job satisfaction, health, and age can each be reasons for these responses, as noted, this is not a scientific survey, as the participants do not necessarily reflect the demographics of solo and senior pastors as a whole. Also, some of these pastors could be from somewhere other than the United States. However, the point here is that less than six out of ten are enthusiastic enough about the future of their ministry to be “very likely” to still be there in five years. Age could account for some of these responses, but most other reasons for the responses could be abated by being better at keeping the Greatest Commandment. For example, health reasons may recede as a senior pastor pays better attention to be all he can be physically. The same for the congregation, perhaps there would be less sickness, and hospital calls if his church members followed his example and embraced physical fitness as a way to be better prepared to show love to God with all their strength.

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<b>As it relates to families in your congregation, which of the following issues tend to weigh heaviest on you personally as a pastor? In other words, which are you most burdened by?</b>	
The relational turmoil I see between husbands and wives in their marriage	11.0%
The relational turmoil I see between parents and their children	3.6%
The lack of practice of biblical stewardship: time, talents and treasure	25.2%
The lack of spiritual formation (discipleship) that's taking place in homes	47.7%
Other	12.5%

Table 1.10

Senior pastors are pulled into many tasks and programs, out of the necessity of the job, which they do not feel as “called to” as others. The findings here are not surprising, as the desire to disciple is one of the key elements for successful ministry. Keeping the Greatest Commandment in focus as an exemplary lifestyle will encourage others in the pastor’s congregation to catch the enthusiasm for discipleship. The Greatest Commandment ignites the Great Commission.

<b>Which of the following best describes the amount of time you spend intentionally exercising each week?</b>	
None	30.8%
At least 20-30 minutes, 1-2 days a week	10.4%
At least 20-30 minutes, 1-2 days a week	21.9%
At least 20-30 minutes, 3-4 days a week	21.6%
At least 20-30 minutes, 4 + days a week	15.4%

Table 1.11

Intentional exercise points to a thought, thus involving the mind. The fact that 30% of the pastors surveyed spend zero time intentionally exercising strongly suggests that the heart is not involved, at least in a positive way; otherwise, there would be an emotional catalyst to get the mind to act and intentionally set aside time for exercise. Strength, or might as the NASB interprets the Deuteronomy text of the Greatest Commandment, each point to physical strength, but also a connotation of resolve, courage, and endurance.

The body is used to show the expression of the mind, heart, and soul. The mouth speaks for the brain. The body feeds the brain through its eyes and ears . . . and touch. The body speaks for and interprets the heart with a kind word, a laugh, a cry, a smile, a hug, or a kiss. The body cohabitates with the soul to make a living being (Gen. 2:7). All of the areas of the human existence (HSSM) which God commands men to use “all” of to love Him, are relational one to the other. Each area has a function, but no area operates in isolation from the others. What happens to one area happens in all areas. Hit your toe with a hammer, the body is in excruciating pain, the brain simultaneously tells the hand to put the hammer down, the heart to send the message of regret and remorse most likely manifested in tears, which the body produces . . . and for a fleeting moment, at least, your soul wishes it was already in heaven.

The separate but connected relationship of these areas reflects the same design of connected relationship as the Trinity. Tim Keller calls this relationship the Divine Dance. The Apostle John “describes the Son as living from all eternity in the ‘bosom of the Father’ (John 1:18), an ancient metaphor for love and intimacy. Later in John’s gospel, Jesus the Son, describes the Spirit as living to ‘glorify’ Him (16:14). In turn, the Son glorifies the Father (17:4) and the Father, the Son (17:5). This has been going on for all eternity (17:5b).”

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## LifeWay RESEARCH

**SURVEY METHODOLOGY:** The phone survey of pastors of evangelical and black Protestant denominations was conducted March 5-18, 2015. The calling list was a random sample, stratified by church membership and denominational groups, drawn from a list of all evangelical and black Protestant churches. Each interview was conducted with the senior pastor, minister, or priest of the church called. The completed sample is 1,500 pastors. Responses were weighted by region and denominational group to more accurately reflect the population. The sample provides 95 percent confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 2.7 percent. This margin of error accounts for the effect of weighting. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups. The study was sponsored by the North American Mission Board and Richard Dockins, M.D.<sup>23</sup>

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<b>LifeWay RESEARCH poll of 1500 pastors</b>	
Say they're on call 24 hours a day	84%
Expect conflict in their church	80%
Find the role of pastor frequently overwhelming	54%
Are often concerned about their family's financial security	53%
Often feel the demands of ministry are more than they can handle	48%
Their church has unrealistic expectations of them	21%

Table 1:12

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The following identifies several problems and possible causes that prevent the Greatest Commandment from being properly followed: The pace of life in the digital age, a lack of helpful resources, church conflict episodes, a lack of understanding, success in ministry, overzealousness and misdirected priorities, failure to reconcile, apathy, and choosing the wrong starting place and approach.

### The Pace of Life in the Digital Age

There are several obstacles that cause senior pastors to lose their grasp on this all-important command. First, they lead extraordinarily busy lives. In addition to balancing family,

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<sup>23</sup> Appendix F - LifeWay Research, <https://blog.lifeway.com/newsroom/2015/09/01/despite-stresses-few-pastors-give-up-on-ministry>. © Copyright LifeWay Research Reprinted and Used by Permission

personal health, and vocation, the senior pastor has the additional job of managing quality time for ministry each day. The fact that the requirements of ministry often cannot be scheduled practically compounds the problem. Church members do not schedule death and sickness. Opportunities for evangelism do not always call and make an appointment. The Holy Spirit does not always give advance notice of the message He wants the senior pastor to share week to week to the congregation as a whole, or small groups, or individuals in private settings. Christian ministry for professional senior pastors is unpredictable and demanding, but with the calling comes an added dimension of pressure for the senior pastor: “Christian leaders carry the additional burden that they are not only failing their people but God.”<sup>24</sup> Whether the church is large or small, the rigors of ministry take a personal toll, which will ultimately spill over into other areas of the pastor’s life; such as the pastor’s relationships with family, friends, ministry associates, the church he pastors, and the community in which he lives.

Trying to balance personal life and ministry can be destructive to senior pastors. In the year 2015 LifeWay Research “Survey of 734 Pastors who left the Pastorate before age 65,”<sup>25</sup> (Methodology and control group information for the Survey – Appendix “B”) around 29% now work in a non-ministry job, 19% cite burnout as the reason for leaving the pastorate, and 25% cite church conflict as the cause. 48% say a seminary education did not prepare them for “the people side of ministry.” 26% said that while a pastor, they likely did not do enough to protect time with their family. 80% believed they could have stayed at their last church as long as they wanted. 80% felt that as a pastor, they had to be “on-call” twenty-four hours a day. 85% agreed

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<sup>24</sup> Henry Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God’s Agenda*, (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group 2011), 4.

<sup>25</sup> <http://lifewayresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Pastor-Protection-Former-Pastor-Survey-Report.pdf>

they worked hard to protect their image as a pastor. 1 in 3 agreed their family resented the demands of pastoral ministry. Almost half agreed they often felt the demands of ministry were greater than they could handle. Only 1 in 3 said they had personal time alone with the Lord seven or more times a week. 57% felt the role of being a pastor was frequently overwhelming. Almost 50% felt their church had unrealistic expectations, and 6 in 10 said they felt isolation as a pastor.

### Lack of Helpful Resources

A scarcity of helpful resources that address adherence to the Greatest Commandment contributes to the problem. Many of the statistics listed above would improve proportionally to any improvement in the senior pastor's ability to be more faithful in following the Greatest Commandment, but there is little research or discussion as to how best to achieve such faithfulness. The Shema (Deut 6:4-9, 11:13-21, and Num 15:37-41) is a passage that is deemed important, but the familiarity of the passage tends to make Christians callous as to its message and intent. Moreover, the Greatest Commandment is not the topic of many books or studies. A comparison of almost any Christian topic versus the Great Commission finds no other topic than the Greatest Commandment exceeds in helpful literature. The importance of this study to the life and ministry of senior pastors becomes obvious when a thorough exposition of the passage and all it entails is researched. Furthermore, when a senior pastor neglects the use of heart, soul strength, and mind in showing love to God, the result is detrimental to the church and its mission.

### Church Conflict

Such a condition of neglect can cause the problem of decline or plateau in attendance and/or membership at the senior pastor's church. As a church plateaus or declines, over time, the membership becomes unsettled and ripe for discord. As a result of declining or stagnant numbers attending worship, Bible study, and events, the weakened local church is more prone to an

underling aspiring to assume leadership control. Under such conditions, the weakened fellowship is susceptible to manipulation by nefarious personalities working in the shadows at first, and then quickly escalating into negative, destructive conflict. This chaotic leadership disturbance is exacerbated by the further conflict that arises among church members who disagree on why the decline or stagnation is occurring, and whom to blame. “Unresolved church conflict is destroying pastors and churches and is causing the name of Jesus Christ to be mocked. Unbelievers, therefore, are being turned away from Christ, and the church, because of church conflict. There are many Christians who have stopped attending church, while pastors and their families are being destroyed because of the sinful, corrupt decisions of a local body of Christ.”<sup>26</sup> When the leadership of the senior pastor is ignored, the conflict becomes his focus instead of loving God with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind; and it becomes harder to love others as distrust grows in the pastor and his family’s lives. The two, lack of following the Greatest Commandment, and church conflict, become symbiotic; each malady receiving life and benefit from the other.

The priority of the church should be to search for solutions to the problems at hand, but instead, intentions fall prey to the agenda of a mutinous minority. Sadly, searching out and placing blame for the decline and stagnation often prevails as the first response. Divergent ideas and opinions on who or what to blame for the decline, as well as what action is needed for an expedient and effective remedy, leads to even more conflict. This unhealthy environment builds the case of those vying to convince the fellowship of the need for mutiny. Further damage is done to the Bride of Christ as the conflict that arises from trying to address the problem of

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<sup>26</sup>Hicks, Donald Q. “A Study of the Conflicts within Churches that Lead to the Termination of Pastors within the Southern Baptist Convention, Accompanied by a Proposal of Preventative and Interventional Solutions.” Liberty University School of Religion, 2010. <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/855823625?accountid=12085>.



declining or plateaued attendance exacerbates the decline or plateau, thus creating a perpetual dysfunction of a power struggle that can last decades leaving many Christian testimonies crippled in the process.<sup>27</sup>

Mutiny against spiritual leadership is not exclusively a contemporary issue. The Bible records several accounts of the rebellion of people against authority, which mirrors the problem of mutiny against church leadership. Miriam and Aaron challenged Moses in the narrative found in Numbers 12:1-10. In this narrative, the pair claim to have also heard from God and therefore asserted that they too could lead God's people as Moses' equal. They reasoned that since they were older than Moses, then they should, at the very least, be his equal in leadership. Such an arrangement would have assumed that Miriam and Aaron had heard the same instruction God had given Moses, which was not true. They were claiming spiritual equality with Moses, which was also false. God punished Miriam and Aaron for their rebellion against the leadership He had put in place. In the local church, pastors are not perfect, but God calls them, and this call to lead is agreed upon by the church. Pastors are charged with seeking out and hearing from God through prayer, study, and counsel, and to bring a vision to the church for ministry in carrying out the Great Commission. Just as there was only one Moses, there can only be one spiritual leader of the church with no other equal. The leader should be held accountable by spiritual Christians, but one person must ultimately be the one that hears from God, brings that message to the church, and lead in ministry as God directs.<sup>28</sup>

Judas Iscariot gave in to the wiles of Satan in complaining that money should be spent on the poor instead of in worship to Jesus (John 12:1-8). Ultimately, the pastor must be the leader

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<sup>27</sup> Warren Bird and Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003).

<sup>28</sup> Mark Dever. *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton IL: Crossway, 2013),

that directs the use of funds for ministry. Again, there should be accountability, but the pastor must relay to the church the priorities God places in their heart.

Jeroboam of Judah rebelled against Abijah and Israel (2 Chronicles 13:1-20) in Ephraim. Jeroboam rose in rebellion against his master and rallied troops around him. His mutiny included replacing the priests with people that were loyal to him. In the end, God routed Jeroboam and his troops. He was taken a prisoner, never to lead again, and eventually, God struck him down, and “he died” (v. 20).

Absalom rebelled against his father David by inserting himself as an empathizer with the people's suffering ( 15:1-6). As Absalom gained their trust, he began to turn them against the king and lifted himself as the new leader. In the local church, this manifests as a group of members that begin to break away and follow someone besides the pastor, thus creating a separate fellowship within the main fellowship. The group eventually grows to such magnitude that it can cause significant disruption in a church, even to the point of a split.

Noah was exposed as drunk and naked by his son Ham (Genesis 9:20-29). Ham did not point out anything that was not truthful, but God knows that there are no perfect leaders, and there is a right and wrong way to hold someone accountable. Publicly humiliating them is not God’s plan, as He made clear by curing Ham and his descendants.

Church mutiny challenges leadership in the church, crippling the senior pastor’s ability to make decisions for God’s people to follow. “Decision making is a fundamental responsibility of leaders . . . Leaders may consult counselors, seek consensus, and gather information, but ultimately they make choices. Leaders who refuse to do so are abdicating their leadership

responsibility.”<sup>29</sup> A healthy practice of the Greatest Commandment is vital to both the senior pastor and all Christians, for the church to function as God intends.

### Misunderstanding the Greatest Commandment

In some cases, the ability to keep the Greatest Commandment is that the passage is misunderstood. “If the commandment of love (Deut 6:4-9) is not understood, it cannot be obeyed properly. This affects whether the promises of abiding in Jesus will be realized or not because Jesus states in John 15:10 that to keep the commandments proves one’s love for Him.”<sup>30</sup> The issue arises when senior pastors try to manage the relationship by simply learning more about God instead of getting to KNOW God. “If our relationship to God were based on our ability to know Him . . . God would be unknowable. How can a finite creature know an infinite Creator” He can’t unless, of course, the Creator make Himself known to the creature.”<sup>31</sup> This problem of switched roles will continue until intentionally addressed.

In addition to misunderstanding, a failure to give conscious and intentional effort to keep the commandment exacerbates the problem. The personal nature any solution must address varies from pastor to pastor. Some are better in one area, while another is better where the first is weak. Indeed, adopting solutions to the problem can be born out of resistance to change, but that resistance takes many forms, and thus efforts to identify the cause for each individual become difficult. The best way to teach is to demonstrate, just like Jesus did. “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). Johnny recognized this scriptural paradigm of leadership,

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<sup>29</sup> Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 219.

<sup>30</sup> Alyssa Marie Oyen, "Intertwined with the Divine: Law and Love in John 15:1-12," Oral Roberts University, 2015. <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1685010209?accountid=12085>

<sup>31</sup> Henry and Richard Blackaby, *A God Centered Church: Experiencing God Together* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), 29.

which is also used in corporate leadership for business success. “The most potent lever for change is modeling the change process for other individuals. This requires that the people at the top themselves engage in the deep change process.”<sup>32</sup> Any organization benefits from hands-on leadership that understands that showing is doing. “Lead by example. Be what you are challenging your people to become. Spend as much or more time emulating your message as you do exhorting them through your message. People follow what they see a whole lot more readily than what they hear.”<sup>33</sup>

However, although for different reasons, the desired outcome is the same for all senior pastors; and all senior pastors serve in differing ministry settings of community, church talent, resources, personal ability, and time. Tim Keller observes, “We have one calling-to sing the praises of God. We declare and demonstrate the glory and goodness of God in diverse ways to different groups of people.”<sup>34</sup> God has designed each of us to show our love to Him through these four areas (heart, soul, strength, and mind) in very diverse ways since we are diverse as people and ministry. The commonality is the mission and the One who sends us. This is why we begin there, “love the Lord your God” because He is the unifying factor in life and ministry.

### Success in Ministry

However, sometimes success in ministry causes senior pastors to lose their way regarding the Greatest Commandment. Further, even when the senior pastor is obedient to the Greatest Commandment, and the church and ministry are growing and moving forward, the senior pastor

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<sup>32</sup> Robert E. Quinn, *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within*, Jossey-Bass Business and Management Series (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass Publishers, ©1996), 148.

<sup>33</sup> Johnny M. Hunt, *Building Your Leadership Résumé: Developing the Legacy That Will Outlast You* (Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Books, ©2009), 203.

<sup>34</sup> Tim Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 294.

will often be blamed for any dispute in a church body brought about by those who are in obvious retreat from the Greatest Commandment. Both forward and backward movement in a ministry can cause conflict in churches. Indeed, the very concept of leadership implies that there is motion in a direction; otherwise, there would not be a leader but rather a caretaker. It is this motion or change that causes unrest amongst the flock, making the senior pastor the focus as the cause of any change and thus the cause of any conflict that arises as a result of the change. The simple solution would be for the pastor to embrace the status quo; however, "change is the function of leadership."<sup>35</sup> Embracing and leading out in change for the cause of effective ministry is necessary and biblical. Henry Blackaby notes: "Leadership would be much easier if everything remained the same...The reason change is so difficult is because people instinctively resist it."<sup>36</sup> Obedience to the Greatest Commandment lessens resistance to God's purposes.

More recently, the Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership's 2016 Statistics on Pastors Update notes that "Congregations are filled with hurting people who hurt other people...They fear that they are losing 'their' church, too. So, they take their hurt and apprehensions, turn it into artillery, and fire that at pastors. Pastors are overwhelmed with criticism and factions, who fear change and store stock loads of hurt."<sup>37</sup> All of these maladies are due to a failure for God's leaders and/or His people to keep the Greatest Commandment. The one thing that unifies them, "love the Lord your God," slips from their consciousness, and they begin

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<sup>35</sup> "John Kotter, What Leaders Really Do,," *Organizational Dynamics*. 28. No. 2 (November 2000): 90-91.

<sup>36</sup> Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 275.

<sup>37</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development, Lead researcher Rev. Richard J. Krejcir, Ph.D. (2016) *Statistics on Pastors: Research on the Happening in Pastors' Personal and Church Lives: 2016*. Retrieved May 4, 2019, from <https://files.stablerack.com/webfiles/71795/pastorsstatWP2016.pdf>

following the herd into chaotic distractions that harm the people involved, as well as the purposes of God.<sup>38</sup>

### Overzealousness and Misapplied Priorities

Pastors may be the cause of difficulties by the way they approach change. “It is easy to polarize people with too much push...Trust levels can drop so low that any new effort designed to push toward change is viewed as manipulation...”<sup>39</sup> Pastors are also prone to attempt to fix faux problems. “Like it or not, we are largely shaped by adaptive issues, the forces and unspoken norms largely invisible to us.”<sup>40</sup> Time is spent trying to please everyone and react when they are not pleased. “The reality of ministry is this: people will leave your church no matter what you do.”<sup>41</sup> A better approach would be to spend energy on relationships instead of solutions to problems that would go away with better relations. The relationship the senior pastor must begin with is the relationship with God by prioritizing and obeying the Greatest Commandment and leading his flock to do the same. When the senior pastor is loving God, the second greatest commandment comes naturally. Sadly, most pastors reach for a new program to fix the problems when a more genuine relational ministry is needed. “Too many organizations have been forced enough programs *du jour* to gag their people, no matter how good the intentions were. Your goal should be simple. Get to these people as intimately as possible within the boundaries of

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<sup>38</sup> Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift That Changes Everything* (Kingsford, N.S.W.: Matthias Media, 2009), 17-28.

<sup>39</sup>Hans Finzel, *Change is like a Slinky: 30 Strategies for Promoting and Surviving Change in Your Organization* (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2004), 157.

<sup>40</sup> Kevin G. Ford, *Transforming Church: Bringing Out the Good to Get to Great* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008), 43.

<sup>41</sup> Dan Southerland, *Transitioning: Leading Your Church Through Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 127.

your role.”<sup>42</sup> Such an approach is transformative and can turn people toward the correct goal.

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom 12:2). Lastly, pastors are cautioned to slow down until the people catch up to them. Setting the right pace is a delicate balance; between overzealousness and apathy.

### Failure to Reconcile

When discord takes root in the church, the pastor must share the blame and be prepared to move forward when the relationship is restored. “Successful leaders have learned that no failure is final...”<sup>43</sup> When God’s servants turn back or double down on His promises and instruction, transformation can and will occur. Such transformative restoration in a church must be pastor led. “Jesus Christ is our Mediator, and as his servants, we are called to mediate his grace—not in any sacerdotal or priestly sense but as ambassadors of reconciliation.”<sup>44</sup>

### Apathy

Apathy towards the Greatest Commandment is a fatal flaw for a church if not addressed. This is particularly true in the life of the senior pastor. Obedience is required by God; therefore, it should be a priority in the pastor’s life. “An apathetic leader is a contradiction in terms. No true leader will ever be uncaring. This is another fundamental principle of all leadership: A *leader is passionate*.”<sup>45</sup> The people must see a pastor’s drive as passion and not politics. “If

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<sup>42</sup> Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and Ken McElrath, *The Ascent of a Leader: How Ordinary Relationships Develop Extraordinary Character and Influence* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Imprint, 1999), 176.

<sup>43</sup>J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007, 163.

<sup>44</sup>Alfred Poirier, *The Peace Making Pastor: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006) 200.

<sup>45</sup> John MacArthur, *The Book on Leadership* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 124.

authentic (the passion), it naturally shines through as convictions come to life, as a great mission is undertaken, and as people share the same great passion and join together as one.”<sup>46</sup> This type of authenticity will make it easier to lead the church to obey the Greatest Commandment.

### Choosing the Wrong Starting Place and Approach

Finally, transformation must begin in the heart because the heart is where the trouble begins. The heart is the first area we are to use in loving God, and as such, it is reasonable to research if this makes it the logical starting place. The Bible says the Christian’s heart must be pure. "James in 4:1-3 makes a specific application of the fundamental principle Jesus taught in Matthew 15:19: 'Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.' Our hearts are the wellsprings of all our thought, desires, words, and actions. Therefore, it is also the source of our conflicts.”<sup>47</sup> Holding people accountable for keeping a pure heart and motives is the pastor’s role and priority, beginning with himself. “Effective leaders call fouls. They call fouls when unhelpful words are spoken. They even call foul when no words are spoken at all.”<sup>48</sup> Too often, senior pastors are quick to use words to communicate proper action and responses to God’s Word. But there is indeed much more to communication than words. "Body language often becomes the elephant in the room—the enormous issue everyone can see and hear and smell—and if it is not addressed immediately, everyone suffers.”<sup>49</sup> The senior pastor is to demonstrate proper obedience and behavior and bring

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<sup>46</sup> Albert Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles for Leadership That Matters*, (Bloomington, MN: Bethan House Publishers, 2012), 52.

<sup>47</sup> Ken Sande, *The Peace Maker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 101-2.

<sup>48</sup> Bill Hybels, *Leadership Axioms: Powerful Leadership Proverbs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 112.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 113.



others along with him. “God is glorified when He sees His work grow and develop in our lives. It’s God who gives comfort, peace, contentment, and direction for life. As we worship and tell others about Him, we experience His comfort, His peace, and His love in powerful ways. And He gives us opportunities to walk with Him, talk with Him, trust Him, and declare His wonders to unbelievers around us.”<sup>50</sup>

### **Purpose Statement**

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis project is to evaluate the current condition, as well as history, of a diverse group of current and past licensed and ordained senior pastors of Protestant churches regarding their obedience to the Greatest Commandment and the effects on relationships with God and others. The research is then evaluated to identify prescriptive measures for avoidance of, and recovery from, failure to abide by the commandment; and posit these measures as practical solutions so that a senior pastor can successfully adhere to the Greatest Commandment and lead his church to do likewise.

The ensuing research builds on existing studies and observations regarding the correlation between obedience to the components of the Greatest Commandment (heart, soul, strength, and mind), and relational conflict within their relationship to God and others; and to discover practical and effective ways to prevent or heal. Though there is scarce research devoted to identifying specific causes leading to problems brought about by senior pastors not obeying the Greatest Commandment in its entirety, research does exist on the individual components. As with most research, the problem comes into focus much more readily than do the causes or workable solutions, which can each be quite elusive. This research demonstrates that no matter

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<sup>50</sup> David Wheeler and Vernon Whaley, *Worship and Witness: Becoming a Great Commission Worshipper; Member Book* (Nashville: Lifeway Christian Resources, 2013), 51.

the cause of failure to abide by the Greatest Commandment, as long as the causes of failure are identified by the senior pastor early enough, then preventative measures can be taken. The Bible promises, The steps of a man are established by the LORD, and He delights in his way. When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong because the LORD is the One who holds his hand” (Ps. 37:24).

### **Basic Assumptions**

A better understanding and practice of what Jesus labeled the Greatest Commandment, is needed to minimize many of the issues causing the grim statistics noted earlier in this work. A cognitive approach to adherence must replace the conative acknowledgment of the commandment. Such an approach must include: 1) how humans are to “love” God, 2) how humans are to employ the tools of “heart, soul, strength, and mind,” 3) a clear definition and understanding of each of these areas of the human existence, and 4) a practical plan for accomplishment. Moreover, what constitutes a person? “The study of the biblical view of humanity has been somewhat confusing . . . Soul, spirit, body, heart, and mind are a few of the key words that refer to people in their psycho-spiritual functioning. Biblical thought . . . sees knowledge as something to be acted upon and demanding commitment by the person . . . mind and its ability to know, refers to a response that involves the whole person.”<sup>51</sup>

### **Old and New Testament Accounts are Congruent**

In scripture, the passages that layout the Greatest Commandment contains congruent content even though the New Testament references contain the seemingly added command for loving God with “all your mind.” In Deut 6:5, Moses names the three areas of heart, soul, and strength directly. However, the mind is implied. In Matthew and Mark’s Gospels, the

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<sup>51</sup> W. T. Kirwan, Biblical Anthropology, Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology & Counseling, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 133.

commandment is quoted by Jesus, and He cites the mind by name. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus asks the question of "an expert in the law," who seems to errantly cite Moses' instruction in Deuteronomy as including "mind" as a tool to direct love to God. Jesus, however, knew there was no error because the Israelites in the Old Testament had a different view of human existence than did the people of Jesus' days on earth. Ancient Israelites considered the heart the center of both emotion and thought. Therefore, the concept of *mind* as a part of the passage in Deuteronomy 6:5 is very much evident in the Old Testament text. Strong's defines heart in Deuteronomy 6:5 as being "by extension: the inner person, self, the seat of thought and emotion: conscience, courage, mind, understanding."<sup>52</sup> Also, it is possible that the singling out of the "mind" as a separate part of the human existence reflected the cultural diffusion the Jews gained from living as captives in other cultures. Nevertheless, the method it was placed there, it is clear that the mind is involved in managing the three areas of heart, soul, and strength. Further, an observation of the researcher is that in light of 1 Corinthians 2:14-16, the mind Christians are to have Christ's, "But we have the mind of Christ" (v. 16b). The apostle Paul also instructs the Romans, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2). At the time of the passage in Deuteronomy, the ancient Hebrews did not have the ability to have the mind of Christ.

Since the ancient Israelites saw the heart was not only the inner person, but also the seat of thought, emotion, intellect, and understanding,<sup>53</sup> and the passage in the Old Testament combines the heart and mind, and the New Testament references separate the heart and mind,

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<sup>52</sup> John R. Kohlenberger III, *NIV Exhaustive Bible Concordance* 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 1420.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

this research thus identifies the mind as an additional area of human existence separate from the heart. Christians are to use all four areas to love God. No matter the reason, Jesus identifies all four areas (heart, soul, mind, and strength) as being recruited into God's command to use in showing love to Him.

### Trial and Hardship Should be Expected

Becoming a senior pastor is not without trial and hardship. Earley and Gutierrez advise to "Go into ministry with your eyes wide open. Yes, serving Jesus has its high points and rewards, but some days it's little more than hard work. It could lead to misunderstanding, rejection, oppression, and outright persecution. Real ministry often leads us out of comfort . . . But no matter what, serving Jesus is always ultimately worth it because He is worth it."<sup>54</sup>

### Prayer is Essential to Successful Ministry

The prevailing assumption for this research is that both Moses' and Jesus' words are true, and we are to obey them. The Bible teaches "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess 5:16). Jesus promised, "And I will do whatever you ask in my name so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it" (John 14:13-14). Therefore, if we ask for help in keeping the Greatest Commandment, Jesus will help us so that God may be glorified. God expects us to come to Him in prayer when we are faced with something we know He desires or requires, but that we cannot do on our own. Prayer must be a priority that accompanies any other solutions that rise from the research. Bonhoeffer posited that "A congregation that does not pray for the ministry of its pastor is no longer a congregation. A

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<sup>54</sup> Earley and Gutierrez, *Ministry*, 13.

pastor who does not pray daily for his congregation is no longer a pastor.”<sup>55</sup> Prayer is essential to successful ministry.

### Human Self is Distinct from Human Existence

The Bible speaks of man’s creation in several places in scripture. Besides the creation account in Genesis, man’s creation is dealt with in Job 27:3; 33:4; Psalm 104:29z; Psalm 8:4-8; Hebrews 2:7, and 1 Corinthians 15:27. Although four areas are listed in the Greatest Commandment, heart, soul, strength, and mind, according to scripture in Genesis 2:7, only two are ingredients of a “living being”: soul (spirit) and strength (body). Pope Leo X solemnly approved the Viennese definition at the Fifth Lateran Council, A. D. 1512.<sup>56</sup> Thus, the researcher distinguishes between the human self and the human existence.

Regarding the human self, the Bible clearly asserts that a “man is constituted a ‘living being’ (*anima vivens*, נִפְשׁוֹ הַחַיִּים = *ens vivum*) by the union of the *limus terrae* (*i.e.*, body) with the *spiraculum vitae* (*i.e.*, spiritual soul). Consequently, his whole life . . . must flow from the spiritual soul, which vivifies the body . . . Ezechiel’s (sp) vision of the resurrection of dry bones (Ezech. 37:4) illustrates this truth.”<sup>57</sup>

If the human *self* consists of soul and body (strength), then heart and mind are necessary tools to assist the soul and body in loving God. The melding of these four areas constitutes the human *existence* where our human self exists and functions in concert with the heart and mind. The Greatest Commandment describes this *total* self and existence as heart, soul, strength, and mind, reflecting emotion, spirit, body, and intellect, respectively. The heart and mind are not a

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<sup>55</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, English edition. Vol. 13. (London: 1933-1935), 13.325.

<sup>56</sup> J. Pohle and A. Preuss, *God: The Author of Nature and the Supernatural* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1916), 144.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

part of the human self, but rather assist the human self in making interaction with the creator “love the Lord your God (Exod 6:5 et al. NT passages; Gen 3:1:27; 3:8), and other people “the second is like it” (Luke 10:27) possible.

At creation, arguably, man had no reasoning in their intellect until they ate from the tree of knowledge, “and they knew” (Gen 3:7). Not only did they add reason to their intellect, but they also added feelings. “I was afraid . . . so I hid myself” (Gen 8:10). In knowing he had done something wrong (reason), and feeling ashamed about his actions (emotion), Adam appears to have employed the mind and heart for the first time. This was demonstrated in his ability to *know* that he had erred in judgment and harmed his soul (the part God placed inside of him); and his ability to *feel* the shame from the circumstance of God seeing his naked body (the physical part of him). “Man, being torn away from nature, being endowed with reason and imagination, needs to form a concept of himself, needs to say and to feel ‘I am I.’ Because he is not lived, but lives, because he has lost the original unity with nature, has to make decisions, is aware of himself and of his neighbor as different persons, he must be able to sense himself as the subject of his action.”<sup>58</sup> Therefore, Adams's heart and mind interacted with his body and soul, displaying the human self in the human existence.<sup>59</sup>

#### All Four Areas of HSSM Work Together and Affect Each Other

The commandment of the Old Testament teaching in Deuteronomy 6:5 “love the Lord your God,” is supplemented with information on how the elements of the human existence (heart, soul, and might) should be utilized in keeping the commandment. Moses then gives

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<sup>58</sup> Erich Fromm “Values, Psychology and Human Existence,” (1959) *On Disobedience and Other Essays* (1981): 5. Accessed January 25, 2020.  
[https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=human+self+existence&hl=en&as\\_sdt=0&as\\_vis=1&oi=scholar](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=human+self+existence&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholar)

<sup>59</sup> Kelvin J. Cochran, *Who Told You That You Were Naked? Overcoming the Stronghold of Condemnation* (Loganville, GA: 3G Publishing, Inc., 2013), 15-19.

instruction on practical ways to faithfully carry out such obedience. After Moses shares God's commandment for the ancient Israelites to love God with "all" of three areas of their lives (heart, soul, and might), in verses 6-9 he reveals ways that all three areas can lead people to better relate to, and show total devotion to, their LORD YHWH. Therefore, a definition of these elements is important in the context of scripture and research.

Regarding the four elements Jesus identifies in the Greatest Commandment, James Hastings notes, "With his heart man appreciated God's mercies; with his soul, he appreciated God's holiness, the living impulses of His Spirit; with his mind, he appreciated the majesty and order of God's thought; with his strength, he adores and imitates the constancy of God's will, the righteousness of His rule."<sup>60</sup> These four areas evidence three parts of the existence of man. First, the interior or spiritual part of man's existence (vv. 6-7), second, the exterior or physical part of man's existence (v. 8), and third, the environment in which they live (v. 9). Understanding the dynamics of keeping the whole person, as well as the environment in which persons live out their lives in optimum condition, is important for *all* people; but such an understanding is essential for success as a senior pastor.

God is concerned with all four of these areas, according to other places in scripture. Concerning the heart, God says, "Give me your heart, my son, and let your eyes delight (observe) in my ways." (Prov. 23:26). Regarding the soul: God gave it, and He is going to get it back anyway, but would rather it be a voluntary offering. "Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit (breath) will return to God who gave it." (Eccl. 12:7). God is the one who gives men strength, "He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases

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<sup>60</sup> James Hastings, *The Great Texts of the Bible: St. Mark* (New York; Edinburgh: Charles Scribner's Sons; T&T Clark, 1910), 314.

power” (Isaiah 40:29). He expects them to use it for Him, “whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ ” (1 Peter 4:11b). Finally, the mind is the part of men that gets renovated when they accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior, “be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2). So, each of these four parts of the human existence is to be used in loving God because scripture shows where He must be active in each of these areas.

### **Definitions**

Relating to the Basic Assumptions above, the following definitions are needed to fully understand and appreciate the premise, problem, purpose, and conclusion within the research and analysis of this thesis project. The definition, as well as various contexts in which the word may be used regarding the use in the Great Commandment, are noted. The biblical references for heart, soul, strength/might (OT uses “might,” NT uses “strength”), and mind, are from the NASB translation of Luke 10:27 and Deut. 6:5. The Greek and Hebrew are given for each word, and a graphic is provided showing the distribution of the English word throughout scripture. A brief dialogue regarding the words and the meanings as they apply to the thesis project research prefaces the reference resource definitions. Only the words contained in the scripture passages referenced above are defined in Greek and Hebrew.

### **Senior Pastor**

Within this research, a senior pastor is someone who is (or has been), licensed and ordained, and is (or has been) a senior or solo pastor of a Protestant evangelical church in the United States of America. Descriptions as, “senior pastor survey participant (SPSP),” references the group of pastors as a sub-group that took part in the survey associated with this thesis research project and successfully submitted the completed survey in time for evaluation. A



reference to simply “senior pastors,” is still limited to protestant evangelical pastors, but is also inclusive of the subject senior pastors.

## Love

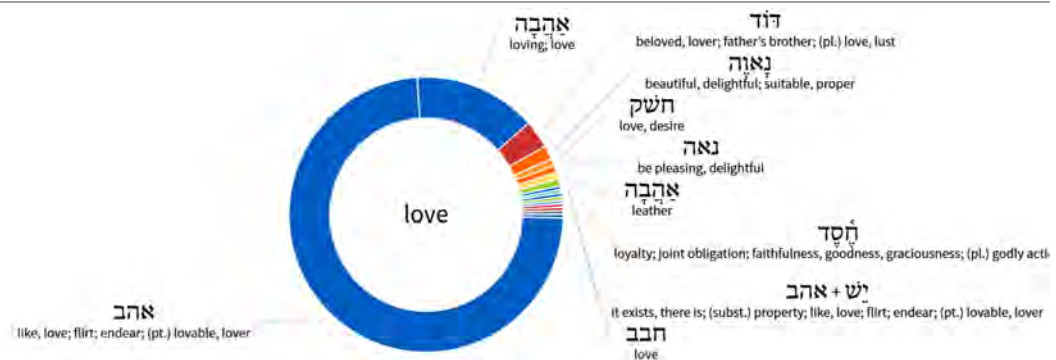
Love can be defined through an understanding of a lover; just as electrical issues can best be defined by an electrician. “A lover says, ‘I love you with all my heart, with all my soul, with every thought, I love you.’ The greatest and first commandment is a call to love truly, madly, deeply. Jesus Christ is the truest illustration of love.”<sup>61</sup> God is the supreme lover because of the gift of His Son Jesus to mankind. “But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Jesus affirms that such a demonstration is the highest form of love. “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). In the fourth chapter of Apostle John’s first epistle, the Scriptures further reveal about illuminate the virtue of love by reminding Christians that they are loved “beloved” (v.7), calling Christians to partake in love “let us love” (v. 7), and further revealing the definition and source of love “God is love” (v.7). The epitome of love is also revealed in this passage: “...love of God manifested,” (v. 9) and in the “...only begotten Son” (John 3:16). Further, scripture in I John teaches that it should be obvious to the world that someone is a Christian because “if we love one another, God abides in us” (v.12), and this is how God’s love is “perfected in us” (v.12; 17). The indicative of Scripture on the virtue of love compels us to love God, others, and self. The Apostle Paul instructs Christians to “put on love . . .” (Col. 3:15), and that love is patient, kind, not jealous, not braggadocios, humble, appropriate, selfless, even-tempered, forgiving, righteously judicial, truthful, comprehensively strong, believing, hoping,

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<sup>61</sup> DeWolfe, Laurence, "The Greatest and First Commandment: a Call to Love Truly, Madly, Deeply," *Presbyterian Record*, October 2014, 13+. Accessed January 23, 2020. [https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A388428468/ITOF?u=vic\\_liberty&sid=ITOF&xid=a2d5b481](https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A388428468/ITOF?u=vic_liberty&sid=ITOF&xid=a2d5b481)

enduring, and unfailing (1 Cor. 13:4-8). Scripture further informs that others will identify Christians “by our love” (John 13:35). The issue arises when, as Christians, even senior pastors “have a difficult time understanding, believing, or accepting God’s absolute and unlimited love for us.”<sup>62</sup>

Hebrew: 170 אָהַב 'āhab, v. [215] [→ 71,172,173,174?, 175]. [Q] to love, like, be a friend; [N] to be loved; [P] be a lover, an ally; love can refer to friendship, familial love, romantic love, or covenant loyalty:-love (93), loves (38), loved (31), lovers (12), friends (8), friend (5), allies (4), in love with (3), fell in love with (2), liked (2), long for (2), adore (1), attracted to (1), both<sup>s</sup> (1 [+2021, 2256, 2021, 8533]), chosen ally (1), dearly (1), desires (1), like (1), likes (1), on friendly terms (1), resent (1 [+4202]), show love (1), showed love (1), value (1), was loved (1), were loved (1).<sup>63</sup>



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Illustration 1.1

Greek: 26 ἀγαπάω agapáō, v. [143] [→27, 28]. To love; in the NT usually the active love of God for his Son and his people, and the active love his people are to have for God, each other, and even enemies:- love (76), loved (39), loves (22), dearly loved (1), have<sup>s</sup> (1), longed for (1), love shown (1), loving (1), NDT (1).<sup>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Francis Chan, *Crazy Love* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008), 53.

