Liberty University School of Divinity

PASTORAL STRESS: THE URGENT NEED FOR SELF-CARE

A Thesis Project Submitted to
the Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

by

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Lynchburg, Virginia
July 2020
Liberty University School of Divinity

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Pastors are called to the ministry of helps while also needing help. The care and counseling they offer others can also be beneficial to them. Unfortunately, they are often so busy helping others they may neglect themselves and their families. Consequently, what is meant to be a blessing becomes a curse. Pastors often suffer with the silent frustrations of their call, personal temptations, family pressures and career desires while struggling to hold it together. The pastor may be limited in who can be entrusted with the deep concerns of their hearts. Everybody needs someone they can talk with and the pastor is often not afforded such a privilege. They are expected to have all of the answers and the spiritual prowess to overcome all obstacles and life challenges. The truth is, the pastor needs a confidant more than anybody else. The confidant needed is someone who is not in the same condition or position, but who is a licensed professional trained to help them navigate their concerns and challenges. Submitting to a licensed pastoral counselor or therapist can prove most helpful in securing the health of the pastor and subsequently the church.

The research method used for this study is a questionnaire survey of 100 pastors of Baptist or Pentecostal churches in the South Florida region. The questionnaire was provided to willing participants and collected by email. Responses will be kept confidential to ensure participant transparency. The findings of the questionnaire are compiled and summarized to reveal the urgency of self-care among pastors.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Ministry has no ironclad blueprint. There is no one-size fits all approach to ministry as there is no one-size fits all context. Leaders sometime spend years modeling themselves after someone else without realizing behind the representation is a real person with real issues that have nothing to do with ministry or their accomplishments. Just as there are functioning alcoholics and functioning drug addicts there are functioning pastors and ministry leaders who drown out their pain by busying themselves in the work of the ministry. Leaders become driven by building the Kingdom of God for it seems far easier to do so than to deal with building themselves. Pastoring is not only the call or vocation – it is also the person. Diane Chandler writes, “Pastors risk burnout because of excessive ministerial demands, which may drain their emotional, cognitive, spiritual, and physical energy reserves and impair their overall effectiveness. Burnout advances across three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced accomplishment.”¹

Many people are of the false belief that what is written in the Bible has mostly to do with getting people into heaven. Although it is a part, the Bible is equally concerned with living on this earth. Living well and living in full-bodied sanity is also the goal of Scripture. Bernice Patterson suggests, "Pastors do not feel as though they are permitted to feel emotions like

sadness, depression, hurt and anger. These pastors, both men, and women have served as leaders of the community and are perceived as being above struggling with common human issues, mental and emotional stress.” Of the many responsibilities given to a pastor – the main one is preaching. Sadly, it seems preaching today has been watered down to accommodate “itching ears”. Sermons have become more like motivational speeches that inspire productivity above transformation. Consequently, could this be why the church is losing its effectiveness? So much time is spent preaching to the flesh or surface of a person as opposed to getting to the root of the problem and preaching to the soul of a person.

When the flesh or surface of a person is the aim of preaching, emotionalism is the result. However, when preaching to the soul of a person is the aim, consecration is the result. Gary Thomas writes, “For most of our lives, we have emphasized growing our souls, not always realizing that lack of physical discipline can undercut and even erode spiritual growth.” Consecration is essential because consecration is what urges one to look deep inside in order to make necessary changes that will eventually appear on the outside. When this is done effectively, most pastors do not like what they see, and the spirit of self-condemnation hovers over them as they wrestle with their guilt and their call. Pastors are first to be partakers of the fruit. Therefore, the messages they preach must fill them first. So then, it would be futile to continue to tackle the issues of the flesh only because what is being displayed in the flesh is the result of a deeper issue that has not been addressed.

2 Bernice Suzette Patterson, "Hurting Leaders: The Lived Experiences of African American Clergy and Their Views, Attitudes, and Barriers to Help-Seeking," (Dissertations, Western Michigan University, 2013) 207.

A significant number of well-known Christian leaders grew up in unhappy homes.4 Becoming a pastor does not exempt one from the pain of their past. In fact, the unresolved issues of a leader’s past can easily plague the leader’s present and future. One of the greatest limitations for today’s spiritual leaders is their inability to understand and acknowledge how their past cripples their current effectiveness.5 It does not help that pastors are held to a higher standard than others. However, they should never be held so highly that they are deified. While they must be Christlike, they are not Christ and can therefore, not be considered infallible.

Pastors, being humans, are born in sin just like the people they serve. This reality is often overlooked as pastors are expected to live above reproach, be aware of and alert to all things spiritual, flow in the spirit, operate out of the spirit and perform miraculous acts as representatives of Christ. High expectations produce a level of trust for pastors as religious leaders over and above that of politicians, businessmen, and civil servants. The moral compass of the pastor is always expected to lead them on the right path. Congregants and worldly spectators alike find it difficult to accept or understand. Jackson Hester asserts, “Helping professions often attract individuals whose childhoods were consumed with trying to satisfy the needs and meet high expectations of parents, but whose own emotional needs were not met.”6

Ironically, having a fault overtake a pastor in a society where everything immoral is acceptable still seems widely unacceptable. Pastors have no room for failure. There is no space for unethical behavior. Saints and sinners are given the room to be recipients of the grace and

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5 Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 60.

mercy of God – except the pastor. Pastors are charged to balance expectations placed on them by both God and man. Living up to those expectations may cause a pastor to suffer silently as they simultaneously battle with their own sin nature. Pastors suffer silently because while open confession is good for the heart it is not good for the ministry. The risk of destroying the ministry they have worked so hard to build is far greater than it being secured. Therefore, it becomes easier to live a lie than to stand in the truth. Unfortunately, while making every attempt not to hurt or cause destruction in the ministry, those most affected are the most important – the pastor’s family.

While the family suffers, the pastor feels the need to maintain an appearance because the church is also their place of employment. Therefore, the need to produce and maintain the ministry outweighs the need to face the problems which plague the family. The immense stress levels that come from trying to balance it all, often lead to pastoral malfeasance. What is often lost is what Jesus comes into one’s life to do. Jesus does not come to rearrange the outside of our life the way we want. He comes to rearrange the inside of our lives the way God wants. Science suggests humanity possesses a neuro-biological drive that compels it to want to be around people who are just like themselves. The challenge then becomes forcing oneself to be around people who are not likeminded for the greater good of oneself.

The goal of the church is to unify the body of believers in preparation for the return of Christ. Could it be the difficulty one faces in unifying others is the result of not being one with self? For far too long, the struggle that rests within many pastors and ministry leaders has been denied and overlooked providing for a false sense of reality. Pastors must stop deceiving

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themselves into believing their problem is does not exist – it is real and must be faced. Freedom comes to those who actively and passionately pursue it. Only when a pastor is free can they effectively work to free others. Everyone at some point looks for relief from the trauma of their experience.

Seeking relief may begin in innocence and but it often ends in addiction. Pastors sometimes immerse themselves in doing the work of the ministry at the expense of their families, their health, and their wealth. While their immersion will produce feelings of effectiveness it will also produce the feeling of loneliness. People who are lonely often feel guilty and unloved. Those feelings often lead to dependence on other vices and addictions that serve as a source of relief. Without realizing it, those vices begin to consume much of the pastor’s life. The new found place of refuge causes neglect of the church, the spouse, and the friends of the pastor. When parishioners accept pastors are fallible, they are more apt to restore the pastor when found in a fault. Acceptance frees the pastor from the weight of having to be perfect while imperfect and causes them to be more accepting of the same grace God gives to everyone else.

Representing Christ to serve both His people and His church is a significant honor. The call to the pastorate is a call to selflessness and humility which flows out of a correct view of who God is. The call forces one to face problems and have solutions with the goal of fostering hope even in hopeless situations as led by God. Being a pastor allows for great influence. However, it comes with a great amount of responsibility with eternal ramifications. The responsibility comes with the unequaled task of both exhorting and reproving believers for the sake of Christ. The call of a pastor is weighty, but necessary. Pastoring requires great


9 MacArthur, Pastoral Ministry, 5.
sacrifice, commitment, and fervent prayer. The balance of congregant and community members is influenced by the convictions of the pastor as they seek to build both demographics naturally and spiritually.

The pastor does more than just preach on Sunday morning and teach a Bible study lesson during the week. The preaching and teaching of the pastor is essential for those who fail to feed their flock adequately will not have that flock for long. The pastor must be all things to all men in their time of need. An important truth often overlooked is spiritual leaders can influence all people, not just Christians. Pastors are involved in social advocacy programs; benevolence to the needy; intervention of those suffering with depression, suicide, anxiety and other psychological issues. They offer opportunities for fellowship with membership to foster relationship; promote scholarship; maintain peace and social cohesion within the community and society; counsel persons who are having difficulty navigating life happenings; walking with families in times of transition; celebrate with families during the birth of children, a wedding, and a graduation; offer conflict resolution; and make every attempt to bridge cultural, political, social and economic divides. Without the pastor’s influence in these areas, the world would be worse. As Henry and Richard Blackaby write, “Merely exerting influence is not in itself leadership. You must evaluate the result of that influence.” So then, while having influence is worthwhile, it is not enough standing alone – results are required.

Henry and Richard Blackaby continue, “While individuals may hold a leadership position, one could question whether that person has truly led until someone has followed, and

10 MacArthur, Pastoral Ministry, 23.
11 Blackaby and Blackaby, Spiritual Leadership, 39.
12 Blackaby and Blackaby, Spiritual Leadership, 34.
more importantly, until God’s purposes have been advanced.”13 Either way, the execution of influence comes at the expense of the pastor’s personal life and development. Many pastors have made the mistake of making Christ’s bride their bride. More than the call of Christ to lead the church – the pastor is also called to lead his family and to do it well for the strength of the home begins with the pastor.14 Strong homes produces strong ministries and weak homes produce weak ministries.15 Creating a strong home and ministry requires the pastor first take care of himself. Effectively submitting to self-care while simultaneously fulfilling the demands of a pastoral call can be difficult. The difficulty is what causes many to serve with the appearance of success by secular benchmarks under the weight of silent frustration. The pastor can easily become a public success, but a private failure when the pursuit of accomplishments for the benefit of self rather than the pursuit of accomplishments as an act of worship to Christ becomes the driving force.16

The goal or the design of God is for the pastor to be successful both publicly and privately and this project will prayerfully demonstrate how this can be achieved. Pastoral care is not just for laypersons – pastors are in need of pastoral care also. More so, pastors are in need of therapy and counseling because while they may be able to navigate their spiritual journey – they are emotionally, mentally and physically drained and often times distraught. Even therapists sometimes have a therapist, and yet they are trained in mental healthcare. If this is so, it bears witness that mental healthcare is a critical part of self-care. Pastors, when overwhelmed, can no

13 Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 35.


longer afford to over spiritualize their dysfunction but must be willing to submit to an inner healing which facilitates a true and life changing encounter. There is no way for a human being to come to God and it not involve surrender.17 Surrender is the glad and voluntary acknowledgment there is a God and He is not me.18 Such surrender is especially needful for pastoral leaders.