<sup>63</sup> John R. Kohlenberger III, *NIV Exhaustive Bible*, 1359.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 1503.



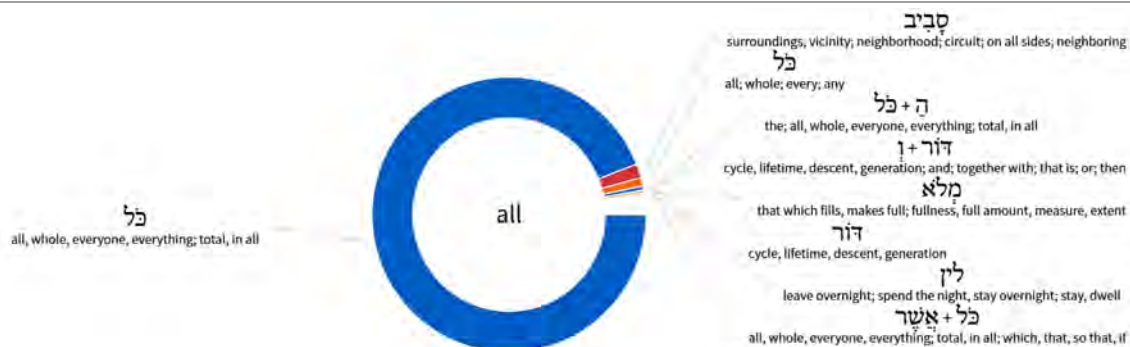
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Illustration 1.2

## All

The concept of all is inclusive to a totality of the object of the descriptive, not a part or portion. This includes both tangible objects and intangible attributes or emotions, feelings, thought, and concentration. An allegiance or total dedication can also describe and define the word ALL. It may be used as a noun, pronoun, adjective, or adverb. In the context of the Greatest Commandment passages, it serves as the adverb to the verb, love.

Hebrew: H3972 כָּל kōl, n.m. [5413] [→3997; cf. 4005; 10353, 10354]. All, everyone, everything, totality of a mass or collective; every, any, a particular of a totality: - all (3246).<sup>65</sup>

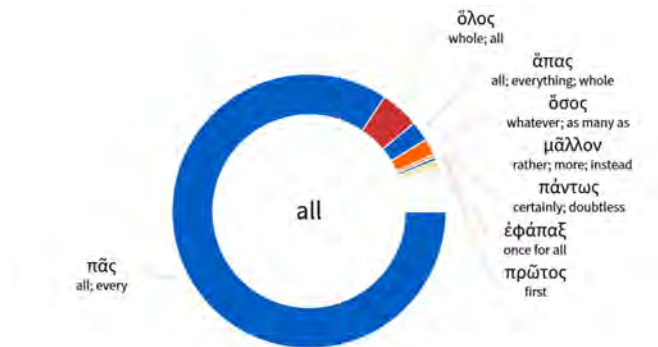


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Illustration 1.3

<sup>65</sup> John R. Kohlenberger III, *NIV Exhaustive Bible*, 1415.

Greek: G3910: ὅλος hólos, a. [108] [→ 2772, 2773, 3906, 3907, 3908, 3911, 3914]. All, whole, entire; throughout:--whole (52), throughout (6 [+1877]), entire (2), throughout (2 [+1650]), throughout (2 [+1650]), throughout (2 [+2848]), all 91 [+4012]), all long (1), all over (1 [+1650]), all over (1+2848]), completely (1), steeped (1), throughout (1), to bottom (1 [+1328]), whole (1 [+4116]).<sup>66</sup>



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Illustration 1.4

## Heart

The heart is the seat of deep feeling: grief (Gen. 6:6), fear and anxiety (Gen 45:26; 1 Sam 4:13), joy or merriment (1 Sam 2:1). A heart may be hardened repeatedly in Exodus (Exod 7:13, 14, 22, 23, etc., of Pharaoh), or it may be pure (Matt 5:8). It may be the sphere of reflection or pondering (Luke 2:19, 51), or of belief (Rom 10:9).<sup>67</sup> Contemporary culture, when talking about

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 1550

<sup>67</sup> Bill Wilson, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 144.

the heart as other than the noun regarding the organ of the human body, use the meaning of feeling, emotion, or even resolve. However, ancient “Hebrews used heart to stand for the place of thought and will, of decision-making and conscience. Thus, to do something ‘with all your heart’ is equivalent to saying ‘in all your thoughts and decision making.’”<sup>68</sup> Modern studies also point to a physiological/psychological association between the heart and mind, and interestingly this occurs through the experience of emotion. A recent Harvard publication notes, “We often think of the heart and brain as being completely separate from each other. After all, your heart and brain are located in different regions of your body, and cardiology and neurology are separate disciplines. Yet these organs are intimately connected, and when your emotions adversely affect your brain, your heart is affected as well.”<sup>69</sup>

In the New Testament, there was the concept of the mind as the center of thought. Jesus made the distinction by adding the word mind to the Greatest Commandment. He also used the word heart as the seat of reasoning. “Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, “Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts?” (Luke 5:22). Jesus also said this of the heart: “but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt 5:28). Therefore, the concept of the heart is a lingering of thought; the mind takes in information, but the heart decides what to do with that information. In ancient Hebrew, man is more than simply his thoughts, as the thoughts and reasoning/feelings were considered of the

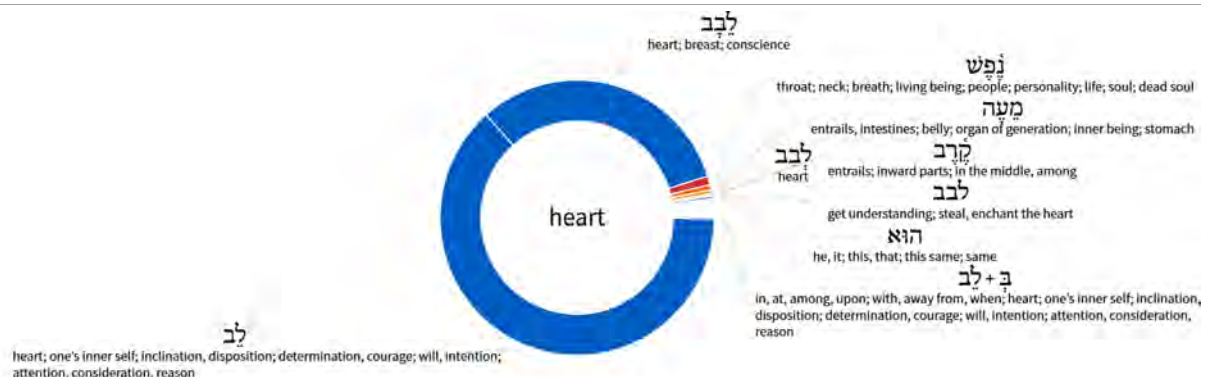
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<sup>68</sup> Rebecca, Abts Wright, "The Impossible Commandment," *Anglican Theological Review* 83, no. 3 summer, 2001, 579-84. Accessed January 25, 2020. <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/215265612?accountid=12085>.

<sup>69</sup> Srinii Pillay, “Managing Your Emotions can Save Your Heart,” Harvard Health Blog, Harvard Health Publishing Harvard Medical School, May, 09, 2016. Accessed on February 1, 2020. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/managing-emotions-can-save-heart-201605099541>.

same constitute. Silvia Schroer and Thomas Staubli note that “the Hebrew word *lebab* is rendered ‘heart,’ . . . The Hebrews linked the inner person, thoughts, reflections, and aspiration with the heart and, thus, also what we call conscience. In the Shema Israel . . . *lebab* and *nefes*/ represent two aspects of the person, namely one’s capacity for reason . . . , two aspects, then, that only produce a whole together.”<sup>70</sup>

Hebrew: 3824. לֵבָב *lebab* (523b); from an unused word; *inner man, mind, will, heart*—anger(1), breasts(1), conscientious(1), consider(5), courage(1), desire(1), encouragingly(1), fainthearted(3), heart(185), heart and the hearts(1), heart’s(1), hearts(27), hearts like his heat(1), intelligence(1), intended(2), mind(8), purpose(1), thought(1), thought(1), timid(1), understanding(2), wholehearted(1), wholeheartedly(1), yourself(1).<sup>71</sup>



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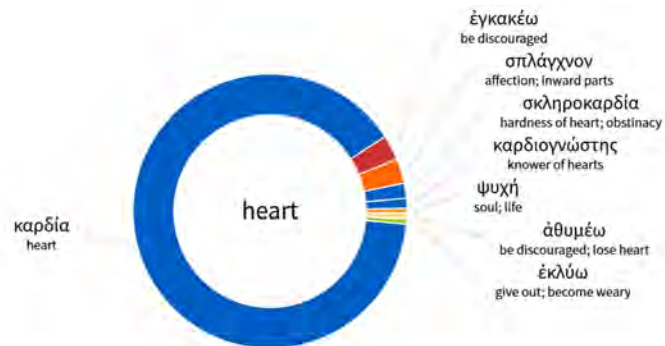
Illustration 1.5

Greek: 2840 καρδία *kardia*, n. [156] [→2841, 5016]. heart, mind (seat of thought and emotion). The heart was thought to be the seat of the inner self (composed of life, soul, mind, and spirit). “Heart” is similar in meaning to “soul,” but often the “heart” has a focus on thinking and understanding (Mk 2:8; Lk 1:51; 24:38): - heart (68), heart (61). Mind (3), himself (2 [+3836, 899]), minds (2), you (2 [+5148, 3836]), decided (1 [+326, 2093, 3836]), experts (1 [+1214]), furious (1 [+1391, 3836]), heart’s (1), how slow (1 [+1096, 3836]), inmost (1), made think 91 [+5502, 1877, 3836]), make up mind (1 [5502, 1877, 3836]). Prompted (1 [+965, 1650, 3836]), self (1 [+476’]), stand firm (1 [+5114, 3836]),

<sup>70</sup> Silvia Schroer and Thomas Staubli, “Bodily and Embodied: Being Human in the Tradition of the Hebrew Bible,” *SAGE Journals*, vol67/iss1/5-19. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.11770020964312463189>

<sup>71</sup> New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: updated edition, (Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998), s.v. R. L. Thomas.

themselves (1 [+899]), themselves (1 [+3836, 899]), thought (1), thoughts (1 [+1369]), wondered about (1 [+5502, 1877, 3836]), you (1 [+ 5148]), yourselves (1 [+5148]).<sup>72</sup>



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Illustration 1.6

## Soul

The soul is one half of the constitution of a man. “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being” (Gen 2:7). God used dust to form the physical man, body. Then God breathed the spirit (soul) into the body’s nostrils to complete the whole man (being) consisting of body and soul. The soul and spirit are recognized as synonymous here and throughout scripture. Psychologist Dr. William. T. Kirwan notes that in the New Testament, the words soul and spirit appear to be used as equivalents. “The words *soul* (*nephesh*; *psuche*) and *spirit* (*ruah*; *pneuma*) are often used as parallel expressions and probably should be viewed as synonymous. Matthew 27:50 (NIV) reads, ‘. . . he gave up his spirit [*pneuma*]’ . . . John 10:17 Jesus says . . . ‘I lay down my life [*psuche*]’ . . . (NIV). Here both *soul* and *spirit* . . . seem to be used interchangeably.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, the soul is

<sup>72</sup> Kohlenberger III, *NIV Exhaustive Bible*, 1537.

<sup>73</sup> *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology & Counseling*, eds. D. G. Benner & P. C. Hill, 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), s.v. “Biblical Anthropology,” Kirwan, W. T.

the essence of a man, the eternal part. “The human soul has—both philosophically and theologically—been associated with the essence of the individual; . . . what makes the person more than a machine . . . constitutes individuality. . . . For Aristotle . . . the soul . . . is the whole which is greater than the sum of the parts: ‘all natural bodies are instruments for the soul . . . showing that they exist for the sake of the soul.’”<sup>74</sup> This research builds on the *creationist* view of the origin of the soul; “God created each individual soul at the moment that he gave it a body.”<sup>75</sup>

Hebrew: 5315 נֶפֶשׁ nephesh (659b); from an unused word; *a soul, living being, life, self, person, desire, passion, appetite, emotion*:—any (1), anyone (2), anyone\*(1), appetite(7), being(1), beings(3), body(1), breath(1), corpse(2), creature(6), creatures(3), dead(1), dead person(2), deadly(1), death(1), defenseless\*(1), desire(12), desire\*(2), discontented\*(1), endure\*(1), feelings(1), fierce\*(2), greedy\*(1), heart(5), heart’s(2), herself(12), Himself(4), himself(19), human(1), human being(1), hunger(1), life(146), life\*(1), lifeblood\*(2), lives(34), living creature(1), longing\*(1), man(4), man’s(1), men\*(2), mind(2), Myself(3), myself(2), number(1), ones(1), others(1), ourselves(3), own(1), passion\*(1), people(2), people\*(1), perfume\*(1), person(68), person\*(1), persons(19), slave(1), some(1), soul(238), soul’s(1), souls(12), strength(1), themselves(6), thirst(1), throat(2), will(1), wish(1), wishes(1), yourself(11), yourselves(13).<sup>76</sup>

*\*The key word represents two or more Hebrew or Aramaic words refer to the English concordance listing of the key word for the additional Hebrew or Aramaic word numbers.*<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Dolan, Brian. “Soul Searching: A Brief History of the Mind/Body Debate in Neurosciences,” *Journal of Neurosurgery* 23 (1):E2k, 2007/2.

<sup>75</sup> Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary*, 1129.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek*.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

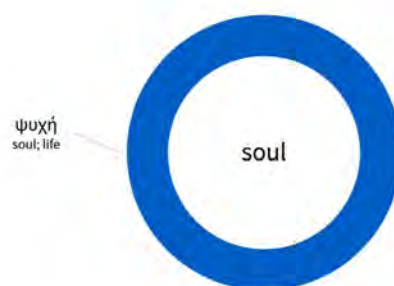




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Illustration 1.7

Greek: 6034 psyche, n. 9101] [ $\sqrt{6038}$ ]. Life, soul; heart, mind; a person; the immaterial (and eternal) part of inner person, often meaning the animate self, which can be translated by pronouns: “my soul” + “I myself”:- life(33), soul (20), lives (5), souls (5), heart (3), I (2[+3836, 1609]), minds (2), you (2[+3836, 5148]), alive (1[+3836, 1877, 899m 1639]), all<sup>s</sup> (1), everyone ( [+4246]), everyone ( [+4246]), anyone (1 [+4246]), being (1), keep in suspense (1 [+3836, 149]), living (1 [+2400]), living thing (1 [+2437]), longed for (1 [+2123, 3836]), me (1 [+3836, 1609]), mind (1), one (1 +1651]), people (1), saved (1 [+1650, 4348]), sold as slaves (1 [+5393, 2779]), strengthening (1 [+2186, 3836]), them (1[+899]), them<sup>s</sup> (1), themselves (1 [+3836, 899]), to myself (1 [+3836, 1609]), trying to kill (1 [+2426, 3836])0< unstable (1 [+844]), us<sup>s</sup> (1), you<sup>s</sup> (1), you (1 [+5148]), yourselves (1 [+3836, 5148]), NDT (1).



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Illustration 1.8

## Strength (NT) / Might (OT)

Strength is the companion of the soul, the union of which constitutes a man: body and soul (see definition of the soul above). Strength refers to the body and/or the tasks the body can perform. The apostle Paul affirms that the body is a temple, which is a physical reference to man's being, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore, *glorify God in your body*" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Paul's last phrase describes a way the command to "love the LORD your God with all your...strength," can be obeyed. There exists a dichotomy of meaning between the qualitative and quantitative, as one is used to either amplify the other three areas of heart, soul, and mind, or to perform on behalf of the heart, soul, and mind. In either case, the body is used via the five senses and motion to do the bidding of the others.<sup>78</sup>

Hebrew (might – Deut. 6:5): H3966. מִצָּדָה m'ōd 547b); from an unused word: *muchness, force, abundance*:—abundantly (1), all (1), almost (1), badly (3), carefully (1), closely (1), diligent (1), diligently (3), enough (1), especially (1), exceeding (1), exceedingly (14), exceedingly \*(3), excessive (1), extremely \*(1), far (1), firmly (1), fully (1), great (16), great abundance (1), greatly (52), greatly \*(1), hard (1), harder \*(1), highly (4), immense (1), louder (1), measure (2), might (2), more (2), more \*(1), most (1), much \*(1), quickly (1), richly (1), serious \*(1), severely (1), so (2), so much (1), sorely (1), strongly (1), swiftly (1), too (2), utterly (1), utterly \*(3), very (139), very well (1), very \*(2), violently (1), violently \*(1), well (2).<sup>79</sup>

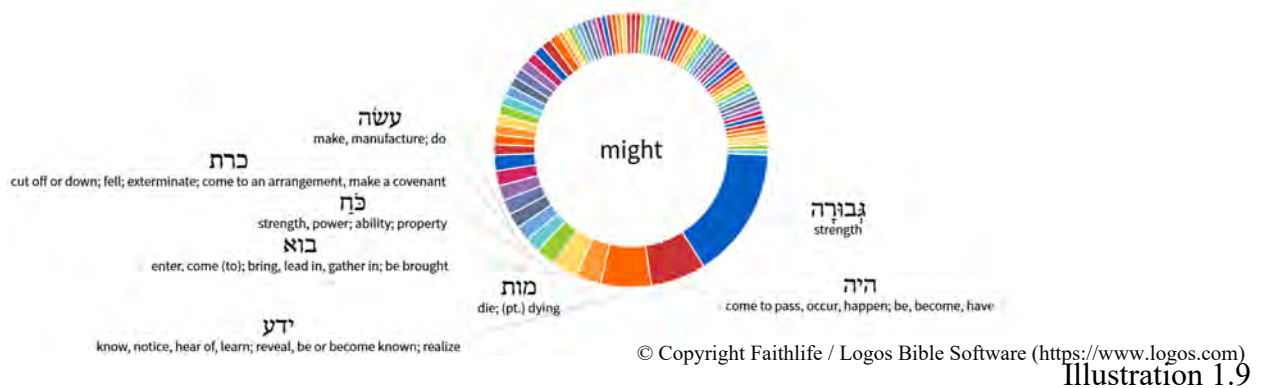
*\*The key word represents two or more Hebrew or Aramaic words. Refer to the English concordance listing of the keyword for the additional Hebrew or Aramaic word numbers.*<sup>80</sup>

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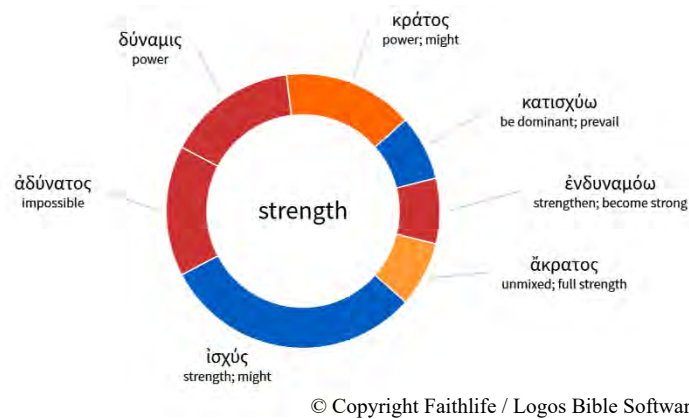
<sup>78</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Thomas, New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek.



Greek (strength – Luke 10:27): G2709. ἰσχύς ischys, n. [10] [→1462, 1932, 2015, 2196, 2708, 2710, 2996]. Strength, power: -strength (7), might (1), power (1), stronger (1).<sup>81</sup> “to be strong or powerful” physically; in this context, the meaning can be “to be healthy...”<sup>82</sup>



## Mind

The intellect of a man but void of reasoning thought; as reasoning thought is the work of the human heart. “Jesus, aware of their reasoning, answered and said to them, ‘Why are you reasoning in your hearts?’” (Luke 5:22). Senior pastors are called upon to marry the mind with the heart to make decisions regarding life and ministry. Intellect in isolation of thought and

<sup>81</sup> Kohlenberger III, NIV Exhaustive Bible, 1536..

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 1536.

reason is generally unhelpful in a ministry context. “Now, in terms of Christian leadership, all of these insights from the concept of multiple intelligences are helpful, but Christian leaders must develop and operate out of an additional intelligence—convictional intelligence.”<sup>83</sup> Convictional intelligence is the marriage of heart and mind.

Hebrew: the word “mind” is not used in the NASB text of Deut. 6:5, the word.

Greek: 1379 διάνοια dianoia, n. [12] [√1328, 3808, mind, thinking, understanding; this is a part of the inner person that thinks and processes information into understanding, including the making of choices, the seat of which is the heart - minds (4), mind (3), thoughts (2), understanding (2), thinking (1).<sup>84</sup>



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Illustration 1.11

## Limitations and Delimitations

### Limitations

Research is limited by the availability of, and of a qualifying, willing, and timely pool of the population targeted for sampling; current or former pastors of Protestant evangelical churches in the United States. Further limitations are identified as the truthfulness of the responses of the research survey distributed, the percentage of the survey questions responded to, the

<sup>83</sup> Albert Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead: Principles for Leadership that Matters* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2012), 29.

<sup>84</sup> Kohlenberger III, *NIV Exhaustive Bible*, 1519.

comprehensiveness of the responses, and the punctuality rendered from the participants. “An honest witness tells the truth, but a false witness tells lies” (Prov. 12:17). Self-examination is intimidating to some Christians, even senior pastors “avoid the path of self-knowledge because they are afraid of being swallowed up in their abysses. But . . . Christ has lived through all the abysses of human life and . . . goes with us when we dare to engage . . . ourselves . . . loves us unconditionally—along with our dark sides . . . In the light of this love the pain . . . can be . . . the beginning of our healing.”<sup>85</sup>

This research is affected by varying interpretations, and thus responses, for similar sample survey questions. This is due to the sampling being purposefully distributed to pastors with varied experience in ministry as well as methods, resources, providence, and professional talent; all which can affect interpretation and understanding of queries, the timeliness of response, the descriptive accuracy of responses, processes, and their results. For example, pastors with similar identifiers may react differently regarding the question, “What reason(s) were given if you were forced out of the pulpit.” There is a world of difference between immoral behavior and bad health.

This type of limitation, however, is one of the points of this research. A nuance of similarities and differences are scrutinized to determine possible preventative and prescriptive measures, as well as signals for early detection that there is a problem with keeping the Greatest Commandment to the best of the respondent’s ability and desire. “Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong” (1 Cor 16:13). But, such preventative and prescriptive measures, as well as identified signals for early detection, still have limits as to the amount, accuracy, and

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<sup>85</sup> Richard Rohr and Andreas Ebert, *The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective*, tran. Peter Heinegg (New York: 2016), ix,

relevance of the information made available by the sample pastors and the institutions they serve (or have served) through the survey.

Expositing prescriptive measures for staying healthy in heart, soul, strength, and mind may also require more time and research of nuances than can be effectively covered in one thesis project; but will certainly be identified as an area in need of further research.

### Delimitations

This research is delimited by the criteria of sampling a population of current and former senior pastors of Protestant (Christian) evangelical churches in the United States, and their positive indicative response in agreeing to take part in the survey on the subject of the Greatest Commandment. This research purposefully collects samples from an equal number of current and past pastors in the pooled sample.

Further, a homogenous grouping from each pastor subgroup (active and inactive) according to the size of the fellowship, style of worship, church polity, age of the institution they serve (or have served), with the goal of collecting a sampling of approximate equal numbers of churches that are similar in these factors: geographically, demographically, and socio-economically similar settings for ministry.

The degree of education of the pastors and number of years in ministry are included as filters in the survey. For example, for each survey participant that has a seminary education and has served a small (100 or less members) Baptist church in a metro-suburban area with a heavy Latino population, but predominantly Caucasian membership; other participants serving (or having served) ministries with similar qualifications and identifiers are sought for comparison of results.

Research is purposefully comprehensive in focusing on the pastor, his relations, and interactions with family, staff, church members, associations (both civic and professional), denomination, and the community. Thus, any senior pastor survey participant that does not complete the survey to include all these areas are not considered in the research.

### **Thesis Statement**

Current and past pastors of Protestant evangelical churches in the United States are more successful in life and ministry through obedience to the Greatest Commandment (Deut 6:5; Matt 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:27); and this obedience can be measured, and grown to improve success in life and ministry through sound biblical principles and practices.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Conceptual Framework**

The focus of this research is obedience, by senior pastors of Protestant evangelical churches in the United States, to what Jesus identified as the Greatest Commandment (Deut 6:5; Matt 22:38-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28). This crystal-clear command, first given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit in Deuteronomy 6:5, reveals to mankind the revelation of how God desires for the crown over His creation to prioritize their life. The Psalmist observes that the position of men in God's creation is "a little lower than God" (or the angels) and that God has crowned him with "glory and majesty" ("honor" KJV) by giving him the duty of having "dominion over the works of (His) Your Hands" (Psalm 8:1-6). Therefore, men are to live life in such a way as to demonstrate that they "Love the Lord" and to grow into the person God created them to be. This can only be accomplished with God's help, but this research aims to enlighten senior pastors in the meaning, purpose, and importance of the Greatest Commandment, and techniques to obey properly. Research of over one hundred scholarly peers approved literature works, as well as the Scriptures, results from Focus on the Family Pastoral Ministries 2009 Survey,<sup>86</sup> and LifeWay Research Phone Survey of Pastors of Evangelical and Black Protestant Denominations, 2015.<sup>87</sup> Further research has been approved by the Institutional Review Board and will be conducted over the next several months as a result of this thesis project. The information will be assimilated and examined to identify causes of failure, warning signs of

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<sup>86</sup> Appendix E - Focus on the Family Pastoral Ministries Survey 2009.  
<https://www.parsonage.org/images/pdf/2009PMSurvey.pdf>

<sup>87</sup> LifeWay Research Phone Survey of Pastors of Evangelical and Black Protestant Denominations, 2015.  
<https://blog.lifeway.com/newsroom/2015/09/01/despite-stresses-few-pastors-give-up-on-ministry/>



impending failure, and prescriptive practices for success in honoring our LORD through faithful obedience to the Greatest Commandment.

Kibbe says, “A thesis is a specific claim [the researcher] makes about that particular set of information.”<sup>88</sup> This is a true statement, however, concerning this research, the researcher is guided by the clear command of God to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut 6:5); and “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22:37). The treasury of theological concepts in Deuteronomy not only declare that there is only one God and men are to love Him but “these words were to be upon the hearts of the Israelites, they were to teach them urgently to their children . . . bound ‘as a sign’ on the hand and ‘as frontlets’ between the eyes . . . written on the doorposts of the house and the gates. These instructions . . . are essentials in the Jew’s daily religious rituals.”<sup>89</sup> This specific instruction, which Moses relays to the Israelites, speaks to the importance of the command. Jesus concurred as he noted the instruction in Deuteronomy 6:5 as the “greatest commandment” (Matt. 22:37).

Less than optimum obedience to the Greatest Commandment affects pastors, and thus churches, across the United States and around the world. Challenges are not only a current issue for pastors, but all Christians. Scripture is clear in the command to “love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your strength, and with all of your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27). The Gospel of Luke parallels Matthew’s Gospel (v. 22:36-40) and Mark’s Gospel (12:28-31). Scripture speaks clearly regarding loving God. The apostle John asserts that “We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). In John’s Gospel, he

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<sup>88</sup> Michael Kibbe, *From Topic to Thesis: A Guide to Theological* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 15.

<sup>89</sup> William L Sanford, *Old Testament Survey, the Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Bm. B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 118.

quotes Jesus as disclosing how to grow closer in relationship with Him by declaring, “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; , and he who loves Me will be loved by My father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him” (John 14:21). Jesus also asserts, “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you” (John 15:12-14). In the Old Testament, God the Father speaks along the same thread, “Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments” (Deut 7:9). The apostle Paul points out the faithfulness and permanency of the love, which God the Father and His Son Jesus speak of in scripture, “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:37-39).

### Obedience in Loving God

There are many admonishments in Scripture to both love God, and to grow in the areas of heart, soul, strength, and mind. The apostle Peter advised followers of Christ to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ ” (2 Peter 3:18), and “like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord” (1 Peter 2:2-3), and “Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge . . .” (2 Peter 1:5). The apostle Paul (most likely) noted in the book of Hebrews, “Therefore, leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity” (Hebrews 6:1a), and to the church in Colossae, “Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the

Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude” (Colossians 2:6-7). Indeed, Jesus’ assertion that He and the Father are One (John 10:30; 17:21-23), “should be understood on the backdrop of the great central confession of Israel’s faith in the Shema.”<sup>90</sup>

### With All Your Heart

Concerning the heart, Scripture notes that men have an issue with using the heart “as is” in showing love and devotion to God. The prophet Jeremiah preached, “Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, circumcise your hearts” (Jer 4:4). King David deemed his heart so wretched that he begged, “Create in (for) me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast (upright) spirit within me” (Ps 51:10). God, through the prophet Ezekiel, promises, “I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you” (Ezek 36:26). And through the prophet Jeremiah “I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord” (Jer 24:7). The apostle Paul recognized this need for help with the heart. For the church at Ephesus he prayed “that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (holy ones)” (Eph 1:18); and to the church at Corinth, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Cor 5:17).

### With All Your Soul

In regard to the soul, Scripture tells us that the soul is given to men by God, “The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (soul)” (Genesis 2:7); and that God owns the souls, “Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul (person) who sins

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<sup>90</sup> Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI:, 1994), 106.

will die” (Ezek 18:4). The Bible places its importance above the body. The apostle Matthew records Jesus as giving advice and warning. “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28). So, fear for losing the soul serves as an impetus to seek God. Interestingly, a paradox regarding the “fear of Him” exists in the Bible. The book of Proverbs says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7a), while the apostle John writes in his first epistle, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love” (1 John 4:18). This is, however, a paradox with a purpose: God strikes fear in our hearts so that we might be moved to come to Him and learn to love perfectly so the fear will subside.

Finally, Jesus asked, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt. 16:26). As noted earlier, the soul is one of the two essential parts that compose humans. The real loss is in consideration of the knowledge that this is the part that “God-breathed” into man—something that all men experience sometime after conception and before birth. Though the timing is a mystery, the occurrence is certified biblically; everyone born to earth receives a soul. “The essence of both spiritual formation and soul care is seen to be clearly articulated in the teachings of the Scriptures, which are the ultimate authority for our understanding and participation in these historic Christian practices.”<sup>91</sup> Indeed the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning the soul and the role the Holy Spirit plays in the placement and transformation into the image of

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<sup>91</sup> Barrett W. McRay et al. “Spiritual Formation and Soul Care in the Department Christian Formation and Ministry at Wheaton College.” *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 11, no. 2 (Fall 2018): 280. Accessed February 7, 2020, <https://web-a-ebshost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=a2b86f34-0195-4096-8fc8-8762d84a7f84%40sdc-v-sessmgr02&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZW-hvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#db=lsdar&AN=ATLAI FZK181210001131>

Christ, “But whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (1 Cor. 3:16-18).

### With All Your Strength

The Greatest Commandment also speaks of physical strength. There has been much debate over the meaning of מְאֹד *m'ōd*, which most often carries the connotation of “much,” or “most.” However, in the New Testament, Jesus endorses the use of the Greek ισχύς *ischys* as “You have answered correctly” when an “expert in the law” quoted the Shema. The same word and meaning are used several other times in the New Testament in the context of physical strength. The apostle Peter taught in 1 Peter 4:11, “Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterance of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies.” The apostle also in this verse speaks to this being a way to glorify God, “so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to who belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” If God didn’t intend for humans to use the body to love Him, then why would we have such? The body and soul need each other to constitute a man. If we are to love God with all the soul, then the physical body must follow. Therefore, the Greatest Commandment includes the whole person, emotionally (heart), spiritually (soul), physically (might/strength), and intellectually (mind).

There is evidence in scripture to take care of the body to use it properly in loving God. The apostle Paul noted that the physical body is important to God and that we are to use it to show our love just as the Greatest Commandment teaches. “Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which

is your spiritual service of worship” (Rom. 12:11). The apostle later instructed the church at Corinth to “Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training . . . I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave” (1 Corinthians 9:24-27a).<sup>92</sup> In Hebrews, the writer (Paul?) uses a physical metaphor to advise them to “run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1). He evokes physical fitness later in the same chapter, “Therefore, strengthen (make straight) the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed” (v. 12, 13).

### With All Your Mind

The Christian’s duty of paying proper attention to the mind is also found in scripture. The apostle Paul encourages the Romans, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:2). The apostle Peter warns to “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). To the church at Colossae, he wrote, “Set your minds on the things above, not on the things that are on earth” (Col. 3:2). He fleshed out this advice to the church at Philippi, “Finally brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these [‘think about such’ – NIV] things” (Phil. 4:8).

Finally, the Bible also promises reward for those that follow the admonishments, for example, the psalmist asserts, “The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree, he will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our

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<sup>92</sup> *The Holy Bible, New International Version*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984).

God. They will still yield fruit in old age; they shall be full of sap and very green” (Psalm 92:12-14).

### Free Will versus the Sovereignty of God

A right perception of how God works in the lives of men is often a confusing and unproductive discussion. As such, how God works in the lives of senior pastors to help or cause obedience to the Greatest Commandment is worth exploring. Christianity is built primarily upon faith, so many Christian presuppositions must concede that faith is their ultimate, if not the primary foundation. There are, however, many empirical facts and testimonies which lend credence to the validity of *The Sovereignty of God* and *The Free Will of Man*. The work of this research does not aim to resolve all the issues nor identify all of the apologetical positions in favor of, or in opposition to a sectional-thesis of sorts: *The sovereignty of God is not diminished by the free will of man. Therefore, the sovereignty of God is eternal, and the free will of man temporal*. Rather this study aims to postulate as true the unique holy position of The Sovereignty of God and how it has an effect on and relates to, The Free Will of Man. The basic question to be answered is: When does God have the reins, and how does one know? The Sovereignty of God is defined as: Sovereignty — of God, his absolute right to do all things according to his own good pleasure (Dan. 4:25, 35; Rom. 9:15–23; 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 4:11).<sup>93</sup> The Free Will of Man is defined as: free will *noun* -13th century; 1: voluntary choice or decision 〈I do this of my own *free will*〉 2: freedom of humans to make choices that are not determined by prior causes or by divine intervention<sup>94</sup> These definitions, though simple, provide a base point from which to enter

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<sup>93</sup> Easton, M. G. *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893),

<sup>94</sup> Merriam-Webster, I. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

into research to show that the free will of man does not negate God's sovereignty. The peculiarity of this research is due to free will being created and perpetuated by the sovereignty of God. The study will identify a few of the conflicting attributes of each and then show that the tension between the two cannot be totally resolved, thus proving the thesis. Faith is the wildcard in any theological research and should be aptly identified as the adhesion when used by the research and any reference sources.

### ***The Sovereignty of God***

“He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants for the earth” (Daniel 4:35 KJV). The Bible is emphatic in several places that Jehovah is a sovereign God. Both Old and New Testament are full of references to God's sovereignty, citing attributes of omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, and immutability “Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand, it is to make great and to give strength to all.” (1 Chronicles 29:11-12 ESV). The sovereignty of God is either emphatic or implied in every book of both Testaments.

The sovereignty of God is woven into the Scriptures in such a way that if the references were removed, the rest of Scripture would fail. “Were there even one datum of knowledge, however small, unknown to God, His rule would break down at that point. To be Lord over all the creation, He must possess all knowledge. And were God lacking one infinitesimal modicum of power, that lack would end His reign and undo His kingdom . . . and God would be a limited



ruler and hence not sovereign.”<sup>95</sup> God must be fully God at all times and in all things for the Scriptures to stand as the truth it professes to be.

Providence should not be confused with sovereignty.