**Ministry Context**

Serving in a predominately African American Pentecostal and Baptist church in South Florida allows the writer to observe leaders who have experienced brokenness, due to the demands of ministry. Time for self-care never seems to be enough as the days are filled with preparation, support, counseling, health challenges, family challenges, ministry challenges and community challenges. Many pastors buckle under the weight of their assignments. While they are busy helping others – they need help too, but do not know where they find it safely. Unfortunately, with time, church becomes the vehicle that is used to draw out the pain of their personal existence. Keeping busy helps the pastor avoid facing self and overcoming their personal temptations.

In short, many pastors and churches are overextending themselves. The grand focus of changing the world impedes on the pastor’s ability to change their local communities. Their weaknesses are promoted while their strengths are overlooked. Andy Stanley, Reggie Joiner, and Lane Jones write,

The truth is that church by its nature is a very general concept. And most people are not looking for a church; otherwise, churches would be full of visitors every week. What


people are looking for is something that is relevant to their marriage, their family, their personal lives. What they are looking for is something that works for them as individuals. And that is something specific, not general.”

Unfortunately, the frustrations many pastors have is rooted in their general approach to ministry. Narrow is the way. When ministry is generalized the focus becomes diminished. Over time, this paralyzes the church because of its inability to rid itself of efforts counterproductive to its mission and vision. Activity seems to be masked as results. While the church may be busy “doing”, it may not be busy effectively reaching the lost. Long-term growth efforts are often sacrificed for short-term progression. This truth is unhealthy for not only the pastor, but for the congregation they serve.

Being the founder of Remiel Lockwood Ministries, INC (RLM) a not-for-profit organization, has provided the lens from which the testimony of many pastors of both Pentecostal and Baptist churches in South Florida who have folded as a result of the pressures of ministry will be viewed. The context of Remiel Lockwood Ministries shall be revealed through its core values, vision, mission and leadership structure.

Core Values

Why a ministry exists, and its functionality is rooted in its core values. Aubrey Malphurs states, “Discovering your values is the basis for knowing and understanding your identity, because they are at the core of the church’s culture.” The functions of humility, community, love, empowerment and prayer are the bedrock comprising RLM. The evidence of one’s care is


not only rooted in what is known, but rather what is shown. Only care provided in humility has lasting effects. According to John P. Dickinson, “Humility is the noble choice to forgo your status, deploy your resources or use your influences for the good of others before yourself.”

Individuals will never win unless all involved win because victory is never isolated. The tools of victory are best used in the hands of those determined to help others and the hands of those in need of help. RLM’s faithfulness is secured by the faithfulness of those under the sphere of its influence. The ministry is keenly aware the power it has to operate in is not a power of its own, but a power given by God for the benefit of others. Understanding power is what assists in bridging the gap between humility and community.

The strength of RLM is secured by its alliances with other churches or organizations for the greater good. RLM seeks to be a light that brightens even the darkest places of the community it serves. As far as its eyes may see and its hands may touch, RLM seeks to affect positive change in the community without regard to cultural, political, organizational, economic and social differences. Michael Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffman write, “Human beings were never intended to function in isolation. From creation, we learn God’s plan for us was to exist within the context of community.”

To join forces with people who share in understanding, carrying the weight of life’s burdens, cultural proclivities and religious beliefs, makes the journey more manageable. Being created in the image of Christ means at the core of creation, humanity is to be relational. Those who are supported with a strong and loving community have the greatest chance of success in both life and ministry.


22 Wilson and Hoffmann, *Preventing Ministry Failure*, 35.
The blessing of community is rooted in having a people connected who support one another, hold one another accountable, celebrate one another, uphold one another in times of despair and challenge one another to be the best version of themselves. The need for connection is one of humanities most basic needs. It is even more needful among ministry leaders. Paul Pettit indicates, “Community is an essential element of spiritual formation. Indeed, the degree of our success or failure on the pathway of Christian discipleship depends upon the depth of community that we cultivate with one another.” Therefore, building community is at the forefront of RLM’s ministry focus. Nothing progresses effectively without the elements of relationship and love. Building community affords RLM the opportunity to build relationships and love is what drives it. Love is the force that powers the vehicle of hope and shows the heart of RLM.

Love dictates how the organization operates. It drives the core values of RLM and is potent enough to restore the broken. Love provides an environment that both covers and protects when moments of indifference and difficulty are most prevalent, while simultaneously offering healing and safety. The element of love is what allows for the empowerment of others. Through empowerment, RLM assist in the discovery of one’s voice, promotes the intentional fulfillment of one’s destiny and encourages the diligent pursuit of one’s purpose. All of this is done because RLM submits to God and believes in prayer.

None of what RLM is able to do can be accomplished without the help of the Lord. Instruction, guidance, resources and creative ideas are all provided through prayer as the ministry depends on the voice of God for sustainability and maximum impact. RLM serves as an answer

to many of the circumstances and trials faced by believers and non-believers alike. Therefore, our view of God must be great. Only then are we able to realize the significance of prayer. Whenever the awareness of God’s greatness is dim it will be reflected in ones prayer life. RLM holds fast to the belief God can and will do anything but fail.

Vision

George Barna states, “How frustrating to find a church that is anxious to follow its leader but has no idea in what direction it is being led.” It is the job of every leader to share the vision and empower its followers to assist in carrying it out. Unfortunately, many leaders lack clarity in their worldviews which impacts their lifestyles and challenges their communities. God type vision, should propel individuals into modes of outreach that defies comfort, but yields growth both personally and collectively. Vision has a way of stretching and challenging ones comfort zone. It demands one is open to the leading of Christ, committed to change, open to sharpening their skills, and willing to bravely pursue uncharted territory. Vision requires drive. Without drive, the various obstacles that come along with pursuing the vision can easily become a hinderance.

Vision establishes urgency. Having a vision in place for life and ministry provides a blueprint for forward progression. It cancels out one's tendency toward procrastination. The fulfillment of vision requires urgency in order to capitalize on the excitement and energy required to accomplish it. To do otherwise is to risk productivity and efficiency.


According to Henry and Richard Blackaby, “Vision serves as the North Star to help leaders keep their bearings as they move their people forward. Hence, any organization that lacks a clear vision risks becoming sidetracked and failing to accomplish its purpose.”

George Barna asserts, “Vision is a reflection of what God wants to use ones ministry to accomplish in order to build His kingdom.”

The vision of RLM is to be a ministry that builds the total person through the use of biblical principles, spiritual instruction, demonstrative encouragement, holistic empowerment and developmental assessments. Barna continues, “Vision becomes a bold reason for living. It is a badge of purpose the bearer wears proudly and courageously.”

Transformation is the goal of every relationship built through RLM. Change is never stumbled upon, it is intentional. As the ministry executes vision, it desires to do so in excellence while serving both the community and its members through compassion and integrity. On one hand, the diligent pursuit of the least, the lost, the rejected and the broken with the single goal of transformative living encapsulates the vision of this ministry. However, on the other hand, the vision is to develop, equip and deploy leaders who will positively effect change mentally, relationally, emotionally, spiritually, financially and culturally.

Mission

Ministry means nothing and goes nowhere until it is defined by its leadership. The definition is provided through the ministry's mission – not its charisma. According to Malphurs, “The mission concerns what God wants to accomplish through individuals, not necessarily what

they want to accomplish. The mission addresses what God wants to do with the lives of the followers-how he plans to use them in his kingdom endeavors.”29 The job of every leader is to ensure all of its followers are aware of and intimately related to the mission of the ministry if it is to move forward. Followers must know where they are going even if they do not know how they are going to get there. Malphurs provides clarity on the point: “What distinguishes the leader is his willingness and patience to walk the church through this process.”30

The mission provides the marching orders for the ministry as it details what the ministry is to do. The mission of RLM is to make disciples through sincere worship, dedicated scholarship, intentional fellowship and the efficient stewardship of our talents, gifts and treasures. This mission is realized through empowerment sessions, conferences, books and workshops. The various conferences RLM has organized to shift the lives of attendees are: “I Can Breathe Again”, “Men in Worship”, “Leaders Who Win” and “Women Who Win”. Conferences are offered throughout the year locally with the goal of expanding to other states and countries. For the goal to be realized, RLM takes to heart discipling others with the commitment to deploy them for greater impact and then charge them with doing the same.

RLM has expanded beyond Florida to host the same conferences and empowerment sessions in Gary, Indiana and Ridgeland, South Carolina while facilitating its mission globally in Accra, Ghana in West Africa. RLM fulfills its mission in Africa by adopting two schools, one middle and one high school, to ensure the students are clothed and provided with essential tools needed for their learning. Furthermore, RLM has worked to create learning environments filled with hope, care, respect and dignity through various beautification projects at the schools

29 Barna, The Power of Vision, 159

30 Malphurs, Advanced Strategic Planning, 161.
adopted in West Africa. While the mission has not been totally realized, RLM has made tremendous strides with the limited resources at its disposal and the help of the Lord.

Leadership Structure

RLM is led by Christ and three other individuals making it a small ministry by most standards. Having a small leadership team serves as a strength for the ministry as it focuses on fulfillment of its vision and mission while serving the people it is called to serve. However, the demand of the ministry at times outweighs the capacity of its leadership giving way to high levels of stress and burnout which serve as weaknesses of the ministry. Weaknesses are often overcome by the passion of the leadership team to affect change in the lives of others. George Barna writes, “The execution of vision involves the integration of one’s personal abilities and limitations with God’s plan to produce God’s will for His people.”

God serves as the inspiration and guide. Elder Remiel Lockwood serves as the Chief Executive Officer. Javonn Lockwood serves as the Chief Operating Officer. Allen Perry serves as the Director. RLM wholeheartedly believes whenever God chooses to move mountains, He does not use the masses, but a remnant totally dependent upon Him. Though small in leadership structure, God has used RLM to accomplish awesome feats with many more yet to come. As the ministry grows and develops to reach its full potential, the leadership structure will also grow to meet such demands as directed by God.