Providence literally means foresight, but is generally used to denote God’s preserving and governing all things by means of second causes (Ps. 18:35; 63:8; Acts 17:28; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). God’s providence extends to the natural world (Ps. 104:14; 135:5–7; Acts 14:17), the brute creation (Ps. 104:21–29; Matt. 6:26; 10:29), and the affairs of men (1 Chr. 16:31; Ps. 47:7; Prov. 21:1; Job 12:23; Dan. 2:21; 4:25), and of individuals (1 Sam. 2:6; Ps. 18:30; Luke 1:53; James 4:13–15).<sup>96</sup>

Providence does not exist in a vacuum of effect on the things and events man cannot control, such as circumstances. “It extends also to the free actions of men (Ex. 12:36; 1 Sam. 24:9–15; Ps. 33:14, 15; Prov. 16:1; 19:21; 20:24; 21:1), and things sinful (2 Sam. 16:10; 24:1; Rom. 11:32; Acts 4:27, 28), as well as to their good actions (Phil. 2:13; 4:13; 2 Cor. 12:9, 10; Eph. 2:10; Gal. 5:22–25).”<sup>97</sup> Therefore, providence is merely a working out of God’s sovereignty within a prescribed time and place. It is bounded by God to preserve certain attributes that are germane only within those boundaries. God allows man to be limited in solutions to problems by setting boundaries. Such does not, however, prevent God from being a just God. Again, his sovereignty trumps providence and free will. “God is the Sovereign of the universe – doing his pleasure in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. By this, we do not mean that he disposes of his creatures without any regard to justice. It is held that on no creature has any more misery been inflicted, or will there be, that is deserved.”<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Tozer, A. W. *The Best of A.W. Tozer Book Two* (Camp Hill, PA: WingSpread, 2007), 29.

<sup>96</sup> Easton, *Easton’s Bible Dictionary*,

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Albert Barnes, *A Discourse On the Sovereignty of God* (Morristown, NJ: Jacob Mann, 1829), 4.

## ***The Free Will of Man***

Free will is a misunderstood concept. Taken out of context, it lends much more power to man than God intended, or that nature allows. Although we have freedom to decide certain things regarding our belief and even direction of life, it all occurs within the confinement of a creation to which we are bound. The boundaries are set by the Creator and cannot be influenced by any desire or act of man. "Each man is the direct arbiter of his own character and destiny; the elements of personal efficiency and development are subject in all things to direct positive law, that law being in reference to every action, the written word, wherever it exists, and where it does not, the handwriting of God in the human heart... to which focal point all the manifest tendencies of providence and history converge..."<sup>99</sup> Man's ability to move about within the boundaries set by God is bestowed upon man by God. Man can, however, cause God to act within those boundaries. The story of the centurion's servant in Matthew's gospel gives evidence to this argument. "From Christ's own lips we have a clear, definite statement of the greatest faith that he found on earth; so that 'he marveled at it, and said, I have not found so great faith . . . in Israel' (Matt. 8:10) . . . just as the centurion's soldiers obeyed him promptly, coming or going, acting or waiting, according to his orders, so he thought that diseases would stay or depart at Christ's bidding."<sup>100</sup>

The real freedom that God intends for man, regarding free will, is manifested outside the boundaries we move about within our physical existence. Genuine freedom cannot exist in a corrupt creation, so we must consent to the elements of our natural setting in all things, while at the same time carried by faith to glimpses of what is to come when we are made perfect in glory,

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<sup>99</sup> Benjamin W. Dwight, "The Doctrine of God's Providence" *The Bibliotheca sacra* 26, no. 102 (1869): page 318.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, page 334.

“through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:2 NIV). Tozer states, “To grasp the idea of unqualified freedom requires a vigorous effort of the mind. We are not psychologically conditioned to understand freedom except in its imperfect forms. Our concepts of it have been shaped in a world where no absolute freedom exists. Here each natural object is dependent upon many other objects, and that dependence limits its freedom.”<sup>101</sup> This is true even to the inclusion of men and the lives they live in a broken world.

One main example: certainly, our free will plays no part in salvation. Yes, it is our freedom to choose “through faith, believe.” However, neither will nor salvation would exist had a sovereign God not created it in the first place. The reformers understood this concept: “Evangelism from this perspective is an appealing and witnessing to unbelievers for ‘repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,’ while recognizing that saving repentance and faith are both gifts from God and not abilities or virtues of the human will.”<sup>102</sup> It is not up to man to exercise his free will to obtain salvation; instead, it is just the opposite, God’s will that conveys the power of salvation. Paul reminded the Ephesians of this dynamic of God’s will in chapter 1 of his epistle...“Paul is stressing that the mystery God has made known to believers is not an abiding riddle. Rather what once was hidden is now made manifest. God made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ. In other words, God has disclosed to the church his eternal purpose and plan for what we call ‘history,’ for space and time.”<sup>103</sup> Man has no say in the matter until it is offered first by a sovereign God.

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<sup>101</sup> Tozer, page 30.

<sup>102</sup> Ellis E. Earle, “The Sovereignty of God in Salvation”, *Biblical Essays* (2009): page 2.

<sup>103</sup> R.C. Sproul, *The Purpose of God: Ephesians* (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 29.

It is only then that man can exercise his free will to agree with God in his sovereign purpose for their lives. “That purpose will be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and earth together under one head, even Christ.”<sup>104</sup> Therefore, although man has been extended the gift of a free will, it is still only operative and valid within the bounds and on the terms of a sovereign God. The man could not will that God performs some act, and God is obliged to perform the said act. This would negate God’s sovereignty, thus eroding the context of all creation according to the Scriptures. Instead, man can only use his will within the context of a sovereign God within the boundaries set forth by God.<sup>105</sup>

### ***Resolving the Tension of God’s Sovereignty and the Free Will of Man***

Yes, man has a free will, but it is within the boundaries set by a sovereign God. Man can exercise his free will within those boundaries to embrace through faith a belief that will make them truly free in future glory, the most significant element of that future glory being the FULL presence of a sovereign God. At that time, the will of man becomes the will of God, and the chasm disappears from existence; man will desire the same things as God.

Before discussing the role of future glory in resolving the tension, it is incumbent upon man to realize, not only his boundaries but also the boundaries of institutions – including the church. “God might not say be doing his work in the world rather outside the church than within it. He is passionately concerned to repudiate any claim on man’s part to have God at his disposal, to make of him an idea in our minds or an institution, however sacred. The Word of God is in the church’s preaching – but it is not that preaching. Faith is our religious experience – but it is

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<sup>104</sup> R.C. Sproul, *The Purpose of God*, 29.

<sup>105</sup> M. B. Button. “Paul’s Method of Influence in 1 Thessalonians” *In Die Skriflig*. Vol. 50, no. 21 (2016): 1-9 Accessed December 21, 2019.

something other than that experience.”<sup>106</sup> Faith is born out of a relationship with a sovereign God and him alone. There is no intermediary needed or allowed by God to accept a bond of faith with a man or woman. The sovereignty of God is paramount even in the formation of our relationship with him, and it is on this basis that free will of man truly manifests its intended purpose. God allows man to choose to relate with him or to go another way.

No matter the will of man, he has no bearing on the sovereignty of God. “The Bible is aptly clear on this attribute. ‘THE LORD REIGNS FOREVER’! (Psalm 9:7). It does not matter how many nations oppose his rule or oppress his people. It makes no difference how many spiritual forces of evil ally themselves for his dethronement. His purposes will prevail (cf. Job 42:2). All that he has promised will be fulfilled. He is in control. His dominion is an eternal dominion (cf. Daniel 4:3-34; 6:26).”<sup>107</sup> And not only does God flex sovereignty, but also providence. “He raises both the righteous and the unrighteous to perform his works. In his time, he brings down the wicked (cf. v.4; Isaiah 40:23–24). It is His name that is praised, even by the wrath of men (cf. Psalm 76:10), and his justice, moral and true, that is exercised throughout the earth.”<sup>108</sup>

Tension is also relieved in the senior pastor’s knowledge of and longing for a promised future in glory. “The situation of the Christian, as Barth defines it, is that of one who lives ‘between the times,’ that is to say, between the Ascension and the Lord’s Return. He lives in a world in which the victory of Christ has, in principle, been won but has yet to be carried out effectively.”<sup>109</sup> Future glory also protects God’s integrity in allowing bad things to happen to

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<sup>106</sup> Edgar Leonard Allen, *A Guide to the Thought of Karl Barth: the Sovereignty of God and the Word of God* / by E.L. Allen (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1950): page 13.

<sup>107</sup> T. Shenton, (*Nahum and Obadiah: an Expository Commentary*. Exploring the Bible Commentary (Leominster, UK: Day One Publications, 2007), 77.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid

<sup>109</sup> Allen, page 41.

people, even senior pastors. The cliché's assertion in how this can happen "too good people" is an oxymoron in light of The Fall. However, God nevertheless works out His sovereignty through justice at a later time, even in glory. "God claims the attribute of justice, and though at present it is somewhat difficult to establish its propriety, yet it cannot be proved not to belong to him, till eternity is exhausted – for in that eternity the good, however much they suffer here, may be appropriately rewarded; and the wicked, however much they may triumph here, may be sufficiently punished."<sup>110</sup>

It is also incumbent for the senior pastor to self-examine his existence and purpose to understand fully the boundaries a sovereign God has placed him in. This required God to allow man a degree of freedom, and a glimpse of God this side of glory. "Each person has to be freed to recognize what is of themselves, and we can only become free when we are freed by someone who is themselves free. If we are to have a future, it will include someone other than ourselves, for we have to be given a future. But a future that is simply given is unilaterally imposed, and so it is not yet truly our future."<sup>111</sup> This point, that man cannot place his will upon something that has not been given to him is key to understanding his role. Man is not a creator. Only a sovereign God is a creator. Therefore, if a future exists (glory), it is from the creator's act, and man can only agree with it, which then must serve as man's act of free will. This is how senior pastors must relate, not only to God but to fellow men. "So this future must be both someone else's act and our own act, and therefore the act of two or more parties. Christian worship of God allows us

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<sup>110</sup> Albert Barnes, *A Discourse On the Sovereignty of God* (Morristown, NJ: Jacob Mann, 1829), 4.

<sup>111</sup> Philip Gordon Zeigler and Francesca Aran Murphy, *Providence of God: Deus Habet Consilium*: T&T Clark, (2009), 134.

to see others as the creatures of God, and thus to understand that they are ours because they belong first to God, the guarantor of their inalienable particularity and uniqueness.”<sup>112</sup>

The question arises as to why God didn’t simply place us in glory in the first place instead of risking a corrupt creation based on the free will of man, however, bounded. “A necessary being, with complete knowledge of the world, is a necessary determiner of all that happens. This effectively eliminates contingency in the world, and with the elimination of contingency, human freedom becomes a chimera. The universe is reduced to being a puppet in the hands of God who effectively pulls all the strings.”<sup>113</sup> So God placed man in his creation and placed spiritual forces to help guide man’s decisions within his free will within the boundaries of creation. “There are two kinds of influences by which God works on the minds of men. First, that which is common, and which is affected by the ordinary use of motives presented to the mind for consideration: Secondly, that which is special and supernatural. The one contains nothing mysterious, any more than the influence of our words and actions on each other; the other is such a mystery that we know nothing of it but by its effects.”<sup>114</sup> God shows us the way, but man is free to choose God’s way or another of man’s choosing. While providence works on the outside through events and occurrences, God is more effective working within the heart of man through God’s Holy Spirit. “The former ought to be effectual; the latter is so.” The work of the Holy Spirit upon or towards men is always ‘resisted’ by them; His work within is always successful.

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<sup>112</sup> Zeigler and Murphy, *Providence of God*, 134.

<sup>113</sup> Neil Ormerod, “Chance and Necessity, Providence and God,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (2005): 265.

<sup>114</sup> A. W. Pink, *Objections to God’s Sovereignty Answered* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2005).

What saith the Scriptures? This: ‘He which hath begun a good work IN you, will finish it.’ (Phil. 1:6)”<sup>115</sup>

These two workings, providence, and the Holy Spirit display the sovereignty of God on a grand scale. Thomas Aquinas reflected, “The moment I think of speaking upon that Providence of God, by which He governs not only the vast machinery of the whole world and each smallest part of it, but also the hearts and the actions of men, a mighty and complex subject presents itself before me.”<sup>116</sup> But regarding providence, Aquinas makes a distinction that clarifies God’s perfect will and providence – as it relates to the free will and condition of man. Among his detailed response: ‘If God foresees that this event will be, it will happen, just as the second argument suggested. But it will occur in the way that God foresaw that it would be. Now, He foresaw that it would occur contingently. So, it follows that, without fail, it will occur contingently and not necessarily’<sup>117</sup> Therefore he identifies the boundary of the free will of man and those areas and circumstance where he defers to providence and makes clear that those boundaries are set by a sovereign God. These two effects are most certainly powerful in their own right, but only within those divine boundaries.

### ***Conclusion***

The section of research on free will and the sovereignty of God has led to a position holding that the free will of man does not interfere with the sovereignty of God. Therefore, the thesis holds: *The Sovereignty of God* is not diminished by *The Free Will of Man*. *The Sovereignty of God* is eternal and *The Free Will of Man* temporal. The research contained herein helps senior

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<sup>115</sup> Pink, *Objections*.

<sup>116</sup> J. Calvin & H. Cole, *Calvin’s Calvinism: A Defence of the Secret Providence of God* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 3.

<sup>117</sup> Neil Ormerod, “Chance and Necessity,” 268.



pastors and all Christians gain information to understand better the unique relationship between Creator and creation – specifically man and the responsibilities that necessarily falls to man because of free will. The Greatest Commandment to love God with heart, soul, strength, and mind are included, a striving for following God’s sovereign will is commanded and expected in scripture.

Concerning providence, the deference God has to certain activities to unfold as they will and being used by Him is important to grasp. A proper definition can thus be understood through this research, “...not an unconcerned sitting of God in heaven, from which He merely observes the things that are done in the world; but that all-active and all-concerned seatedness [sp] on His throne, above, by which He governs the world which He Himself hath made.”<sup>118</sup> God is active, even more so in providence. Whereas God’s perfect will and sovereignty are from an eternal decree, the providence of God is His active concern in the immediate lives of men within creation.

Concerning the free will of man, God as a sovereign has set boundaries within which man’s free will must be exercised within creation. However, with the help of the Holy Spirit in fostering “righteousness that is by faith” (Romans 1:17) through the work of Christ on the cross, man can use his free will to become “free indeed” (John 8:36).

Inherent upon this research, and any theological research for that matter is a reverence for the sovereignty of God. His very essence permeates every word of Scripture, every thought of man, every gigabyte of information collected through annals of history. This is precisely accurate because God created all that exists, to include the stuff thoughts are made of. The boundaries allow for man to misalign and pervert this information into a distorted and grotesque

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<sup>118</sup> Calvin & Cole, *Calvin’s Calvinism*, 4.

manifestation of their own making through free will. Yet the essence from which everything, including thought, is born, was intended for good. God accomplishes this through providence because of His sovereignty.

Joseph's brothers used their free will to scheme against him, eventually throwing him in a well, selling him into slavery and staining his coat with blood to convince their father he was dead. Of this heinous act from willful men, Joseph extrapolates, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Genesis 50:20). God's sovereignty acting through providence thwarts the ill effects of the will of men when it is intended to harm those that have chosen to use their free will to obey God. He doesn't thwart the free will, only the intended negative effect. God is sovereign and obviously to our benefit. John Calvin wrote concerning the heart of a man using his free will to understand a sovereign God:

That the sun rises upon us day by day; that in a course so rapid his rays should be so tempered and his degrees so adjusted; that the order of the stars, so wonderfully arranged, should never be disturbed; that the vicissitudes of the seasons should recur so continuously; that the earth should open her bowels with such annual regularity for the nourishment of man; that the elements and their separate particles should not cease to perform their appointed functions; in a word, that the fecundity of nature should never be worn out nor fail—all this marvelous operation, co-operation, and continuance, can surely never be thought to proceed from any other cause than from the directing hand of God!<sup>119</sup>

Senior pastors must come to understand the beauty and necessity of God's sovereignty within creation and carefully exercise the free will He bestowed upon man to earnestly strive in keeping the Greatest Commandment.

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<sup>119</sup> Calvin & Cole, *Calvinism Calvinism*, 4.

## Literature Review

The literature for this research is mined from books, commentaries, peer-reviewed journals, published surveys, scholarly website blogs, and dissertation/thesis works. The literature review is organized in the same manner.

This research uses over seventy books for proving points, adding insight, and provoking thought. Among the works in use regarding keeping the Greatest Commandment, David Duby posits about keeping the first part of the commandment and obedience to God. He notes Jesus' advice in Matthew 6:33 regarding prioritizing God's will over all else. "Seeking the kingdom was first and foremost submission to His Father's will, a will that included obedience unto death . . . It is worth noting that there were times when Jesus seemingly refused service to others in order to be obedient to the Father."<sup>120</sup> Jesus demonstrated the priority, and that the proverbial horse must go before the cart. When priorities are misplaced, burn out is possible because the reasons for serving people might be other than loving God with all of your heart, soul, strength, and mind.

Blanchard, Hodges, and Hendry's book, *Lead Like Jesus*, looks at the life and ministry of Jesus and digs into the leadership examples the Bible reveals, as well as both historical and contemporary leaders that follow the same principles of Jesus. They wisely point out that "The greatest barrier to leading like Jesus is Edging God Out of our lives (EGO). . . . you can replace Him as the object of your worship; as the source of your security, self-worth, and wisdom; and as the audience for authority over your daily work and life story."<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> David Duby, "The Greatest Commandment: The Foundation for Biblical Servant Leadership" (LU Faculty Publications and Presentations, 2009), 11. [http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/busi\\_fac\\_pubs/11](http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/busi_fac_pubs/11)

John Maxwell's *Everyone Communicates, Few Connect*, points out that whenever people take action, they do so for their reason, not yours or mine"<sup>122</sup> The same holds for senior pastors when looking to find motivation in keeping the Greatest Commandment.

David Wheeler and Vernon Whaley's *The Great Commission to Worship*, is full of insight regarding the four areas invoked in the Greatest Commandment. Though they seem very forthright and clear in the instruction, they point out the desire for God "to love" must be the drive to make obedience possible. "God strategically places in the heart of each person an impulse or desire to seek, know, comprehend, value, pursue, and love Him."<sup>123</sup>

In *Spiritual Leadership*, J. Oswald Sanders observes "Before we can conquer the world, we must first conquer the self"<sup>124</sup> In doing so, there is much to learn regarding how to employ the four areas, heart, soul, strength, and mind to love God, as well as what these areas are regarding definition and substance. The best place to start searching is with the One who is requesting His children to use these to love Him. One such way to search is through prayer. Dave Early notes, "True prayer not only speaks, but also listens. Prayer connects us with God, and God knows everything. When we listen in prayer, God gives us insight into important matters."<sup>125</sup>

The remaining literature is mined for relevant content, prior research, and insight including seven works of commentaries and/or theological dictionary encyclopedias, sixteen peer

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<sup>121</sup> Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges, and Phillis Hendry, *Lead Like Jesus Revisited: Lessons from the Greatest Leadership Role Model of All Time* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing, 2016), 50.

<sup>122</sup> John Maxwell, *Everyone Communicates, Few Connect* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2010), 43.

<sup>123</sup> Wheeler and Whaley, *The Great Commission*, 96.

<sup>124</sup> J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership, Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2007), 61.

<sup>125</sup> Dave Early, *Prayer: The Timeless Secret of High-Impact Leaders* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2008), 9.

reviewed journals, a couple each of dissertation/thesis works, scholarly blogs, articles, and published surveys. Some of the commentary and theological dictionary material is accessed through Logos<sup>©</sup> Bible Software. Most of the dissertation/thesis, peer reviewed journals and article material is accessed through the Jerry Falwell Library web portal. A preponderance of the book, commentary, and reference material is accessed from the researcher's private study library, as most are textbooks from his coursework over the last decade to earn his B.S., Religion, M.Div., Professional Ministries, and D. Min., Pastoral Leadership degrees. There is also a preponderance of video and PowerPoint lecture material from the researcher's coursework at Liberty University that informs and shapes his academic, theological, and Christian worldview. The published surveys are from Focus on the Family and LifeWay Research. Illustrations are accessed from Logos<sup>©</sup> Bible Software Logos or created by the researcher.

Commentaries and reference research materials include content from The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, Easton's Bible Dictionary, Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, The Sovereignty of God in Salvation: Biblical Essays, Understanding Poets and Prophets: Essays in Honour of George Wishart Anderson, the NIV Exhaustive Bible Concordance, Holman's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, and others. Peer reviewed journals include works from Sage Journals, Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling, Pastoral Psychology, Review of Religious Research, Anglican Theological Review, Journal of Psychology and Christianity, Journal of Biblical Literature, and more. Research accessed comes from institutions such as Wheaton College, Harvard University, Oral Roberts University, University of Aveiro, University of Colorado, American College of Cardiology, Australian National University, Hebrew University-

Hadassah Medical School, Saint Louis University, University of Witten/Herdecke Witten Germany, University of Bradford UK, Tufts University and more.

### **Theological Foundations**

God commands men to “love” Him, and describes the things which, with and through, they should love Him. Such a command seems a paradox, considering the nature of true Godly love is unconditional. “The references to people’s love toward God are comparatively few possibly because it would seem normal for people to love God, who has done so much for them, and because they have experienced God’s love. However, the command to love God is important because it shows that God is approachable and desires the dynamic relationship involved in love.”<sup>127</sup> Here the theological bisects the theoretical. “The theoretical difficulty that arises in relation to the Great Commandment pertains to the language of command. Assuming that ‘love’ (*agapē*) has at least some emotional content, how can one be commanded to love? Emotions can only be evoked, not commanded.”<sup>128</sup> This valid theoretical question can be answered with consideration of the theology of who is commanding love. In Deuteronomy chapter five, we see Moses summoning the Israelites into an assembly and rereading the Ten Commandments. He reminds them that they sent Moses back to speak to God because they were afraid the “fire would consume” (v. 25) them. Moses here is relaying what the Lord told him when he returned to the mountain: “I have heard the voice of the words of this person which they have spoken to you. They have done well in all that they have spoken. Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them

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<sup>127</sup> C. Brown, W. Gunther, and H.G. Link, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House Company, 2001), 710.

<sup>128</sup> J.I.H. McDonald, “The Great Commandment and the Golden Rule” in *Understanding Poets and Prophets: Essays in Honour of George Wishart Anderson*, vol. 152, ed. A. Graeme Auld (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 224.

and with their sons forever!” (v. 28-29). It is further important for the Christian to remember that God longs for his creation to have the right hearts, but He knows they are flawed. But God already had a plan to make such a command possible, “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love, He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved” (Eph 1:4-6). Once a man becomes the “new creature, the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Cor 5:17), the heart, soul, strength, and mind of a man are equipped to obey *out* of love; love comes first, and then obedience follows. Still, one might ask, “How on earth can I love God like that?” The answer lies in position; on earth, you can’t love like that. The apostle Paul taught the Colossians, “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeing (set your hearts on – NIV) the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth” (Col 3:1-2). God’s plan is to make possible that our heart, soul, strength, and mind, be made whole in His Son, Jesus. Ezekiel prophesied what Jesus would do for men, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezek 36:26). This new heart is capable of loving God because it is made new by God’s gift of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross to pay for the sin that has corrupted the heart of all men. “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph 2:8-9). Not only is the heart capable after salvation, but it is also ready and willing because of the source of the love. “‘In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.’ We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:10, 19).

Concerning the soul, scripture teaches that after salvation, our souls have direct access to God, “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever . . .” (Hebrews 6:19-20). This direct access allows the Christian, and thus the senior pastor to align their life with the desire of the Father. The closer a man gets to God, the more he begins to succumb to the Holy Spirit, which directs man in the direction of God’s perfect will. The apostle Paul teaches, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom 12:2). Jesus’ brother James reminds the Christian, “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you”(James 4:8). The psalmist states, “How blessed is the one whom You choose, and bring near You, to dwell in Your courts” (Psalm 65:4); and, “The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth” (Psalm 145:18).

The might (or strength, NIV and others) the Shema refers to is the physical stamina, the fortitude to push the brain and body, utilizing all the senses, to love (the verb in both the Shema in the Old Testament, and the Greatest Commandment in the New Testament), using the mind, emotion, and soul. Each of these three, heart, soul, and mind, require a kinetic energy that blooms from the physical fortitude of the man. Certainly, they are all connected; the mind tells the body what to do and helps the heart sort out the emotions it feels, and the soul, the activities that will draw it closer to God. But each of these activities, though initiated by the mind, are dependent on the senses of the body to spring into action; and the “body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own” (1 Cor. 6:19). It is within the bodies of Christians (the new “temple”) that the Holy Spirit dwells and pushes His agenda into the other areas of heart, soul, and mind.



The mind in the context of the Shema, and the NT Greatest Commandment, in particular, refers to the mind that is being transformed into the likeness of Jesus (Rom 12:2). The apostle Paul teaches to “have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:5). Christians are called to be “taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:5). This is a work of the mind. The psalmist teaches that the righteous man walks with delight “in the law of the Lord, and in His law, he meditates day and night” (Psalm 1:2). But such an endeavor and outcome does not occur without great effort. “When you became a new creation in Christ, nobody pushed the delete button in your memory bank. Everything you learned before Christ (and all the feelings that go with it) is still recorded in your memory.”<sup>129</sup> The apostle Paul taught the Romans, “not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom 12:2a). He later admonished the Christians in Philippi, “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things” (Phil 4:8).

Indeed, it is the mind that willfully keeps the Christian positioned “in the good soil . . . hearing the word” and holding it “fast in an honest and good heart” that will “bear fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15). Here Jesus is telling the Christian they will bear fruit if they are positioned (body/strength) in the good soil, storing the word of God (mind), and holding it fast in the *heart*, and in doing so, they will bear fruit. Fruit is associated with the soul (spirit). The “fruit of the Spirit,” the apostle Paul divulges in the fifth chapter of Galatians, is given to us Spirit to spirit. These are attributes of God the Holy Spirit who plants within us as we are willing. Jesus taught the disciples, “I am the vine; you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Here, we see the four areas

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<sup>129</sup> Neil T. Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker* (Eugene OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2000), 60.

of HSSM being called upon to work to show love to God (bear fruit) but are reminded that we cannot do so without abiding in God's Son Jesus. When we abide in Jesus, the vine, He freely imparts to our souls the fruit of the Spirit. This is the power that Christ gives the Christian to "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace" (Heb 4:16), and love God as He commands; "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline" (2 Tim 1:7).

The research explores causes, and thus preventative solutions for a weakened adherence to the Greatest Commandment brought about by rebellion against senior pastors by the people they serve. This is at the instruction of the Scriptures, "Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them" (Rom 16:17). In light of such instruction, biblical leaders and the challenges to their authority are explicated for common leadership rebellion episodes and used as a baseline for comparison of how conflict regarding leadership, particularly senior pastor leadership, presents in current church culture in the United States.

The problem of discord regarding the siege of the senior pastor's authority is well-seasoned. "Conflict is not a recent phenomenon. Specifically, in the biblical account, one observes numerous personal and interpersonal conflicts."<sup>130</sup> Indeed much teaching on conflict directed against God's person of authority in a leadership position predates the institution of the church. Still, the Bible records several instances where resistance to obey or observe proper authority led to a group or person embarking on usurping the leadership God has ordained, the church notwithstanding. Some of these occurrences failed, and others were successful in

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<sup>130</sup> Shaun Joynt, "Exodus of Clergy: When the Fight is Just Not Worth It Anymore – The Role of Conflict in Responding to the Call" *In die Skriflig* 52, no. 1 (2018), Academic OneFile (Accessed April 23, 2019). [http://link.galegroup.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A548623058/AONEu=vic\\_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=c0271c37](http://link.galegroup.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A548623058/AONEu=vic_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=c0271c37).

removing God's leadership and taking the role for themselves. Even Jesus Christ was not exempt from attempts to challenge His authority by a follower. “But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected” (John 12:4 NIV). Judas openly questioned Jesus’ judgment in allowing Mary to use expensive perfume to wash Jesus’ feet. Jesus rebuked Judas and eventually revealed the real motive of Judas to his contemporaries.

Scrutiny of motive must be applied when searching out a challenge to leadership. For example, Samuel called out King Saul for disobeying God. In a genuine display of arrogance, Saul not only rebelled against what God had instructed but also tried to make excuses for his disobedience. Saul claimed that the offering of the best livestock for the sacrifice made moot the fact that they were gained through disobedience to God. However, Samuel, as the leader chosen by God to hold the king accountable, quickly chastised Saul for taking plunder in his defeat of the Amalekites and reminded him of the seriousness of the offense of rebellion against God. “For rebellion is as the sin of divination (witchcraft in KJV), and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king” (1 Sam 15:23). Later in the kingdom, King Solomon also warned of serious consequences for open rebellion against God. “A rebellious man seeks only evil, so a cruel messenger will be sent against him” (Prov 17:11). These passages in their context show that even the leadership God has appointed needs to be held accountable. However, the context also shows that Samuel's rebuke of Saul's conduct was never intended as an excuse to usurp Saul's leadership; but rather to help Saul be faithful to God's direction.

Finally, the senior pastor is to grow into the image of Christ. The Apostle Paul models this life path. Everything the Apostle Paul did in life, to include his ministry, was centered on his obsession of growing into the image of his Savior, Jesus. Paul saw himself as mimicking Christ

in both activities of importance as well as the mundane. As he taught the church at Corinth and elsewhere, he made it evident in words and actions that the gospel of Christ was central to every aspect of life and existence. “The gospel does not merely shape Paul’s words; it molds his way of life and the example he sets for the Corinthian congregation. Thus, Paul cannot expound his manner of life apart from its connection to the gospel.”<sup>131</sup> Paul is seemingly in ministry and life without the knowledge and power of the gospel present daily. He drew his energy from this relationship, and apart from it, he had no further purpose in life. “I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far” (Phil 1:23 NIV). His sole reason for continuing life on earth was to be both the Herald and an example of the gospel of Christ to everyone he encountered.

### **Theoretical Foundations**

The Theoretical Basis reveals a phenomenological approach to the problem of senior pastors of evangelical churches obeying the Greatest Commandment. The problem is researched about scripture, contemporary practices, and occurrences. Furthermore, the base of this research is on the presupposition that obedience is not an option, or best practice, but rather a command of the highest order, as denoted by Jesus Christ when he delegated “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength and with all your mind” as the Greatest Commandment. Note that the moniker, Greatest Commandment, is often identified as, and synonymous with, the reference in Matthew’s Gospel as the “most important” (NIV), or “great and foremost” (NASB) commandment. This research focuses on how to identify and

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<sup>131</sup> Dustin W Ellington, “Imitating Paul’s Relationship to the Gospel: 1 Corinthians 8:1-11.1,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33, no. 3 (Dec. 2019): 303–15, doi: <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/10.1177/0142064X10381957>.

prevent the distractions and inefficient, even counter-productive practices, which prevent the highest degree of obedience to the Greatest Commandment humanly possible. “The theoretical difficulty that arises in relation to the Great Commandment pertains to the language of command. Assuming that ‘love’ (*agapē*) has at least some emotional content, how can one be commanded to love? Emotions can only be evoked, not commanded.”<sup>132</sup>

The four areas identified as the tools and/or resources with which the Christian is to love God have been extensively researched. The research below serves as the starting place for the findings in this thesis project’s research.

Concerning the concept of loving God, Sutton and Mittelstadt’s research observes,

We examined love as a multidimensional attitudinal construct. Using the acronym SCOPES, we referred to six dimensions of love (spiritual, cognitive, observable behavior, physiological, emotional, social) . . . We primarily focused on attachment theory as a useful psychological model for understanding loving relationships among people as well as between people and God.<sup>133</sup>

This observation fits well with the Shema’s direction to use emotional, spiritual, physical, and intellectual faculties to love God. Since the Greatest Commandment in the New Testament is a citation of the Shema in the Old Testament, the meaning of love is indistinguishable.

Much and varied research has been conducted regarding the heart. Honing in on the contextual meaning in the Shema, Mark Smith posits,

Physiologically, the heart shows marked change with a number of different emotions. This point is especially relevant for biblical prayer, since the heart seems to be the physical location where multiple emotions register physically. Consequently, it is hardly surprising that the heart is the physical organ to which emotion in general is attributed by Israelites and other people of the ancient Middle East. I prescind from the problem of why the heart is attested also for thought. Hebrew has no word for brain, and functions often accorded the brain in English are expressed with the heart in Hebrew.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> J.I.H. McDonald, “The Great Commandment,” 224.

<sup>133</sup> Geoffrey Sutton and Martin Mittelstadt, “Loving God and Loving Others: Learning About Love from Psychological Science and Pentecostal Perspectives,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 31 (2012):157.

The physiological connection between the heart and brain makes it possible to evaluate and train emotions the heart may feel by which it is affected. Having access to such an evaluation of emotional intelligence is critical for senior pastors to do ministry more effectively. “Self-knowledge is the first step toward emotional intelligence and effective leadership, because some people are unable to recognize their own emotional states and reactions and eventually get stuck in dysfunctional behavioral [sp] patterns, hence the inability of effectively leading others.”<sup>135</sup>

The mystery of the soul, both definition and function, has been the subject of much research in both theological and scientific circles. Regarding the biblical understanding of the soul, the biblical record speaks of the soul (and spirit) in several places. Wayne Grudem's research discloses that,

Scripture uses “soul” and “spirit” interchangeably. When we look at the passage of the biblical words translated “soul” (Heb. Nephesh and Gk. Psychē) and “spirit” (Heb. rūach and Gk. Pneuma), it appears that they are sometimes used interchangeably. For example, in John 12:27, Jesus says, “Now is my soul troubled,” whereas in a very similar context in the next chapter John says that Jesus was “troubled in spirit” (John 13:21). Similarly, we read Mary’s words in Luke 1:46-47: “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” This seems to be quite an evident example of Hebrew parallelism, the poetic device in which the same idea is repeated using different but synonymous words. This interchangeability of terms also explains why people who have died and gone to heaven or hell can be called either “spirits” (Heb. 12:23, “the spirits of just men made perfect”; also 1 Peter 3:19, “spirits in prison”) or “souls” Rev 6:9, “the souls of those who have been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne”; 20:4 “the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony to Jesus”).<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Mark S. Smith, “The Heart and Innards in Israelite Emotional Expressions: Notes from Anthropology and Psychobiology, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 117, No. 3 (Autumn 1998): 427-436.

<sup>135</sup> Loan Pastor, “Leadership and Emotional Intelligence: The Effect on Performance and Attitude” *Procedia Economics and Finance* vol. 15 (2004): 985-992. Accessed on February 2, 2020. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671\(14\)00658-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(14)00658-3).

<sup>136</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 473.

There is much research and debate about the constitution of man dating back to not only the beginnings of the Old Testament narrative but also Plato, Aristotle, and the early church fathers. Thomas Toews' dissertation "analyzes the usage of the two soul words, ψυχή, and anima, in the early Church Fathers and seeks to develop a history of the general understanding of the soul and its powers. It studies the foundational role of Scripture as an authoritative source used by the early Church Fathers in arguing their various understandings of the soul."<sup>137</sup>

Strength can have both a physiological and quantitative meaning. The prophet Isaiah asserted, "He gives strength," and those who "wait for the Lord will gain new strength" (Isa. 40:29, 31). Isaiah is obviously speaking of physical strength, if not exclusively, inclusively. In the Shema, strength is listed among four other areas of human existence; therefore, the relevant meaning would appear to logically be in addition to inner fortitude since the heart is already named. The same observation can be made regarding duration, as the soul is a consistent part of man. The inclusion of heart and soul leads to consideration of strength in the meaning of physical ability, power, and/or agility, literally physical ability and application, the sense of being physically strong. Jari Metsämuuronen has researched the following regarding the LXX New Testament translation of strength" and "mind":

"It may be so that, in the Greek discussion of Shema Yisrael, two concepts were needed: "ischys", strength (absolutely), power, might, force, ability, and "dianoia", the mind, disposition, though. While "ischys" refers to the physical strength and abilities, "dianoia" refers to psychic strength to control the abilities and strength to the correct direction . . . When knowing that Jesus cited the "greatest commandment" in Hebrew, we know that he, in fact, used the Hebrew root words LeVV, NeFeSH, and Me'oD, "hearth", "soul", and "abundance". It seems that the ancient translator and editor behind Matthew's original Hebrew version was willing to keep the number of root word ("hearth", "soul", and "understanding") the same as was in the (possibly) Hebrew original. The root word Me'oD in Matthew and Luke (or their latest editor and copiers) seem to be more

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<sup>137</sup> Thomas W. Toews, "Biblical Sources in the Development of the Concept of the Soul in the Writings of the Fathers of the Early Christian Church, 100-325 C.E." (PhD diss., Andrews University, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2011), 6.

dynamic in their translations. They understand and translate the root word Me'od by two words, “understanding” and “strength” – both physical and psychic strength.”<sup>138</sup>

As noted about the inclusion of “mind” in the New Testament, understanding and interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:5 may have been somewhat redundant in the translation of Hebrew to Greek in the culture at the time of Jesus. However, the use of “mind” in the current culture is not redundant but rather reconciles two meanings/concepts of “strength,” as noted above, each of which is relevant to the principle of the Shema, and thus the Greatest Commandment. It is not so much that “mind” is “more explicit” in New Testament times, but that the writer quoting Jesus is making cultural translations. The meaning was there in the Old Testament all along in the Hebrew . . . long before the New Testament. The difference . . . may well be that the Septuagint was translated by and for people who were steeped in Semitic idiom of the Old Testament”.<sup>139</sup>

Concerning theoretical outcomes, one rises above others in the experience and observation of the researcher. Senior pastors can unintentionally have conflicted priorities. Namely, they can become victims of distractions brought about by a person or group challenging the senior pastor’s authority. Such conflict can simplistically be described as when two pieces of matter, objects or ideas try to occupy the same space at the same time, according to George

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<sup>138</sup> Jari Metsämuuronen, “What Did Jesus Really Teach about שמע ישראל?—Some Reflections of the Differences in Gospels When it Comes to the “Greatest Commandment,” *Researchgate.net* (February 2019). Accessed January 31, 2020. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330848532>

<sup>139</sup> Rebecca Abts Wright, “The Impossible Commandment,” *Anglican Theological Review* 83, no. 3 (Summer, 2001): 579-81, Accessed January 31, 2020. <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/215265612?accountid=12085>.



Bullard<sup>140</sup> and Gil Rendle.<sup>141</sup> Bernard Mayer adds that the process begins when at least one person believes it to exist.<sup>142</sup>

The busy nature of current culture, and the many diversions modern life holds, already tax the heart, soul, strength, and mind of senior pastors who, as a result, can increasingly falter in maintaining the emotional, spiritual, physical, and intellectual dimensions of their existence. When other people cause harm to these areas in a senior pastor's life, such an approach will ultimately harm not only the senior pastor, his family, friends, and ministry, but also the church. Therefore, this distinction of motive for a leadership challenge is made when surveying the population used in the research herein. Only episodes in which the challenging parties usurped leadership control are considered as a legitimate distraction for senior pastors. However, it is noted that another distinction is the challenging party may not assume the leadership control themselves but will rather look to place someone in the leadership position that can be manipulated or outright controlled by the challenging party.

Scrutiny of legality must also be applied when screening for challenges to church leadership. The Bible teaches to obey the law of the land as God's directive. The Apostle Paul instructed "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore, whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves" (Rom 13:1-2). God certainly can and does use the leadership of all types to do His bidding. God's involvement in placing or using leaders reinforces the

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<sup>140</sup> George. W. Bullard, *Every Congregation Needs a Little Conflict*, (St. Louis, Chalice Press, 2008), 5.

<sup>141</sup> Gil R. Rendle, *Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders*, (Washington DC, Alban Institute, 1998), 21.

<sup>142</sup> Bernard, S. Mayer, *The Dynamics of Conflict Resolution: A Practitioner's Guide*, (San Francisco, John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 5.

argument that rebellion against any form of authority is rebellion against God. A possible exception is if the rebellion is rooted in the fact that the directive from the authority requires those under their authority to break God's laws. The Apostle Paul also notes, "For the one in authority is God's servant for your good" (Rom 13:4a NIV). Peter and other Apostles also made this distinction: "But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

A forensic study of a conflict that arises challenging leadership must unveil which side, the leadership or the follower, is being directed by the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all I have said to you" (John 14:26). Obedience to God's word, which is inspired by the Holy Spirit (when originally written, and today) will give a clear indication as to the offending party in the conflict. It is important to note that neither party is obeying God's directives perfectly, as humans will not be able to accomplish this until we meet Christ face to face: "We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2 NIV).

Of critical observation, many times, the party causing conflict by challenging leadership in church does so "righteously" in their mind because God told them to do so. Many times, a claim of the gift of prophecy is used for justification of their actions. However, the gift of prophecy is not for challenging others, but rather to edify other believers, including leadership: "But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation" (1 Cor 14:3). The Apostle Paul addressed a squabble over unity under leadership in the church at Corinth. "Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and

in the same judgment” (1 Cor 1:10 NIV). He further instructs the church at Philippi: “. . . make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose” (Phil 2:2). Sometimes prophecy does indeed exist, but it is usually not recognized as such at the time it is uttered. Although the Bible does not connect the prophecy with fulfillment in Saul of Tarsus nor Paul, the converted persecutor—understanding the implications may still be useful in gaining a broad overview of who the Paul we study in Scripture is and how he operates. “The exegetical tradition that found a prophecy of the ministry of Paul in Jacob’s blessing of Benjamin (Gen 49:27) . . . Most often, the exegesis consisted simply of three elements: Paul’s descent from the tribe of Benjamin, his persecution of the church prior to his conversion, and his teaching ministry after.”<sup>143</sup> The debate is not the story, but rather the implication of a dramatically changed life through an encounter with Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus that morning as Paul was on a mission to devour Christian prey. Although not a provable prophecy, the implication that God was up to something on a grand scale is arguably evident.

In scripture, God calls one man (or woman) to lead his missions. All of the Judges are examples: the twelve identified in the book of Judges, the four from the book of first Samuel, and the two as recorded in Second Chronicles. Further, God chose Abraham, Moses, Samuel, the Kings, the Prophets, and the Apostles. These leaders were identified as such by God, and God also often appointed those to assist in leadership. One leader who is appointed by God is the model of leadership found in the Bible. The principles the Bible teaches regarding the problem of church conflict brought on by challenging God’s leadership are abundant in scripture.

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<sup>143</sup> Darrel D. Hannah, “The Ravenous Wolf<sup>27</sup> in the Early Church: The Apostle Paul and Genesis 49,” *New Testament Studies* 62, no. 4 (2016): 610-27.

The problem of church conflict caused by a challenge to leadership is addressed in modern culture, though not extensively. Several monikers are used to identify such events. “Forced termination of clergy has been the topic of limited research, and little or no attention has been given to the long-term lived experiences of forced termination.”<sup>144</sup> For this research, church conflict, mutiny, uprising, leadership challenge, and forced termination are examples of terminology which serve as descriptors for the definition of conflict caused by challenging leadership as described above.

The topic of the senior pastor and church health is also researched to acquire a baseline for the missing elements and attributes in the life of the senior pastor and/or his church body. Findings may serve as early indicators of a social-communal environment conducive to triggering a challenge to the leadership of the senior pastor. “These markers are simple and attainable for churches that desire to pursue a healthier congregational life. The four characteristics are: (i) clarity of mission and vision, (ii) transformational conflict, (iii) authentic community, and (iv), transparent communication.”<sup>145</sup> Additionally, several organizations that provide mediation and consulting services for churches which are experiencing, or have experienced church conflict, are researched for their effectiveness. These organizations and businesses are further used to glean candidates that fit the criteria for the study population of senior pastors for the survey.

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<sup>144</sup> Dallas E. Speight and Sheila W. Speight, "Exploring the Lived Experience of Forced Termination among Southern Baptist Clergy Couples: a Retrospective Study," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 36, no. 2 (2017): 149+. *Academic OneFile* accessed April 23, 2019.  
[http://link.galegroup.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A501832131/AONE u=vic\\_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=bf9d9651](http://link.galegroup.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A501832131/AONE u=vic_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=bf9d9651).

<sup>145</sup> Bill Wilson, “What does a Healthy Church Look Like?” *Sage Journals* 113, no. 3 (2016): 333-340. *Review & Expositor* Accessed April 23, 2019.  
[https://journals.sagepubcom.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1177/0034637316658582?utm\\_source=summon&utm\\_medium=discovery-provider](https://journals.sagepubcom.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1177/0034637316658582?utm_source=summon&utm_medium=discovery-provider).

## Chapter Three

### Methodology

To determine the current state of effective practice of the Greatest Commandment by senior pastors, and offer effective, prescriptive practices for optimum execution, the research is carefully organized and evaluated. The research process is approached with a commitment to meaningful prayer and petition for God's wisdom to be revealed so that senior pastors can find and implement ways to allow God's will to prevail in their lives. "Commit your works to the LORD, and your plans will be established" (Prov 16:3). To identify problems, the research is studied from three perspectives. "The three angles I suggest are outsider, insider, and researcher."<sup>146</sup> The outsider material researched is scholarly writings from non-senior pastors (though several of these sources are, or at one time were senior pastors and thus placing this source as both outsider and insider, the preponderance is gleaned from outsider sources), and the Holy Scriptures. The Holy Scriptures are indeed another outside angle as they are to be applied, therefore, are naturally outside of man. For example, "shall be on your heart" (Deut 6:4), "impress these words of mine on your heart" (v. 11:18), "write them on the tablet of your heart" (Prov 3:3; 7:3), "Bind them continually on your heart" (v. 6:21).

The inside angle is covered by the senior pastors participating in the survey. The senior pastor survey participants (SPSP) are sourced as follows: beginning with a list of senior pastors known to the researcher, but not necessarily friends or acquaintances. This first group is asked to share the survey with senior pastors known to them and is reprised by each level that receives the survey. The researcher expects he may receive more surveys after the deadline for use in this

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<sup>146</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 75.

thesis project and will sort the information for future research, and to adjust the current findings of the present research.

Lastly, the researcher, who is himself a senior pastor of a Protestant evangelical church and has been so for around ten years, assimilates the information and draws conclusions using information gleaned from the scriptural narrative, senior pastor surveys, and scholarly writings. While bringing his own experience and observations, the researcher then identifies known practices from among all information gathered, insider, outsider, and researcher, that demonstrated optimum performance of the heart, soul, strength, and mind in showing love to God. Identifiable deficiencies in each of these areas and their application to the stated task of the command, to love God with each, are explained and evaluated for cause, repercussions, and common factors. The information is then used to explore, test, and recommend any useful prescriptive practices recognized. “Qualitative analysis requires some creativity, to examine data in a holistic fashion, and to find a way to communicate the interpretation to others.”<sup>147</sup>

Even though there are many variables as to how a senior pastor maintains a healthy life in these four areas of human existence, this research seeks to identify specific pathways and practices for senior pastors to routinely employ for successful life and ministry. The benefits acquired by following these practices, as well as the detriment wrought to life and ministry that result in poor practices, will each be thoroughly evaluated. The findings will also be reviewed with the senior pastor’s role as leader of God’s people in mind so that any prescriptions will be to the benefit of the church if they are willing to commit to the change needed for successful application of such prescriptions. Tim Sensing notes that “systems are complex and interact with multiple contexts. For the change to sustain itself over time, it needs to be integrated into the life

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<sup>147</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 194.

of the community.”<sup>148</sup> Key motivational points useful to the life and ministry of senior pastors, and that of the churches they serve, as well as key warning signs of current or impending issues, are revealed, researched, and addressed. Careful, objective attention to the raw data is applied at all stages of the research process so that all prescriptions are based on true and reliable findings. “He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him” (Prov 18:13).

The evaluations ascertained from the research will be compared using successful senior pastor life and ministry models, so workable preventative solutions can be prescribed and implemented. Successful restorative solutions for senior pastors currently engaged in unhealthy, counter-productive practices are also identified. Each of these areas of evaluation and recommendation are conducted and put forth as practical solutions that lead to positive results for the senior pastor’s life, ministry, and church.

### **Intervention Design**

Any intervention that involves a closer relationship with the God of the universe must begin with a confession of sin. “Confession is the endgame in the self-examination process” and “requires the willingness to acknowledge and take responsibility not only for the outward manifestations of our sin but also for the inner dynamics that produced the sinful or negative behaviors. Confession requires us to say our failure out loud to ourselves, to God, and to the person(s) we have hurt.”<sup>149</sup> Having the righteousness of Christ in our life is critical to reciprocate love with the Father. Senior pastors must “be found in Him, not having a righteousness of (their) own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith” (Phil 3: 9). The nature of the intervention is to interrupt.

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<sup>148</sup> Sensing, Qualitative Research, 226.

<sup>149</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging our Lives for Spiritual Transformation*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 103.

In the case of this research, the aim is to interrupt the carnal and replace it with the spiritual, not just any spiritual, but with that given by God through Christ. Jesus manifested by obedience to the Greatest Command. Confession and repentance is the beginning, which plows the ground for new seed to be planted in the lives of the senior pastor research participants; “The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree, he will grow like a cedar in Lebanon” (Psalm 92:12).

To address the problem of senior pastors of evangelical churches falling short of effectively and efficiently loving God with all their heart, soul, strength, and mind, consideration is given to scope and practicality. Each of these areas included in the Greatest Commandment has effect and influence on the other. They each can either complement or hinder another. Therefore, a holistic approach is needed and used to postulate a comprehensive and effective intervention. A senior pastor Bible study <sup>150</sup> *7 Lessons from the Greatest Commandment: Keeping the Greatest Commandment the Greatest* created for this research project, as well as the forthcoming Senior Pastor Survey, will each serve as interventions in the life and ministry of the senior pastor participants. Further research proposed and approved by the IRB board will take place over the next several months as an interventional *Survey for Senior Pastors, RE: The Greatest Commandment*.<sup>151</sup> Intervention and prescriptive measures identified in this research project are included in the readings and activities of the study. For example, a listing of suggested related readings for each topic.

The Bible-centered study produced by the researcher can be used by pastors that wish to teach these prescriptions to their leadership team, elders, deacons, women or men’s groups, and

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<sup>150</sup> On page 111.

<sup>151</sup> See Appendix B.



even teens and children. There is no age limit, social or service status required to understand, obey, and reap the rich reward of obedience to the Greatest Commandment.

The intervention necessarily includes bringing senior pastors to an understanding of the definition, and symbiotic relationship of function and purpose, of the Greatest Commandments verb love with the four essentials of heart, soul, strength, and mind. As these terms have been defined earlier in this research, the intervention disclosed here acknowledges such and moves into the practical interventional activities as well as the observations and recommendations in response to the need for, and implementation of such prescriptions.

Both the survey and the 7 Lessons from the Greatest Commandment Bible study follow up include questions designed to make the pastor think through their knowledge of scripture and their life experience to formulate a response. Senior pastors, as all people do, have abundantly more knowledge than they apply. The apostle Paul agonized over this very condition, “For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate” (Rom 7:15). Paul also, however, realized that God doesn’t leave us in our mental darkness if we ask. The Bible teaches that Paul told the church at Ephesus that God “is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us” (Eph 3:20)

### Love

As the meaning of love in the context of the Greatest Commandment passages, both the Old and New Testament have a harmonized meaning, scripture from each area of the Bible is used to inform and craft prescriptive responses in relation to the four areas of heart, soul, strength, and mind. The senior pastor survey crafted for this research does not require a defining of love from the SPRP but rather moves forward with the assumption that since they represent

(or represented) a group of senior pastors, they likely know, practice, and experience agape love regularly in their life and ministry. It is important to note, however, that the New Testament radically changed the perceived entryway to funnel love to God. “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me. He who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:6, 9b). Jesus is to be the object of the Greatest Commandment, for there is no other way to God. The senior pastor must, as all Christians, look forward to their “adoption as sons” (Rom 8:23), and allow love to grow for the “Abba! Father!” (v 15).<sup>152</sup>

### Heart

The Bible teaches that the heart has many functions in a man. To really know himself, the senior pastor must look into his own heart. The Bible teaches, “As in water, face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects the man” (Prov 27:19). In reality, the senior pastor must look through his heart in several areas of his life. The ancient Hebrews thought differently about the heart, and scripture reveals the areas that need scrutiny. The heart functioned comprehensively, in their belief, as the “seat of the intellectual (e.g., Prov 2:10a; 14:33/ Dan 10:12), affective, e.g., Exod 4:14; Ps 13:2; Jer. 15:16), volitional (e.g., Judg 5:15; 1 Chron 29:18; Prov 16:1), and religious life of a human being (e.g., Deut 6:5; 2 Chron 16:9; Ezek 6:9; 14:3). Because of this ultimate and vital role, to know a person’s heart is to know the actual person. It is the mirror image of a man or woman.”<sup>153</sup>

Since the heart is the seat of emotion, the senior pastor is advised to take an Emotional Intelligence Test, and preferably more than one. Getting to know how you respond emotionally

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<sup>152</sup> Trevor J. Burke, “Adopted into God’s Family: Exploring a Pauline Metaphor,” in *New Studies in Biblical Theology*, vol. 22, ed. D. A. Carson (England: Downers Grove, IL: Apollo; InterVarsity Press, 2006),

<sup>153</sup> Dallas Baptist University, “The Biblical Conception of the “Heart,” *2001 Summer Institute in Christian Scholarship*, July 2001, Accessed February 8, 2020.  
[https://www3.dbu.edu/naugle/pdf/institute\\_handouts/general/biblical\\_heart.pdf](https://www3.dbu.edu/naugle/pdf/institute_handouts/general/biblical_heart.pdf)

in different circumstances and settings is key to understanding how to relate to others and God. “Emotions can help you, and they can hurt you, but you have no say in the matter until you understand them.”<sup>154</sup> For senior pastors, knowing the dynamics of how they are constituted emotionally can also relieve stress, anxiety, and depression. Leading those under the senior pastor’s care is also advised. When both sides of a relationship know how to read each other’s emotional transcript in a given circumstance or situation, the prospect for better communication and reaction increases.

Keeping a daily journal of emotions and thoughts is recommended as a way to detect patterns in moods, both for the senior pastor and for the people he socializes with, and particularly those in close relationship, including Jesus Christ. The journal can serve as a visual of the heart and used to help determine the best way to filter information that comes and goes through the course of days, weeks, months, and years. It can be used for planning preemptively regarding emotional land mines personally, and those of others. The journal should also include scripture writing, which helps to place emotions where they should be each day. The effect may be stark, “sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of the soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12). The effect may also be calming, “do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day . . . for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor 4:16, 18).

Teaching others is prescribed for all areas of personal development. To be able to teach others, senior pastors must first teach themselves. Watching the lives of others improve can

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<sup>154</sup> Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves, *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* (San Diego, CA: TalentSmart, 2009), 12.

motivate the senior pastor to take measures to assure that his ability to interact with God on a deeper level is growing.

The following questions are used in the interventional Bible study and are also used for questioning SPSP in an IRB approved extended research project. This bank of questions elicits responses as germane to the heart, in the context of the Greatest Commandment.

- How would you define the word “heart” as used in Luke 10:27?
- What emotionally exhausts you about your current or past ministry?
- Have you ever participated in an emotional intelligence test or survey?
- If so, were you surprised at the assessment?
- Did you make any specific lifestyle changes due to the assessment?
- If so, please explain the lifestyle changes you made.
- Which emotion is typically on open display in your professional life?
- Which emotion is typically on open display in your personal life?
- Which emotional term do people most often use when describing you?
- Why do you think people use this term to describe you?
- Do you agree with the term others use to describe you? Why or why not?
- What are the emotional deficiencies you see in yourself?
- With Luke 10:27 in mind, how do you show love to God with all of your heart?
- Share any practical advice for anyone regarding how they can best love God with all of the heart.

### Soul

The soul can be a confusing concept due to its very nature, and the attempt by men to explain what it consists of. The soul is a deeply personal entity that makes the heart, body, and mind a person. Ortberg posits, “Your soul is what integrates your will (your intentions), your mind (your thoughts and feeling, your values and conscience), and your body (your face, body language, and actions) into a single life. A soul is healthy—well-ordered—when there is harmony between these three entities and God’s intent for all creation. When you are connected with God and other people in life, you have a healthy soul.”<sup>155</sup> The researcher adds that heart

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<sup>155</sup> John Ortberg, *Soul Keeping: Caring For the Most Important Part of You*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 43.

(emotion) is the impetus for the connectivity and can be efficient at either causing great harm or great satisfaction.

The intervention of the survey requires the senior pastor to define the soul and do a thorough self-examination. Such a thoughtful and objective self-examination is commanded in scripture, as the Apostle Paul admonished the Corinthians, “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?” (2 Cor 13:5), and the Prophet Jeremiah advised, “Let us examine and probe our ways, and let us return to the LORD” (Lam 3:40). Indeed, thoroughly looking into the depths of who you are as a senior pastor is paramount as this is the eternal part of his existence.

Thinking more about the soul’s eternal home, heaven is prescribed as a way to keep the senior pastor healthy in this area of his life. This research intervenes with a call to use all the faculties of self to embrace the future hope of heaven, as this is the eternal resting place for the soul. Heaven was created for the soul, and Jesus is currently there to “prepare a place” (John 14:2b) for the soul to join Him for eternity. With such a view in mind, it is healthy for the soul to be reminded often of its purpose, and the ultimate reunion with its maker. The senior pastor’s soul has its hope placed in Christ Jesus, who promised, “If I go there and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3). The soul is in a foreign place while on earth “for our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:20). And the body also has reason to hope and long for the return of the Savior “who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself” (Phil 3:21). The soul longs for “a new heaven and a new earth”

(Rev 12:1a), and to be ever closer to Jesus. Not only does Jesus promise the things noted above, but His intervention in the soul of the senior pastor is amplified because of the experiential nature of His frame of reference, “No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man” (John 3:13).

Indeed, there is an intervention that must necessarily come from God, who created the senior pastor. The psalmist asked, “Search me, O God, and know my *heart*; try me and know my anxious *thoughts*; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the *everlasting way*” (Ps 139:23-24, emphasis researcher’s). Note that he is using his strength (mouth/body) and asks for God to search his heart, thoughts (mind), and to lead him in the everlasting way (soul). The whole self must be made available and involved in order for God to truly search someone.

“There is a paradox, of course, in the truth that I am inviting God to search me and know me when in fact, He already has searched me and known me. This may point to the fact that the real issue in self-examination is not that I am inviting God to know me (since he already does) but that I am inviting God to help me know me.”<sup>156</sup> Thus, is the purpose of the survey intervention.

The Bible teaches fasting as a way to better connect the deepest parts of self, the soul, with God. This intervention practice must be used cautiously. Remember that Jesus was tempted by Satan during one of His fasts. The fast is typically thought of as being used for clearing the mind. However, scripture teaches otherwise. The fast was always accompanied by prayer, and was followed by a moving of God, such as Moses receiving the Ten Commandments, (Exod 34:28), or the pouring out of, or direction from, the Holy Spirit, as was witnessed with the calling and sending of Paul and Barnabas, (Acts 13:2; 14:23). Although to clear the mind may be one

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<sup>156</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 94.

physiological advantage of fasting, “there are quite diverse reasons for exercising the kind of self-control exemplified by fasting. Primitive, historic, and secular reasons for fasting coexist.”<sup>157</sup>

Lastly, practicing Sabbath as God instructs in the Ten Commandments is healing to all four areas of human existence, HSSM. Sabbath is to be practiced by Christians. “Jesus observed the Sabbath, not only worshiping, but also teaching in the synagogue on that day of the week . . . the Bible also made provision for a Sabbath year. During the seventh year, the land was to lie fallow so that the land might rest . . . God promised an abundant harvest the sixth year to carry through the sabbatical period.”<sup>158</sup> In our modern culture, rest can seem at times to be a lost art. When we think of downtime, we think of what we are going to do in our downtime; and there are plenty of ways modern families like to be entertained. However, though participating in something we enjoy is not forbidden, it does need to be evaluated as to why we are participating. Sabbath should have a connection to God, as He is the one who ordained the practice. Ruth Haley Barton eloquently describes proper Sabbath as a longing:

“The truth is, Sabbath keeping is a discipline that will mess with you, because once you move beyond just thinking about it and actually begin to practice it, the goodness of it will capture you, body soul and spirit. You will long to wake up to a day that stretches out in front of you with nothing in it but rest and delight. You will long for a simple way to turn your heart toward God in worship without much effort. You will long for a space in time when the pace is slow and family and friends linger with one another, savoring one another’s presence because no one has anywhere else to go. You will long to sit on your own couch or on your own deck, it is yours, a gift from God that often gets overlooked in the rush of things. You will long for the day when you can crawl back into bed for an afternoon nap, which is all the more delicious because of this day, you know that you are doing exactly what God wants you to do. You will long for the leisurely walk or bike ride. You will long for the experience of preparing your favorite foods and sharing them with people you love. You will long to read a book for pleasure. You will

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<sup>157</sup> Joseph B Tamney, "Fasting and Dieting: A Research Note" *Review of Religious Research* 27, no. 3 (1986): 255-62. Accessed February 9, 2020. doi:10.2307/3511420. <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/stable/3511420>

<sup>158</sup> Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary*, 1046.

long to light candles and read scripture and thank God from the bottom of your heart. You will long to feel the quietness and peace settle over your house as you and your family enter into a different way of being together in God's presence. You will long for a few others to understand the beauty of Sabbath time and will practice it with you. You will long for a community whose traditions enable you to honor the Sabbath rather than making it a day of Christian busyness. You will long for a rhythm of working and resting that you can count on.”<sup>159</sup>

By keeping Sabbath correctly, the senior pastor leads by example, and when others catch on and join him in true Sabbath, he is blessed along with the participants. The practice does not only give all four areas of HSSM rest, but it also gives them space to come to the aid of each other. An observation regarding the relationship between the material and the spiritual acknowledges the two working in tandem for the benefit of the individual's ability to understand how their actions affect the two areas of the material (body) and the spiritual consciousness (heart, soul, mind). A 2015 research study conducted by Ulrich Weger and Johannes Wagemann concluded: “An inward-directed, first-person mode of inquiry is needed to capture the full breadth of reality for either of the realms. The soul is the fulcrum or mediator in between the two”<sup>160</sup> Therefore, care for the body is good for the soul and vice versa.

The survey and study intervention distributed to senior pastor participants elicits responses for the following concerning the soul:

- How would you define the word “soul” as used in Luke 10:27?
- What spiritually exhausts you about your current or past ministry, and why?
- Do you have a spiritual accountability partner or group you meet with regularly for direction, encouragement, and accountability?
- How often does your accountability partner or group meet?
- Do you have any personal practices or programs you employ to stay spiritually healthy?
- Please describe any personal practices or programs you employ to stay spiritually healthy in detail - including how long you have practiced or participated.

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<sup>159</sup> Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*, 133.

<sup>160</sup> Ulrich Weger and Johannes Wagemann, “The Behavioral, Experiential and Conceptual Dimensions of Psychological Phenomena: Body, Soul and Spirit,” *New Ideas in Psychology* 39, (2015): 23-33. Accessed February 9, 2020. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.newideapsych.2015.07.002>.



- Are there any personal practices or programs which you have stopped using?
- Which practices or programs have you stopped using?
- Have you employed any lifestyle changes to improve your spiritual health?
- Describe any lifestyle changes you have employed to improve your spiritual health.
- Describe the spiritual qualities that are typically on display in your personal life.
- Describe the spiritual qualities that are typically on display in your public life.
- If people describe you in spiritual terms, what spiritual terms do people generally use to describe you?
- If you noted spiritual terms with which people use to describe you in your response to question #46, in your opinion, why do they describe you using these spiritual terms?
- Do you agree with the way people describe you in spiritual terms? Why or why not?
- What are the spiritual deficiencies you see in yourself?
- What practical advice would you share with anyone about loving God with all their soul?

### Strength

Strength in the life of a senior pastor is critical to the mission God has for him. Not that God doesn't sometimes allow physical affliction in order to use them for His purposes, but this is the exception to the normal workings of God. Making an effort to maintain good health and fitness is biblical; therefore, the senior pastor should lead in this area by example. As noted earlier in the research, the body and soul are what constitutes a man, "Then the LORD God formed man out of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life: and man became a living being" (Gen 2:7). This research seeks to intervene with a renewed proper perception among senior pastors of this relationship between body and soul according to scripture. Specific to this relationship, Christians should remember that they "will be sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body" (1 Cor 15:42b). The new body will be spiritual, "it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body" (v. 44a), however, the function is the same here and then, so the impetus to take care of the body as the temporary companion of the soul is paramount for successful life and ministry. Therefore, senior pastors should develop good health habits to include regular self and professional medical evaluation, an intentional diet regimen to include biblical fasting, and physical activities conducive to their age and ability. The

following interventions are posited as ways to bring the senior pastor's physical life up to the highest degree possible, as well as recommendations to measure and maintain good fitness.

This research advises an intentional and habitual approach to care for the senior pastor's physical self. The heart, mind, and soul count on the body to get them places. In such an important position, the physical self must work to remain cognizant of the needs of all the other three. Stress has emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical repercussions. Proper exercise and how we live our lives physically affects the whole self. "Lifestyle behaviors may help to protect clergy from the harmful effects of occupational distress on health. Participation in regular physical activity reduces the risk for cardiovascular and metabolic disease as well as mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression."<sup>161</sup> Therefore, intervention with fitness and diet programs known to work for the individual senior pastor that takes into account body statistics such as age, height, weight, race, health, genetics, and preferences such as food and activities, is recommended. Additionally, preventive medical care is prescribed.

A close look at diet is recommended as an intervention in the life of the senior pastor "The Mediterranean diet is considered today to be among the healthiest of diets, with evidence of increased longevity and protection against CVD and cancer."<sup>162</sup> Numerous diets exist for all types of needs, and the senior pastor is encouraged to pay close attention to his needs and research the type of diet most beneficial to him. Fasting was discussed earlier regarding the benefit to the soul, but the physical benefit cannot be ignored. The God-ordained, harmonious,

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<sup>161</sup> B. L. Webb and K. Chase, "Occupational Distress and Health among a Sample of Christian Clergy," *Pastoral Psychology*, (2019):68:331. Accessed February 8, 2020. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s11089-018-0844-y>

<sup>162</sup> Elliot M. Berry, Yardena Arnoni, and Michael Aviram, "The Middle Eastern and Biblical Origins of the Mediterranean Diet," *Hebrew University-Hadassah Medical School*, (September 2011): 2288. <https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy.liberty.edu/article/639047>

and dichotomous relationship between soul and body is married during the fast. Kathleen M. Dugan gains an interesting perception from research, that, “fasting in Christianity is only truly itself when it realizes the sacredness of the body. Like its foundational insight, that humanity was created for Incarnation . . . this still remains only partially accepted and understood by most Christians.”<sup>163</sup> Proper diet and the use of fasting is recommended as an intervention.

Physical activity is implied throughout scripture, and modern science agrees that the benefit is clear. A recent study by Dr. Jochanan Stessman, MD of Hadassah Hebrew University Medical Center found that “physically active\* seniors were 31% to 58% less likely to die during the study than their sedentary peers, and 72% to 92% more likely to remain independent while performing the activities of daily living.”<sup>164</sup>

As part of the intervention regarding strength and the body, senior pastors are encouraged to learn new hands-on skills, sport, hobby, and/or other physical activity to that would have the benefit to the body. A new skill may also allow for a new way to be of use in ministry or service to others in the name of Jesus. This intervention could be a benefit to other areas of life as the new activity and ensuing use may bring about a closer relationship with God. “God gave us souls—and bodies to go with them. To be fully alive, fully human, fully the people God created us to be, we have to care for our bodies, discipline them, and make them our servants in our service to God.”<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Dugan, Kathleen M., "Fasting for Life: The Place of Fasting in the Christian Tradition," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63, no. 3 (1995): 539-48. Accessed February 9, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/1465092](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1465092).

<sup>164</sup> "To Live to a Biblical Old Age, Stay Physically Active," *Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter*, December 2009, 1+. *Gale Academic OneFile* (accessed February 9, 2020). [https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A220767135/AONE?u=vic\\_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=054282c2](https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A220767135/AONE?u=vic_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=054282c2).

<sup>165</sup> Gary Thomas, *Every Body Matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 29.

\* To test those possible benefits, the Jerusalem Longitudinal Cohort Study followed 1,821 people born in 1920 and 1921 for 18 years, from ages 70 to 88. Participants were classified as active or sedentary based on self-reported physical activity, which included regular walking as well as vigorous exercise. Those reporting activity

The survey and study intervention distributed to senior pastor participants elicits responses for the following concerning the body:

- How would you define the word “strength” as used in Luke 10:27?
- What physically exhausts you about your current or past ministry, and why?
- Are you satisfied with how you maintain yourself physically?
- What physical health practices do you currently use to increase and/or maintain physical health and strength?
- Do you have a physical health accountability partner or group that you meet with regularly for direction and encouragement?
- If so, how often do you meet?
- Have you employed any specific physical healthy lifestyle changes to improve in any areas? If so, which areas?
- Which physical health and growth practices have you employed in the past, but are not currently practicing?
- Do people ever describe you using physical terms? If so, which terms do they use?
- If you noted terms in question #61 that people use to describe you using physical terms, in your opinion, why do they describe you using such terms?
- Do you agree with how people describe you using the physical terms you noted in question #61? Why or why not?
- Describe any physical qualities that are typically on open display in your personal life (If you had to call yourself something; golfer, kayaker, jogger, sedentary).
- Describe any physical qualities that are typically on open display in your public life.
- With Luke 10:27 in mind, how do you show love to God with all your strength?
- Please share any practical advice for anyone regarding loving God with all their strength.

### Mind

The mind is an area of the human existence that, like the body, can be conditioned for a higher function and usefulness. Scripture speaks to such conditioning in several places; “but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom 12:2), “I will put my laws into their minds” (Heb 8:10), “taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:5), “put on the new self, who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the one who created him” (Col 3:10). As noted earlier, the heart and mind were thought to be located jointly

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totaling less than four hours a week were labeled as sedentary. Participants were also grouped by whether their activity level changed over time.

in the OT, but in the NT, the mind takes on a role apart from the heart, though it generally works through the heart. “The mind is conscious of the outer world to perceive its stimuli, reflect in memory, considered the desires, respond to the will, inform opinions, or direct one's life. This mental activity takes place in the mind, which functions through the heart. Hastings observes how Christ's mind was conscious to the outer world.”<sup>166</sup> The interventions for areas of ministry and preparation that address the mind are practices in communication, practices to stay sharp and alert, ongoing education, teaching, reading, and writing.

An obvious intervention is to encourage exercises that sharpen the mind and maintain the edge. Again, in leading by example, this area of the life of the senior pastor is essential. The first reason is because Jesus modeled this example. Regarding the accounts of Jesus’ life in the Gospels, E. P. Smith observes, “Perhaps the first characteristic to notice is the way in which the mind of the Lord Jesus was always so thoroughly alive to everything around him.”<sup>167</sup> Jesus was teaching in the temple at age twelve, and he was teaching right up until the day of His death on the cross. Teaching challenges, sharpens, and strengthens the mind and leads the students of the senior pastor to the same result.

Getting the right amount of rest is essential for a clear, optimal functioning mind. Placing too many tasks into a day can frazzle the mind and interrupt sleep. In his book, *Replenish* (Baker Books 2011), Lance Witt asserts, “Busyness will not only distract, it will infect . . . over time you will develop a hurried spirit. And even when your body is still, your soul will be racing. Your busy spirit will constantly remind you of everything you need to be doing. At times, you’ll feel like your insides are racing.” Witt continues, “Psalm 46 has only eight words and twenty-four

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<sup>166</sup> Elmer Towns, *Theology for Today*, (Mason, Ohio: Cengage Learning, 2008), 609.

<sup>167</sup> E. P. Boys-Smith, “Mental Characteristics,” *A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, ed. James Hastings, (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1906), 2:161.

letters, but it stands as an indictment to modern ministry: ‘BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD.’”<sup>168</sup>

Modern culture, specifically modern communication, makes keeping a sharp mind imperative for successful ministry. Most people will hear you more frequently and longer by extension (recording, phone calls, writings, social media, etc.) rather than in person. Therefore, the mind needs to be able to adjust for this reality by properly thinking through all of these mediums and how they affect the ministry of the senior pastor. Courses on the way to optimize results in communicating through these mediums exist, as well as the proper etiquette to employ for each. The intervention suggests finding such resources and take advantage of the skills and techniques they teach. Communicating properly is something the Bible commands, “Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person” (Col 4:6).

Proper diet applies to the mind as well, and the mind will be considered in tandem with the body as described earlier. The survey and study intervention distributed to senior pastor participants elicits responses for the following concerning the mind:

- How would you define the word “mind” as used in Luke 10:27?
- What intellectually exhausts you about your current or past ministry, and why?
- How do you maintain and or improve yourself intellectually? Be specific.
- Which intellectual health practices have you employed in the past but are currently not practicing?
- Do you have an intellectual health accountability partner or group that you meet with regularly for direction and encouragement? How often do you meet?
- If you answered yes to the question above, which activities do you and your accountability partner or group utilize for intellectual health and growth?
- Which personal practices/programs do you employ to stay intellectually healthy?
- Have you employed any specific lifestyle changes to improve in any area of intellectual health? If so, describe.
- Which intellectual qualities are typically on open display in your personal life?

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<sup>168</sup> Lance Witt, *Replenish: Leading from a Healthy Soul* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 2008), 62.

- Which intellectual qualities are typically on open display in your public life?
- Do people ever describe you using intellectual terms? If so, which terms do they use?
- If you noted terms, in your opinion, why do they describe you using such terms?
- Do you agree with how people describe you using the intellectual terms you noted in question #79? Why or why not?
- What are the intellectual deficiencies you see in yourself?
- With Luke 10:27 in mind, how do you show love to God with all your mind?
- Do you have any practical advice for anyone regarding loving God with all their mind?
- Please share any additional thoughts that come to mind regarding Luke 10:27.

Intervening in the life of senior pastors regarding the four areas of HSSM will bring harmony, not only to the life of the senior pastor, but also to that of his family, church, and community in which he serves. His leadership in his family watches over his primary and most important discipleship group. As head of the home, the senior pastor loving God in the way He commands to the best of his ability will draw his family closer together. The same will hold true for his ministry at church.<sup>169</sup> Unity in the church is critical in showing love to the Father just as unity in a marriage shows love to a couple's children. "Among the reasons why the church must strive for unity are didactic passages in the New Testament . . . Probably the most persuasive is the so-called high priestly prayer of Jesus: (John 17:20-23). The unity between the Father and the Son is a model for the unity of believers . . . with each other and with God will testify . . . that the Father has sent the Son."<sup>170</sup> Therefore, one last intervention will be to make recommendations of how to specifically provide leadership for positive change in the church body under the senior pastor's charge. "The things that got us to where we are today will not get us to where we need to be tomorrow."<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Jim Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship: Building Churches That Make Disciple*, Student/Study Guide ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010), 52-60.,

<sup>170</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 1137-7.

<sup>171</sup> George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2001), 10.

The researcher knows and believes that the Bible does not err, and the heart, soul, strength, and mind are cited in the Greatest Commandment because each has a specific duty to execute. As noted in the research above, each area of HSSM has a direct effect on the others. Collectively they can complement or hinder each other; staying on mission with all four deployed to love God effectively leads to staying on mission in sharing the gospel, which the senior pastor is called to demonstrate and encourage. In a healthy relationship, the Holy Spirit challenges Christians to live outwardly instead of inwardly. Both are necessary for a healthy Christian life, but the latter exists to promote the former. “As a missional Christian, you must consider yourself deployed—not dispersed. While you still recognize your church and Christian friends as home base, you are comfortable going out from them to engage unbelievers.”<sup>172</sup>. Therefore, the intervention is put forth as a holistic approach for best practices in keeping the Greatest Commandment, which energizes commitment to the Great Commission.

To wrap up Intervention Design, the researcher notes that the senior pastor must understand the advanced measure that the Bible promises will be used to gauge his effort and obedience, “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment” (Jas 3:1). Charles Spurgeon taught his seminary students, “when God calls us to ministerial labor we should endeavor to get grace that we may be strengthened into fitness for our position . . . equipped with the whole armor of God, ready for feats of valor not expected of others: to us self-denial, self-forgetfulness, patience, perseverance, longsuffering,,

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<sup>172</sup>Jeff Iorg, *Live Like a Missionary: Giving Your Life for What Matters Most* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2011), 95.



must be every-day virtues.”<sup>173</sup> With the proper response to such a charge, intervention will accomplish its mission in the life of the senior pastor.