Problem Presented

Leadership may look exciting from the outside, but it is a difficult posture to maintain especially when you have a quality leadership demand for self. Quality leadership requires a

commitment to growth, development, empowerment and maturity. Furthermore, quality leadership demands experience and time. Ministry can thrive on giftedness, but it cannot be sustained if giftedness is not matched with character. Spiritual maturity flows out of one's desire to have and maintain an intimate relationship with God. Having such an understanding is essential for working in ministry because in ministry all leaders will contend with crises, conflicts and times of isolation. If not careful, these crises, conflicts, and times of isolation will lead to frustration thereby causing leaders to have a love and hate relationship with the ministry they are called to do.

Like anything else, trauma, crisis and conflict must be processed and worked through. Jim Putnam, Bobby Harrington, and Robert E. Coleman write,

Crisis processing either drives them deeper into the presence of God or drives them away from God. Identifying this process item will help you recognize its major function, drawing you into a deeper dependence on God both as your source or life and as your motivation to live and minister.32

Unfortunately, most pastors preach through their crises without having the time or space to process them leading to frustration and even self-destruction. Preaching becomes the high that helps the pastor cope with the pain of their past while robbing them of their present. When the preaching moment has ended, the pastor must have the tools necessary to properly deal with the dysfunction of their lives. Otherwise, as much as preaching helps – it hurts.

Silent frustration and emotional instability are problems in the church, and more specifically, in the pastorate. They are problems that cannot be overlooked. They must be addressed in order to change a generation of leaders from feeling its impacts. That which

is not confronted can never be changed. Admittedly, pastoral leadership can be a very lonely position to hold as there is often no place to go for release or relief. The leader must provide help and hope to others and yet they need help and hope themselves. Mental stress is a significant problem in society today and can also negatively affect pastors. However, stress in itself is an unavoidable reality. As much as it is a nuisance – it is an impetus for better. Stress, or the amount thereof, is not the source of one’s problem. The inability to manage stress is what is problematic and forces one to walk away from ministry. Sad to say, coping with high levels of stress has caused many ministers to turn to unhealthy behaviors and substances with no one willing to directly address it.

Michael Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffman state,

Too little stress and we’ll lack sufficient motivation to accomplish our calling; too much stress and we’ll likely feel overwhelmed, leading to decreased effectiveness. That’s why we need good stress-management skills. It’s the lack of skill for managing stress that ultimately causes fatigue and burnout.33

Over the last several years the church has paid the price for its silence in this matter through the upsurge in pastoral suicides. The church has also seen a surge in church closings or pastors simply walking away from the church. The hard work of identifying why is necessary for the longevity of the church and the well-being of the pastor. According to Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington, and Robert E. Coleman, “The pastor being the DNA of the church sets the tone for the spiritual growth and maturity of the church.34 If they are torn, depleted, hopeless and worn then the church they serve will reflect their state of being. While it may be easy to provide spiritual solutions to this problem, it is time to provide some practical solutions to it as well. These practical solutions may be difficult to accept and face, but the destiny of the pastor and

33 Wilson and Hoffmann, Preventing Ministry Failure, 101.

34 Putman, Harrington, and Coleman, Discipleshift, 98.
ultimately the church depends on it. The problem is pastors in Pentecostal and Baptist Black churches in Miami, Florida have been plagued by high levels of unaddressed mental stress causing both them and their churches to be unhealthy.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to provide pastors in South Florida with information on mental stress so they may assess themselves and areas in their ministries which may have been affected by mental stress in order to offer solutions. A pastor will only be as good to a church as he or she is to themselves. Andy Stanley, Reggie Joiner, and Lane Jones write, “Your potential to make an impact with your life is directly related to your willingness to narrow your focus.”

Pastors must take the time to focus on self if they are to have the greatest impact on others. Often, they are forced to wrestle with the weight of their personal challenges while providing hope for others, there is no way of escape, release or safety for themselves. Often pastors operate under the false impression they must present a life of perfection or “holiness” to their flock as representatives of Christ.

This false assumption gives way to overwhelming feelings of guilt and shame for failures, sins or mistakes they have made. However, as a sign of liberation for pastors and members alike, leaders ought to model what it is to stumble and yet remain faithful to the cause of Christ. In so doing, they free themselves, remove the stains of guilt and shame, and serve as a representative of God’s grace to all. God never called His children to perfection – He only asked that we strive for faithfulness.


Psalms 37:23-24 records, “A good man’s steps are ordered by the Lord, and he delights in his way, though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholds him with His hand.” Falling is part of the process. It is a part of the process that is often overlooked, rejected or thought to never happen. This text suggests God not only orders ones steps, but He also orders one's steps. A fall causes one to stop and reflect on what has gotten them into that position and more importantly how to recover from it. It forces one to take inventory of themselves and to rid themselves of the things that are counterproductive to their forward progression.

Unfortunately, when a pastor or ministry leader falls, they are judged more harshly and their good takes a back seat to the error of their ways. Such a time becomes uncertain for ministry leaders. In those uncertain times, it is good to know when you cannot depend on people – you can always depend on God. Pastors must be assured that the course of their lives have been planned by and are in the hand of God. Peter Marshall said, “God will never permit any troubles to come upon us unless he has a specific plan by which great blessing can come out of the difficulty.”

Joseph in Genesis 37, is proof positive the plan and hand of God orders the course of one’s life. God arranges people, plans, processes and places to orchestrate his divine flow in one’s life sovereignly. This established order is what births the spiritual, fiscal, physical and mental unfolding of God's plan. Therefore, God knew affliction would be a part of the process and needs pastors who will trust Him even when they cannot trace Him. Trust however, does not come without its set of stressors. Therefore, this project seeks to provide possible solutions for overcoming stress.

Basic Assumptions

This paper makes the basic assumption that the unchecked stressors of pastors in African American Pentecostal and Baptist churches in South Florida lead to unhealthy lives and churches. It assumes many pastors are unaware of the danger they are in and are unaware of the stress levels they are under. Furthermore, it assumes if pastors are made aware and are provided the tools necessary for reducing their stress levels they would take full advantage of the tools afforded to them. The tools are professional counseling, therapy, sabbaticals and rest just to name a few. This project presupposes pastors who are burdened with navigating the demands of family and ministry are looking for help. Although this project is written knowing it will not help all pastors, the hope is to provide relief for many while providing a framework that creates systemic change in this area.

Definitions

This paper will focus on several themes such as broken systems, conviction, hard times, stress, composure, trauma, burnout, being emotionally unhealthy, pastoral ministry, self-care, emotional intelligence, charisma and forgiveness. The definitions for each of these themes follow. Broken systems are defined as faulty systems put in place to control outcomes. Leadership principles and perspectives are not one size fits all ideals. It can become very frustrating trying to implement systems that seem to work for others but do not fit within one’s specific ministry context. This project considers how broken systems plague the overall development and growth of the pastor and their ministry. Pastors must be willing to boldly and courageously challenge, confront and fix systems that have been broken within their ministries. However, broken systems should never have a bearing on one’s personal convictions.
Conviction is defined as a fervent belief in a person or thing. Conviction also shapes how one approaches life and its happenings. According to Malphurs, “The average speaker imparts information, and that’s important. The challenging speaker, however, imparts information with conviction. There’s something about conviction that engenders credibility.” Therefore, this project will challenge leaders to measure their appetites, both natural and spiritual, against their beliefs in order to achieve necessary change. There is a major difference between religious conviction and a conviction based on one's relationship with God. Religion will fail anyone who subscribes to it and it alone as it is often flawed and based solely on one’s ability to stick to and follow a set of rules, traditions and dogmas. However, a conviction is rooted in a relationship with God and is set on following the example of His Son, Jesus the Christ and being liberated through his death, burial and resurrection. Sometimes such a conviction opens the door to difficult times.

Hard times are seasons of difficulty, lack, unproductivity and stunted growth. Seasons come and seasons go. What matters is how one engages the season they are in. Just as there will be seasons of blessings; there will be seasons of difficulty. However, seasons of difficulty, if handled correctly, should not derail the momentum of the ministry if the pastor remains true to his call. This is not to suggest the hard times endured will not invoke high levels of stress.

Stress is defined as the burden and weight of life resting heavily on the mind and body of an individual. When stress is unresolved, consequences are inevitable. The byproducts of stress include heart attacks, strokes, obesity, depression, suicide, and more. The root cause is unresolved stress. Clinton, Hart and Ohlschlager state, “… when any stress is prolonged (good or

38 Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 62.
bad), chronic, excessive and intense – when we aren’t able to recover, or remove ourselves from it, there is a transition into distress (stress disease). This causes adrenaline exhaustion and begins to erode the foundations of mental and physical health. The mind and body are not equipped to handle the process of ongoing chronic stress.”

Stress is not something that should be simply ignored or overlooked. This paper will seek to offer ways in which pastors can overcome their stress starting with their ability to maintain their composure above all else.

Composure is defined as the ability to maintain control of self. Ministry success and sustainability require stable leadership that is able to keep a level head even in the most difficult times. Composure, or the lack thereof, can either make or break a ministry. Ministry demands leadership that is in control of themselves or failure is a strong outcome. According to Malphurs, “A healthy composure creates a climate where information is shared, leaders are trusted, learning flourishes, and risks are taken. An unhealthy emotional composure creates a setting rife with fear and anxiety.”

“And, most important to this discussion, strong, healthy emotional composure builds leadership credibility, while poor composure, or the expression of inappropriate emotions, is the silent killer of credibility.” Admittedly, it is difficult maintaining composure in certain situations especially those involving trauma.

Trauma is defined as a life happening causing emotional, physical, mental, psychological and social damage. Timothy E. Clinton and Ronald E. Hawkins write, “A trauma would be considered a situation beyond control, one that shakes a person to the core. A trauma can lead to mental disorders or to suicide. Recovery is often slow; flashbacks are common.”


40 Malphurs, Advanced Strategic Planning, 66.

41 Malphurs, Advanced Strategic Planning, 66.

Trauma is often experienced in life threatening situations that involves either self or others. It is heightened when the ability to escape seems impossible. The consistent fight to overcome trauma can often lead to burnout.

It is possible to be overly invested in an endeavor that causes an individual to ignore the need for rest. This can lead to burnout and ultimately decay. Clinton and Hawkins provide a definition for burnout. “Burnout is a stressful state characterized by physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion, chronic fatigue, and lethargy.”43 People who are overcome with feelings of depression, are always looking for ways of escape, are cynical about life happenings, are emotionally distant, are hypercritical and are prone to addictive behavior often suffer from burnout. Burnout could also be defined as the result of ones inability to control their already overloaded schedule. When a person is burned out, they emotionally unhealthy.

Peter Scazerro identified the emotionally unhealthy leader. “The emotionally unhealthy leader is someone who operates in a continuous state of emotional and spiritual deficit, lacking emotional maturity and a “being with God” sufficient to sustain their “doing for God.””44 When assessing the pastors' emotional health, this project considers the emotional and spiritual deficiencies in their lives. It will consider what role those deficiencies play in the deterioration of their lives and ministries. The challenge found in overcoming deficient emotional health as a pastor is in separating the person from the pastoral ministry. Pastors must understand their pastoral ministry is not the sum total of who they are created to encompass. Pastors are people who happen to be chosen by God to fulfill His purposes in the earth.


44 Peter Scazzero, The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2015), 25
Pastoral ministry is defined as the ability to guide, influence, challenge, equip and develop the lives of others according to the word of God. The pastor is likened to a shepherd in Scripture. “As shepherds, pastors are to guard their flocks from going astray, lead them to the green pastures of God’s Word, and defend them against the savage wolves that would ravage them (Acts 20:29).” Therefore, pastoral ministry requires that the pastor be closely acquainted with their flock. John MacArthur argues pastoral ministry should be “biblically based, not demographically defined; Spirit-led, not market-driven; Christ-centered, not man-directed; and God-focused, not consumer-oriented.”

Self-care is defined as the ability to put the needs, concerns and well-being of self above others for a prescribed length of time. Self-care could also be defined as “actions that individuals initiate and perform on their own behalf in maintaining life, health, and well-being.” Pastors especially are guilty of forsaking themselves and their families in order to meet the needs of others. That unfortunate truth has led to pastoral decay. Pastors must accept the fact they cannot continue to pour from empty vessels. Their sustainability in ministry requires and even demands they take the time to care for themselves. The health and well-being of the pastor must be paramount, and it can only be so when a pastor is emotionally intelligent.

Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to clearly identify the things altering one’s behavior. It is being completely competent about self. Bradberry and Greaves suggest, “Personal competence is your ability to stay aware of your emotions and manage your behavior

45 MacArthur, Pastoral Ministry, 22.
46 MacArthur, Pastoral Ministry, 14.
and tendencies.” Whenever a person is unaware or unaccepting of their emotions, they give license to others to control them. Being aware allows individuals to harness control of their emotions and understand their needs. There are many personality traits that can be used to mask or support the awareness of emotional intelligence. One of these traits is charisma.

Charisma is defined as one’s ability to inspire others through the use of charm. It is a leadership tool used especially in times of motivation or team building. More than a leadership tool, charisma is also a personality trait that allows people to mask their deficiencies. Charisma can be a temporary fix, but it is in no way sustainable for pastors. Charm invokes emotions but does nothing for results. Of all of the good things that can come from charisma, one of the bad things is that it does not readily give way to sincere forgiveness.

Forgiveness is defined as one’s ability to release self or another from an offense. Forgiveness is not only for the person receiving it – it is also for the person extending forgiveness. When it relates to self it has dual benefit - liberation. When an offense is released it no longer carries the power to control the emotions, mind and convictions of the offended. It allows the person extending the forgives to move forward unhindered by the experiences of the past.

Limitations

One limitation of this thesis project is it only considers pastors of African American Pentecostal and Baptist churches in South Florida, specifically within Miami Dade and Broward Counties. It will share information on their physical and emotional health and how the results affect the overall health of the churches they serve. The project will seek to highlight the history, nature and function of the pastor. It will also research how pastoral health contributes to

48 Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves, *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* (San Diego, CA: Talent Smart,
the rise and fall of families and ministries. However, this project will not assert its findings as fully conclusive as it will not give detailed analysis of the conditions of those interviewed.

A second limitation is the project will not offer an action plan for pastors who are suffering outside of seeking necessary help for the sustainability of their ministries. It will in no way advocate for the removal of a pastor from their post as a result of perceived malfeasance. More than anything, this project will advocate for a pastor’s involvement in therapeutic and psychoeducational counseling in order to identify more practical ways for overcoming the ills that plague them. However, this project will not detail what counselors a pastor should see nor how long they should see them as it does not seek to force, but to provide understanding. While the project does highlight differing denominations, its findings are based on what unites them instead of what divides them.

A third limitation is the project will not divide pastors considered in its research by the elements of gender, educational training and age while it does only consider those that are African American. The project also will not consider the years of experience held by the pastor, but will reveal the ranges of stress held by newer pastors over seasoned pastors to find commonalities. While the project speaks to pastoral stress; the heart of the project is rooted in pastoral care. It is limited to ensuring pastors lead healthy physical, emotional and spiritual lives. While it its limited to such, it is a limit that is necessary and essential.

**Thesis Statement**

The thesis of this project is if pastors in Miami, Florida leading Black Pentecostal and Baptist churches will gain a greater understanding of mental stress, then those pastors and
congregations will be able to properly identify and overcome stressors in both their lives and their churches. The lack of knowledge does more harm to individuals than anything else. More so, the lack of understanding is just as harmful. The (a) clause of Hosea 4:6 records, “My people are destroyed for the lack of knowledge.” Unlike popular opinion, sense is not common.

Summary

Therefore, some pastors are not aware they are not obligated to do everything and be everywhere especially when it comes at the expense of their families. They are unaware that although stress can be good – it can also be deadly. That is why Proverbs 4:7 states, “Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore, get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.” Whenever one submits to understanding they tool themselves with the ability to make course corrections that will prove positive along their journey.
CHAPTER 2
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Review of Literature

This project incorporates a wide range of literary sources. Michael Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffman in Preventing Ministry Failure, acknowledge the importance of pastoral ministry while recognizing the negative impact unaddressed stress can have on pastors. The literature addresses pastoral longevity; the struggle of pastoral effectiveness in times of transition or societal shifts; pastoral burnout; ethical and moral failures; and the need for self-care. All of these are presented to provide pastoral leaders with tools to overcome stress. The tools may also serve as prevention for potential problems.

Wilson and Hoffman use seven foundational stones upon which leaders can stand:

Intimacy: Connecting to the Heart of Successful Pastoring; Calling: The Power For Effectiveness in Ministry; Stress Management: Avoiding Ineffectiveness and Burnout; Boundaries: Protecting What Matters Most; Re-Creation: The Fuel to Re-energize Ministry; People Skills: Managing Our Most Valuable Resource; and Leadership Skills: Setting Ministers Apart from The Rest of the Sheep.49

If the foundational stones are both laid and adhered to, then pastoral leaders will be better positioned to avoid ministry failure. If not, below are just a few of the areas that will give rise to failure in ministry.

49 Wilson and Hoffmann, Preventing Ministry Failure, 1.
Burnout

Erwin Lutzer defines burnout:

A syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do ‘people work’ of some kind. Its symptoms include increased fatigue, tiredness even after a good night’s sleep, loss of interest in one’s work, and a pessimistic, critical spirit often accompanied by withdrawal, depression, and a feeling of futility.50

Strong suggests, “burnout is a state of physical, mental, spiritual and emotional exhaustion caused by extended and intense levels of stress. It leads to the questioning of one’s abilities and/or the value of one’s work.”51 If the job of the pastor was limited to Sunday morning and a midweek service, then the demands of ministry might be more tolerable.

Unfortunately, this is not the reality. John MacArthur writes, ”The pastor is expected to perform excellently with the widest range of skills – to be at any given time a scholar, visionary, communicator, administrator, consoler, leader, financier, diplomat, perfect example, counselor, and peacemaker.”52 The demands of ministry are great and when compounded with family and career demands they become even more burdensome. Burnout may occur causing a pastor to walk away from ministry and even God altogether. Christopher Ash in his book Zeal Without Burnout: Seven Keys to a Lifelong Ministry of Sustainable Sacrifice indicates, “Thousands of people leave Christian ministry every month. They have not lost their love for Christ, or their desire to serve him. But for one reason or another, they are exhausted and simply cannot carry on.”53


52 MacArthur, Pastoral Ministry, 122.

53 Christopher Ash, Zeal Without Burnout: Seven Keys to a Lifelong Ministry of Sustainable Sacrifice (UK: The Goodbook Company, 2016), back cover
Some pastors are of the false belief it is acceptable or even biblical for them to sacrifice all of their time and resources for the cause of Christ. Luke 9:23-24 records, “And he said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.” It is true serving Christ requires sacrifice, but it is extreme to push sacrifice to the point of burnout. Christopher Ash argues,

It may sound heroic, even romantic, to burn out for Jesus. The reality is that others are implicated in our crashes. A spouse, children, ministry colleagues, prayer partners and faithful friends, all are drawn in to supporting us and propping us up when we collapse.”

When pushed beyond the limit collapse is inevitable. Dr. Tim Clinton and Dr. Ron Hawkins in the book *The Quick-Reference Guide to Biblical Counseling: Personal and Emotional Issues*, offer practical ways for pastors to overcome the feeling of walking away due to the weight and pressure of trying to hold it all together. Those who sit in the seat of the helper often need help too and while they have the answers for others – they may not have the answer for themselves or even know how to properly apply the answers they are afforded. Clinton and Hawkins help to resolve the dilemma in a very concise, practical, relevant and biblical way. It is hard to focus on the fulfillment of the mission of God for a ministry when the focus is simply on maintaining some semblance of normalcy.

Michael Todd Wilson suggests, “A hectic schedule takes a physical, emotional, and spiritual toll on us.” Pastors must remember they have needs – God does not. Ash puts it this way, “We need sleep, but God does not. We need Sabbaths, but God does not. We need

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friends, but God does not. We need food, but God does not.”56 Cloud and Townsend indicate, “Workers who continually take on duties that aren’t theirs will eventually burnout. It takes wisdom to know what we should be doing and what we shouldn’t. We can’t do everything. Any confusion of responsibility and ownership in our lives is a problem of boundaries.”57 To sacrifice the basic needs of self for the work of Christ is to lead to isolation and burnout which is in no way the plan of God for those He calls. Fred Lehr, in his book Clergy Burnout: Recovering from the 70-Hour Work Week... And Other Self-Defeating Practices, shares, “A study conducted by Fuller Theological Seminary in the late 1980s uncovered the following:

- 90 percent of pastors work more than 46 hours per week.
- 80 percent believe that pastoral ministry is affecting their families negatively.
- 33 percent say that being in ministry is clearly a hazard to my family.
- 75 percent have reported a significant crisis due to stress at least once in their ministry.
- 50 percent felt unable to meet the needs of the ministry.
- 90 percent felt they were not adequately trained to cope with ministry demands placed on them.
- 40 percent reported at least one serious conflict with at least one parishioner at least once a month.
- 70 percent of pastors do not have someone they could consider a close friend.
- 37 percent admitted having been involved in inappropriate sexual behavior with someone in their congregation.
- 70 percent have a lower self-image after they have been in pastoral ministry than when they started.”58

These challenges lead to undue stress and must be overcome.