### **Implementation of the Intervention Design**

The intervention created by the researcher for this project is designed to present knowledge, provoke thought, and elicit a positive response from senior pastor participants. The study is designed to be approached with partners or small groups that meet to discuss the material covered. Each Exercise is designed to allow for a month to complete so the accountability partners or groups can meet face to face at least once per month for fellowship and discussion. Between the face-to-face meetings, communication is encouraged via phone calls, emails, social media, and informal meetups for fellowship. The Bible teaches that iron sharpens iron (Prov 27:7), therefore partnering (or grouping) to grow in faith, practice, (and ministry for pastors) is the ideal way for life change to occur. The book of Hebrews reminds Christians to not forsake “assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (Heb 10:25). Current culture and world events arguably seem to be pointing to the day drawing near. James instructs Christians to “confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed” (Jas 5:16). Finally, the Apostle Paul admonishes, “Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2). Could the “law of Christ” Paul refers to fill in this passage be referring to the GC that Jesus labeled as the “greatest?” He also taught the Thessalonians to “encourage one another and build each other up, just as you also are doing” (1 Thess 5:11).

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<sup>173</sup> Charles Spurgeon. *Lectures to My Students*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1954), 14.

# 7 *Lessons* From TGC

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

A Senior Pastor Intensive Exercise

## Keeping the Greatest Commandment the Greatest

*An Exercise for Senior Pastors*

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Before We Begin . . .

*Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than the heavens above—what can you do? They are deeper than the depths below—what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea.*

Job 11:7-9 NIV

As a pastor, life can race by despite our intentions and interventions to slow things down.

Unfortunately, modern life is of little help with the distractions of technology and the convenience of being able to be in several places at one time. As the world has “gotten smaller” because of modern travel and communication technology, the geographic mission field has grown exponentially. This puts an impetus on pastors to effectively serve in an ever-growing and diversifying ministry. Such revelations call for a strategic understanding of priorities, boundaries, expectations, and resources;

to reassess, reorganize, and refresh. There is only a slight chance that a senior pastor will learn some new theological truth from this exercise. Notice that this publication is called an “exercise” instead of “study.” This is because exercise more accurately describes the content, format, and purpose. The journey through the material IS, however, designed to help participants view the truths they know in a different light and in a deeper way, much like you may know someone well—all about them—but you don’t know them deeply. Either they do

not allow you in, or you are not that interested in knowing more. Many people date for months or years before marriage but learn more about each other in the first few weeks of marriage than they did the entire time of dating and engagement. Suddenly they know that significant other more deeply; *“for better or for worse.”*

Finally, this exercise is communal. If you cannot attend a retreat, either join a group, form a group, or at least find a senior pastor partner that would agree to move through the material with you in an unhurried, but steady way. Leave room for lots of conversation during and *between* sessions. (Sessions are to be solo, but the conversation is a part of the exercise). Leave enough time between sessions for the Spirit to speak into your life. Allow your heart, soul, and mind to steep in the Word. Take advantage of all you know about Sabbath and do not neglect your physical self. Wear comfortable clothes and find a comfortable setting. Take advantage of connecting with God’s creation and decompress during a walk on the beach, or along a pathway; sitting in a garden or gazing at the moon and stars.

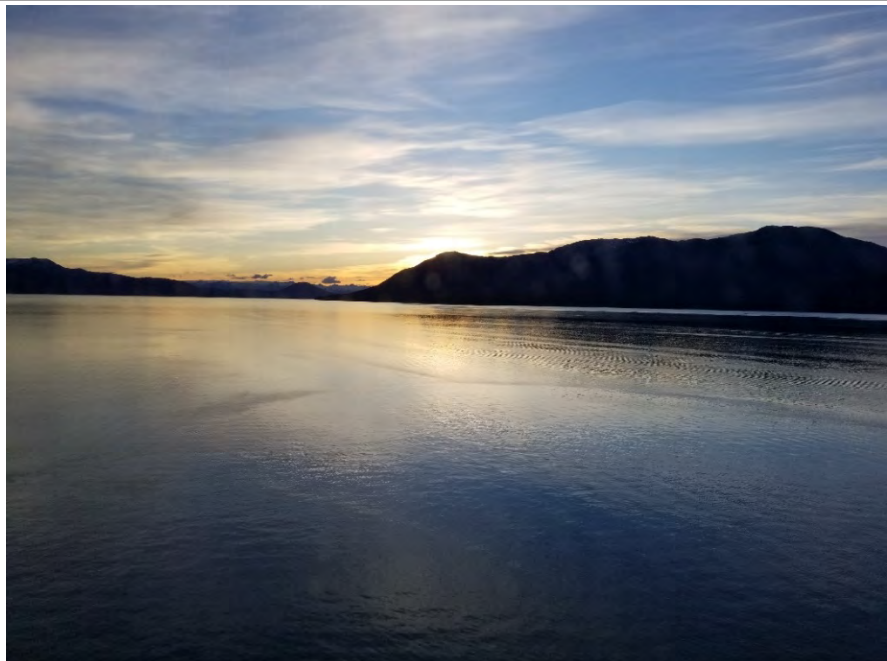
*"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."* Psalm 19:1-4 NIV

*Be Still  
and  
Know  
that I Am  
God...*

Psalms 46:10 NIV

*In Quietness  
and Trust  
is Your  
Strength*

Isaiah 30:15 NIV



Recognizing that God's wisdom is beyond our understanding, allow Him to lead you in the study of His word. Approach each page, chapter, verse, and even word, with inquisitive newness of heart, soul, strength, and mind. Allow all aspects of His holiness, Father, Son, and Spirit, to permeate the deepest, most vulnerable recesses of self. Such open honesty before God requires great humility—setting aside all clever devices and relying only on the Triune God and the faculties with which He has equipped each person.

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# Exercise One

## Practices for Healthy Relationship—Experiencing God

### Isaiah 6

**Learning objective:** To see God as He is: Majestic—High, Holy, and Here

**Lesson setting:** Somewhere other than: Your usual quiet time location. Consider time in: a cabin or retreat / a fireside or fire-pit / a quiet conference room / a study or library / a quiet coffee house / a park. Anywhere you can be free from distractions, to include discomfort.

**Learning pace:** This lesson should be broken into at least three parts that follow the headings. However, let the Holy Spirit be your guide and do not move on until God is finished. This may take 3 days, weeks, months, or longer; “those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength” (Isaiah 40:31 NASB).

**Lesson gear:** bible\*, mp3 player\* and worship song file(s), journal, pen, beverage, clothes for comfort (sweater, jacket, etc.)

\*Although an app with multiple translations is preferable, and listening to a couple of worship songs throughout your study time can be productive, if you can resist using your technology for other things during the time you have set aside for this session, it is better to go old-school.

**Suggested Reading:** These publications are not meant to each being read during the exercise, but rather added to your reading list.

- *The Knowledge of the Holy:* by A. W. Tozer.
- *Knowing God:* by J. I. Packer
- *The Holiness of God:* by R. C. Sproul
- *The Nature of God:* by Arthur W. Pink
- *12 Essential Doctrine:* by Dr. Harold Willmington
- *The Existence and Attributes of God:* by Steven Charnock
- *Experiencing God:* by Henry and Richard Blackaby

**Suggested Listening:** Music is a productive media to usher the heart and mind into worship. You may have your favorites, but here are a few germane to this topic:

- *Revelation Song* by Craig and Dean Phillips
- *Holy, Holy, Holy Hymn:* by Audrey Assad
- *Beautiful Name:* by Hillsong

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**Part One: GOD IS HIGH** - Read Isaiah 6:1

God is high and exalted—high and lifted up (KJV, ESV), —lofty and exalted (NASB).

In his vision of the throne room of heaven, Isaiah saw God as high. Outside of dream and vision, God again spoke through Isaiah as to His loftiness. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thought than your thoughts.’” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Take time to meditate:

- What descriptive words and/or names do you use to describe God when addressing Him? *Make a list now.*

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- What new descriptive words and/or names might He reveal to you now as you meditate on His high position? *Spend time in prayer to ask Him right now.*

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- Search out other scripture passages that speak of God’s standing in the universe—His high, eminent, sovereign, position.

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*On the glorious splendor of Your majesty and  
on Your wonderful works, I will meditate. Psalm 145:5*

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**Part 2: GOD IS HOLY** Read Isaiah 6:2-3

. . . the LORD almighty— LORD of hosts (ESV, KJV, NASB), is holy, holy, holy.

Isaiah learned from the seraphim that God is the highest degree of holy—holy to the 3<sup>rd</sup> power. His holiness is so brilliant, radiant, and massive, that the whole earth is full of his glory (fullness of the whole earth is his glory NASB footnote), (may his glory fill the whole earth ESV footnote). “There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God” (1 Samuel 2:2).

Take time to meditate: *Prayerfully and comprehensively answer the questions and do the exercises below.*

- What ways is God unlike anything else in the universe? *Make a list now.*

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- What new ways might you worship Him in light of the revelations you just received regarding His holiness? *Spend time in prayer to ask Him how right now.*

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- More scripture regarding God’s holiness and our call to be:

1 Pet. 1:15-16; 2:9	Heb. 12:14; 7:26	Ps. 96:9	Matt. 5:48
Is. 35:8; 57:15	Rev. 4:8; 15:4	103:1-22	1 Thess. 4:7
Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:26	Ex. 15:11	Rom. 12:1	Deut. 7:6
Eph. 1:4	2 Cor. 7:1	2 Tim 1:9	Col. 3:12

\*List your thoughts about the passages here:

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*But the LORD of hosts will be exalted in judgement,  
And the holy God will show Himself holy in righteousness. Isaiah 5:16*



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**Part 3: GOD IS HERE** Read Isaiah 6:4

At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook—foundations of the thresholds shook (ESV)—posts of the door moved (KJV)—foundations of the thresholds trembled (NASB) . . . and the temple was filled with smoke—and the house was filled with smoke (ESV, KJV)—while the temple was filling with smoke (NASB).

To the ancient Hebrews, smoke was symbolic of the glory of His position as the pre-existent one—God Almighty—Lord of Hosts and His holiness. (Gen 15:7; Ex 3:2-6; 18:18; 24:17; Luke 3:16; Num. 11:1; 16:35; Deut. 5:24; Acts 2:3-4). His presence, or any evidence which existed to verify He had been there, caused spontaneous fear, awe, and worship.

Take time to meditate:

- Think of times that you felt God’s undeniable presence in your life. *Write a short description of the most memorable event.*

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- What area or coming event in your life would you most like for God to make His undeniable presence known to you? What about areas or coming events in the life of others? *Spend time in prayer to ask for the recognition of His presence now.*

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- Search out other scripture passages that speak of God’s standing in the universe—His high, eminent, sovereign, position, and write thoughts about them here.

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*You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is  
Fullness of joy; in Your right hand, there are pleasures forever. Psalm 16:11*

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## Exercise Two

### Object of Love—Love Unleashed

John 15:12-17

**Learning objective:** To better understand the biblical meaning of Love: to love; in the NT, usually the active love of God for his Son and His people, and the active love His people are to have for God, each other, and even enemies.

**Lesson setting:** Somewhere other than: Your usual quiet time location. Consider time in: a cabin or retreat / a fireside or fire-pit / a quiet conference room / a study or library / a quiet coffee house / a park. Anywhere you can be free from distractions, to include discomfort.

**Learning pace:** This lesson should be broken into at least three parts that follow the headings. However, let the Holy Spirit be your guide and do not move on until God is finished. This may take 3 days, weeks, months, or longer; “those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength” (Isaiah 40:31 NASB).

**Lesson gear:** bible, mp3 player and worship song file(s), journal, pen, beverage, clothes for comfort (sweater, jacket, etc.)

\*Although an app with multiple translations is preferable, and listening to a couple of worship songs throughout your study time can be productive, if you can resist using your technology for other things during the time you have set aside for this session, it is better to go old-school.

**Suggested Reading:** These publications are not meant to each be read during the exercise, but rather added to your reading list.

- *Crazy Love:* by Francis Chan
- *God as He Longs for You to See Him:* by Chip Ingram
- *The Twelve Steps of Humility & Pride and on Loving God:* by Saint Bernard of Clairvaux
- *Hold On To Love:* by Nichole Marbach
- *Jesus in Me:* by Anne Graham Lotz

**Suggested Listening:** Music is a productive media to usher the heart and mind into worship. You may have your favorites, but here are a few germane to this topic:

- *Amazing Love, How Can It Be:* Hymn by Charles Wesley
- *Deep in Love with You:* by Michal W. Smith
- *Learn to Love:* by Leland

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**Part 1: MEANING** Read John 15:12-15

“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.”

The love of God cannot be contained in the human heart, soul, or mind; no more than the earth could contain Him—the one who created the universe. His love is lavished upon the children of God, it is everlasting, drives out fear, endures forever, and abounds unfailingly.

Take time to meditate:

- How would you define the love God desires us to show Him as used in Luke 10:27?

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- What prevents you from loving God as He desires?

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- What practices might you put in place to better show the kind of love God requires?

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- What resources would you need to put these practices into place and be held accountable?

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*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,  
that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16*

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**Part 2: PERCEPTION** Read 1 John 4:18-21

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because He first loved us. If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.”

The tendency for men is to live in fear. We may not fear God, (though we should—it is, after all, the beginning of wisdom, Prov. 1:7) but we fear many other people, objects, events, and the unknown. We even fear things we love. Men are unable to love perfectly, but God can and does; and men can claim His perfect love and find courage to boldly stand down our fears.

Take time to meditate:

- Can you think of a time when fear was absolved when you applied God’s love?  
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- Is there evidence in your life that would make someone who has never heard you speak a word, know that you love God?  
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- How does love for God manifest itself in your private life? Your public life?  
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- Have you ever truly shown love to God and feel it wasn’t reciprocated?  
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*But now faith, hope, love, abide these three;  
but the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:13*

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**Part 3: REALITY** Read Isaiah 6:4

“Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, ‘For Your sake, we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

God’s love is sticky and enduring. Life is full of opportunities to give up—on ourselves and on other people. But God’s love obliterates those opportunities if we turn to Him. Just as we cannot escape the love He has for us, that same power can be tapped by us to love others when it is hard.

Take time to meditate:

- Go to the back of your journal, and write down all the ways you can see evidence of God’s love for you.
- In looking over the list you made in the back of your journal, can you think of a reason why you should not use your whole self to show love to Him?

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- What could you do today, that is repeatable, i.e., could become a routine, to unquestionably demonstrate your love for God?

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- What could you do today that is repeatable, to unquestionably demonstrate God’s love to someone else?

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*But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth. Psalm 86:15*

# Exercise Three

## Practices for Healthy Emotion—Heart

### Psalm 119

**Learning objective:** To better understand the biblical meaning of Heart: Seat of emotion and thought—the seat of deep feeling, and that God requires it be used to show love to Him.

**Lesson setting:** Somewhere other than: Your usual quiet time location. Consider time in: a cabin or retreat / a fireside or fire-pit / a quiet conference room / a study or library / a quiet coffee house / a park. Anywhere you can be free from distractions, to include discomfort.

**Learning pace:** This lesson should be broken into at least three parts that follow the headings. However, let the Holy Spirit be your guide and do not move on until God is finished. This may take 3 days, weeks, months, or longer; “those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength” (Isaiah 40:31 NASB).

**Lesson gear:** bible\*, mp3 player\* and worship song file(s), journal, pen, beverage, clothes for comfort (sweater, jacket, etc.)

\*Although an app with multiple translations is preferable, and listening to a couple of worship songs throughout your study time can be productive, if you can resist using your technology for other things during the time you have set aside for this session, it is better to go old-school.

**Suggested Reading:** These publications are not meant to each be read during the exercise, but rather added to your reading list.

- *Wild at Heart:* by John Eldredge
- *Developing a Servant’s Heart:* by Charles F. Stanley
- *Feeling Like God:* by Chris Tiegreen
- *Renovation of the Heart:* by Dallas Willard
- *The Heart of Christ:* by Thomas Goodwin
- *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* by Peter Scazzero

Consider taking an Emotional Intelligence tests/evaluations . . . either now, or in the future. Better understand your own heart and emotions, and be equipped to better understand others.

- *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* and *IDISC Emotional Intelligence Appraisal—Me Edition* by Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves at Talent Smart.
- BeMIS (Behavioral Management Information System) is another personality/emotional measurement test. Also called ACL (Adjective Check List)

Access each at link: <https://www.talentsmart.com/products/emotional-intelligence-appraisal.php>

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**Part 1: MEANING** Read Psalm 119

Psalm 119 teaches that God sent His word for the heart of man and provided a capable mind to understand it through the heart. We are blessed by seeking God with our whole heart (v. 2). When we seek with our whole heart, we remain obedient (v. 10). We can store God's word and can observe God's law with our hearts (v. 11, 34). God's testimonies and commandments bring delight to our heart (24, 47-48).

The heart is the seat of deep feeling: grief, fear and anxiety, joy, or merriment. A heart may be hardened repeatedly in Exodus; or it may be pure. It may be the sphere of reflection or pondering or of belief. (Gen. 6:6), (Gen. 45:26; 1 Sam. 4:13), (1 Sam 2:1), (Exod. 7:13, 14, 22, 23), (Matt. 5:8), (Luke 2:19, 51), (Rom. 10:9). In a word: emotion.

Take time to meditate:

- How would you define heart as used in Luke 10:27?

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- What emotionally exhausts you about current or past ministry?

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- Have you ever participated in an emotional intelligence test or survey? What were the results?

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- Were you surprised at the assessment? Why or why not?

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*Examine me, O LORD, and try me: Test my mind and my heart. Psalm 26:2*

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**Part 2: PERCEPTION** Read 1 Sam 16:7

“But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.’”

Since God created the heart, it is logical that we should first look to Him for a proper definition; and God is always looking at the heart, so His perception should be primary in our evaluation. The human heart is made for God’s love. But it can be full of evil in the brokenness of creation. God knows about the shadows in our hearts, and one by one, over time, we allow His light in.

Take time to meditate:

- What emotion is typically on display in your professional life? Your personal life? If they differ, why?

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- What emotion term do people most often use when describing you? Why do you think people feel this way?

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- Why do you think people use this term to describe you?

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- Do you agree with the term others use to describe you?

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*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Psalm 51:17*



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**Part 3: REALITY** Read Ezekiel 11:19-21

And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God. But as for those whose hearts go after their detestable things and abominations, I will bring their conduct down on their heads,” declares the Lord God.

How would someone know that they had a heart of stone? If they have a dysfunctional heart, their whole life is not set in reality, but rather imitations of what might be if they would turn to God. The “heart of flesh” is a living heart, as opposed to the “heart of stone,” which is a lifeless heart. God’s desire is to bring life, and Jesus doubles down with “more abundantly” (John 10:10).

Take time to meditate:

- What practices might you put in place to better manage your emotion for a healthy heart?

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- What resources would you need to begin these new practices?

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- What resources would you put in place for metrics and to hold you accountable?

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- With Luke 10:27 in mind, how do you show love to God with all of your heart?

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*Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You. Psalm 119:11*

# Exercise Four

## Preparing for Forever—Soul

### 1 Corinthians 15:51-55

**Learning objective:** To better understand the biblical meaning of Soul: breathed by God, living being, life, self, person, desire, passion, appetite, emotion receptor—and that God requires it be used to show love to Him.

**Lesson setting:** Somewhere other than: Your usual quiet time location. Consider time in: a cabin or retreat / a fireside or fire-pit / a quiet conference room / a study or library / a quiet coffee house / a park. Anywhere you can be free from distractions, to include discomfort.

**Learning pace:** This lesson should be broken into at least three parts that follow the headings. However, let the Holy Spirit be your guide and do not move on until God is finished. This may take 3 days, weeks, months, or longer; “those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength” (Isaiah 40:31 NASB).

**Lesson gear:** bible\*, mp3 player\* and worship song file(s), journal, pen, beverage, clothes for comfort (sweater, jacket, etc.)

\*Although an app with multiple translations is preferable, and listening to a couple of worship songs throughout your study time can be productive, if you can resist using your technology for other things during the time you have set aside for this session, it is better to go old-school.

**Suggested Reading:** These publications are not meant to each be read during the exercise, but rather added to your reading list.

- *Replenish:* by Lance Witt
- *Foundations of Spiritual Formation:* by Paul Pettit
- *The Soul:* by J. P. Moreland
- *The Gospel of Paul:* by John MacArthur
- *Living into the Life of Jesus:* by Klaus Isler

**Suggested Listening:** Music is a productive media to usher the heart and mind into worship. You may have your favorites, but here are a few germane to this topic:

- *Open the Eyes of My Heart:* by Paul Baloche
- *Whole Heart:* by Hillsong
- *Oh My Soul:* by Casting Crowns
- *Awake My Soul:* by Nathan Jess

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**Part 1: IDENTITY** Read Psalm 62:1-8

“My soul waits in silence for God only; from Him is my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken . . . My soul waits in silence for God only, for my hope is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; and I shall not be shaken. On God, my salvation, and my glory rest; the rock of my strength, my refuge is in God. Trust in Him at all times, O people; Pour out your heart before Him: God is a refuge for us.”

Soul and spirit are used interchangeably in scripture (Matt. 27:5; John 10:17). The soul can experience many emotions, though it is not the seat of them; that is the job of the heart. But the Bible speaks of the soul being strengthened, thirsty, hungry, dismayed, weary . . . it can be saved, restored, kept, taken or given (only by God) delivered, redeemed, imprisoned, troubled, filled, sustained, . . . it can bless, rest, hope, wait, long for, endure, love, taste,

Take time to meditate:

- How would you define the word “soul” as used in Luke 10:27?

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- What spiritually exhausts you about current or past ministry and why?

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- Do you have a spiritual accountability partner or group you meet with regularly for direction, encouragement, and/or accountability? If so, how often to you meet?

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*He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Psalm 23:3*

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**Part 2: PERCEPTION** Read Psalms 107:1-9

“Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His lovingkindness is everlasting. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, who He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary and gathered from the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north and from the south . . . Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, and for His wonders to the sons of men! For He has satisfied the thirsty soul, and the hungry soul He has filled with what is good.”

Our heart, mind, and body assist the soul in communing with its Creator. The body is for the soul, but the soul is not for the body alone. Adam, the first living soul. Jesus is the life-giving spirit. (1 Peter 1:9), (Ps. 121:7), (Job 12:10), (Gen. 2:7b), (Ezek. 18:4), (Eccl. 12:7), (Ps. 116:7), (1 Cor. 15:45).

Take time to meditate:

- What spiritual practices or programs do you employ to stay spiritually healthy?

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- Have you employed any in the past that you stopped using? Why?

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- Have you made any lifestyle changes to improve your spiritual health?

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- What spiritual qualities are typically on display in your personal life? Public life?

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*My soul waits in silence for God only; From Him is my salvation. Psalm 62:1*

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**Part 3: REALITY** Read Isaiah 6:4

“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this, perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’”

The soul is the eternal part of man. In a sense, other parts of men will have to change in order to advance to heaven, but the soul came from the breath of God, not created here on earth. The soul is uniquely from the divine, not from His hands or exterior manipulations, but directly from within God. Knowing your soul well is an act of worship to the God who created it . . . the closest we can get to touching God.

Take time to meditate:

- What spiritual terms do others use to describe you? Why or why not?

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- Do you agree with the spiritual terms others use to describe you? Why or why not?

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- With Luke 10:27 in mind, how do you show love to God with all of your soul?

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*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Psalm 103:1*

# Exercise Five

## Fit for Duty—Strength

### 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

**Learning objective:** To better understand the biblical meaning of Strength—physical, body, one-half of the constitution of a man, God’s temple, can glorify God, together we are one body in Christ. For this study, the focus will be a strength as being the physical attributes of men.

**Lesson setting:** Somewhere other than: Your usual quiet time location. Consider time in: a cabin or retreat / a fireside or fire-pit / a quiet conference room / a study or library / a quiet coffee house / a park. Anywhere you can be free from distractions, to include discomfort.

**Learning pace:** This lesson should be broken into at least three parts that follow the headings. However, let the Holy Spirit be your guide and do not move on until God is finished. This may take 3 days, weeks, months, or longer; “those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength” (Isaiah 40:31 NASB).

**Lesson gear:** bible\*, mp3 player\* and worship song file(s), journal, pen, beverage, clothes for comfort (sweater, jacket, etc.)

\*Although an app with multiple translations is preferable, and listening to a couple of worship songs throughout your study time can be productive, if you can resist using your technology for other things during the time you have set aside for this session, it is better to go old-school.

**Suggested Reading:** These publications are not meant to each be read during the exercise, but rather added to your reading list.

- *Every Body Matters:* by Gary Thomas
- *The Daniel Plan:* by Rick Warren, Daniel Amen, and Mark Hyman
- *Faith Infused Training:* by Everett Tellez
- *Faith Fitness:* by Cecil Sharp
- *Atomic Habits:* by James Clear

**Suggested Listening:** Music is a productive media to usher the heart and mind into worship. You may have your favorites, but here are a few germane to this topic

- *Strong Enough:* by Matthew West
- *His Strength is Perfect:* by Jerry Salley & Steven Curtis Chapman
- *You are my Strength:* by Hillsong

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**Part 1: MEANING** Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”

The body as a temple is a remarkable thought . . . and truth. That the God of the universe chose to dwell inside of men is a humbling arrangement.

Take time to meditate:

- How would you define strength as used in Luke 10:27?

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- What physically exhausts you about current or past ministry?

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- Are you satisfied with how you maintain yourself physically?

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- What physical health practices do you currently use to increase and/or maintain physical health and strength?

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*I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully  
and wonderfully made. Psalm 139:14a*

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**Part 2: PERCEPTION** Read Isaiah 40:31

“Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.”

Since God created the heart, it is logical that we should first look to Him for a proper definition; and God is always looking at the heart, so His perception should be primary in our evaluation.

Take time to meditate:

- Do you have a physical health accountability partner or group that you meet with regularly for direction and encouragement?

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- Have you employed any specific physical health lifestyle changes to improve in any areas? If so, which areas?

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- Which physical health and growth practices have you employed in the past, but are not currently practicing? Why did you stop?

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- Do people ever describe you using physical terms? If so, which terms do they use?

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*I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely  
I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10*



**Part 3: REALITY** Read Romans 12:1-2

“Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

The truth is, our bodies are presented to God every moment of every day. The only variable is whether we are living holy and acceptable, by God’s standard; and thinking of the body we present as an act worship is quite sobering. Worship is presenting something of value to us, to God; as God already owns everything. The intent and the value we place on the offering. In light of this do you value your physical self, and if so, could you commit to make it the best it can be?

Take time to meditate:

- Do you agree with the physical term others use to describe you? Why or why not?

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- What physical deficiencies do you perceive regarding yourself?

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- With Luke 10:27 in mind, how do you show love to God with all your strength?

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- Can you think of examples of someone in scripture that loved God through their physical strength?

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*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:9*

# Exercise Six

## Do You Mind—Mind

### 1 Chronicles 28:9

**Learning objective:** To better understand the biblical meaning of Mind: thinking, understanding; a part of the inner person that processes information into understanding, including the making of choices, the seat of which is the mind.

**Lesson setting:** Somewhere other than: Your usual quiet time location. Consider time in: a cabin or retreat / a fireside or fire-pit / a quiet conference room / a study or library / a quiet coffee house / a park. Anywhere you can be free from distractions, to include discomfort.

**Learning pace:** This lesson should be broken into at least three parts that follow the headings. However, let the Holy Spirit be your guide and do not move on until God is finished. This may take 3 days, weeks, months, or longer; “those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength” (Isaiah 40:31 NASB).

**Lesson gear:** bible\*, mp3 player\* and worship song file(s), journal, pen, beverage, clothes for comfort (sweater, jacket, etc.)

\*Although an app with multiple translations is preferable, and listening to a couple worship songs throughout your study time can be productive, if you can resist using your technology for other things during the time you have set aside for this session, it is better to go old-school.

**Suggested Reading:** These publications are not meant to each be read during the exercise, but rather added to your reading list.

- *Humilitas:* by John Dickson
- *The Bondage Breaker:* by Neil T. Anderson
- *Unshakeable:* by John Eckhardt
- *Spiritual Leadership:* by J. Oswald Sanders
- *Shepherds after My Own Heart:* by Timothy S. Laniak

**Suggested Listening:** Music is a productive media to usher the heart and mind into worship. You may have your favorites, but here are a few germane to this topic

- *Oh I Want to Know You More:* by Steve Green
- *My Desire:* by Jeremy Camp
- *More of You:* by Hillsong

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**Part 1: MEANING** Read 2 Corinthians 10:1-6

The Apostle Paul elicits obedience of the mind to the church at Corinth by advising them to take “every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (v. 5b). Man has a human body which is married to a spirit (soul). The mind functions as the connection between the two—not only orchestrating the intricate details of bodily function, but also the discernment of what is, and is not, the “knowledge of God” in the world around them.

The intellect of a man, but void of reasoning thought, as reasoning thought is the work of the human heart. “Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, ‘Why are you reasoning in your hearts?’” (Luke 5:22). Senior pastors are called upon to marry the mind with the heart to make decisions regarding life and ministry. Intellect in isolation of thought and reason is generally unhelpful in a ministry context.

Take time to meditate:

- How would you define mind as used in Luke 10:27?

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- What intellectually exhausts you about current or past ministry?

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- What practices might you put in place to better manage your learning for a healthy mind?

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- What resources would you need to put these practices into place and be held accountable?

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*Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. Colossians 3:2*

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**Part 2: PERCEPTION** Read 1 Timothy 1:3-7

Timothy is being groomed by the apostle Paul to filter the knowledge he receives, and to take care as to what he spends his intellectual currency on. In the current culture, as was the case when Paul and Timothy walked the earth, there is a tendency to waste mental thought on things that do not matter. Currently, in the information age, there is not only more material to waste time on, there are more ways to spend such unproductive time.

The Christian's duty of paying proper attention to the mind is also found in scripture. The apostle Paul encourages the Romans, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:2).

Take time to meditate:

- What intellectual qualities are typically on display in your professional life? Your personal life? If they differ, why?

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- What intellectual terms do people most often use when describing you? Why do you think people feel this way?

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- Do you have an intellectual health accountability partner or group that you meet with regularly for direction and encouragement? If so, explain. If not, why?

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- What activities to you and your accountability partner or group utilize to stay intellectually healthy?

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*The peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard our hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus... Philipians 4:7*

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**Part 3: REALITY** Read Hebrews 8:7-12

The author of Hebrews evokes the Torah to drive home the point that God's people (in Hebrew's context, Christians) are to take advantage of the covenant that God will supply the knowledge that is most useful to men for existence, not only here on earth, but for eternity.

Along with the mind comes the ability to have a free will. Senior pastors must come to understand the beauty and necessity of God's sovereignty within creation and carefully exercise the free will He bestowed upon man to earnestly strive in keeping the Greatest Commandment.

Take time to meditate:

- With Luke 10:27 in mind, how do you show love to God with all your intellect?

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- What new practices might you implement to better love God with all your intellect?

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- How do you discern and balance the free will and God's sovereignty dynamic in life?

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- What practical advice would you share with anyone concerning loving God with all their mind?

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*Who has put wisdom in the innermost being or given understanding to the mind? Job 38:36*

# Exercise Seven

## On the road of life—Neighbor

Exodus 20:16-17

**Learning objective:** To better understand the biblical meaning of neighbor: not only what, but more specific and important, who; and how senior pastors should model for the church, healthy habits of interaction.

**Lesson setting:** Somewhere other than: Your usual quiet time location. Consider time in: a cabin or retreat / a fireside or fire-pit / a quiet conference room / a study or library / a quiet coffee house / a park. Anywhere you can be free from distractions, to include discomfort.

**Learning pace:** This lesson should be broken into at least three parts that follow the headings. However, let the Holy Spirit be your guide and do not move on until God is finished. This may take 3 days, weeks, month, or longer; “those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength” (Isaiah 40:31 NASB).

**Lesson gear:** bible\*, mp3 player\* and worship song file(s), journal, pen, beverage, clothes for comfort (sweater, jacket, etc.)

\*Although an app with multiple translations is preferable, and listening to a couple of worship songs throughout your study time can be productive, if you can resist using your technology for other things during the time you have set aside for this session, it is better to go old-school.

**Suggested Reading:** These publications are not meant to each be read during the exercise, but rather added to your reading list.

- *Making Room for Neighbors:* by Lucado & Frazee
- *Once We Were Strangers:* by Shawn Smucker
- *The Art of Neighboring:* by Pathak & Runyon
- *Reckless Love:* by J. Tom Berlin
- *Loving my Actual Neighbor:* by Alexandra Kuykendall

**Suggested Listening:** Music is a productive media to usher the heart and mind into worship. You may have your favorites, but here are a few germane to this topic:

- *God Gave Me You:* by Dave Barnes
- *By Your Side:* by Tenth Avenue North
- *Prayer for a Friend:* by Casting Crowns

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**Part 1: MEANING** Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

King Solomon waxes about life in the book of Ecclesiastes. Some of the information points out the foolishness of it all, but other passages point to wisdom and wise practices. The latter is the case for the scripture listed directly above. Not only does the Bible instruct about how we are to treat our neighbors, but here, a direct benefit of the relationship to each other is pointed out.

Jesus asserts to his disciples, “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you” (John 15:12-14). Here Jesus attaches obedience to Him as a condition of friendship. The point here is if we do not take up a friend's cause, then are we truly a friend?

Take time to meditate:

- How would you define neighbor as used in Luke 10:27?

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- What exhausts you about friendships in your current or past ministry?

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- What practices might you put in place to better manage relationships with friends and neighbors?

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- What resources would you need to put these practices into place and be held accountable?

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*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! Psalm 133:1*

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**Part 2: PERCEPTION** Read Proverbs 27:17

The biblical teaching of influence, both positive and negative, is abundant. The wisdom of noting that iron sharpening iron can be used as a metaphor of relationships and outcomes is deeper than it may first appear. How this is applied to relationship is key, but the proverb evokes a lot of questions; the most obvious two are, “How does iron sharpen iron?” and “How does that apply to a human relationship?”

Each area of heart, soul, strength, and mind has a direct effect on the others. Collectively they can complement or hinder each other; staying on mission with all four deployed to love God effectively, leads to staying on mission in sharing the gospel, which the senior pastor is called to demonstrate and encourage. In a healthy relationship, the Holy Spirit challenges Christians to live outwardly instead of inwardly.

Take time to meditate:

- What neighborly qualities are typically on display in your professional life? Your personal life? If they differ, why?

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- What neighboring terms do people most often use when describing you? Why do you think people feel this way?

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- Do you have a relationship accountability partner or group that you meet with regularly for direction and encouragement? If so, explain. If not, why?

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- What activities do you and your accountability partner or group utilize to foster healthy relationships?

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*There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. Proverbs 18:24b*



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**Part 3: REALITY** Read Psalm 133

The psalmist points out the mutual benefit of maintaining unity in relationship. Men were designed for relationship, both with each other and with God. The triangle visual aid of two people on the bottom corners and God at the top illustrates the way Christians are to become and stay unified. The hard part is keeping near the top, and success depends on the encouragement of each other.

As a senior pastor, you must principally be an avid follower of Christ. You are called by God to lead others in knowing God in a personal relationship through His Son Jesus, obeying God through keeping the instruction of His Word, and loving God as prescribed in the Greatest Commandment. Only by doing so will you be in the position of being able to pull others up to your level of relationship.

Take time to meditate:

- With Luke 10:27 in mind, how do you show love to your neighbor?

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- What new practices might you implement to better love your neighbor?

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- What are your plans to engage your neighbor for the benefit of your role in God's kingdom?

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- What practical advice would you share with anyone concerning neighbors?

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*Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interest of others.  
Philippians 2:4*

## Chapter Four

### Results

The results of the thesis project will be realized into the future as the solutions outlined here become a part of the daily habits of the senior pastors surveyed and the researcher, while the practices learned through scripture and research are implemented and maintained. The Greatest Commandment has been explicated as being about relationship and character. Most pastors already have more knowledge than they will ever effectively use. But having the right relationship with the Creator as first priority, helps build the character that others will embrace and follow. This is from the spiritual point of view, but “there are very practical reasons for placing an emphasis on character rather than emphasizing the need to choose people who have a lot of knowledge and skills. Leaders can have a lot of Bible knowledge and be immature spiritually.”<sup>174</sup> Therefore any metric is necessarily set in the future as well. However, there are some resulting actions for which the research is a catalyst. Defining and understanding the problems and the dynamics of how they arrive in the lives of senior pastors has motivated the researcher to make some distinctions and recommend further research.

First, a proper understanding and approach to compliance of the Greatest Commandments for a senior pastor are attainable, but any approach must take into account the unique nature of the pastorate and the men called to serve there. For senior pastors, the approach may be a bit different compared to that of a non-pastoral believer. This is because leading elicits an expectation of example, dedication, and verifiable result. Albert Mohler notes the differences by

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<sup>174</sup> Gene A. Getz, *The Measure of a Healthy Church: How God Defines Greatness in a Church*. Updated and expanded edition, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 155.

making observations of leaders that never grow out of the simple believing stage, and leaders that jump right into the leading stage at the expense of mastering the believing stage. There is a profound variance in the two stages, and both are necessary to have success in ministry as a senior pastor. Mohler asserts, “Believers are driven by deep and passionate beliefs. They are heavily invested in knowledge, and they are passionate about truth. They devote themselves to learning truth, teaching truth, and defending truth. They define themselves in terms of what they believe, and they are ready to give their lives for these beliefs.”<sup>175</sup> Such belief was witnessed in the life of Jesus’ disciples, and yet they all scattered when things got tough. At the time when Jesus needed them the most, they were not around, though the Bible points out that the only one that didn’t believe was Thomas. But Jesus knew their belief wasn’t enough for what He needed for them to accomplish. For senior pastors in this “believe only” mindset, “The problem is, many of them are not ready to lead. They have never thought much about leadership and are afraid that thinking too much about it will turn them into mere pragmatists, which they know they shouldn’t be. They know a great deal and believe a great deal, but they lack the basics equipment for leadership”<sup>176</sup> Conversely, the leaders that do not excel at keeping their beliefs at the core of what they are working on, over time, even unintentionally, can drift into areas God did not lead them into. Mohler says this group of leaders “are passionate about leadership. They are tired of seeing organizations and movements die or decline, and they want to change things for the better. They look around and see dead and declining churches and lukewarm organizations. They are thrilled by the experience of leading and are ardent students of leadership where they can find

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<sup>175</sup> Mohler, *The Conviction*, 19-20.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

it.”<sup>177</sup> Reading this likely makes most pastors stomachs turn a bit, because most pastors have been in this very place before. Mohler continues, “They talk leadership wherever they go and are masters of motivation, vision, strategy, and execution. The problem is, many of them are not sure what they believe or why it matters. They are masters of change and organizational transformation, but they lack a center gravity in truth.”<sup>178</sup>

For senior pastors, a balance of the two areas Mohler identifies, believing, and leadership is crucial to their success in ministry. Understanding and adhering to the Greatest Commandment requires self-evaluation for all Christians, but for the senior pastor, self-evaluation is paramount because the church he leads depends on his ability to provide a successful, though not perfect, example. The apostle Paul was the first example for the church at Philippi, but he wasn’t perfect, by his own admission: “Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:12-13). However, because he had the “believe” side of the equation in addition to the leader side, he let them know in the same breath that he was going to persevere in his effort: “Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet: but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead. I press on toward the goal of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (v. 14). Therefore, the information learned from these two evaluations, self and ministry, are effectively used to marry the two extremes discussed, and the senior pastor is better equipped for the work God desires of him.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Mohler, *The Conviction*, 19-20.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Adam McClendon, “Leading a Healthy Church” (Video Lectures Weeks 1-8), 2017. [https://learn.liberty.edu/webapps/blackboard/content/listContent.jstor/course\\_id=\\_445089\\_1&content\\_id=\\_235\\_52678\\_1&mode=reset](https://learn.liberty.edu/webapps/blackboard/content/listContent.jstor/course_id=_445089_1&content_id=_235_52678_1&mode=reset) (accessed September 27, 2018).

## Senior Pastor Research Participants

For the researcher, accomplishing a self-evaluation of keeping the Greatest Commandment, a high and holy view of God was essential as the starting point for obedience. In Deuteronomy, the Shema begins by speaking of the high and holy nature of God, where Moses relays, “the Lord is our God, the Lord is one” (Deut 6:4). The holiness of God is noted several times in scripture, of which Christians (even senior pastors) can become callous. Precautions and reminders should be in place moving forward so that the awe and goosebumps that were evoked at the beginning of their relationship with Christ remain. The recollections of when they first read of the seraphim calling out to each other, “holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory. And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke” (Isa 6:3-4) will be evoked often. If this vivid description of “the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple” (v 1) no longer has the moving power it once did in the senior pastor’s life, he will be reminded to consider the fact that those same six-winged seraphim are still in the same place calling out God’s holiness to this day. “And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, IS THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME” (Rev 4:8).

Because of the new focus accomplished by the research of literature, the experience of the researcher, the future participation of senior pastors in an IRB approved survey, and/or experiencing *Lessons from The Greatest Commandment: Keeping the Greatest Commandment the Greatest Bible* study, these four areas of heart, soul, strength, and mind will be better

equipped to be used so that the believer—emotionally, spiritually, physically, and intellectually—loves God to the best of their ability. Participation increases the ability to grow in effectiveness to “love the LORD your God” daily. After research and self-assessment, senior pastors realize that before any of these areas can be employed to show proper love to God, proper understanding of love is critical, as are the four areas to be used as conduits; and to understand what it means to pass through these four conduits to God. The answer to the latter, of course, is love, but even with an intellectual definition, senior pastors still need reminders. Senior pastors will better understand the conduits of love as well as put safeguards in place to assure that the enemy, the deceiver, doesn’t steal what belongs to God. Satan’s craftiness and deceit is strong, but God is stronger if we call on Him, “the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one” (2 Thess 3:3); and take the proper precaution, “Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil” (Eph 6:11).

Another result is the revelation that keeping God in view is important, but there will be inevitable failures to do so; and when these failures occur all is not lost for the senior pastor as “The cognitive dimension of love entails thoughts and images of the loved one, which persist and may even grow more frequent or intense when the loved one is absent”<sup>181</sup> The future survey and study participation properly places the senior pastor in such a position by focusing on their relationship with the Creator and encourages him to relay the information to those whom he leads. Scripture speaks to this model. The apostle Paul admonished the Philippians, “Therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose” (Phil 2:1-2).

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<sup>181</sup> Sutton and Mittelstadt. *Loving God and Loving Others*, 158.

## The Researcher

In addition to the basic understanding senior pastors will gain through the exercises outlined above, the researcher has developed a practical strategy relevant to the goal of becoming the best person God intended. It has been duly noted that learning through all endeavors in life is key to continuing education for a senior pastor. Every conversation, event, and group address engagement, is considered a time for learning; learning as you go. The value of managing time is critical to successfully managing the four areas of heart, soul, strength, and mind. “Time is a profoundly theological issue. It reflects our understanding of God, the creative process, history, human life, and our values as God’s companions in ministry.”<sup>182</sup> This learning strategy was employed and fine-tuned by the researcher for this project using information about himself gleaned from his coursework assessments, completed over the past few months and years in meeting the requirements for a D.Min. degree. Such an undertaking is deemed critical to the researcher’s future as a senior pastor. “The Bible often contrasts those who are prudent with the simple, or foolish. Such individuals are naïve and easily influenced by those around them. They don’t want to do the hard work of thinking things through and asking hard questions.”<sup>183</sup> The researcher was required to create and routinely update a “Guiding Purpose Statement,” which has evolved to the following: “To grow emotionally, spiritually, physically, and mentally by spending quality, God-ordained alone time with spouse.”

The researcher received a SID (Dove, Parrot, and Eagle) DISC (Dominant, Interactive,

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<sup>182</sup> Bruce Epperly, *A Center in the Cyclone* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 87.

<sup>183</sup> Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 201.

Supportive, and Conscientious) assessment.<sup>184</sup> Alone time is currently plentiful, perhaps even too plentiful. Spending time with the spouse helps to draw the researcher out of isolation into a safe place where encouragement is received, and a recharge occurs emotionally, spiritually, physically, and intellectually. Among the ways this activity has improved the life of the researcher are less stress, spiritual renewal, better sleep, and clearer thinking. Such improvements have positively affected life at home, in day-to-day ministry, and relationship with Christ. The time with the spouse has become a place where the researcher can simply exist without worry or guilt, and having no expectations besides reciprocating the unconditional love received. The marital outings as well as the home-front, have become a workshop for developing the four quadrants of Emotional Intelligence. These four contributors to an individual's personality style, correlate to the four areas that the Shema identifies: Dominant (strength-physical), Interactive (heart-emotional), Supportive (soul-spiritual), and Conscientious (mind-intellectual). Therefore the goal of the Christian should be to keep each of these areas as healthy as possible so they can effectively love the LORD their God, as the Greatest Commandment gives direction to follow.

For the researcher, the work in the Personal Competence tier has allowed energy and insight into tackling the Social Competence tier. Social Awareness and Relationship Management have become second nature and easier to quantify.<sup>185</sup> A recent example was the task of developing a new lay leadership team around a "church council" model spelled out in a newly adopted constitution and bylaws at the researcher's church. Placing the right people in charge of the positions that best suited not only their skills but their Emotional Intelligence was

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<sup>184</sup> See Appendix C (Omitted for Publishing).

<sup>185</sup> Bradberry, *Emotional Intelligence*, 24.



key in getting people that could work together effectively. Combining this with information privy to the researcher about individuals under his leadership, regarding their spiritual, intellectual, and physical fortes and shortcomings, allowed him to put together teams of people that would complement the strong traits, and compensate for the weaker ones.

Making these observations in order to properly place people seemed like an insurmountable task at first. However, the newly discovered revelations about himself, and the emotional, spiritual, physical, and intellectual oasis of spending time with his spouse, helped the task to be completed within the time constraints needed. Not only did the self-assessment assist the researcher, but identifying the health of these areas in the lives of the members in his care helped in making decisions and moving forward with plans for ministry. This knowledge not only made the task approachable, but also more enjoyable. This project definitely required the approach of a chameleon.<sup>186</sup>

In response to time spent with his wife, which includes the researcher's intentional renewed approach to their relationship and the success thereof, he has begun a sixty-day endeavor of journaling with the expressed purpose of recording people, places, events, and things that provide encouragement, so that the results can be assessed in future research. The journal is anticipated to be of value for research because the researcher has already witnessed such a quantifiable positive result from applying the knowledge of identifying and tailoring response to personality traits, and in a diminutive timeframe in relation to expectations. To prompt journaling, a time has been set for entries – before retiring for bed each night. A methodical set of questions will prompt the entries each night: First, what special encounter occurred today that

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<sup>186</sup> Merrick Rosenberg, *The Chameleon: Life-Changing Wisdom for Anyone Who Has a Personality or Knows Someone Who Does* (USA: Take Flight Learning, 2016).

risers above the rest? Second, which person's day may have been improved by how the researcher treated them? Third, what new thing did God speak today, and how did He send the message? And finally, what could be done tomorrow to become more like Christ that you didn't do today? "The encouraging note is that our emotional interactions with each other can be formed like Jesus. Jesus' life illustrates that facing challenging situations requires significant emotional maturity and sensitivity."<sup>187</sup> This knowledge reassures senior pastors seeking change to further transform themselves, as well as church and family members, into the image of Christ, while developing people skills to better assist.<sup>188</sup>

### Researcher Emotional Intelligence Evaluation

Part of the required coursework the researcher has participated in preparing for his Doctorate of Ministry Degree was the Pastoral Counseling course, PACO 825, Growth & Development of the Contemporary Minister.<sup>189</sup>

#### COURSE DESCRIPTION

An in-depth look at the person in ministry. Extensive testing will form the foundation for this course, and the results of the testing will be used to develop a growth profile for the individual student.

#### RATIONALE

D.Min. students are required to take this course in order to develop an awareness of the myriad of challenges and opportunities facing ministry leaders today. The course also supports the development of a personal strategy to facilitate longevity in service, increased competency, and person growth in ministry and facilitates its application in his/her personal, spiritual, marital, familial, and ministry life.

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<sup>187</sup> Paul Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2008), 133.

<sup>188</sup> Mels Carbonell, *How to Solve the People Puzzle: Understanding Personality Patterns* (USA: Uniquely You Resources, 2008).

<sup>189</sup> The Course Syllabus for PACO 825, Liberty University Department of Community Care & Counseling.

Two of the programs used<sup>190</sup> for evaluation was a BeMIS Personality Report, based on an adjective list, and a DISC report using the Emotional Intelligence 2.0 book by Bradberry and Greaves, who posit: “Emotional intelligence is the ‘something’ in each of us that is a bit intangible.”<sup>191</sup> The researcher (SPSP1) agrees, which is why several years ago he formed a mental picture of personhood to which he could relate. His father was a home builder, as was the researcher for a few years early in his career, so this imagery particularly resonates. In his mental construct, he sees the heart being the foyer of a home, the mind as the host/resident, the soul the rest of the dwelling, and the body the land upon which it sits. Like all metaphors, the image is limited in scope; but it has served as a useful way to contextualize the function of these areas of human existence.

The foyer of a home is where people are welcomed and then either given entrance to the home or turned away. Such an arrangement occurs with the heart regarding the soul. The heart is the opening to human relations. It is the area of human existence where men can entertain thoughts, feelings, and plans, to determine what to turn away and what to allow in. It serves as a filter of sorts. The rest of the areas have functions in this metaphoric contextualization of the human existence. When the Bible instructs someone to “Love the Lord my God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength” (Mark 12:30), the research conceptualizes: strength (body) as the physical land to which the home is attached. The heart is the foyer or entrance to the home, the soul is the main dwelling area of the home, the main thing, and the mind is the resident/caretaker that orchestrates the functional use and care of itself, as well as the care of the heart, soul, and body.

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<sup>190</sup> EI test results for the researcher (SPSP1) as Appendix C, and D (Omitted for Publishing).

<sup>191</sup> Bradberry and Greaves, *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, 17.

As the researcher read through the text and completed the evaluations for his PACO 825 course, he viewed emotional intelligence through the above described personhood construct (human existence) already formed in his head. As such, emotional intelligence is the relationship between the foyer and the caretaker; that is, the heart and mind. The mind must know the heart well and help decide which emotions that come to visit are allowed to enter for a visit (or reside) and which ones to put out the door, back on the curb. The two, heart and mind, serve as an emotional filter to the soul; and all three exist upon (or within) the body.

The researcher is working on each of the HSSM areas of human existence, and recognizing the role of each in the context as described above is helpful for the researcher as well as those with whom he associates. “Emotional intelligence is your ability to recognize and understand emotions in yourself and others, and your ability to use this awareness to manage your behavior and relationships.”<sup>192</sup>

Since the researcher’s personal and social competence is a work in progress. The four skills outlined in our textbook—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management—rotate in and out of top-shelf attention in his life as a senior pastor. However, over the years, he has come to realize that the social competence will never be balanced if the personal competence is weak. The researcher has seen evidence of the relationship between self and social awareness and self and relationship management throughout his life. “God is at work in me as He was in Jesus’ life when He walked among men.”<sup>193</sup>

Upon evaluation, the Taking Flight from Bradberry and Greaves assessment exercise revealed that the researcher is a parrot dove in both public and private, but the two switch positions of prominence depending on the social setting. In his public self, the parrot is king. In

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<sup>192</sup> Bradberry, *Emotional Intelligence*, 17.

<sup>193</sup> Issler, *Living into*, 63.

his private self, the dove reigns—though interestingly, the eagle rises above the zero grid in his private self. This indicates the researcher is an introvert that acts like an extrovert in social settings—because that is how he thinks people would rather he behave. The researcher realizes that this mindset has placed undue pressure on himself to act a certain way in public, and allow very few to encounter his true private self. He is working to balance where he gets his emotional energy from, and how to protect, or reject (the heart/foyer filter) emotional vibes he may carry with him into social settings, or that are already in the room when he arrives. Learning to read the room is proving to be a worthwhile endeavor, particularly now that the researcher knows what he is looking for. Indeed, working on reading himself before engaging/connecting, and reading others while engaging/connecting, will help the researcher improve his personal as well as his social competence.

#### Further Research Launched

As of submission of this thesis research project, phase two of the study is launched, and results will be gathered over the next several months with the goal of receiving a qualitative research data collection. The further research is in the form of an IRB approved Senior Pastor Survey.<sup>194</sup> The results from this survey will be made a part of this research document when the data is assimilated, vetted, and analyzed for findings. The time frame to accomplish this is estimated to take a calendar year for enough survey material gathered for meaningful research.

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<sup>194</sup> Appendix A

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

Ultimately this research reveals that adherence to the Greatest Commandment is as much a paradox for the Christian as the cross was for Christ. Success for a senior pastor in keeping the Great Commandment can only be realized through faith in the grace bought with the death of Jesus Christ. In the sinful state of fallen men, there is no real path to obedience of any kind worthy of offering to God. Therefore, surrender to Christ and accepting His righteousness as a substitute for the senior pastor's is the only way for true obedience to be achieved. Just as God's greatest power, the salvation of men, through the humility of His Son Jesus on the cross of Calvary, so also is the greatest power of men realized through the same humility. Christians are called to display this definitive humility in the Apostle Paul's letter to the church at Philippi, "have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who . . . emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason, also, God highly exalted Him..." (Phil 2:5, 7-9a).

### Obedience through Humility

Karl Barth provides a scriptural observation of such obedience through humble faith in his work, *Church Dogmatics*:

Christian obedience consists in their ... that by the grace of God, there is a relationship of God with man. For that the Christian community can have specially as knowledge and experience of the atonement made in Jesus Christ, for the power, therefore, of its witness in the world, everything depends on the simplicity of heart which is ready to let the grace of God be exclusively His grace, His sovereign act, His free turning to man as new and strange every morning, so that it does not know anything higher or better or more intimate or real than the fact that quite apart from anything that he can contribute to God or become and be in contrast to Him, unreservedly there and undeservedly, man can hold fast to God and live by and in this holding fast to Him.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (CD), vol. IV/1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1953), 43.

All Christians are called to humility and senior pastors are to lead God's people by example. The intervention of this research project is designed with this view in mind. One of the richest rewards of self-examination is the effect of bringing humility into the senior pastor's life, not to beat him up, but to allow God to lift him up. The senior pastor is fortunate in that his very call to lead by example, positions him uniquely for God to do His most powerful work through him. John Dickson posits, "Humility is the noble choice to forgo your status, deploy your resources, or use your influence for the good of others before yourself. More simply, you could say the humble person is marked by a willingness to hold power in service of others."<sup>196</sup>

In other Scripture, the Holy Spirit makes the distinction that reaching such obedience is about first surrendering their whole self—heart, soul, strength, and mind—to God, rather than self-effort and human resolve. "Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He might exalt you at the proper time" (1 Pet 5:6). The original audience is denoted as "the elders among you . . ." (v. 1), and refers to the elders as "yourselves" (v. 6), denoting their whole selves, which is constituted of the four areas of heart, soul, strength, and mind. But as humble as the senior pastor may strive to be, there is a caution in laying claim to success in keeping the Great Commandment. "For to say that you love God with all of your minds, and all of your soul, and all of your strength, and all of your heart, really is to say that you never sin, because it would be impossible to sin if you loved God in this way."<sup>197</sup> Therefore, humility should especially be applied in approaching the topic of obedience to the Greatest Commandment.

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<sup>196</sup> John Dickson, *Humilitas: A Lost Key to Life, Love, and Leadership*, (Grand Rapids, MI: 2011), 24.

<sup>197</sup> R. C. Sproul, *A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1999), 226.

Throughout the Bible, the idiom of humble surrender leading to exaltation is repeated. The Apostle Peter admonishes, “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you” (1 Pet 5:6-7). Here the apostle not only directs followers of Christ to surrender and expect exaltation from God, but he also adds that God will exalt the Christian as it suits *His timing*, and Christians are not to worry about the timing or repercussions good or bad, that result from showing humility. For senior pastors, as shepherds of the church, the beginning of Christian leadership is to surrender in humility so that God can fulfill the promise of exaltation in their life and, more importantly, ministry. Success in pastoral ministry is contingent upon the pastor to lead by this example with the whole of their existence.<sup>198</sup>

Finding and maintaining humility in leadership can be an elusive endeavor and requires effective management of emotion to achieve success. Knowledge, works, and being spiritual will not bring a senior pastor to this point of obedience, though they can certainly contribute, so the mind, strength, and soul acquiesce to the heart to embrace the right emotions and reject the wrong ones. The leadership foundation of seeking the Holy Spirit to develop and empower leaders for ministry has served the Kingdom’s business well throughout the history of the church; Christian growth is fostered by doing Christian life together. As such, the pastor must be a part of the community’s life. This demonstrates his love for the people and helps push the mission and vision forward. “The leader’s life communicates the ministry’s vision.”<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Dickson, *Humilitas*,

<sup>199</sup> Aubrey M. Malphurs and Gordon E. Penfold, *Re: Vision: The Key to Transforming Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 161.



## Obedience through Discernment

Further, the senior pastor that knows his emotional intelligence, and can discern certain emotional traits of others, will develop a heart that provides a proper response in all settings and circumstances. Further, such proper management of emotion is contagious in a leadership dynamic. “Equipping pastors with higher competency in EI (Emotional Intelligence) will better equip them to fulfill their spiritual calling as they provide a positive example of emotional health and serve their congregations with emotional maturity.”<sup>200</sup>

## Obedience through Comprehensive Approach

Success as a pastor cannot, however, stop at managing the heart alone. The Greatest Commandment for the senior pastor is essentially about striving to build up all four areas of their lives, emotionally, spiritually, physically, and intellectually by understanding and conditioning the heart, soul, strength, and mind in their life for obedience to God. Keeping the Greatest Commandment is preemptive medicine for relational problems between God and men, and men with each other. Many adverse conflictual events can be avoided altogether if the warning signs are appropriately identified, so a biblical response can be applied at the beginning of a problem. “Satan is countering that by getting us to live for self, indulging in sin and carnal gratification, adopting the values and standards of the world rather than living a separated life of holiness . . . he lies and deceives, causing us to rationalize and doubt the truth of God’s Word. He creates conflict, dissension, and disunity in the body of Christ, and is behind anything that keeps God from being glorified.”<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> John Lee West, “An Analysis of Emotional Intelligence Training and Pastoral Job Satisfaction,” *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* vol. 70(4), 2016, 228-243 Accessed February 2, 2020 <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1177/1542305016680629>

<sup>201</sup> Jerry Rankin, *Spiritual Warfare: The Battle for God's Glory* (Nashville, TN: B&H Books, 2009), 56.

One obvious early result that can point to the onset of conflict is the tendency to anger easily and hold it for a while. Like conflict, not all anger is wrong; but to allow anger to linger ignores the instruction of Scripture. The Apostle Paul invokes the fourth Psalm in instructing the church at Ephesus: “‘In your anger do not sin.’ Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold” (Ephesians 4:26-7 NIV). “Anger is a secondary response telling us that something is missing, wrong, or uncomfortable and needs to be checked, fixed, or changed.”<sup>202</sup> Identifying the root of anger and dealing with the circumstance expeditiously goes a long way in quickly settling the conflict. Loving God with the HSSM helps senior pastors, and all Christians, more readily identify the warning signs.

### Obedience through Absolute Surrender

Humans are universally called to the Lord God with not only the two parts of humanness that He gave them at creation—a soul inside a body, but God also calls on humans to love Him with the two things man attained at The Fall: heart and mind. Achieving this may manifest itself diversely in senior pastors, but all find their way to this goal by walking closely with God and learning something from every experience life unfolds. Dietrich Bonhoeffer noted that God often uses events and conditions for His purpose, and we must trust Him. “I believe that nothing meaningless has happened to me and also that it is good for us when things run counter to our desires, I see a purpose in my present existence and only hope that I fulfill it.”<sup>203</sup>

A research process such as this, is an example of an experience that leads one closer to God. “It can be concluded that learning through research . . . is an in-depth, intense, emotional

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<sup>202</sup> Chip Ingram, *Overcoming Emotions That Destroy: Practical Help for Those Angry Feelings That Ruin Relationships* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 81.

<sup>203</sup> Stephen J. Nichols, *Bonhoeffer on the Christian Life: From the Cross, for the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 19.

and reflective process that requires . . . (i) a cognitive apprehension of new concepts, (ii) observing . . . from different perspectives, (iii) a profound cognitive, emotional and social relationship with a chosen research object . . . oneself, and . . . others, and (iv) a personal discovery . . . at an emotional level.”<sup>204</sup> Ultimately, senior pastors must turn to Jesus Christ for help in keeping the Greatest Commandment, as He informs in John’s Gospel, chapter 14, verse 6, that “no one comes to the Father but through me.” Striving to live more like Christ (the Great Shepherd) every day will help the senior pastor (the under-shepherd) to love Him more effectively with heart, soul, strength, and mind.

### Obedience through Shepherding

Tim Laniak has written a superb book, *Shepherds after My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible*, which defines and identifies the monograph of shepherding in the Holy Scriptures. Old and New Testament examples and narratives of shepherding lend themselves as both idyllic nuances and strong characterizations of relations with God and others. The shepherd lifestyle, disposition, struggles, and purpose—create a productive, relevant teaching tool for students of the Bible, particularly for Christian leaders. Acknowledging and teaching the nature and intricacies of shepherding that is woven into the biblical narratives presents new opportunities for connection and comprehension of biblical principles. The book evokes a desire to apply ancient shepherding concepts to modern ministry. Through this enhanced understanding of shepherding, a closer and better relationship with the Great Shepherd is possible. “With the ancient Israelites, we confess, ‘My father was a wandering Aramean.’ With a later generation, we affirm that the Great Shepherd ‘pitched his tent’ among us

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<sup>204</sup> Baptista, Ana V. “‘With all my heart’ Mature students’ emotions while doing a research-based PhD.” *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences* Vol. 114, (2014), 914-918. Accessed February 1, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.12.807>.

(John 1:14; cf. 2 Sam. 7:6) and showed us how to live and die for those sheep who recognize His name.”<sup>205</sup>

The New Testament is full of direction and encouragement for those who seek Him, as is the Old Testament, “You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart” (Jer 29:13). King David covers all of the four areas God requires to love Him at the close of the 139<sup>th</sup> Psalm, verses 23-24:

(heart/emotion), “Search me, O God, and know my heart” (what he feels)  
(mind/intellect), “Try me and know my anxious thoughts” (what he thinks)  
(strength/physical-self), “see if there be any hurtful way in me” (what he does)  
(soul/spirit), “and lead me in the everlasting way” (to eternity)

May the searching and researching continue in earnest until “face to face . . . I will know fully just as I also have been fully known” (1 Cor 13:12). Amen.

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<sup>205</sup> Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 251.

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## APPENDIX A

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 13, 2020

Herbert K. Smith

IRB Exemption 4134.021320: How Evangelical Pastors Manage the Four Areas of the Greatest Commandment—Heart, Soul, Strength, and Mind—and Practical Applications for Obedience

Dear Herbert K. Smith,

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

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

(2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

(iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

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

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

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**

*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*  
**Research Ethics Office**

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## APPENDIX B

### **Survey for the doctoral thesis project of Herbert K. Smith, a doctoral candidate at Liberty University Rawlings School of Divinity**

#### *How Evangelical Pastors Manage the Four Areas of the Greatest Commandment—Heart, Soul, Strength, and Mind*

Taken by survey pool via email with link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QZVTJ8K>

1. Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_
2. Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are you currently serving, or have you formerly served, as a licensed and ordained senior pastor in an evangelical church?
  - ☐ Yes. (Please continue with the survey)
  - ☐ No. (Thank you for participating. The remainder of this survey does not apply to your background)
4. Approximately how long have you been licensed and/or ordained?
  - ☐ Less than five years
  - ☐ More than five years, less than 10
  - ☐ More than 10 years, less than 15
  - ☐ More than 15 years, less than 20
  - ☐ Twenty plus years
5. What is your gender?
  - ☐ Male
  - ☐ Female
6. What is your age range?
  - ☐ 18-24
  - ☐ 25-34
  - ☐ 35-44
  - ☐ 45-54
  - ☐ 55-64
  - ☐ 65+

7. Marital Status?

- ☐ Married
- ☐ Single
- ☐ Widow/Widower
- ☐ Widow/Widower and Re-married
- ☐ Divorced and single
- ☐ Divorced and Re-married

8. How long have you been married to your current spouse?

- ☐ 0 – 5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-20 years
- ☐ 21-30 years
- ☐ 31-40 years
- ☐ 41-50 years
- ☐ 51 plus years
- ☐ Not applicable

9. If currently divorced, how long has this been your status?

- ☐ 0 – 5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-20 years
- ☐ 21-30 years
- ☐ 31+ years
- ☐ Not applicable

10. If widowed, how long have you been widowed?

- ☐ 0 – 5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-20 years
- ☐ 21-30 years
- ☐ 31+ years
- ☐ Not applicable

11. Regarding your children, check all that apply.

- ☐ No children
- ☐ Infant / toddler
- ☐ Pre-school / kindergarten
- ☐ Elementary school
- ☐ Middle school
- ☐ High school
- ☐ College age
- ☐ Already out of home

12. Does your spouse help directly with your ministry?

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Usually
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never
- ☐ Not applicable

13. Do any of your children help directly with your ministry?

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Usually
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never
- ☐ Not applicable

14. If family members help in your ministry, please briefly describe how.

11. Are you currently serving as a senior pastor?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

12. How long have you been serving at your current church?

- ☐ Less than five years
- ☐ More than five, less than ten
- ☐ More than ten, less than fifteen



- ☐ More than fifteen, less than Twenty
- ☐ Twenty plus years
- ☐ Not Applicable

15. How many ministerial staff members do you oversee?

- ☐ One
- ☐ Two
- ☐ Three to five
- ☐ Six to Ten
- ☐ Over ten
- ☐ Not applicable

16. If you are not currently serving as a senior pastor, how long have you been out of the pulpit?

- ☐ Less than five years
- ☐ More than five, less than ten
- ☐ More than ten, less than fifteen
- ☐ More than fifteen, less than twenty
- ☐ Twenty plus
- ☐ Not applicable

17. If you are no longer in the pulpit, how did you leave?

- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Voluntary resignation to search for a call elsewhere
- ☐ Voluntary resignation to acquire a secular job
- ☐ Forced resignation through buyout or separation agreement
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Not applicable

18. If you selected any response BESIDES Retired for question 15, please briefly explain the details here.

19. Mark all that apply - What reason(s) were given if you were forced out of the pulpit?

- ☐ Immoral behavior
- ☐ Dishonest behavior
- ☐ Illegal behavior
- ☐ Job performance

- ☐ Bad health
- ☐ No reason given
- ☐ Not a fit
- ☐ Not Applicable

20. How would you define the word “heart” as used in Luke 10:27?

21. What emotionally exhausts you about your current or past ministry?

22. Have you ever participated in an emotional intelligence test or survey?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

23. If so, were you surprised at the assessment?

- ☐ A great deal
- ☐ A lot
- ☐ A moderate amount
- ☐ A little
- ☐ None at all
- ☐ Not applicable

24. Did you make any specific lifestyle changes due to the assessment?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not applicable

25. If so, please explain the lifestyle changes you made.

26. Which emotion is typically on open display in your professional life?

27. Which emotion is typically on open display in your private/family life?

28. Which emotional term do people most often use when describing you?

29. Why do you think people use this term to describe you?

30. Do you agree with the term others use to describe you? Why or why not?

31. What are the emotional deficiencies you see in yourself?

32. With Luke 10:27 in mind, how do you show love to God with all of your heart?

33. Share any practical advice for anyone regarding how they can best love God with all of their heart.

34. How would you define the word “soul” as used in Luke 10:27

35. What spiritually exhausts you about your current or past ministry and why?

36. Do you have a spiritual accountability partner or group you meet with regularly for direction, encouragement, and accountability?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

37. How often does your accountability partner or group meet?

- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Every other week
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ No set time
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Never meet
- ☐ Not applicable

38. Do you have any personal practices or programs you employ to stay spiritually healthy?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

39. Please describe any personal practices or programs you employ to stay spiritually healthy in detail - including how long you have practiced or participated.

40. Are there any personal practices or programs which you have stopped using?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

41. Which practices or programs have you stopped using?

42. Have you employed any lifestyle changes to improve your spiritual health?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

43. Describe any lifestyle changes you have employed to improve your spiritual health.

44. Describe the spiritual qualities that are typically on display in your personal life.
45. Describe the spiritual qualities that are typically on display in your public life.
46. Do people ever describe you using spiritual terms?
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
47. If people describe you in spiritual terms, what spiritual terms do people generally use to describe you?
48. If you noted spiritual terms with which people use to describe you in your response to question #46, in your opinion, why do they describe you using these spiritual terms?
49. Do you agree with the way people describe you in spiritual terms?
- ☐ Sometimes
  - ☐ Never
  - ☐ Always
  - ☐ Not applicable
50. Why do you agree or disagree?
51. What are the spiritual deficiencies you see in yourself?
52. What practical advice would you share with anyone about loving God with all their soul?
53. How would you define the word “strength” as used in Luke 10:27
54. What physically exhausts you about your current or past ministry and why?
55. Are you satisfied with how you maintain yourself physically?
- ☐ Always
  - ☐ Sometimes
  - ☐ Never
56. What physical health practices do you currently use to increase and/or maintain physical health and strength?
57. Do you have a physical health accountability partner or group that you meet with regularly for direction and encouragement?
- ☐ Yes

☐ No

58. How often do you meet?

- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Every other week
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ No set time
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Never meet
- ☐ Not applicable

59. Have you employed any specific physical health lifestyle changes to improve in any areas? If so, which areas?

60. Which physical health and growth practices have you employed in the past, but are not currently practicing?

61. Do people ever describe you using physical terms? If so, which terms do they use?

62. If you noted terms in question #61 that people use to describe you using physical terms, in your opinion, why do they describe you using such terms?

63. Do you agree with how people describe you using the physical terms you noted in question #61? Why or why not?

64. Describe any physical qualities that are typically on open display in your personal life.

65. Describe any physical qualities that are typically on open display in your public life.

66. With Luke 10:27 in mind, how do you show love to God with all your strength?

67. Please share any practical advice for anyone regarding loving God with all their strength.

68. How would you define the word “mind” as used in Luke 10:27?

69. What intellectually exhausts you about your current or past ministry and why?

70. How do you maintain and or improve yourself intellectually? Be specific.

71. Which intellectual health practices have you employed in the past but are currently not practicing?

72. Do you have an intellectual health accountability partner or group that you meet with regularly for direction and encouragement?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

73. How often do you meet?

- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Every other week
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ No set time
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Never meet
- ☐ Not applicable

74. If you answered yes to question #71, which activities do you and your accountability partner or group utilize for intellectual health and growth?

75. Which personal practices/programs do you employ to stay intellectually healthy?

76. Have you employed any specific lifestyle changes to improve in any area of intellectual health? If so, describe.

77. Which intellectual qualities are typically on open display in your personal life?

78. Which intellectual qualities are typically on open display in your public life?

79. Do people ever describe you using intellectual terms? If so, which terms do they use?

80. If you noted terms in question #79 that people use to describe you using intellectual terms, in your opinion, why do they describe you using such terms?

81. Do you agree with how people describe you using the intellectual terms you noted in question #79? Why or why not?

82. What are the intellectual deficiencies you see in yourself?

83. With Luke 10:27 in mind, how do you show love to God with all your mind?

84. Do you have any practical advice for anyone regarding loving God with all their mind?

84. Please share any additional thoughts that come to mind regarding Luke 10:27.

\*Appendix C and D omitted for publishing.



## Pastoral Ministries 2009 Survey Focus on the Family

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### INTRODUCTION

The Pastoral Ministries division of Focus on the Family has been reaching out to pastors and their families since November 1991. Our primary objective over these years has been the welfare of the pastor's family. We believe it is essential for all pastors to focus on their own families first in order to have the healthy relationships they need as a foundation for ministry.

In order to learn more about those pastors with whom we have some level of relationship, we created a survey that would help us better understand who they are and what they would like from us in the way of support.

### EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

We wondered what kind of educational background our pastoral audience had that prepared them for pastoring or some other form of ministry. Here's the breakout of their highest level of education:

No Diploma	0.3%
High School Diploma	9.0%
Associate's Degree	9.6%
Bachelor's Degree	29.9%
<b>Master's Degree</b>	<b>41.1%</b>
Doctorate Degree	10.1%

In reference to where they received their theological/biblical training, this is what they said:

None	1.8%
Church-sponsored program	14.3%
Bible College	31.7%
University	7.5%
<b>Seminary</b>	<b>44.7%</b>

### AGE

Those pastors who find our resources, services and support helpful tend to be in the older brackets. The age groups included:

60 and over	22.8%
<b>50-59</b>	<b>41.8%</b>
40-49	25.3%
30-39	8.5%
20-29	1.6%
Under 20	0%

While these findings do not surprise us, it does underscore our need to connect with the younger generations of pastors and their families, and we strongly desire to do so.



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### DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATION

There is a vast array of non-denomination and denominational churches representative of North America. The largest category of churches was non-denominational (14.1%). Southern Baptists are the largest denomination (13.5%), followed by Assemblies of God (7.4%) and Nazarene (7.1%).

### ETHNICITY

Among those who took the survey, 87.3% were Caucasian, 3.4% were African-American, 2.6% were Hispanic, 1.8% were Asian, 1.5% were Native-American, and 3.4% consider themselves in some other category. Since we have been rather intentional about reaching a variety of ethnicities, these stats are rather discouraging and show we'll have to work harder or change strategies.

### GENDER, MARITAL STATUS AND CHILDREN

About 95% of the respondents were male. In reference to marital status, 97% were married and nearly 1.7% were single. Those divorced or widowed were 0.8 % and 0.5%, respectively. Nearly 72% have children still living at home. These numbers fit well into Focus on the Family's core emphasis on the importance of marriage and parenting.

### A TYPICAL WORK WEEK

Of the 1,548 respondents who identify themselves as full-time pastors and Christian leaders (those who work at ministry for 40 or more hours per week), here's the breakout:

40-49 hours	37.2%
<b>50-59 hours</b>	<b>42.6%</b>
60+ hours	20.2%

The 470 part-time pastors and Christian leaders (those who work at ministry for less than 40 hours per week) said they were logging the following number of hours each week:

Less than 20 hours	15.5%
<b>20-29 hours</b>	<b>51.9%</b>
30-39 hours	32.6%

### BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTRY

When we asked whether a respondent was a full-time pastor or bi-vocational, 77.6% said they are full-time and 22.4% said they are bi-vocational. We found that 90.3% of bi-vocational pastors are male and 10.4% are female. However, we discovered that there are quite a few bi-vocational pastors who work full-time hours, as the following numbers indicate:





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#### (BI-VOCATIONAL PASTORS)

Less than 20 hours	14.6%
<b>20-29 hours</b>	<b>51.3%</b>
30-39 hours	23.2%
40-49 hours	9.1%
50-59 hours	1.5%
60+ hours	0.9%

Bi-vocational pastors who are also the only pastor at their churches comprise 50.9% of bi-vocational leaders, while 16.4% of senior pastors (those with all staff pastors reporting to them) are bi-vocational. We realized too late that we needed to better define these categories and that many solo pastors prefer to be considered senior pastors unless clearly specified.

#### THE TOP RESPONSIBILITY

Those ministers who shoulder the ultimate responsibility in a church can often be the most stressed and short on discretionary time. Looking at just solo pastors and senior pastors, we found the following curves in hours worked each week in ministry.

<u>Part-time</u>	<u>Solo</u>	<u>Senior</u>
Less than 20 hours	..2.9%	..0.8%
20-29 hours	13.4%	..4.9%
30-39 hours	10.1%	..4.5%
<u>Full-time</u>		
40-49 hours	<b>33.4%</b>	25.9%
50-59 hours	28.3%	<b>42.9%</b>
60+ hours	12.3%	21.4%

#### YEARS IN MINISTRY

We've heard in recent years that those answering God's call are not staying with it very long, but the following relatively even spread of longevity is encouraging. Respondents told us they had been in pastoral ministry for the following number of years. The average was 20.3 years.