56 Ash, Zeal Without Burnout, 41.

57 Henry Cloud and John Townsend, Boundaries: When to Say Yes How to Say No Take Control of Your Life (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 27.

58 Fred Lehr, Clergy Burnout: Recovering from the 70-Hour Work Week... And Other Self-Defeating Practices (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 4.
Stress

Bill Gualtiere stated,

Pastor stress today is enormous. The expectations that people put on their pastors – and that pastors put on themselves! – can be debilitating. Everywhere pastors go they are expected to be “on” – ready to give stellar leadership, unending compassion, an inspiring message, anointed prayer, and words of encouragement.”

Christopher Schmitz writes,

The fact of the matter is that many pastors are burned up, burned out, or have been just plain burned by the church, and the modern church has made it a habit of doing so. The stress of ministry weighs heavily on a pastor and on his or her family (and most of these stressors are not part of the calling as a pastor, but are extra, human burdens we put on him or her).

Any high impact job comes with a set of stressors especially when the lives and well-being of others hang in the balance. Consequently, it is essential environments of safety are created and a demand for efficiency is established in order to receive best use.

Pastors who lead well should be properly compensated as a measure of support for their work. 1 Timothy 5:17-18 “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, the labourer is worthy of his reward.”

Unfortunately, it is not always true for pastors. Adding to their already extreme stress levels, some pastors are forced to be bi-vocational because the ministry cannot afford to support them. These challenges may lead to errors in judgement.

Michael Wilson and Brad Hoffmann write, “Unhealthy personality traits such as the need for accomplishment, the desire for others approval, perfectionism & driveness all contribute to


60 Christopher D. Schmitz, Why Your Pastor Left (n.p.: CreateSpace, 2016), 11.
high levels of stress.”61 Stress for a pastor reveals character flaws and if unchecked affect the congregation. "Because when the challenges and stresses of life become overwhelming, a pastor's behavior will flow from his character. How he acts—both privately and professionally—will spring from who he is."62 Clinton, Hart, and Ohlschalger further state, "We now know that it is not stress itself that is the problem, but our responses to stress, the sense of helplessness, the duration of the stress, and the lack of recovery from the stressors bombarding us which cause damage emotionally and physically."63

Godly character and personal character are sometimes two opposing forces at war within pastors although it should not be the case. Pastors should take on the posture of submission to the will of God in all areas of life; however, it is a daily struggle like anyone else. Part of the struggle is rooted in how well the pastor manages to keep the doors of the church open, the lights on and the needs of the people met. Sadly, godly principles are not always used to accomplish those goals. The stress of it all allows for compromised character. Yet still, the duty of the pastor is always to point believers to Christ and not themselves. When stress is prevalent the duty becomes marred as pastors find themselves at odds with God, spiritually stuck, spiritually depleted, tired of church, and feeling like aborting their call making it most difficult to focus on discipleship. Often in an effort to make disciples the truth gets lost causing discipleship to be more personal instead of transformational. Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington and Robert E. Coleman in Discipleshift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples, seek to help pastors realign their focus and minimize stress in ministry. They attempt to free

61 Wilson and Hoffmann, Preventing Ministry Failure, 103-104.
62 Putman, Harrington, and Coleman, Discipleshift, 103.
63 Clinton, Hart, and Ohlschlager, Caring for People God's Way, 163.
pastors to rest in their humanity while pushing God’s divinity. “The biblical model for church community is an authentic and healthy transparency that repeatedly points back to the gospel.”

One of the major stresses of a pastor is rooted in trying to be something they are not – perfect. When this is overcome then a pastor will be better positioned to both lead and create disciples and better manage stress. According to Clinton, Hart, and Ohlschlager,

Ongoing highly pressured work, long-term relationship problems, loneliness, complicated bereavement, persistent financial worries – all could meet the diagnostic criteria if these disturbance lasts for 6 months or more. Eventually this form of stress can weaken the immune system and have many damaging effects to health and well-being.

Bill Gaultiere in his work on Pastor Stress Statistics, offers some insight into how stress effects pastors in various areas. Gaultiere writes, “It is particularly disturbing to see how much pastors are struggling with emotional pain, family problems, living well and moral failures:

- 70% of pastors say they have a lower self-esteem now than when they entered ministry.
- 70% constantly fight depression.
- 50% feel so discouraged that they would leave their ministry if they could, but can’t find another job.
- 80% believe their pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families and 33% said it was an outright hazard.
- 80% of ministry spouses feel left out and unappreciated in their church.
- 77% feel they do not have a good marriage.
- 41% display anger problems in marriage (reported by the spouse).
- 38% are divorced or divorcing.
- 50% admit to using pornography and 37% report inappropriate sexual behavior with someone in the church.
- 65% feel their family is in a glass house.”

64 Putman, Harrington, and Coleman, Discipleshift, 104.
65 Clinton, Hart, and Ohlschlager, Caring for People God's Way, 168.
Those stats are alarming and speak to the number of pastoral leaders who lead stressed and broken lives. They reveal how many pastors are truly emotionally unhealthy.

**Emotional Health**

Often a pastor’s theology does not inform their psychology. Peter Scazzero in *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World* seeks to remedy this by highlighting the challenges of leaders who do not realize the link between their spiritual and psychological lives. "Unhealthy leaders engage in more activities than their combined spiritual, physical, and emotional reserves can sustain." 67 Leaders must take time to address their inner lives so it is not in direct or indirect conflict with their outer lives. When this is done with the leadership of the church it will have a domino effect on the congregants of the church, thereby causing the psychological and spiritual climate of the church to strengthen. Leaders can then deal with the unseen versus the seen. This will ensure health, longevity and a fortified relationship with Christ not rooted in what they do for Him, but in how they connect to Him.

The church has many emotionally unhealthy people who are filled with disappointment, hurt, anger and various forms of conflict all of which can be overcome. Peter Scazzero explains, “The emotionally unhealthy leader is someone who operates in a continuous state of an emotional and spiritual deficit, lacking emotional maturity and a “being with God” sufficient to sustain their “doing for God.”" 68 These types of leaders are those who are so busy doing, they neglect the opportunity to just be who God created them to be. This business is not by chance – it

is purposeful. Laurie Beth Jones writes, "People who are in service to others, and especially those who are Christians, often believe that they must give all they have all the time to all who ask wherever they may ask it." 69

The busier an emotionally unhealthy leader is, the less he has to deal with the disdain of his current situation. It is not that he does not want to deal with it as much as it is that he does not know how to deal with it and lacks the trust necessary to reach out for help. Bob Burns suggest, "People in ministry rarely feel understood and seldom have anyone with whom they can openly talk about their experiences." 70 This truth only exacerbates the unhealthy disposition of one’s heart as the emotional strain that is experienced grows. One can never be healed from what they refuse to confess or discuss. According to Bill Gaultiere,

One of the reasons why many pastors share their struggles only on a surface level is that there is still a culture of shame and stigma in the church. Many pastors struggle in silence because they are ashamed to publicly admit that they are not the people you see on the stage or in the pulpit. They are burdened and broken. They are ashamed to say they are not okay. They are embarrassed to admit they are scared and lonely. 71

This is the result of a culture that has not allowed the pastor to be human, to struggle and to be covered like all others.

Another part of what makes pastors emotionally unhealthy is trying to juggle what is known about others in light of what they struggle with within themselves. Pastors are bound by confidentiality and they value it as they attempt to build trust with congregants while leading them in the things of God. Pastors know a lot about the people they serve. They are aware of who has struggled and who is struggling with various forms of addiction. They know who is


having marital issues, family issues, financial issues and issues raising their children. They know who is cheating and lying. They know why certain families have been missing in worship. They know when tithes and offerings are low and when bills are not paid. They know the people who talk about them behind their backs while smiling in their faces and asking for prayer. Pastors are aware of the traps set for others and for themselves. Pastors know and yet they are charged to keep silent and operate in love. They are filled to the brim with issues, cares and concerns about those under their care until they have little room to care for themselves. Their pain is secondary to the pain and plight of others. That negligence opens the door to slow but sure decay.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is an intentional act of the will and is a choice. Unforgiveness is the same. Part of what keeps leaders bound is the guilt carried from past or current failures. Pastors can preach on the forgiveness of Christ without accepting the same forgiveness for themselves. They often do not forgive themselves and are not freed to truly forgive others. Tim Clinton, Archibald Hart, and George Ohlschlager assert, "The way people talk about transgressions can affect forgiving. If people talk destructively about transgressions, unforgiveness multiplies." 72

T.D. Jakes in his book, Let It Go: Forgive So You Can Be Forgiven, seeks to give pastors permission to forgive both themselves and others so they can experience the liberation that Christ died to provide for them. "When we do not embrace forgiveness as the key to our freedom, our little ideas will always poison our bigger opportunities for new thought, honest dialogue, and solution-oriented discussion." 73 The author provides strength to the broken that

72 Clinton, Hart, and Ohlschlager, Caring for People God's Way, 131.
have been battered from the trials, tribulations and transgressions of life through forgiveness.

Jakes writes,

> You see, in order to survive and forgive there must be a component of catharsis, a deep cleansing of the soul. Anytime there is emotional stagnancy, your inner health is jeopardized. Lingering issues left without resolution can become lethal to your well-being and block the blessings of creativity, opportunity, and openness to new experiences.74

Forgiveness not only produces freedom, but it also produces vulnerability through trust.

**Vulnerability**

According to Bill Gautiere,

> You’re vulnerable and good leaders don’t spend time trying to protect themselves because putting up walls doesn’t protect you it poisons you. Yet, when you are totally open to the influence of the church and those you lead you run the risk of allowing your faith to be undeservedly dictated by the status of the church.75

Vulnerability is often one of the scariest propositions for pastors, but it’s really one of the noblest things they could possess. Humanity is always encouraged to look at the big picture; however, sometimes it is the small things that make the most impact. Tim Suttle in his book, *Shrink: Faithful Ministry in a Church-Growth Culture*, desires that pastors would have a shift in their perspectives thereby releasing some of the pressures of ministry success. He forces pastors to check their motives and agendas to see if they align with the will of God for both their lives and ministries or if they align with some secular worldview of ministry success.

As Suttle notes, "Most people think that leadership is the exercise of power, but it is not. Leadership that has been informed and transformed by Christ is about learning to

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embrace vulnerability, leveraging it in ways that will inspire faithfulness in the lives of others."76 When a pastor is willing to stay small enough long enough to be healed, to be free and to be whole then God will make them big enough soon enough. Admittedly, having a large church is not a problem, the problem is “that they distract the easily impressed, unstudied mind of the Christian world.”77 Those distractions come at the risk of overcoming their vulnerabilities. Vulnerabilities must be worked through if they are to be overcome successfully otherwise they will maintain control.

Vulnerability requires an atmosphere of accountability. Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington and Robert Coleman indicate, "A leader is not simply a person who shepherds others; he also creates a shepherding environment. To create an environment like this, a leader must allow others to shepherd him as well. And that requires vulnerability."78 One of the greatest positions for any believer to take is one of vulnerability for when that position is taken then healing can emerge. Such a position helps the hearer to properly accept and apply the truths of God’s word when heard. Tim Clinton, Archibald Hart, and George Ohlschlager, Caring for People God’s Way: Personal and Emotional Issues, Addictions, Grief, and Trauma said, “Many times I find that survivors can speak eloquently to me of the truths of Scripture, but on an experiential level their lives are lived out in the context of what the abuse taught them, rather than the truths of the Word of God.”79 While one may be broken, he does not have to remain that way – freedom is a choice.


78 Putman, Harrington, and Coleman, Discipleshift, 104.
79 Clinton, Hart, and Ohlschlager, Caring for People God's Way, 418.
Theological Foundation

Hebrews 13:17-18 reads,

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

Pastoring is a heavy load. No other vocation carries with it eternal ramifications and no other vocation makes its leadership accountable to God. Moreso, Hebrews teaches congregants that it is more prudent to have a pastor that watches over their souls in peace and with joy. Dr. J. Lamar Hardwick writes,

But watching over souls can make one weary. In fact, the word that the writer uses for watch over literally means “without sleep.” That means that when a pastor is following their calling, he or she can become weary because there is no such thing as a part-time or full-time pastor. There are no office hours. Watching over souls is serious business and as the writer suggests, we are accountable to God.

Pastors are charged to watch over the souls of a people who often only give the pastor access to their lives in times of need. The ability to execute this charge and to do it well comes with great risk. Matthew Henry provides insight:

They watch for the souls of the people, not to ensnare them, but to save them; to gain them, not to themselves, but to Christ; to build them up in knowledge, faith, and holiness. They are to watch against everything that may be hurtful to the souls of men, and to give them warning of dangerous errors, of the devices of Satan, of approaching judgments; they are to watch for all opportunities of helping the souls of men forward in the way to heaven.

What a task! It is a task that comes with grave pressure especially since the pastor is accountable to God.


81 Matthew Henry, Matthew Henry's Commentary On the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume (Hendrickson Publishers, LLC, 2005), 2407
The idea of being accountable to God for the souls of others is what makes it so weighty. It is weighty because to fail is to not only let the congregants down whose souls the pastor is charged to keep watch over, but it is also to let God down, to whom the pastor is accountable. As Lamar Hardwick writes, “Yet at the same time a discussion should be had about the role that pastoring and caring for the souls of others has on our ability to speak up about the internal challenges that we face.” Unfortunately, the responsibility of watching over the souls of others constrains pastors from their ability to speak their truth and it is doing more damage than good.

The routine of ministry can become overwhelming and even boring. Therefore, pastors need a break from the repetition in order to restore their energy for ministry. Strong says, “Pastors who cannot give up their work even after they become bored due to the repetition of the same work every day, every week and every year, usually burnout and become less effective.” Gaultiere adds, “But ministry stress alone does not explain why pastors burnout emotionally or blow out morally. Other statistics suggest that many pastors struggle with “professionalizing” their spiritual lives and failing to care for their own souls under God:

- 53% of pastors do not feel that seminary or Bible college prepared them adequately.
- 70% do not have someone they consider a close friend.
- 50% do not meet regularly with an accountability person or group.
- 72% only study the Bible when preparing for sermons or lessons.
- 21% spend less than 15 minutes a day in prayer – the average is 39 minutes per day.
- 16% are “very satisfied” with their prayer life, 47% are “somewhat satisfied”, and 37% are either “somewhat dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” (spending more time in quiet prayer or listening to God versus making requests was correlated with higher satisfaction).
- 44% of pastors do not take a regular day off.

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• 31% do not exercise at all, while 37% exercise at least three or four days a week as recommended.
• 90% say they have not received adequate training to meet the demands of ministry.
• 85% have never taken a Sabbatical.”

As congregants reach for Christ, they look to their pastor for an example. Pastors are charged to both lift Jesus up and those given to their charge. Pastors are called to be undershepherds of God’s church – shepherding the sheep. Pastors must preach God’s word, demonstrate His love and build His people holistically. Pastors are to provide care for those under their charge. Care does not just speak to feelings of emotion or concern. Pastoral care speaks to a deep-rooted desire to meet the basic needs of people while ensuring their spiritual growth and development. One of the many responsibilities given to a pastor is the vested interest in the maturity of its people. Maturity must be purposeful because at some point a believer is required to stand on their own. 1 Peter 2:2 “As new-born babies, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” Dependence on the pastor or the church should lessen as the believer grows. For milk will no longer be enough. The meat of God’s word and wisdom is required for sustainable living.

The church, led by the pastor, should always be concerned about the health and well-being of its members including its pastor. The church may do a masterful job of caring for the flock, and yet be negligent in its duty to ensure the health and well-being of its pastor is secure. The church seems to be more concerned with the pastor’s production than it is with the pastor’s sanity. The truth often stands in direct conflict with the overall health and sustainability of both the church and the pastor. Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:25-26 states, “That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And

whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.” Paul teaches that when one suffers all suffer and when one wins all win. All embodies all levels of service in the church. The head is no more important than the foot, the neck, the hand, the stomach, the back, the hips or the knees. Each body part has its function and that function can only be performed by that body part if the body is to operate according to design.

So then, Paul was teaching the basic elements of respect and humility. One’s position does not make them better than others as much as it makes them dependent on others. If the church (the body) is going to be effective it requires all parts working together on one accord. The King James Bible Commentary notes, “Divisions and alienation of feelings should find no place in the body of Christ. Rather, the members should have the same care one for another. The body is one and it has a common life and consciousness, therefore, whether one member suffer. Likewise, if one be honored, all the members rejoice with it.”

This truth is not exempt from the office of the pastor or at least it should not be. The pastor, like members of the church, are a part of the body. In fact, they are an essential part of the body that could be the difference between life and death. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to ensure the pastor, the head of the local church body, is free from unresolved wounds, a bleeding heart, exhaustion, emotional trauma, mental fatigue, and spiritual unrest. When those things are true, church leaders and members alike must be courageous enough to give pastors the time necessary to breakaway and be restored. Even Jesus broke away to pray and to rest. There is a dual benefit here. If an infection is not properly attended to it will spread until it consumes

85 Edward G. Dobson et al., eds., King James Bible Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 199
everything within its reach making the body weaker until it eventually dies. Tragically, that is true for many ministries and it does not have to be.

Pastors must be bold enough to articulate their need for rest and recovery. Members must be courageous enough to allow it without adding more stress on the pastor due to lack of attendance or giving. Matt Periman suggests, “The core principle of effectiveness is to know what’s important and put it first. Don’t prioritize your schedule, schedule your priorities.”

One of the healing virtues of the body is found in its rest. Matthew 11:28-30 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Matthew Henry’s Commentary observes, “The character of the persons invited; all that labour, and are heavy laden.” “All” is the operative word in that Scripture. It includes the pastor. Sadly, while many pastors use this Scripture to comfort the hearts and minds of others, they are not as apt to accept its invitation for themselves. Pastors need rest. Their health, vitality and sustainability depend on it.

The church is not just a place for social gathering. Individuals who make up the church body are a family (Eph 3:15). For many, a church family is the only family they have. The health of the family is dependent on the level of care provided within the family unit. Family members have a responsibility to meet each other’s needs. Family members are to assist in the care of the elderly, infants, those hospitalized, the incapacitated, and the physically weak. More than that, the church family provides a sense of belonging, security, unconditional love, and accountability.


87 Henry, Matthew Henry's Commentary On the Whole Bible, 1670.
The church family also acts as a support system for the emotionally distraught and the mentally drained.

Unfortunately, while the hand of the church reaches out to its members to meet their needs, it does not reach up to its leadership to meet theirs. The responsibility to pray and minister to others does not just rest in the pulpit but also in the pew. Every now and again the pastor needs to feel and pull from the strength of the pew. It can only be done when the pastor has created an environment where the people are dependent on Christ. Ephesians 4:11-13 states, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

Scripture commands those within the household of faith to pray, encourage, uphold, build and love one another. The power of the family dynamic is rooted in the relationships that are built. Those relationships provide the leverage necessary to affect change in the lives of others. Scripture is concerned with the health of the family. It indicates believers are to encourage and comfort one another (Rom 1:12); to rejoice and weep together (Rom. 12:15); to contend for one another in prayer (Rom 15:30); to be refreshed (Rom15:32); to suffer and honor together (1 Cor. 12:26); to restore one another (Gal. 6:1); to carry burdens together (Gal 6:2); to be kind, tenderhearted and forgiving of one another (Eph. 4:32); to walk in strength and purpose (Phil. 4:13); and to give to one another (Phil 4:14-15). None of these scriptures exclude the pastor in context, but many of them exclude the pastor in practice. Therefore, the theological foundation of this project seeks to ensure all of these scriptures are applied to the life of the pastor ensuring their spiritual, emotional and physical health.
**Theoretical Foundations**

A church filled with people is not necessarily an indication of a healthy church. If those who comprise it are filled with dysfunction, the church is not and cannot be healthy. People are more apt to connect with people, organizations or churches that share in their world view as opposed to those that challenge it. An extreme is people will come to churches to avoid being accountable for their issues. So then, they subject themselves to becoming a number instead of a name. In so doing, wearing a mask becomes more acceptable than dealing with the pain that exist in their lives head on.