0 – 5 years	10.6%
6 – 10 years	14.7%
11 – 15 years	14.1%
16 – 20 years	13.3%
<b>21 – 25 years</b>	<b>14.8%</b>
26 – 30 years	13.7%
31 – 35 years	9.1%
More than 35 years	9.7%

It's also worth noting that according to the Barna Group, the average pastoral career lasts only 14 years, and 1,500 pastors leave their assignments every month in the United States because of conflict, burn-out or moral failure.



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#### NUMBER OF CHURCHES SERVED DURING YEARS IN MINISTRY

Our respondents have served an average of 3.4 churches during their years in ministry.

No churches	1.0%
One church	19.9%
<b>Two churches</b>	<b>22.3%</b>
Three churches	19.9%
Four churches	13.6%
Five churches	9.9%
Six to ten churches	12.1%
Eleven to fifteen churches	1.2%
Sixteen or more churches	0.2%

#### COMPENSATION

##### Salary

None	9.9%
\$19K or under	16.4%
<b>\$20 – \$39K</b>	<b>30.8%</b>
\$40 – \$59K	27.8%
\$60 – \$79K	11.2%
\$80K+	3.9%

It's noteworthy that 199 of the total respondents or 9.9 % receive no salary. Additionally, 2.1% of full-time pastors, 36.7% of bi-vocational pastors, 6.7% of solo pastors and 3.7% of senior pastors receive no salary.

##### Benefits

In reference to benefits, pastors and ministry leaders were asked to check all that apply.

<u>Benefit</u>	<u>All Respondents</u>	<u>Only Pastors</u>	<u>Senior Pastors</u>	<u>Bivocational</u>
Auto	0.7%	19.1%	28.4%	8.4%
Housing	51.3%	59.0%	57.1%	26.1%
Medical	55.5%	49.7%	67.3%	12.8%
Dental	21.8%	17.2%	26.8%	2.4%
Life Insurance	18.4%	14.4%	23.2%	4.2%
Retirement	45.4%	42.8%	56.4%	13.7%
<b>Paid Vacation</b>	<b>69.1%</b>	<b>69.3%</b>	<b>80.7%</b>	30.1%
None	16.4%	14.0%	7.0%	49.1%

From the survey, we learned that 16.4% of the pastors we serve do not receive any benefits apart from salary. Among bi-vocational pastors, 49.1% receive no benefits versus just 7.0% of full-time pastors. Solo pastors indicate that 14.0% of them do not receive any of these benefits, while 7.0% of senior pastors claim the same.

Perhaps the richest benefit any pastor could receive today is health or medical. Unfortunately, it's not always easy to come by. Based on responses to the May (2008) Evangelical Leaders Survey,



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Leith Anderson, president of the National Association of Evangelicals, states, “Thousands of pastors and churches are among the millions of Americans without health insurance.” Anderson goes on to say, “This is a large and growing problem for American pastors and churches. So many churches are small and too many pastors are uninsured. There is no room in limited budgets for premiums or no way to get adequate insurance at any price. As clergy age with the rest of America’s population, we may see a growing list of pastors entering retirement with bankrupting medical bills.”

Within the Pastoral Ministries division at Focus on the Family, our concern is the monumental stress and distraction this places on pastors and their families.

#### DAYS OFF TAKEN EACH WEEK

No days off	17.3%
<b>1 day off</b>	<b>58.6%</b>
2 days off	19.6%
More than 2 days off	4.5%

#### FORCED RESIGNATIONS/TERMINATIONS

Denise George, in her new book, *What Pastors Wish Church Members Knew* (Zondervan, 2009), says getting fired is one of a pastor’s greatest fears. George cites one pastor who admitted, “I’ve been in my church for 10 years. For many church members today, firing the pastor is like changing cars — a new one is fun to drive! I fear being terminated by my church people who decide they just want a change.” A Southern Baptist pastor expresses his concerns on this topic: “I’m afraid to go on my annual two-week vacation because I might not have a job when I get back!”

If you’ve been a pastor for any amount of time, you know the chances of being “forced out” at one time or another is a growing reality. Here’s what we found overall in response to the question, “Have you ever experienced a forced resignation/termination?”

Yes	23.6%
<b>No</b>	<b>76.4%</b>

The following data represents how the four largest categories or denominations of churches answered the question, “Have you ever experienced a forced resignation/termination?”

##### Non-Denominational (284 respondents)

Yes	16.5%
<b>No</b>	<b>83.5%</b>

##### Southern Baptists (272 respondents)

Yes	29.0%
<b>No</b>	<b>71.0%</b>



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### Assemblies of God (150 respondents)

Yes	30.0%
<b>No</b>	<b>70.0%</b>

### Nazarene (143 respondents)

Yes	27.3%
<b>No</b>	<b>72.7%</b>

## WEEKEND ATTENDANCE OF THE CHURCHES THAT PASTORS SERVE

Less than 50	20.9%
<b>50 – 149</b>	<b>43.6%</b>
150 – 199	10.4%
200 – 299	8.5%
300 – 499	7.5%
500 – 999	5.3%
1000 – 1999	1.9%
2000+	1.9%

These numbers are based on average weekend attendance and not “membership.” The majority of the pastors who serve alone (89.3%) are pastoring churches that are 149 or less in attendance. Thom S. Rainer (founder of the Rainer Group) states that, “In 70 percent of the churches in America, the pastor is the only full-time staff person.” While most of those churches are smaller in number (150 or less), there are some solo pastors in larger churches as well:

Less than 50	34.5%
<b>50 – 149</b>	<b>55.8%</b>
150 – 199	5.7%
200 – 299	3.3%
300 – 499	0.7%
500+	0.0%

## CHURCH GROWTH IN THE LAST YEAR

<b>Grown</b>	<b>47.1%</b>
Stayed the same	35.2%
Declined	17.7%

Over the past several months, we've found opportunities to ask pastors why they believe their churches have grown in attendance in the last year. One would expect their answers to be related to a new vision, a new building or some change in ministry philosophy. However, we're hearing that growth is more related to crisis — in this case, the current financial and economic crisis the nation is facing. Pastors speculate that people are coming in greater numbers because they're searching for answers to the most important questions of life.



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#### HAVE YOU EVER TAKEN A SABBATICAL SEPARATE FROM VACATION?

Yes	15.2%
<b>No</b>	<b>84.8%</b>

This could be an indication of why so many pastors suffer from burnout? They're not getting away for an extended time of focused introspection, rest and renewal. It needs to be said, however, that, if churches do provide for a sabbatical, it's normally after you've been on staff for 5-7 years. The average time a pastor serves in one church is 4.1 years. This begs the question: Are most pastors "moving on" before they have a chance to take advantage of a sabbatical?

#### DO PASTORS AND MINISTRY LEADERS MODEL A DAILY DEVOTIONAL LIFE WITH GOD—THE LIFE THEY CALL OTHERS TO ON A CONSISTENT BASIS?

We attempted to arrive at some of this answer through asking the question, "How much time do you spend in personal devotions each day (not including sermon or other teaching preparation?" Here's the breakdown of how respondents answered this question:

Less than 30 minutes	45.6%
<b>30-60 minutes</b>	<b>47.2%</b>
More than 60 minutes	7.2%

In addition to trying to assess pastors' and ministry leaders' spiritual health, we tried to put a finger on the pulse of their physical health by asking the following question:

#### WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES THE AMOUNT OF TIME YOU SPEND INTENTIONALLY EXERCISING EACH WEEK?

<b>None</b>	<b>30.8%</b>
At least 20-30 minutes, 1-2 days a week	10.4%
At least 20-30 minutes, 1-2 days a week	21.9%
At least 20-30 minutes, 3-4 days a week	21.6%
At least 20-30 minutes, 4+ days a week	15.4%

Our findings on this question compare with an Ellison Research Study (original release date: August 1, 2003) that showed 28 percent of pastors don't typically get any exercise at all.

#### IF YOU ARE THE LEAD PREACHING/TEACHING PASTOR, HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU SPEND EACH WEEK IN SERMON PREPARATION?

N/A	12.4%
Less than 10 hours	26.0%
<b>10 – 15 hours</b>	<b>38.3%</b>
16 – 20 hours	17.2%
More than 20 hours	6.1%

N/A=Not a preaching or teaching pastor



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Unless you're a pastor who's downloading sermons to preach each week, you know preaching/teaching preparation needs to be a significant part of your week because of the relentless return of the weekend! Further, many of those in your congregation expect preaching/teaching to be your most important weekly task.

#### HAVE YOU EVER SOUGHT HELP FOR DEPRESSION THROUGH MEDICATION OR PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING?

Yes	21.2%
No	78.8%

Affecting over 19 million Americans, clinical depression is one of the fastest growing and most common illnesses in our country. Though it is almost always treatable through medication, counseling and in most cases a combination of the two, many people forego treatment because they believe they can "deal" with this on their own. For others, it's often seen as a sign of weakness.

Unfortunately, for many Christ-followers, depression is viewed as a spiritual failure. Even as pastors, we're quick at times to tell someone who might be dealing with depression, "Pray more. Read this passage of Scripture and memorize these few verses. Then, you'll be okay." Perhaps that's a bit oversimplified; however, this is not a topic we often discuss openly. The reality, though, is depression happens. Martin Luther had it. Charles Spurgeon had it. Charles Stanley had it. In a recent interview on our *Pastor To Pastor* audio series, Pastor Tommy Nelson shared about his own struggle with depression. We encourage you to download this edition entitled, "Keeping Your Spirits Up" at [www.parsonage.org](http://www.parsonage.org). It's free!

#### DO YOU MEET WITH AN ACCOUNTABILITY PERSON OR GROUP ON A REGULAR BASIS (AT LEAST ONCE EVERY COUPLE WEEKS)?

Yes	41.8%
No	58.2%

We've all seen the headlines: "Another pastor falls." Over the years, we've learned that pastors can prevent from being the next casualty. We encourage them to meet with someone. Ask one another some pointed questions. Respond honestly to one another. Speak truth in love to one another.

#### HOW OFTEN DO YOU INTENTIONALLY VIEW PORNOGRAPHY ON THE INTERNET (OR IN OTHER FORMS)?

Never	75.1%
Occasionally	22.8%
Monthly	0.5%
Weekly	1.1%
Daily	0.3%

Given the private and secretive nature of porn use, it's often difficult to arrive at reliable data of who's using it. Additionally, individuals (pastors and Christian leaders, in this case) are more likely



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to refrain from self-reporting, even on a survey, for fear of being found out somehow. Whatever the real numbers are, the use of pornography is pandemic. If you're addicted or just struggling some in this area, please know help is available. But you must reach out. Here are three initial ways you can do that:

1. If you would like to speak with a pastor, call our toll-free Pastoral Care Line at 1-877-233-4455, Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (Mountain).
2. If you would like to speak to a licensed counselor, call our Counseling Department at 1-800-A-FAMILY (232-6459), Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Mountain). Both are free and we have a vast referral network.
3. Visit the Web site of one of the ministries that specialize in this addiction. One of the best, Pure Intimacy, can be found through a link on our Parsonage Web site ([www.parsonage.org](http://www.parsonage.org)). Other Web sites and pastoral caregiving ministries that deal with this problem can be found in our Online Pastoral Care Directory, also on the Parsonage.

#### WHILE SERVING AS A PASTOR, HAVE YOU EVER BEEN INVOLVED IN AN INAPPROPRIATE (EITHER SEXUAL OR EMOTIONAL) RELATIONSHIP WITH A MEMBER OF THE OPPOSITE OR SAME SEX?

Yes	8.7%
No	91.3%

#### AMONG THE SO-CALLED "SEVEN DEADLY SINS" (GREED, GLUTTONY, ENVY, LAZINESS, PRIDE, LUST AND ANGER), WHICH THREE DO YOU STRUGGLE WITH THE MOST?

- # 1 Anger
- # 2 Lust
- # 3 Pride

#### HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS OF YOUR LIFE?

	<u>Unhealthy</u>	<u>Healthy</u>	<u>Thriving</u>
Marriage (if applicable)	5.6%	51.2%	43.2%
Family (if applicable)	3.4%	62.4%	34.2%
Management of finances	18.5%	63.5%	18.0%
Time Management	27.4%	66.7%	5.9%

#### DO YOU HAVE A CLOSE COLLEAGUE/FRIEND WITH WHOM YOU COMMUNICATE ON A REGULAR BASIS?

Yes	71.3%
No	28.7%



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While those with this type of relationship far outweigh those who don't, that still leaves nearly a third of pastors and ministry leaders who give the impression that they are "Lone Ranger" types. Again, we encourage pastors and ministry leaders to have someone in their lives who can speak truth in love to you on a consistent basis. As one pastor likes to say, "Christianity was meant to be immensely personal (in your relationship between you and Christ); however it was never meant to be private."

#### WHAT OVERALL IMPACT IS YOUR MINISTRY HAVING ON YOUR MARRIAGE/FAMILY?

<b>Positive</b>	<b>65.1%</b>
Negative	11.6%
Neither	23.3%

#### HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR GENERAL LEVEL OF FULFILLMENT AS A PASTOR?

Very fulfilled	24.7%
<b>Mostly fulfilled</b>	<b>62.4%</b>
Mostly unfulfilled	11.9%
Very unfulfilled	1.0%

Our findings on this question compare with Group's First Annual State of the Church Survey (2009). Group's survey reflected that 60 percent of pastors and church leaders said they were "mostly satisfied" in their work with their church and another 20 percent indicated they were "very satisfied." The clear majority of pastors and ministry leaders sense a great deal of fulfillment in what God has called them to do. As a follow-up to this question, we wanted to drill down a bit deeper by asking a couple more questions that would help us assess pastors' general sense of satisfaction with their role as pastors. Those questions follow:

#### WHAT ONE WORD BEST DESCRIBES EMOTIONALLY WHERE YOU ARE TODAY IN PASTORAL MINISTRY?

Energized	8.6%
<b>Encouraged</b>	<b>34.0%</b>
Fulfilled	15.8%
Apathetic	1.9%
Lonely	8.0%
Discouraged	14.7%
Exhausted	10.3%
Overwhelmed	6.7%

#### HOW LIKELY YOU ARE TO BE INVOLVED IN THE PASTORATE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW?

<b>Very likely</b>	<b>58.6%</b>
Most likely	24.8%
Unsure	12.4%
Most likely	2.1%
Very unlikely	2.1%





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Again, our findings parallel Group's 2009 survey of pastors and church leaders which showed that 57 percent said they'd "definitely" be involved in pastoral or church leadership five years from now, and 29 percent said "probably."

#### AS IT RELATES TO FAMILIES IN YOUR CONGREGATION, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ISSUES TEND TO WEIGH HEAVIEST ON YOU PERSONALLY AS A PASTOR? IN OTHER WORDS, WHICH ARE YOU MOST BURDENED BY?

The relational turmoil I see between husbands and wives in their marriages	11.0%
The relational turmoil I see between parents and their children	3.6%
The lack of practice of biblical stewardship: time, talents and treasure	25.2%
<b>The lack of spiritual formation (discipleship) that's taking place in homes</b>	<b>47.7%</b>
Other	12.5%

In response to the number one burden above, we'd like to recommend a resource that might be helpful for you and your congregation. It's a new book entitled, *Your Family Journey: A Guide to Building Faith at Home*, by Focus on the Family. As Jim Daly (President and CEO of Focus on the Family) says, "In a fast-paced world, it's so important to have a clear plan for nurturing faith at home. *Your Family Journey* provides the tools necessary to build your unique spiritual plan." If you'd like more information, please visit us at [www.FocusOnTheFamily.com](http://www.FocusOnTheFamily.com) or call toll free: 800-A-FAMILY (232-6459). We have a team of folks here at Focus who would love to serve you as it relates to this topic.

Here are some of the answers that were included in the "Other" category:

- The lack of biblical literacy
- The lack of younger people stepping into church leadership
- The lack of men who want to engage in the life of the church
- The many believers who do not possess a biblical worldview
- The lack of unity in the congregation
- The sense of general apathy and unfaithfulness within the congregation

If one is not careful, he can perceive this as the pastor just whining and complaining. Rather, we like to think this is the pastor revealing his true heart for what burdens him among those he's been called to shepherd. In other words, these are areas of "holy discontent" for pastors.

#### IF YOUR CONGREGATION, ELDERS, DEACONS OR SOME TYPE OF GOVERNING BOARD COULD PROVIDE YOU WITH ONE THING TO DEMONSTRATE THAT YOU ARE VALUED AS A PASTOR, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Brace yourself if you are among the laity, elders or deacons. What the majority of pastors want may be a surprise to you!

Additional paid staff	6.5%
An increase to my salary	12.5%
An increase to my benefits (medical, dental, etc.)	4.7%
<b>A simple expression of appreciation periodically</b>	<b>34.0%</b>
More authority/trust to do the things I believe God is leading me/us to do	12.1%
More of their time and energy in leading the church	12.4%
Other	17.8%



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We wholeheartedly endorse the congregation, elders and deacons, etc., taking the time to show appreciation to their pastors. Clergy Appreciation Month (October of each year) is a great time to shower love and appreciation on your pastor(s). If you'd like some creative ways on how to do this, please visit us at [www.clergyappreciation.org](http://www.clergyappreciation.org). Remember, though, much of what pastors are looking for is "a simple expression of appreciation periodically." You don't have to wait until October to do that!

#### IF YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE PASTORAL MINISTRIES DEPARTMENT AT FOCUS ON THE FAMILY, HAVE YOU FOUND OUR PRODUCTS, CONFERENCES AND SERVICES TO BE ...

<b>Very beneficial</b>	<b>41.7%</b>
Somewhat beneficial	36.4%
Not beneficial	0.8%
Not familiar	21.1%

#### WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES, EVENTS AND/OR SERVICES THAT ARE OFFERED BY THE PASTORAL MINISTRIES DEPARTMENT AT FOCUS ON THE FAMILY HAVE YOU PERSONALLY USED/EXPERIENCED?

On this question, we asked pastors and ministry leaders to check all that apply.

Pastor to Pastor	66.8%
<b>Pastor's Weekly Briefing</b>	<b>83.9%</b>
Shepherd's Covenant Encourager	37.2%
Pastoral Care Line	13.6%
Pastors' Roundtables	1.2%
Pastor and Spouse Retreats	6.7%
Pastor and Spouse Gatherings	8.4%
Clergy Appreciation Month	23.6%
Pastoral Families Online Community	5.2%
The Heart of a Pastor Blog	5.4%
The Heart of a Pastor Podcast	4.4%
None of the above	5.6%

For 17 years now, *The Pastors Weekly Briefing* has been a key staple of our ministry. That which began as a simple fax to less than 300 pastors — providing brief current events, a word of encouragement from H.B. London, and sermon ideas has grown into a greatly appreciated email-based product that reaches 24,000 pastors and ministry leaders worldwide on a weekly basis. Further, *The Pastor to Pastor* audio series, reaches over 16,000 people bi-monthly. This complimentary product is offered online for listening or download. What makes this series so relevant is that it features interviews with leaders and experts speaking on issues and concerns that impact pastors, their families and their congregations.



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#### WHICH OF THE ABOVE RESOURCES OR EVENTS HAS HAD THE MOST IMPACT ON YOUR LIFE, FAMILY AND MINISTRY?

Again, we asked individuals to list as many as applied. In taking a sampling of the nearly 1,400 responses, *Pastor to Pastor* (audio series), *The Pastor's Weekly Briefing* and *The Shepherd's Covenant Encourager* appeared to be the top three.

#### CONCLUSION

We do what we do because you do what you do as pastors and ministry leaders. We exist for you. Knowing this, we're always searching for ways to serve you better. If you have an idea, please e-mail us at [pastors@family.org](mailto:pastors@family.org) or give us a call to 719-531-3360!

#### SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Our 2009 Pastoral Ministries Survey was taken between January 19 and February 10, 2009. It was composed of 41 questions and was primarily offered to those pastors and ministry leaders who have had some experience with the Pastoral Ministries Department at Focus on the Family. Respondents accessed the survey by visiting our Web site, the Parsonage, and clicking on a link choosing to participate. Thus, this was not a scientific survey because the sample of respondents was not truly representative of the population of all pastors.

Overall, we had 2,018 respondents. Of those, 1,590 were either solo pastors (the only pastor) of their churches (42.6%) or senior pastors (those with other pastors on staff who all report to them) of their churches (36.2%). The third largest category was associate pastors (6.4%).

#### SURVEY DATA


The actual questions and their responses are attached on the following pages for those who would like to review this information. Unfortunately, there was no way to list all of the answers given in open-ended questions. We trust this will be informative and helpful.



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1. What is your position in the church?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Only Pastor	<div><div></div></div>	42.6%	860
Senior Pastor	<div><div></div></div>	36.2%	730
Bishop/Superintendent	<div><div></div></div>	0.5%	11
Associate Pastor	<div><div></div></div>	6.4%	130
Executive Pastor	<div><div></div></div>	0.7%	15
Worship Pastor	<div><div></div></div>	0.7%	14
Education/Discipleship Pastor	<div><div></div></div>	0.5%	11
Children's Pastor	<div><div></div></div>	0.7%	14
Student/Youth Pastor	<div><div></div></div>	1.5%	30
Singles Pastor	<div><div></div></div>	0.0%	1
Men's Pastor	<div><div></div></div>	0.1%	2
Women's Pastor	<div><div></div></div>	0.2%	4
Equipping Pastor	<div><div></div></div>	0.4%	8
Family Life Pastor	<div><div></div></div>	0.3%	7
Small Group Pastor	<div><div></div></div>	0.4%	9
Sports/Recreation Pastor	<div><div></div></div>	0.0%	0
Counseling Pastor	<div><div></div></div>	0.2%	4
Military Chaplain	<div><div></div></div>	0.4%	8
Civilian Chaplain	<div><div></div></div>	0.7%	14
Missionary	<div><div></div></div>	0.8%	16
Parachurch Minister	<div><div></div></div>	1.0%	21
 Other (please specify)	<div><div></div></div>	5.4%	109
answered question			2,018
skipped question			31



## Pastoral Ministries 2009 Survey

### Focus on the Family



2. What is your denomination?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Nazarene		7.1%	143
Lutheran		4.2%	84
Methodist		4.1%	82
Southern Baptist		13.5%	272
Conservative Baptist		1.7%	35
Independent Baptist		4.6%	93
American Baptist		1.7%	35
Other Baptist		4.5%	91
Episcopalian/Anglican		0.6%	13
Presbyterian		2.7%	54
Assemblies of God		7.4%	150
Pentecostal		3.9%	79
Catholic		0.0%	1
Calvary Chapel		0.8%	17
Vineyard		0.2%	4
Wesleyan		0.8%	16
Evangelical Free		1.7%	34
Salvation Army		0.1%	2
Non-denominational		14.1%	284
Independent		5.0%	100
Other		21.3%	429
Other (please specify)			473
answered question			2,018
skipped question			31



## Pastoral Ministries 2009 Survey

### Focus on the Family



3. What is your age category?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Under 20		0.0%	1
20-29		1.6%	32
30-39		8.5%	171
40-49		25.3%	511
50-59		41.8%	843
60+		22.8%	460
answered question			2,018
skipped question			31

4. What is your ethnicity mix? (Please select all that apply.)			
		Response Percent	Response Count
African-American		3.6%	73
Asian		1.9%	39
Caucasian		92.3%	1,862
Hispanic		2.8%	56
Native American		1.5%	31
Other		1.7%	35
Other (please specify) <a href="#">view</a>			38
answered question			2,018
skipped question			31

5. What is your gender?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Male		95.3%	1,923
Female		4.7%	95
answered question			2,018
skipped question			31



## Pastoral Ministries 2009 Survey

### Focus on the Family



6. What is your marital status?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Married		97.0%	1,958
Single		1.7%	34
Divorced		0.8%	16
Widowed		0.5%	10
answered question			2,018
skipped question			31

7. How many children do you have?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
At home		71.7%	1,447
Not living at home		76.5%	1,543
Deceased		8.2%	166
answered question			2,018
skipped question			31

8. Are you a full-time or bi-vocational pastor?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Full-time		77.6%	1,566
Bi-vocational		22.4%	452
answered question			2,018
skipped question			31



## Pastoral Ministries 2009 Survey

### Focus on the Family



9. Which of the following best describes the average number of hours you work as a pastor?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Part-time (less than 20 hours per week)		3.6%	73
Part-time (20-29 hours per week)		12.1%	244
Part-time (30-39 hours per week)		7.6%	153
Full-time (40-49 hours per week)		28.5%	576
Full-time (50-59 hours per week)		32.7%	659
Full-time (60+ hours per week)		15.5%	313
answered question			2,018
skipped question			31

10. What is your gross annual salary from your church (not including benefits)?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
None		9.9%	199
\$19K or under		16.4%	330
\$20K-\$39K		30.8%	622
\$40K-\$59K		27.8%	560
\$60K-\$79K		11.3%	229
\$80K+		3.9%	78
answered question			2,018
skipped question			31


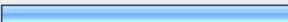

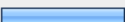
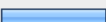

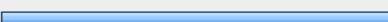



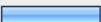

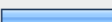



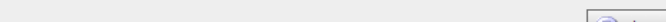

## Pastoral Ministries 2009 Survey

### Focus on the Family



11. What benefits does your church provide? (Please check all that apply.)		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Auto 	20.7%	417
Housing 	51.3%	1,035
Medical 	55.5%	1,119
Dental 	21.8%	439
Life Insurance 	18.4%	371
Retirement 	45.4%	916
Paid Vacation 	69.1%	1,394
None 	16.4%	331
<i>answered question</i>		2,018
<i>skipped question</i>		31

12. How many days do you actually take off each week?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
0 	17.4%	352
1 	58.6%	1,182
2 	19.5%	394
More than 2 	4.5%	91
<i>answered question</i>		2,018
<i>skipped question</i>		31

13. How many years have you served in pastoral ministry? (Please provide a number.)		
		Response Count
 		2,018
	answered question	2,018
	skipped question	31



## Pastoral Ministries 2009 Survey

### Focus on the Family



14. How many different churches have you served in pastoral ministry? (Please provide a number.)			
			Response Count
			<a href="#">view</a> 2,018
answered question			2,018
skipped question			31

15. Have you ever experienced a forced resignation/termination?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<div></div>	23.7%	479
No	<div></div>	76.3%	1,539
answered question			2,018
skipped question			31

16. How many other pastors serve with you on staff?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
None	<div></div>	49.1%	991
1-2	<div></div>	35.2%	711
3-4	<div></div>	9.6%	193
5-6	<div></div>	2.8%	56
More than 6	<div></div>	3.3%	67
answered question			2,018
skipped question			31



## Pastoral Ministries 2009 Survey

### Focus on the Family



17. What is the average weekend attendance (not membership) of your church?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 50		20.9%	421
50-149		43.6%	879
150-199		10.4%	210
200-299		8.5%	172
300-499		7.5%	152
500-999		5.3%	106
1000-1999		1.9%	39
2000+		1.9%	39
answered question			2,018
skipped question			31

18. In the last year, has your average attendance grown, declined or stayed the same?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Grown		47.1%	950
Declined		17.7%	357
Stayed the same		35.2%	711
answered question			2,018
skipped question			31



## Pastoral Ministries 2009 Survey

### Focus on the Family



19. What is your highest level of education?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
No Diploma		0.3%	6
High School Diploma		9.1%	183
Associate's Degree		9.6%	194
Bachelor's Degree		29.9%	604
Master's Degree		41.0%	827
Doctorate Degree		10.1%	204
answered question			2,018
skipped question			31

20. Where did you receive your theological/biblical training?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
None		1.8%	37
Church-sponsored program		14.3%	289
Bible college		31.7%	640
University		7.5%	152
Seminary		44.6%	900
answered question			2,018
skipped question			31

21. How much paid vacation do you typically take each year?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
None		5.5%	110
One week		18.3%	370
Two weeks		31.1%	627
Three weeks		23.8%	480
Four or more weeks		21.4%	431
answered question			2,018
skipped question			31



## Pastoral Ministries 2009 Survey

### Focus on the Family



22. Have you ever taken a sabbatical separate from vacation?		
		Response Percent    Response Count
Yes		15.2%    306
No		84.8%    1,712
	<i>answered question</i>	2,018
	<i>skipped question</i>	31

23. How much time do you spend in personal devotions each day (not including sermon or other teaching preparation)?		
		Response Percent    Response Count
Less than 30 minutes		45.5%    919
30-60 minutes		47.2%    953
More than 60 minutes		7.2%    146
	<i>answered question</i>	2,018
	<i>skipped question</i>	31

24. Which of the following best describes the amount of time you spend intentionally exercising each week?		
		Response Percent    Response Count
None		30.8%    621
Less than 20-30 minutes, 1-2 days a week		10.4%    209
At least 20-30 minutes, 1-2 days a week		21.9%    442
At least 20-30 minutes, 3-4 days a week		21.6%    435
At least 20-30 minutes, 4+ days a week		15.4%    311
	<i>answered question</i>	2,018
	<i>skipped question</i>	31



## Pastoral Ministries 2009 Survey

### Focus on the Family



25. If you are the lead preaching/teaching pastor, how much time do you spend each week in sermon preparation?			Response Percent	Response Count
Not preaching/teaching pastor			12.4%	250
Less than 10 hours			26.0%	525
10-15 hours			38.3%	772
16-20 hours			17.2%	348
More than 20 hours			6.1%	123
answered question				2,018
skipped question				31

26. Have you ever sought help for depression through medication or professional counseling while serving in the pastorate?			Response Percent	Response Count
Yes			21.2%	427
No			78.8%	1,591
answered question				2,018
skipped question				31

27. Do you meet with an accountability person or group on a regular basis (at least once every couple weeks)?			Response Percent	Response Count
Yes			41.8%	844
No			58.2%	1,174
answered question				2,018
skipped question				31



## Pastoral Ministries 2009 Survey

### Focus on the Family



28. How often do you intentionally view pornography on the Internet (or in other forms)?			Response Percent	Response Count
Never			75.1%	1,516
Occasionally			22.8%	461
Monthly			0.5%	11
Weekly			1.1%	23
Daily			0.3%	7
answered question				2,018
skipped question				31

29. While serving as a pastor, have you ever been involved in an inappropriate (either sexual or emotional) relationship with a member of the opposite or same sex?			Response Percent	Response Count
Yes			8.7%	176
No			91.3%	1,842
answered question				2,018
skipped question				31

30. Among the so-called "Seven Deadly Sins" (greed, gluttony, envy, laziness, pride, lust and anger), which three do you struggle with the most?			Response Percent	Response Count
Most			99.3%	2,003
2nd most			91.9%	1,855
3rd most			84.5%	1,706
answered question				2,018
skipped question				31



## Pastoral Ministries 2009 Survey

### Focus on the Family



31. How would you rate the following aspects of your life?					
	Unhealthy	Healthy	Thriving	Rating Average	Response Count
Marriage (if applicable)	5.6% (109)	51.2% (1,006)	43.2% (848)	2.38	1,963
Family (if applicable)	3.4% (63)	62.4% (1,172)	34.2% (642)	2.31	1,877
Management of finances	18.5% (369)	63.5% (1,265)	18.0% (359)	1.99	1,993
Time management	27.4% (545)	66.6% (1,325)	5.9% (118)	1.79	1,988
	answered question				2,018
	skipped question				31

32. Do you have a close colleague/friend with whom you communicate on regular basis?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<div><div></div></div>	71.3%	1,439
No	<div><div></div></div>	28.7%	579
	answered question		2,018
	skipped question		31

33. What overall impact is your ministry having on your marriage/family?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Positive	<div><div></div></div>	65.1%	1,313
Negative	<div><div></div></div>	11.6%	235
Neither	<div><div></div></div>	23.3%	470
	answered question		2,018
	skipped question		31





## Pastoral Ministries 2009 Survey Focus on the Family



34. How would you rate your general level of fulfillment as a pastor?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Very fulfilled		24.7%	499
Mostly fulfilled		62.3%	1,258
Mostly unfulfilled		11.9%	241
Very unfulfilled		1.0%	21
answered question			2,018
skipped question			31

35. What one word best describes emotionally where you are today in pastoral ministry?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Energized		8.6%	173
Encouraged		34.0%	686
Fulfilled		15.8%	319
Apathetic		1.9%	39
Lonely		8.0%	162
Discouraged		14.7%	296
Exhausted		10.3%	208
Overwhelmed		6.7%	135
Other (please specify)			54
answered question			2,018
skipped question			31



## Pastoral Ministries 2009 Survey

### Focus on the Family



36. As it relates to families in your congregation, which of the following issues tend to weigh heaviest on you personally as a pastor? In other words, which are you most burdened by?

		Response Percent	Response Count
The relational turmoil I see between husbands and wives in their marriages.		11.0%	222
The relational turmoil I see between parents and their children.		3.6%	73
The lack of practice of biblical stewardship: time, talents and treasure.		25.2%	509
The lack of spiritual formation (discipleship) that's taking place in homes.		47.7%	962
Other		12.5%	252
Other (please specify) <a href="#">view</a>			270
<b>answered question</b>			<b>2,018</b>
<b>skipped question</b>			<b>31</b>

37. If your congregation, elders, deacons or some type of governing board could provide you with one thing to demonstrate that you are valued as a pastor, what would it be?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Additional paid staff		6.5%	132
An increase to my salary		12.5%	252
An increase to my benefits (medical, dental, etc.)		4.7%	94
A simple expression of appreciation periodically		34.0%	686
More authority/trust to do the things I believe God is leading me/us to do		12.1%	245
More of their time and energy in leading the church		12.4%	250
Other		17.8%	359
Other (please specify) <a href="#">view</a>			367
<b>answered question</b>			<b>2,018</b>
<b>skipped question</b>			<b>31</b>



## Pastoral Ministries 2009 Survey

### Focus on the Family



38. Which of the following best describes how likely you are to be involved in the pastorate five years from now?			Response Percent	Response Count
Very likely			58.5%	1,180
Most likely			24.8%	501
Unsure			12.4%	251
Most unlikely			2.1%	43
Very unlikely			2.1%	43
<i>answered question</i>				2,018
<i>skipped question</i>				31

39. If you are familiar with the Pastoral Ministries Department at Focus on the Family, have you found our products, conferences and services to be...			Response Percent	Response Count
Not familiar			21.1%	426
Very beneficial			41.7%	841
Somewhat beneficial			36.4%	735
Not beneficial			0.8%	16
<i>answered question</i>				2,018
<i>skipped question</i>				31



## Pastoral Ministries 2009 Survey

### Focus on the Family



40. Which of the following resources, events and/or services that are offered by the Pastoral Ministries Department at Focus on the Family have you personally used/experienced? (Please check all that apply.)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Pastor to Pastor	<input type="checkbox"/>	66.8%	1,339
Pastor's Weekly Briefing	<input type="checkbox"/>	83.9%	1,682
Shepherd's Covenant Encourager	<input type="checkbox"/>	37.2%	745
Pastoral Care Line	<input type="checkbox"/>	13.6%	272
Pastors' Roundtables	<input type="checkbox"/>	1.2%	24
Pastor and Spouse Retreats	<input type="checkbox"/>	6.7%	135
Pastor and Spouse Gatherings	<input type="checkbox"/>	8.4%	168
Clergy Appreciation Month Promotions	<input type="checkbox"/>	23.6%	472
Pastoral Family Forums/Message Boards	<input type="checkbox"/>	5.2%	104
The Heart of a Pastor Blog	<input type="checkbox"/>	5.4%	108
The Heart of a Pastor Podcast	<input type="checkbox"/>	4.4%	89
None of the above	<input type="checkbox"/>	5.6%	113
<i>answered question</i>			2,004
<i>skipped question</i>			45

41. Which of the above resources or events has had the most impact on your life, family and ministry? (List as many as apply.)

	Response Count
<input type="checkbox"/> view	1,373
<i>answered question</i>	1,373
<i>skipped question</i>	676

— END —

# **Reasons for Attrition Among Pastors QUALITATIVE REPORT**

## **Pastor Protection Research Study**

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## Reasons for Attrition Among Pastors

### Qualitative Report

This qualitative study is part of a multi-phase pastor protection research project designed to discover why pastors leave the ministry. The objective for the qualitative phase was to identify the factors that challenge pastors and lead to leaving the ministry, as well as to identify healthy interventions that help pastors survive and thrive until retirement. The study was sponsored by the North American Mission Board (NAMB) and Richard Dockins, MD.

A steering team reviewed the methodology, provided guidance on the topic guide, and suggested experts. Many thanks go to Adam Mason, David Self, and Richard Dockins from Houston's First Baptist, Kathy Litton, Richie Stanley, and Kim Robinson from NAMB, and Melissa Haas from Hope Quest Ministries.

LifeWay Research compiled a list of individual experts and ministries who work with pastors who are facing significant struggles or failures. In-depth telephone interviews were conducted with 16 individuals experienced in pastoral care among those leaving or considering leaving the ministry. Eight broad areas of inquiry included:

- Conflict in the church
- Burnout
- Moral lapse
- Illness
- Change in calling
- Family issues
- Poor fit with church(es)
- Lack of preparation for the job

Each interviewee responded to questions in the two areas with which they had the most experience. Experts were also asked for additional topics that may lead to pastors leaving the ministry.

The following experts were interviewed between December 2014 and January 2015.