Donald McKim writes, “The church is the community of those who profess faith in Jesus Christ.”88 A healthy church is one with a good blend of the mind, body, and spirit working together. Healthy churches are led by a healthy pastor or leadership team committed to ensuring its longevity. The Bible exclaims the oil runs from the head, to the beard and down to the skirt which illustrates whatever rests on the head falls on the body (Psalm 133:2). The illustration proves how important it is to ensure the pastor is whole. If unity as opposed to dysfunction is the goal of the church; the pastor must have resolve. Wholeness rests mainly on the pastor’s ability to seek refuge and to surround himself or herself with people who are not impressed by them, but are willing to speak truth to power for the greater good of the pastor and the church. Shinhwan indicates, “Clergy are likely to be dominated by the institutional culture, increasing the potential for burnout. They are often put on a pedestal by others and by themselves. In reality, however, many of these expectations just can't be met.”89 This is why a

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level head is essential.

The pastor must be both secure and trusting. They must be secure within themselves and understand any level of challenge they receive is not personal, and is not an attack and is not an attempt to rob them of their power nor authority. They must trust the people they have placed in positions have the best interest of both them and the ministry at heart. Depending on the size of the ministry, ministry leaders will be more closely connected to the interworking’s of the ministry and will be able to provide a more informed opinion as to how to best move concerning a matter.

Two of the things which affect the health of the church are the pastor’s character and credibility. Pastors, like parishioners, are human and are prone to failure especially when they become settled in secrecy. The secrecy of the pastor’s indiscretions ultimately leads to the decay of their character. More than lowered character standards, it leads to the deterioration of their credibility. All around the world and across denominational lines the failures of pastors have been exposed. Pastors engage in unethical, immoral and non-Christlike behavior which gives non-Christians or battered Christians the license to demonize them due to the false expectations of pastors to be perfect. What further exacerbates the problem is sometimes an unwillingness to repent and be accountable to God or their flock. Therefore, their immoral acts continue. While many focus on the acts of immorality, few seek to address the root cause of the behavior. Getting to the root of the problem does not take away from the offense, but it does ensure the behavior is properly addressed and halted.

Pastors produce after their kind. The same way the anointing of the pastor is transferable, the dysfunction of the pastor is transferable leaving the church family in trouble. When leaders partake in behavior unbecoming of a Christian it robs them of their ability to affect change in the
lives of others convictionally. Their witness becomes impaired and the church subsequently becomes affected thereby leaving it unhealthy. Pastors who fall into immorality are often guilty of operating out of their weaknesses instead of their strengths. They can be overtaken by their gullibility before they even realize what has occurred. They have prayed, but have not established safeguards in times of brokenness. Consequently, the church family is put at risk.

Theoretically, part of what has caused the problem is the codependent culture sometimes established. The members are dependent on the pastor and the pastor is dependent on the people. While that presents a certain level of strength it is not enough. In such a codependent culture, the pastor gives much more than they receive. That is not the fault of the membership – it is by design. The pastor is the leader and as such they are not afforded the same opportunities for release as the members nor should they be afforded such. For to whom much has been entrusted, much more is required (Luke 12:48). However, this does not discount the pastor’s need for relief from the things that burden them. They too need a safe place where they can go to deal with what challenges them. The safe place must be bound by confidentiality and offer not only spiritual relief, but practical relief, such as a professional therapist or counselor.

Summary

Pastors are often well versed in the Word. The application of the Word presents a potential disconnect. Unfortunately, many preach to help others but are not first partakers of the words they preach. Consequently, there are many churches whose pastor tragically pours out of an empty vessel. It is hard to give what you do not have and to continually do it opens the door of destruction. Sarah Pulliam Bailey wrote,
Pastors are facing new challenges than they did decades ago, which may lead some to work past their limits. Smartphones and social media have made many clergy quickly accessible to congregants, many churches face shrinking numbers and can’t afford a full-time pastor, and many lay leaders are less available in the era of two-income households and side-hustle jobs.\textsuperscript{90}

These challenges and more point to the need for outside help and assistance.

The benefits of a professional therapist or counselor for a pastor who is worn down by life and ministry are immeasurable. Pastors need someone who does not need them. The change in dynamic allows the pastor to move from the position of the helper to the position of being helped if they are willing to submit to the process. There are many things pastors are forced to conceal both personally and professionally while still trying to execute vision, provide hope, stay on mission and build the Kingdom. Counseling provides a judgment free zone whereby they are able to release in truth the things that hold them bound and get the help needed to overcome. Successful and long-lasting ministry requires the pastor to have a time of rest.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This project seeks to understand the struggles pastors have with balancing their pastoral duties personal lives. In so doing, the project examines the root causes of those struggles and offer practical solutions for overcoming them. The hope is the solutions will provide a source of healing for the pastor that will consequently set at liberty their families and the ministries they serve. The goal is to meet the needs of the pastor as they meet the needs of others. 1 Timothy 4:16 “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.” When one is whole all can be whole. It seeks to show the importance of self-care. According to Hudson, “Self-care is the starting point for leading a healthy, balanced life in ministry.” More than anything else, serving this present age requires pastors that are refreshed and well rested if they are going to be sustained for the long haul.

Currently the world is being rocked by a global pandemic initiated by what is known as the Coronavirus. It is a virus that has not only caused a collapse of the world systems, but a paradigm shift in the way churches worship. Pastors and churches have literally been forced into change. While the message of Jesus Christ remains the same, the method of sharing the message must adjust. Therefore, pastors need to be properly positioned to remain relevant in a day where their church doors are literally closed and, in a day, when “virtual church” may become the new normal. This new methodology requires a new way of pastoring a people that may never be seen, touched, held accountable or dependent upon their presence. Part of positioning requires

pastors to self-reflect and deal with the inadequacies within themselves in light of this new normal. Self-reflection is birthed through their ability to submit to self-care.

Self-care is a purposeful and intentional act that can often times seem or feel selfish. It goes against the grain of who pastors have been trained to be and its implementation comes with time. However, the best way to establish, enforce and maintain it is by scheduling it into the weekly or monthly calendar. Doing so allows pastors to ensure they make time for themselves and for their families. It is a tragic thing to serve the world while simultaneously losing what is most important - family. It is important to remember that just like Christ, pastors must slip away to have some personal time with God in order to be refilled. The word “no” is not a curse word. Actually, the more it is used and applied the better chances leaders have at longevity. While all things may be important – all things are not a priority. Pastors must be assured they are a priority too.

Even with changing methodologies and with making self-care a priority in pastors lives, there are some things that will remain. Once that truth is accepted it will free pastors from the unwarranted and false expectations of others. For example, no matter how hard they try, pastors will never be able to please everybody, to read other individuals minds, and be readily available at all times. While pastors are in the people business, they have no control over the hearts and minds of those people. They can only direct others in the ways of Christ – not force them into those ways. When those things are accepted and understood, the pressure to perform is removed leaving the desire to please God through enriching others.

**Research Participants**

This research focuses its attention on Senior Pastors of Baptist and Pentecostal churches
in the South Florida area. For this purpose, South Florida spans three counties, Palm Beach County, Broward County and Miami Dade County. In consideration of this project's hypothesis, its literature review, its theological foundation and its theoretical foundation, it is necessary to engage and include the conclusions of those serving in pastoral ministry. This chapter reveals the methodology used to gather the essential information that was analyzed to test its findings against the hypothesis.

For the most part, Baptist and Pentecostal churches are traditional in their approaches to ministry. W.R. Inge stated, “He who marries the spirit of the age soon finds himself a widower.” While traditionalism has its place, churches that are married to it rob pastors of the opportunity to take the ministry in a more progressive direction that would ultimately bridge the gap between the old and the new. Bridging allows the pastor to minister to the baby boomer and the millennial simultaneously while keeping them both engaged and excited about building the Kingdom of God. Pastors new to pastoral ministry often have a reluctance to pastoring ardent traditional ministries unless they were reared in them and prefer the status quo. One of the ills of traditional ministry is it gives way to stagnation, could easily become boring, and lacks the challenge of progression. Traditionalism conflicts with opportunities for the growth and development of the pastor, the ministry and the people.

Pastors in traditional churches, especially in a Baptist church context, sometimes feel more like employees than pastors. They are expected to preach, perform weddings, officiate funerals and balance the budget, but are not allowed to execute the vision God has given them for the ministry without the approval of others. Pastors of Pentecostal churches are often

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not entangled with such oversight. However, incoming pastors of Pentecostal churches are often forced to rebuild the ministry from the ground up. Unfortunately, traditional pastors of Pentecostal churches valued power and control over the necessity of succession. Therefore, they often allowed the church to crumble before they walked away and allowed someone else to pastor it. More than the power of control, most pastors of Pentecostal churches have never made provision for the foreign concept of retirement thereby leaving them with the need to preach until they die.

Some new pastors may believe their approach to the ministry context they are entering into will be fresh and progressive. Without such a belief, the drive and excitement of the pastor would be diminished as they pursue their pastoral journey aimlessly. Change is never easy or welcomed. Churches are of the false idea what is not broken should not be fixed. To do anything different is to go against the very idea of what church is or has been for generations and that seeming attack equates to the peril of the church. Preaching to the demands of the days of old is often ineffective. Jaroslav Pelikan said, “Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living.” Effective preaching and service to God and His people demands relevance to the present age. It demands pastors speak to and operate within the times in which they serve. While the church must stay true to its foundation, it must be flexible enough in its methods to challenge the evolution of the world. That flexibility must be felt in the pastor’s ability to submit to pastoral training, to the understanding of timing, to accountability and to the importance of forging meaningful relationships if transformation is to be realized and remain.

Pastoral Training

The research seeks to expose and analyze the initial expectations of the pastor against the

93 Kapic, A Little Book for New Theologians, 100.
reality of the pastor’s experience. The optimism of young pastors (by age or by experience) in the execution of their vision within the ministry they are called to is routinely elevated. Optimism is chipped away by legalism and traditionalism as the pastor encounters opposition to their ministry pursuits. Unfortunately, outside of preaching, many pastors both young and old have not been properly prepared for the ups and downs of ministry.

Pastoral training and wisdom will teach a pastor that change comes with time. It cannot typically be applied instantly and be welcomed. The concept can be difficult because pastors are always looking to make an instant impact on the spiritual, natural and financial standing of the church. It becomes a two-edged sword because on one side pastors are measured by their ability to maintain and produce spiritual, natural and financial growth within the congregation, but on the other side they are limited in how they do it – at least early on. When this is true, the pastor, the congregation and the ministry is robbed of reaching its full potential not because of the lack of resources, but because of the struggle for power. Those power struggles lead to pastoral stress and feelings of unappreciation resulting from a lack of pastoral training.