1. H.B. London- President of H.B. London Ministries and Pastor to Pastors Emeritus, Focus on the Family
2. Adam Mason- Minister of Counseling Services, Houston's First Baptist Church
3. Jared Pingleton- Director, Counseling Services, Focus on the Family
4. James Eubanks- Director of Counseling, First Baptist Church Woodstock, Georgia
5. Donald Hicks- President, Church Health Solutions
6. Richard Krejcir- Director, Into Thy Word Ministries
7. Jamie Johns- Corporate Chaplain, Houston, TX
8. Melissa Haas- Direct of Support Groups, Hope Quest Ministries
9. Gary Sweeten- Co-Founder, Sweeten Life Systems
10. Ken Swetland- Sr. Professor of Ministry, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

11. Kathy Litton- National Consultant for Ministry to Pastors' Wives, North American Mission Board
12. Lance Witt- President, Replenish Ministries
13. Mike MacKenzie- Clinical Director, Marble Retreat
14. Chuck Shoemake- Director of Care Ministries, The Foursquare Church
15. Kari MacKenzie- Executive Director, Marble Retreat
16. Troy Haas- Director of Restoration Ministries, First Baptist Church Woodstock, Georgia

## **Introduction**

Each year, people leave the pastorate. In many cases, this is a voluntary move, such as retirement or moving to another ministry position. Unfortunately, there are other cases where pastors leave the ministry, never to return. These pastors leave the ministry due to circumstances concerning their families, the demands of the position, or personal moral lapses. This report will identify and explore circumstances and factors that lead to an exit from ministry.

Certain overarching themes emerge from this research. These themes which are summarized below surfaced multiple times throughout the interviews and are foundational influences on many of the decisions and practices made by the pastors and the churches. These themes will be revisited throughout the report as they relate to the other factors that are discussed.

### ***Demands and Expectations***

The pastorate is a demanding position. Churches often have a preconceived set of expectations to place upon the pastor. These may be legitimate expectations, or they may be unrealistic expectations. Either way, they increase the pressure and stress of being a pastor.

Pastors often place expectations upon themselves. They may want to preach a certain style or lead the church a certain way. Or they may not want to make anyone in the church feel let down. These expectations added with those from the church may cause a pastor to consider leaving the ministry.

### ***Need for Fulfillment***

Human beings need to be fulfilled. This need can be met through someone's marriage, friendships, work, or hobbies. In the case of a pastor, the need for fulfillment may not be met, either at home or at work. This may cause the pastor to look for other sources of fulfillment, some that may damage the pastor's personal and professional life, the end result being an exit from the ministry.

### ***Spiritual and Emotional Health***

Due to the demands of the ministry and their personal lives, pastors may neglect their own spiritual and emotional health. They may not set aside devotional time to spend with God. They may fail to take time to nurture their spiritual health. They can also neglect their emotional health by not taking time off to rest from their work or taking a personal sabbath. By neglecting their spiritual and emotional health, pastors may become more vulnerable to circumstances that could jeopardize their ministry.



## Factors that Contribute to Attrition

Pastors leave the ministry, either voluntarily or involuntarily. At the core, there may be an underlying issue, such as spiritual health or insecurity. These issues often go unchecked and may manifest in another form, such as burnout or a moral lapse. One or more factors may lead the pastor to leave the ministry, and these factors are often interrelated.

Pastors are often reluctant to seek help addressing these factors or the underlying issues. The culture in most churches does not permit pastors to easily admit weaknesses. Resources are not always available or offered to pastors to address these factors. However, there are tangible things that churches can do to protect and build up their pastor.

### BURNOUT

Burnout is one of the more common factors that cause a pastor to leave the ministry. The stress of the ministry may lead a pastor to resign and discourage the pastor from seeking another church. The demands and expectations may be more than the pastor can handle.

Symptoms of burnout often resemble those of clinical depression. A pastor's energy level may be affected. A pastor may begin to react differently to people, becoming irritable or frustrated easily. Pastors could also isolate themselves from other people.

- “Burnout can look a lot like clinical depression. Issues of being apathetic, distance from God, distance with family relationships. These are symptoms not only of burnout but as I said also overlap into symptoms of depression.” (Eubanks)
- “They begin to really show signs of being irritated with people rather than loving people. They end up feeling that the people are just frustrating, just another thing on their to-do list. They'll isolate themselves because people become so draining. So often the symptoms for burnout look a lot like, from a clinical perspective, like depression.” (K. MacKenzie)
- “Well, I think loss of motivation, discouragement, and depression, loss of passion or enthusiasm for the ministry. I think increased anxiety is a sign.” (Witt)
- “Lack of feeling of joy and satisfaction in their work. They don't see their own effectiveness even though some of them were so highly effective. I'm not enjoying my job anymore, my ministry anymore. I'm not feeling satisfaction in it. I'm not appreciating other things in life anymore. I just feel drained all the time.” (M. MacKenzie)
- “The isolation that is so endemic of the pastorate, that so many pastors have a tough time being vulnerable because of the shame that wow, my church is only at this and I look over here at First Church of the whatever across town and they're booming and thriving. And, you know, I just feel like a failure.” (Pingleton)

There are multiple root causes that may lead to burnout. Pastors may be spiritually immature. Pastors may attempt to protect their image by meeting the expectations of the church. Pastors may feel inadequate for the position.

- “One is people pleasing. I think [for] a lot of pastors, we’re trying to keep everybody happy and content. So we often violate our own kind of limits and live as though we don’t have any limits which I think is another piece of this equation – which is bad theology. I think a lot of pastors have been sort of trained in the ‘burnout for Jesus’ mentality.” (Witt)
- “Burnout is just the end result of the inevitable, the real issue resides within the pastor and on some level it may also reside in an unhealthy environment in the church that may have unrealistic expectations and demands upon the pastor.” (Eubanks)
- “The fact that often the needs of a ministry position are greater than our ability to meet all those needs and, therefore, it’s hard to prioritize what to focus on because the needs are so great. And, how do you prioritize some of those needs of ministry at times. And then the inadequacy or feelings of insecurity that get stirred up as a result of that.” (K. MacKenzie)
- “I think we way underestimate the pastor’s involvement in trauma of people that he cares for and I think we way underestimate, I guess I would even say like post-traumatic stress.” (Shoemaker)
- “It could be just over work, over responsibility. Not being able to maintain a healthy schedule for whatever reason.” (Litton)
- “Doing too much for too long without any breaks. Just living on adrenaline, you know. Cranking a sermon out on Saturday because I’ve been busy all week with other fires I’m putting out.” (M. MacKenzie)

Measures can be taken to prevent burnout. Changes to a pastor’s schedule or responsibilities may be able to address this. But the situation may be more severe and require the help of a professional counselor.

- “The ability to set some boundaries and be able to notice your own limits and know that you do have limits, accepting your limits. Not choosing the process I think pastors have to go through is recognizing that it’s okay to have limitations and I do have limitations.” (K. MacKenzie)
- “Firmly insist to recharge, recreate, and reconnect because again, as we all know, pastors, one of the burnout factors is that you give and you give and you give until you give out.” (Pingleton)
- “Respecting your Sabbath and respecting their vacation time. In other words that means taking it always.” (M. MacKenzie)
- “Things like personal retreats, solitude, times away where you can think and reflect and pray. To me, that’s crucial. I think more pastors need some life-giving friendships where they’re not the pastor and they’re not on, but actually friendships that replenish their life and fill them up.” (Witt)
- “Burnout is prevented by a pastor regulating his resources, his resources of time and energy, and when one isn’t regulating those resources there’s a reason for it. Typically it is revolving around the inability to say no.” (Eubanks)

In many cases, pastors are able to rebound from burnout. This requires rest and time away from the pastorate, as well as a different approach to job responsibilities. In addition to rest, the pastor must also address underlying issues that caused the burnout.

- “With the right rest and time and refreshment – physical, but more importantly spiritual and mental refreshment – a pastor, yes, can easily rebound. The circle is to not going back to doing it the same way.” (M. MacKenzie)
- “They can rebound from it if they deal with the underlying issues. He needs to understand what brought it on and make the changes that contributed to the onset of it.” (Eubanks)
- “It depends on how severe the burnout is. So I think a pastor often has to learn some new habits and he has to develop some new convictions.” (Witt)

## MORAL LAPSE

Another factor for a pastor leaving the ministry is a moral lapse. Common moral lapses include extramarital affairs and other sexual sins. Drug and alcohol abuse can also be counted under this factor. Moral lapses may also encompass integrity issues such as lying, abuse of power, or financial mismanagement.

A moral lapse can be rooted in a pastor’s need for self fulfillment. It can begin as the fulfillment of an emotional need and escalate to the fulfillment of a physical need. Often, pastors are trying to fill a void in their life, and the fulfillment may take numerous forms.

- “Many of the moral failures are found in trying to fill a void in their lives. But where there is a vacuum in a pastor’s life, he’s gonna fill it with something because he needs some kind of fulfillment. And many times that fulfillment is a result of feeling empty and dried up spiritually.” (London)
- “Affairs begin as an emotional bond and then through the emotional bond affairs escalate into the physical. Their needs for affirmation or approval or for comfort, acceptance. And it’s just a matter of time until it becomes sexual at that point.” (Witt)
- “You’ve got characterological issues. So one of the predispositions, if you will, the predisposition to narcissism. The predisposition to a culture of entitlement that’s present within the person.” (Mason)
- “Pastors often feel like they are not rewarded properly. That makes them vulnerable. But they’re either not getting enough salary or they’re not getting enough ‘atta boy’s,’ nice comments from people in the church. And so they may, then, be vulnerable to somebody who makes themselves available to them and before you know it, they’re involved in a relationship that is sinful and destructive.” (Swetland)
- “Moral failings are going to come out if there are really weak character issues.” (Litton)

Many times, moral lapses go unnoticed by those working with the pastor or the pastor’s family. Though difficult to detect, early signs that a moral lapse may emerge do exist. The pastor may become defensive when asked about certain situations. The pastor may be spending an unusual amount of time away from the office.

- “I think a big one is hiding, lying, justifying . Various hiding behaviors are happening or lying behaviors whether that’s to the spouse or to the staff, those are early warning signs. Covering, really covering up.” (K. MacKenzie)

- “Insecure leaders who need affirmation to feel okay about themselves. Who get defensive or hurt or critical of others have kind of defensive angry reactions if they are criticized.” (M. Haas)
- “But conflict in the home is one that can be kept secret for a while. Two is the lack of preparation for the sermons on Sunday or for what he’s doing. Three is that he takes a lot of time away from the office. Four is that he might be spending too much time alone with one person in the church or one person outside of the church that leads to an emotional affair.” (London)

Moral lapses may result from a pastor counseling a church member, especially one of the opposite sex. Limitations on how often a pastor counsels someone may be an effective preventive step. The pastor’s marriage is also an important piece to preventing a moral lapse.

- “People on a ministerial staff shouldn’t meet with a person more than once or twice. If there’s an issue that is longer than that, that’s beyond a pastoral care or spiritual direction issue, that needs to be referred to either an outside counselor or an in-house counselor if you have it.” (Mason)
- “Keep working on their own marriage to make sure that the delight of their hearts is with their spouse, that they’re not looking around because they just can’t believe how God has blessed them so with a happy spouse and a happy marriage.” (Swetland)
- “Accountability for themselves and accountability in very broad definition, a sense of do you counsel somebody from the opposite sex when there’s not somebody else in your office.” (Mason)

Churches and denominations can take measures to help prevent moral lapses. This may require a culture change within the church, viewing the pastor as a real person who faces temptation. Another measure would be for the church to offer pastors the help they need, such as marriage or personal counseling.

- “I think there has to be a cultural shift away from this notion that a pastor can’t struggle. I think if there was more openness that the churches in general communicated to their pastor, ‘Hey, we know you have clay feet just like everyone else, so we want you to get any help you need, any time you need it, and maybe even providing the resources for it and that it’s okay.’” (Eubanks)
- “They can have the kind of policies and guidelines that help protect the pastor from sticky situations. Providing accountability in terms of having people in place that the pastor can refer to when he has a situation that he feels could put him in danger or make him vulnerable.” (M. Haas)
- “The understanding that this can happen anywhere and to build into conversations with the minister or with the candidate at their church of what kind of systems that might help them build an atmosphere of accountability” (Litton)
- “Keep insisting and encouraging the pastor to have an accountability partner, a soul brother, a soul sister, somebody that they meet with regularly.” (Swetland)
- “So I just think keeping your pastor happy. Surrounding him with people who pray for him and encourage him.” (London)

When seeking help, confidentiality is crucial. For this reason, pastors turn to licensed counselors. Recovery may be possible within the church, but in most cases the pastor may be best served to seek counsel outside of the church, even outside of town.

- “The variable may very well be that it is such a deep part of their personality and their own sense of self that they really need to get some professional counseling to deal with that.” (Swetland)
- “Licensed counselors will lose their license and lose their careers if they break confidentiality. Many will find someone in my next town or in the next church who is licensed, who I can have the confidence of knowing this person will lose their career if they repeat what I say to them and I’m going to let myself trust them.” (Eubanks)
- “I think it would probably in most cases take someone from the outside that’s not caught up in the emotions of the local church sense of betrayal and disappointment and all those things that might be in place there.” (Litton)
- “Find a counselor outside of your own hometown that you could go and confide in. Two, you need to call organizations that care for pastors that have a resource list of pastor care.” (London)

## CONFLICT IN THE CHURCH

Conflict within the church is also a factor that causes pastors to leave the ministry. Common conflicts range from doctrinal differences to differences in leadership style. Different expectations on the part of the pastor or the church may also lead to conflict.

- “I think that some of the conflict is between the pastor and the deacon or deacons. It can be a conflict between the pastor and the patriarch or the matriarch of the church, or some would say church boss.” (Hicks)
- “Often it’s their leadership style. Whether it’s they have conflict with associate pastors who are not appreciating their leadership style or whether it’s people above them like a board of directors or elder board or whatever it may be in that particular church is not liking the way that they’re leading the church.” (M. MacKenzie)
- “Change – where the pastor’s trying to lead the church to a more contemporary, relevant, breaking out of some of the traditions. That’s not how we do this or how we’ve done this in the past.” (Witt)
- “Differing expectations for what the pastor sees as his or her gifting and calling and the skill set with what the congregation had expected that he or she would be doing. The doctrinal differences of pastors that went into the church, having done what they thought was a pretty thorough job of understanding the doctrine of the church.” (Swetland)

Certain character issues make pastors vulnerable to conflict. Insecurity may cause a pastor to be vulnerable to conflict. Lack of personal and spiritual maturity could also contribute to a pastor’s vulnerability.

- “I call it the ostrich complex. They put their head in the sand when conflict comes out and hopes it gets over before they come out. I see that pastors refuse to deal with the conflict.” (Hicks)
- “Lack of maturity and when I say that I mean personal maturity. So then spiritual maturity in that they’re insecure. And in that insecurity are trying to control things more than they maybe need to or trying to avoid conflict because they don’t handle it well because it threatens their own sense of wellbeing.” (M. MacKenzie)
- “A lack of emotional health to be able to deal with that and handle the stress and the criticism of it.” (Witt)
- “Pastors tend to be people who have a high need to be liked, be loved, to be appreciated. They’re people that are afraid that people are not going to like them, love them.” (Swetland)

The cause of a conflict may be an underlying issue, such as insecurity. Insecurity may influence how a pastor approaches conflict, either by taking control of it or avoiding it. Another cause could be that the person does not understand the responsibilities that go along with the office of pastor.

- “When a pastor is insecure or not sure of their calling, not sure of their abilities, they’re afraid people are going to reject them, and if they’re in the middle of a conflict then, they’re afraid that they could come out on the losing end of that and so they’re not going to get involved. Sometimes, then, if a person is thinking down the road, their own family security, their own financial security is at stake there. So instead of seeing it objectively and really seeing it as a possibility for growth in ministry and help encourage them to become stronger as a result of conflict, they tend to hide from it out of a sense of their own insecurity and fear of what’s going to happen down the road if they get involved.” (Swetland)
- “They have developed a certain way of coping with that insecurity whether it’s having a lot of control or whether it’s avoiding. [These] are a couple of big ones. And then that leads to troubles for them in their leadership.” (M. MacKenzie)
- “Not understanding who they are as a pastor. What is my responsibility? How do I need to handle this? And a lack of using biblical guidelines in church discipline.” (Hicks)

Pastors can approach how they and their churches handle conflict in different ways. Pastors can teach and prepare their churches to prevent and/or resolve conflict. However, pastors may avoid conflict and never address the source of it.

- “I think that the goal should be to learn how to resolve conflict. Learn the skills to resolve conflict in a healthy way where there’s reconciliation and love.” (Witt)
- “There are definitely classes you can take on dealing with conflict in leadership. There are programs out there that you can self-educate and use as steps to guide you through. I also think going to counseling is a great thing. Or having a coach where you can have a venue where you can know some of the personal issues that you bring into conflict.” (M. MacKenzie)



- “You never avoid conflict. Any time I’ve seen a pastor avoid conflict it just gets worse and worse. I think it’s about prevention and intervention. A good way to do the prevention part for example is to teach the church about how to handle conflict biblically.” (Hicks)
- “One can prepare for conflict by understanding the conflict and the fact that it’s going to happen. We need to be working with pastors to help them prepare for handling conflicts so that they feel more confident, understand the dynamics of conflict, and get in there and begin the work toward resolution.” (Swetland)
- “And conflict is not bad. Destructive conflict is.” (Hicks)

## POOR FIT WITH THE CHURCH

A pastor is not always a good fit with a particular church. Several factors may contribute to this poor fit, such as the demographics of the church or the pastor’s personality. The pastor may not have any experience ministering in a specific context, which ranges from church size to geographical culture.

- “They come into a congregation and they have not had any experience with that size or the way the church is organized and how it’s run traditionally. The unwritten rules in a church are much stronger than the written theological or constitutional rules.” (Sweeten)
- “One of the first things would be demographics. A young pastor in a congregation that’s primarily in an older community with older members. Personality factors, different churches have different personalities. A poor fit might be in terms of skill or experience.” (T. Haas)
- “Unbiblical expectations on a congregation’s part would be right near the top of my concerns. No man can meet them and I think that many have failed at trying, only to realize they never should have even tried. So I think the CEO model denies a biblical ecclesiology and just makes it inevitable a poor fit.” (Johns)
- “Contextualization. I think in contextualization you have to look at who you are and if you’re married, who your wife is, and your family and how you will be able to contextualize into a new ministry area and how everyone’s going to fit into that.” (Hicks)

Warning signs exist that a pastor is a poor fit. There may be a lack of interest in the church’s history or an absence of friendships. The pastor may have unrealistic expectations about bringing change to the church.

- “Not building close relationships with people within the church. Not having an interest in the church and its history. I think it’s also important in that the pastor’s wife and family are onboard moving to that new church and that they feel a camaraderie, they feel a calling to that church and that city as well.” (Hicks)
- “The pastor is a change agent and very often filled with idealistic notions about how easy change is and listens to great sermons by internationally famous people and all and watches them on television and it looks like all you’ve got to do is stand up there.” (Sweeten)

- “The measurables are going to be trending downward: the satisfaction trending downward, dissatisfaction upward, communication problems, a sense of disconnection, staff leaving.” (T. Haas)
- “After personal failures, deep, frustrating, agonizing defeats many will decide I can’t do this anymore. I can’t do this. And oftentimes it’s I cannot do this. It’s me. Oftentimes, as well, it is I see environment and I cannot change this.” (Johns)

Churches and pastors can be better prepared to find “better fit.” The church may need to be more honest about who it is and what type of personality its pastor needs to have. The pastor may need to get out of the church office and build relationships and friendships with people in the church.

- “They need to get out in the real world, play golf with real people, have friends who are not necessarily Christian or church people and don’t come across always as the clergy. So they need to be – and that’s before they ever take the church.” (Sweeten)
- “I think the key thing there is that the church needs to know who they really are. Not what they want to be, but what they really have been and what they currently are. The members of the pastor search committee are not just politically correct people but people across the spectrum that are spiritually mature and also have a pulse of the church of where it’s been and where it is and where people desire for it to go.” (Hicks)
- “But I think the state of our churches, generally speaking, is such that finding a majority that could get an under-shepherd that might be God’s choice, that might come and stay for a while is extremely difficult.” (Johns)
- “Looking at history, the personalities involved. . . I think a much deeper look at personality and some of those more personality-driven aspects of leadership would be very important to making sure you do not have this lack of fit problem.” (T. Haas)
- “Have a written contract or covenant agreement. A pastor covenant that basically says what I’m going to do for the church, what the church is going to do for me and what we’re going to do together.” (Hicks)

If it is determined that a pastor is not working well, there needs to be a plan to approach this, preferably one that is gracious and handles the situation respectfully. If the pastor’s personality is different from the previous pastor’s, it may involve a discussion with church leadership on how to address it.

- “Then try to find somebody to sit down with the pastor and say, this is not working. And we need to find some face-saving way for both of us to separate, help you find something else.” (Sweeten)
- “I think the pastor would be best served by sitting down with the church leadership and walking through that I’m different from the [previous] pastor and I’m realizing that more and more. He was deeply loved and I’m very different from him personality-wise. How can we work through this? How can we find a way through this?” (T. Haas)
- “But one would hope that, you know, one would have, biblically anyway, a group of men, elders, in which there would be a transparent, sort of ongoing conversation about everything. That’s the only way. So grace can be afforded by one who knows the



grace of our Lord. That only happens in human relationships as one apprehends our grace and apprehends the blessing of being a brother to a brother. “ (Johns)

## FAMILY ISSUES

A pastor's family may be the reason for leaving the ministry. Marital conflict can be a result of pastors giving ministry priority over their spouses. A pastor's children may feel neglected in favor of the church.

- “If marital conflict starts happening around church responsibilities or wives become resentful of ministry or hurt in ministry and she is unable to support her husband, then it sets up an internal conflict for him that is going to be very difficult to manage. The internal conflict of course is ‘What is my priority?’ I feel called to ministry, my wife is hurting, who – what do I choose?” (M. Haas)
- “I think in terms of children, when kids start acting out I think there's a couple of reasons why guys in the ministry think. . . shame or feelings of failure that their children really act out in pretty significant ways. They may feel like they're not qualified to minister because they can't take care of their own house or their children are struggling so much.” (M. Haas)
- “The family begins to realize that the ministry is hazardous to their family health and even spirituality because the church is so toxic or so contentious that it dribbles down into the home. And it creates a disconnect for the spouse and the kids to the point to where they don't even like going to church anymore as a result of that. They want to leave. The other thing is that the younger pastors, their wives see how hard they work and how difficult it is and they just say, ‘We're not going to allow the church to destroy our marriage or our family.’” (London)
- “Churches don't understand the demands that parents have to kids and so they're so demanding on the pastor that the pastor does not have proper time to spend with his spouse or the children. And then I think the other thing is when a pastor is so involved in pastoring and the demands of the church are so hard that he doesn't have time to properly communicate and fulfill his role as a husband and a father.” (London)
- “In other words, the church or the ministry is getting all of the attention that the wife would like to have. And she ends up resenting some things. And the thing is it's like her best friend, too. She likes the church, too. But she gets into a conflict. And I see that often. It builds up over the years, over the time and finally explodes somewhere.” (Shoemaker)

Certain signs may signal a pastor's marriage or family is being affected. A pastor's spouse may be absent from church activities or events. The pastor may be dedicating an unnecessary amount of time to ministry duties. Children may be resentful towards the church.

- “If I'm noticing that my pastor's wife is not involved at all in any of the ministry opportunities, not that she is ultra involved because that's equally unhealthy but she is

completely absent from church activities, ministry events, church functions, probably be a big red flag for me that something's not right in Kansas." (M. Haas)

- "The pastor never takes a break, never takes a sabbatical. He's at the church all the time. He's always visiting hospitals. If church members or a friend notices that he's out more than he's home, that's going to be a red flag." (M. Haas)
- "The spouse's lack of interest or lack of attendance in things that have to do with church events or church things. I think wherever there would be even just little hints of conflict that it's a little bit more public, I don't mean public pulpit-wise, but just that would just kind of stir in their relating within the church framework that people can begin to see it or sense it." (Shoemaker)
- "You're so busy doing the pastor thing that you don't ever deal with the unresolved conflict in the home. And pastors' homes are no different than laymen's homes with the exception is they don't have weekends to recoup." (London)
- "Elementary children typically aren't acting out in ways that are going to signal red flags, not till kids get to adolescence that they have enough autonomy that you're going to start really seeing what has been happening all along. And that is resentment over the time that dad spends in ministry, feeling un-valuable, insignificant, not mattering, others matter more, that kind of thing. Unfortunately that's happening all along, but we normally don't see it, the results, until kids reach adolescence." (M. Haas)

There are actions that pastors can take to protect their marriages and families. One is to set healthy boundaries on the amount of time spent at church. Another is to set aside time with no distractions to spend with the family.

- "I think there needs to be an awareness of, he really does need the discipline of spending whatever is the key to his marriage – and I think each one of them are different. . . There are certain things they can do together that, both of them would say 'Yes, our marriage thrives or flourishes when these things are a part of all of that.'" (Shoemaker)
- "I think healthy boundaries around time that he spends in church, around his time for starters. Healthy boundaries in terms of his relationship to church members, especially women. And no ongoing counseling relationships with women." (M. Haas)
- "I think also intentionality about maintaining connection in the marriage, going on dates, spending time together, taking time out, prioritizing the wives, not always being on 24 hour call, delegating to another minister or deacon or somebody so that you're not always on, that you get some uninterrupted time with your spouse." (M. Haas)
- "First of all, there needs to be a real commitment to the relationship, that the relationship [with the spouse] becomes the most important relationship. I think the second thing is that they need to communicate and, if the problems arise, they need to relate to them and do whatever they can to solve them or it'll become like a festering wound. I think the third thing is that they need down time. They need time to be away. They need time to recover. They need time just to get away and relax and many churches do not give their pastors that extra time if they're working 20 hours a day or whatever the case may be." (London)
- "Time, quality time, undistracted time is absolutely necessary. Just like dad turns off phone to be with mom. Dad turns off phone to be with kids. So that when they're at a

game or doing something together, he doesn't get a phone call that takes him away. Have authentic conversations with children about weaknesses and failures, personal weaknesses and failures so that they don't feel from dad the same pressure they might feel from church members to be perfect." (M. Haas)

Churches can also take measures to help protect a pastor's spouse or family. Realistic expectations need to be established, especially concerning family time and ministry related responsibilities. Another measure is to make sure the pastor's family feels loved by the church.

- "Have realistic expectations for pastors and their families: provide paid vacations and time away, church members filling in the gap for emergency situations, hospital visits, not expecting pastor or his family to do everything, partnering with him." (M. Haas)
- "I think every church needs a clergy support group, whose main objective it is to keep their pastor and his family healthy, well fed, well housed, make sure their automobiles are safe to drive with proper tires. They need to make sure that they pay them adequately. When a pastor is not paid properly, most of his time is spent trying to figure out how he's going to support his family. As a result of that, the pastor left. A well cared for pastor will be a well organized and dedicated servant of his people." (London)
- "Some groups have pastoral relations committee. There needs to be somebody church-wise, I think the church, itself, needs to have a certain sense of ways they can help in the care and well-being of the pastor and family." (Shoemaker)

## **List of Factors Identified by Experts that Relate to Attrition**

### **CONFLICT IN THE CHURCH**

#### **Common conflicts**

- Conflict between pastors and deacon(s) or elder(s)
- Conflict between pastor and church patriarch/matriarch
- Misunderstanding of church structure
- Conflict over leadership style
- Pastor unprepared to deal with conflict
- Pastor trying to lead church in change
- Differing expectations
- Doctrinal differences

#### **Character issues that make pastor vulnerable to conflict**

- Insecurity
- Refusal to deal with conflict
- Not understanding who they are in Christ
- Not understanding who they are as a pastor
- Lack of spiritual maturity and personal maturity
- Emotional health of the leader
- High need to be liked, loved, and appreciated
- Not having a good self image
- Afraid people are not going to like them or love them

#### **Causes of conflict**

- Church may not know how to handle conflict
- Lack of church discipline
- Pastor and church are not prepared for conflict
- Not dealing with conflict biblically
- Church views pastor as a trouble maker
- Have not dealt with issues in their own life
- Hide from conflict
- Worried about family security and financial security

#### **Recommendations on how to address or prepare for conflict**

- Conflict prevention and conflict intervention; Galatians 6:1
- Learn how to resolve conflict; learn the skills to resolve conflict in a healthy way
- Culture of peacemaking has to be set as an example by the pastor
- Can prepare for conflict by understanding it and the fact it is going to happen
- Teach church how to handle conflict
- Take a course or attend a workshop on handling conflict in leadership
- Never avoid conflict, but in some cases avoidance may be appropriate
- Be mentored or receive counseling

- Pastor and those in leadership need to listen to the people carefully for signs of conflict
- Pastor can meet with elders/deacons and get their take on what people are concerned about

## MORAL LAPSE

### Common moral lapses

- Extramarital affairs, either inside or outside the church
- Sexual sin
- Addiction to pornography
- Financial mismanagement and dishonesty
- Drug and alcohol addiction
- Integrity issues, such as lying to cover up a failure
- Abuse of power
- Seeking fulfillment

### Issues that can lead to an extramarital affair

- Pastor not happy in marriage relationship; communication is not good in the marriage
- Pastor counseling someone of the opposite sex leads to inappropriate physical relationship
- Character issues such as a predisposition to narcissism or a culture of entitlement
- Affairs often begin as emotionally based and become physical
- The other person begins to fulfill emotional needs (affirmation, acceptance) and moves to sexual
- The need for affirmation; trying to fill a void in the pastor's life
- Pastor feels not rewarded properly: financially, encouraged, appreciated
- Unresolved conflict at home
- No accountability
- Very limited time spent alone with the Lord

### Warning signs

- Hiding, lying, justifying, covering up
- Defensiveness when asked about situation
- Minister is unhealthy and unprepared
- In some cases, the minister may have been a predator
- Pastors is not resting well
- Neglecting spiritual disciplines
- Conflict in the home
- Lack of preparation for the sermons or for work
- Taking a lot of time away from the office
- Spending too much time with one person, inside or outside of the church

### Measures pastors can take to prevent moral lapses

- Pastor works on own marriage

- Ministerial staff should not meet with a person more than once or twice; beyond that refer to a counselor
- Pastor does not need to feel responsibility to fix the issue
- Pastor understanding role in counseling
- Accountability when counseling someone of the opposite sex (not alone, window in the door of the office, secretary outside the door, etc.)
- Month long sabbatical once a year for full-time minister
- Continuing education

What churches and denominations can do to prevent moral lapses?

- Cultural shift from idea that pastor cannot struggle
- Create atmosphere of healthy confession, repentance, and healing
- Move away from a culture of image management
- Policies and guidelines to protect pastor from dangerous situations
- Have systems in place to protect pastor
- Openness from the church to get pastor whatever help is needed: marriage counseling, personal counseling, etc.
- Have a more healthy culture to realize that people can get help and be freed from situation
- Make sure pastor does not burn out
- Check on pastor to see if they are taking breaks, resting, doing ok emotionally
- Providing accountability by having people that the pastor can refer to
- Insisting and encouraging the pastor to have an accountability partner; someone who can share everything in confidence
- Seminaries doing a better job teaching pastors how to balance their lives spiritually, emotionally, relationally
- Pastor having mentorship that would create accountability
- Provide help with marriage enrichment
- Sometimes pastors won't turn to denominations because they are afraid denominations will side with the church

The need for accountability

- Pastor may travel long distance for counseling away from church
- Important to be inside the church so pastor can model community
- Culture of spiritual formation can help lead to accountability inside the church
- Mentor can help pastor; mentor may need to be an older and more mature pastor
- When looking for mentor, find someone with similar interests
- Pastor may distrust other pastors; may be afraid to talk because may be a sermon example
- Mentorship must be honest accountability, not just a good fellowship time

What kind of help should pastor get?

- Professional counselors; licensed counselor will lose license and career if break confidentiality
- Counselor outside of the town
- Help from outside the church that is not caught in the situation

- Pastor needs to reach out to someone they trust
- An organization that supports pastors
- Should not always go to a mission director or denominational leader; their responsibility may be to the denomination and not to the pastor

## BURNOUT

### Symptoms of burnout

- Burnout can look like clinical depression
- Fatigue, difficulty concentrating, being apathetic, distance from God, distance with family relationships
- Forgetfulness, losing things, being lethargic, feeling overwhelmed
- Isolation
- Being irritated with people; feeling people are frustrating
- Lack of investment in their ministry
- Discouraged about their work
- Low motivation for anything; loss of motivation
- Lack of joy, not just in ministry
- Emotional and physical exhaustion
- Spiritual depletion
- Compassion fatigue
- Workload; not setting clear boundaries
- Lack of nurturing & reinvesting in their marriage

### Root causes of burnout

- Emotional and spiritual immaturity
- Spiritual formation, spiritual practices and healthy souls have been pushed aside
- Weak leadership
- Traumatic situations, emotionally draining situations
- Lack of preparation
- Performance oriented, need to succeed, affirmation of other people, needing to be viewed as right
- Pastor compelled to protect image; feel must appear perfect
- Feeling of inadequacy; feel like a failure
- Have very few deep, true friendships
- Expectations from church (external) and from pastor (internal)
- Demands of the job are greater than ability to meet those demands
- Fear of being judged or rejected by the church
- Health issues
- Doing too much for too long without any breaks
- Disillusionment with ministry
- Size of church has different issues that still contribute to burnout

### Measures to prevent burnout

- Pastor regulates resources (time & energy)

- Ability to set boundaries, notice and accept limits
- Spending personal time with God; rest for the soul
- Pastor comes to terms with what success in ministry means
- Pastor has willingness to say no to some expectations
- Having a hobby
- Taking a Sabbath, taking time off and resting
- Take time to “unplug” from church
- Personal retreats
- Life-giving friendships
- Have a supporting group
- Revisit calling
- Pastors have to own their own personal health
- Firmly insist that pastor recharge, recreate, and reconnect
- Denominations can cultivate relationships
- Congregation can bless and benefit the pastor

#### When and how a church should get involved

- Church can provide assurance that it supports the pastor and wants to get help
- Assure pastor that job is not in jeopardy
- Church should get involved the day a pastor is hired
- Make sure pastor takes time off and has reasonable job description
- Church must come alongside the pastor graciously and lovingly
- Want to come alongside to help

#### Pastor rebounding from burnout

- Pastor can rebound but must understand what brought on burnout and deal with underlying issues
- Pastor can rebound with rest, time, and refreshment
- Pastor can rebound but must learn new habits and develop new convictions
- Many pastors do not return to ministry due to effects on spouse and children
- Pastor may have to learn limits, both physically and emotionally

#### POOR FIT WITH THE CHURCH

##### Ways pastor can be a poor fit

- Lack of contextualization/not understanding the local culture
- Preaching style
- Leadership style
- No experience with the way a particular church is organized and run
- Not knowing the “unwritten rules” of a church
- Unbiblical expectations on a church’s part
- CEO model makes for a poor fit
- Different leadership styles, temperaments, and personality types



#### Symptoms that there is not a good fit

- Not building close relationships within church
- No interest in the church and its history
- No affection or affinity for the community
- Family not onboard with moving to new church
- Does not understand the church's history or environment
- Believes can bring about change by preaching like a famous pastor
- Personal failures, agonizing defeats
- Pastor "not a good fit" is usually a generic reason for asking pastor to leave
- Church does not always have biblical reason; act because of "hurt feelings"

#### Ways churches and pastors can be better prepared to find pastor that is a good fit

- Church needs to know who it really is
- Pastor search committee must be in tune with the church and where it wants to go
- A written contract/covenant between church and the pastor
- Set realistic expectations for what you need as a church and what you want
- Church more familiar with biblical description of pastor or "under shepherd," biblical model
- Pastor can be involved in the "real world"; have friends who are not necessarily church people

#### Actions to take if a pastor is not a good fit

- Find a face-saving way to separate; help pastor find something else
- Bring in church consultant
- Leadership in church has transparent, ongoing conversations; graciously
- Relate properly to each other in the Lord

### LACK OF PREPARATION

#### Problems caused by a lack of preparation

- No preparation in how to handle relationships, deal with conflict, deal with differences
- Little emphasis on the people side of the ministry
- Lack of practical preparation in Bible colleges and seminaries
- Failure

#### Symptoms pastor is not prepared

- Trying to fit in with modern America
- No longer committed to reading Scripture

#### Essential skills

- Public speaking skills and basics of the Gospel
- Listening skills, problem solving, conflict management
- None, other than the call of God
- Develop our personalities through the Holy Spirit

## Recommendations

- Take courses on interpersonal skills
- Become involved in real life with people
- Wisdom and counsel of other people; mentorship

## FAMILY ISSUES

### Ways that a pastor's family may cause the pastor to leave the ministry

- Weak marriage
- Conflict in the family
- Spouse become resentful of ministry and unable to support spouse
- Family realizes that ministry is hazardous to family health; creates disconnect between the spouse and kids and the church
- Children acting out
- Pastor may feel unqualified for ministry because can't take care of home
- Feel like family is in a fishbowl
- Church is so demanding of pastor; does not spend proper time with spouse or children
- Spending too much time in ministry and not enough time ministering to family
- Physical health: lack of insurance or access to healthcare

### Signs that family issues may lead to leaving the ministry

- Pastor's spouse not involved at all in ministry opportunities; absent from church activities
- Pastor spending too much time at church; always out (visiting hospitals, etc) more than at home
- Signs harder to detect with children; don't act out much until adolescence
- Spouse's lack of interest in or attendance at church

### Actions crucial to protecting pastor's marriage

- Healthy boundaries around time spent at church
- Healthy boundaries around relationships to church members or church staff, especially opposite sex
- Maintaining connection in the marriage: dates, time together, delegating to other staff members
- Spending time doing whatever is key to the marriage, things they both enjoy doing

### Actions crucial to protecting pastor's family

- Be at child's activities and be involved with kids
- Quality, undistracted time with kids; turn off phone
- Having authentic conversations with children about weaknesses and failures
- Help kids not feel pressure from dad that they may feel from the church
- Real commitment to the relationship with spouse; must be the most important relationship
- Communication
- Listen to the spouse talk about what is going on in the family, especially with the children

What can churches do differently?

- Realistic expectations for pastors and their families
- Paid vacations and time away; not expecting pastor or pastor's family to do everything
- Leadership prays for pastor's family, affirm them, and encourage them
- Make sure counseling is available to pastor and pastor's family
- Have a "clergy support group" whose main objective is to keep pastor and family healthy
- Pay the pastor adequately so pastor is not spending time trying to figure out how to support family
- Pastoral relations committee
- Give the pastor and spouse a break; time to get away