Trained pastors understand beyond preaching, they must be able to handle and resolve conflict. While God gives the pastor the vision, He factors in and understands those that are to fulfill the vision. The pastor also has the task to understand the people. Gaining such an understanding will come with its share of conflicts; however, it is the pastors responsibility to foster a spirit of collaboration that allows for the progression of the ministry. Deborah Smith Pegues notes, “Those who collaborate or work together toward a common purpose demonstrate spiritual and emotional maturity.”

94 Spiritual and emotional maturity is birthed through pastoral

94 Deborah Smith Pegues, Confronting Without Offending (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 2009), 57.
training and carried out systematically over time.

**Timing**

Pastors must understand and give respect to the element of timing. Far too often, the excitement of the office interferes with the execution of the duties. The office of the pastor should never outweigh the duties of the pastor. Pastoring is not about a title – it is a calling from God. Unfortunately, and fortunately, pastors are younger and younger. It is unfortunate because while they are assumed to be fit for office physically, they lack the life experience that informs wise decisions. The flaw allows for the manipulation and wayward agenda of others to be displayed while the pastor is being used as a pawn. It is fortunate because it allows both the pastor and the congregation to grow together. The flip side reveals pastors who are entering pastoral service later in life. Both scenarios by the unlearned will seek urgency over pace.

The young pastor may feel they have to prove themselves quickly and demand respect because most often they are pastoring people who are their senior. They are gifted, but unlearned. While the older pastor feels whatever they do they must do quickly because they have more time behind them than ahead. What is dangerous amongst both groups is they are often guilty of comparing themselves among their contemporaries. When it comes to change and even the transformation of others, pace is vitally important. Pastors must concentrate on running their own race at the right pace to avoid calamity. Moreover, when it comes to pastoral sustainability and effectiveness, pace is essential. Timing is a methodology that is at times overlooked, but proves helpful in the element of self-care. Pastors that are purposeful in submitting to the counsel of others benefit most from the understanding of timing.
Accountability

Attempting to carry the burden alone is one of the main reasons why pastors are stressed out. Accountability ensures pastors are challenged to still submit to an authority, outside of Christ, that has their best interest at heart. Pastors need a place they can run. A safe place where their humanity can be exposed and covered at the same time. Yes, the pastor must be accountable to their people, but there are limitations. Due to the elements of congregational confidentiality and safety, pastors are limited in how much they can reveal to those under their care. Someone outside of their care is needed to properly care for the pastor. It could be someone who also carries the burden and blessing of congregational care to provide them pastoral care or someone removed from congregational care, but professionally trained to properly provide care. If the accountability methodology is to be effective; it is important that pastors submit to those who are not impressed by them, their church or their financial standing.

Proverbs 11:14 “Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.” Fresh eyes are able to provide fresh perspectives that could alter the trajectory of a pastors life and ministry. According to Aubrey Malphurs, high performing or effective pastors “have had coaches or mentors for most of their ministries. They have seen the wisdom in seeking out people who are ahead of them in ministry and can help them fill in any gaps in their leadership.”95 More than that, pastors need to be assured they are not alone. They need a trusted outlet, to reason together, to be sharpened, to be challenged, to be provoked toward greater and to be rooted in their call. This research project not only encourages but insists on it not just from a pastoral perspective but also from a professional perspective.

95 Malphurs, Advanced Strategic Planning. 25.
Meaningful Relationships

Before a relationship can be fostered with others, the relationship with self must first be developed. From the sunrise of one’s life until the sunset of the same, the only two constants on the journey are self and God. Therefore, ensuring the relationships between both God and self are strong is paramount before trying to enter into meaningful relationships with others. It is impossible to love and give to others without first loving and giving to self. Having a meaningful relationship with both God and self allows pastors to lead from a secure place that is not influenced by fear, pain, lack, or chaos but through joy, peace, abundance and freedom.

This research project considers the methodology of forging a meaningful relationship with self as a tool for healing and sustainability. Pastors who find their fulfillment based upon another’s need for them or of them are usually unfulfilled within themselves. Having a concrete knowledge of self helps to lay a firm foundation as the establishment of association, connection and accessibility. Without a concrete knowledge of self, anything becomes acceptable and unhealthy relationships are forged. In a day where social distancing is not just recommended by legislated, people are forced to deal with the things they have allowed distractions to pull them away from. Now more than ever, pastors have the unique opportunity to build a loving and lasting relationship with themselves in order to increase their capacity to do the same with and for others.

Research Design

Study Type

The study is confidential and was implemented through the use of a questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of twenty-two questions surrounding the ministry, life and stress level of
the senior pastor. The study type was submitted to and approved by the Institutional Review Board “See Appendix 1 for IRB Approval”. It was performed in a confidential manner in order to protect the identity of the study participants. The data was collected over a period of two weeks in consideration of the schedules of study participants and their abilities to complete and return the questionnaire provided given the current state of our nation.

The study was unfunded, and participants were not compensated or promised anything for their participation. They experienced minimal risk for their participation and gained the benefits of understanding the power of self-awareness, the impacts of stress and the need for self-care. None of the participants were audio or video recorded as this study did not involve interviews of any kind. None of the participants were asked to submit a photograph or any other identifying information for study participation either. The study was initiated to learn how many pastors within the South Florida region are suffering silently with the element of stress and are in need of an intervention such as self-care. Furthermore, the study was meant to reinforce the notion pastors are not alone. They and their needs are important. Most important, that the health of both the church and her people are dependent upon the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health of its pastor.

**Procedure**

One hundred pastors, male and female, of Baptist and Pentecostal churches within the South Florida region were identified through personal contacts, recommendations, social media and print publications. Those senior pastors had to be between the ages of 18-80 with no other distinguishable qualification. The recruitment of study participants was done by phone, in-person communication, letter and email seeking their willingness to participate. Though some of the participants recruitment was initiated by phone or by in-person communication, they were
asked for an email address to ensure their recruitment was documented and official. Therefore, despite the method used to initiate participant recruitment, the language of the recruitment was the same.

**Summary**

Of those 100 pastors recruited to participate, thirty of them responded with a desire to participate. Those thirty pastors received by email, individually, the consent form to participate in this study that was to be signed and returned. They also received by email the questionnaire that was to be completed and returned by email. Of the thirty pastors that received the consent form and questionnaire to be signed and completed, thirty returned theirs completed.

Below is a copy of the recruitment letter:
Figure 1: Recruitment Letter

Dear Senior Pastor:

As a graduate student in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for completion of the Doctor of Ministry degree. The purpose of my research is to assess the pastors need for counseling and self-care. Mental illness has invaded the church from the pulpit to the parking lot and while preaching is good it must be coupled with practical tools for overcoming natural pain if this epidemic is to be eradicated at the root. I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are a Senior Pastor serving a Baptist or Pentecostal church in South Florida, and are willing to participate, you will be asked to complete a pastoral questionnaire that will be confidential. It should take approximately 15 minutes for you to complete the questionnaire. Your name and other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation in this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please return a signed consent form and completed questionnaire by email to revlockwood@hotmail.com. The consent form is attached to this email and contains additional information about my research.

Sincerely,

Remiel Lockwood
Researcher/Doctoral Student

The completion of the questionnaire, from the time it is received, completed and returned, only took approximately 15 minutes. Each participant was asked to answer all of the questions of the questionnaire honestly and transparently. It is the position of this project that the participants completely complied with the request. The completion or execution of this study required no
special permissions from anyone outside of study participants. The consent form for study participants was sent along with the recruitment letter and was to be signed and returned. The consent form is shown below.

Figure 2: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM
Pastoral Stress: The Urgent Need for Self-Care
Remiel Lockwood
Liberty University
Rawlings School of Divinity

You are invited to be in a research study on pastors who wrestle with the weight of their office causing stress and a lack of self-care. The purpose of this study is to assess the pastors need for counseling and self-care. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a senior pastor who serves a Baptist or Pentecostal church within the South Florida community. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Remiel Lockwood, a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: Mental illness has invaded the church from the pulpit to the parking lot and while preaching is good it must be coupled with practical tools for overcoming natural pain if this epidemic is to be eradicated at the root. Pastors have great significance and are important to their communities. The expectations and resulting stressors and their assignments are immense. Those expectations and stressors have overcome many pastors. Intervention is needed for the health and longevity of pastors. This research project centers on understanding the stressors of pastors, their silent frustrations, and their ability to persevere without quitting.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete and return the pastoral questionnaire (15 minutes).
2. Be open to receive recommendations of 2 weeks – 1 month for self-care resulting from your responses. (Please note, the recommendations given, if any, are optional but could prove useful for sustainable ministry.)
3. Be open to receive recommendations for professional counseling/therapy for 3 months or as needed. (Please note, the recommendations given, if any, are optional but could prove useful for sustainable ministry.)

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study are recommendations if there is a need for counseling or self-care. Society may benefit from having healthier pastors.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated in any form for participating in this study.
Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participants will complete a questionnaire and will only interact with the researcher to control its confidential nature.
- Participants will only be identified through the use of pseudonyms. No names or other identifiers will be used in any publication or report.
- Data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting said relationship.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher using the contact information provided in the next paragraph. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Remiel Lockwood. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at **redacted** and **redacted**. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty chair, Dr. Seth Polk, at **redacted**.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at **redacted**.

*Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.*

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature of Participant __________________________ Date ____________

Signature of Investigator __________________________ Date ____________
The signed required consent form was to be returned before beginning the questionnaire. There were no other permission or consent forms required considering all study participants are at least 18 years of age. All of the consent forms and questionnaires received back from study participants will be kept on a password secured computer and in a desk that is locked by key. The access to both the computer and the locked desk are limited to only the researcher. There are no ethical issues that need to be considered in this study.

**Data Collection**

The data was collected through the use of a questionnaire. There were no other data collection sources used for this study. At the conclusion of the two-week questionnaire period, all data from the returned questionnaires were compiled, assessed and analyzed. The research methodology that was utilized for the compilation and analyzation of this study is quantitative research. According to the *Sage Encyclopedia*, quantitative research is “the systematic empirical investigation of observable phenomena via statistical, mathematical or computational techniques.”

The questionnaire assesses the tenure of the pastor, the confidence of the pastor in engaging their congregation outside of the sermonic expression, the areas of weakness or opportunity in the ministry, the areas of strength in the ministry, the grace (call) of the ministry, if the pastor has a family and if so, what the involvement of the family is in the ministry. Furthermore, the questionnaire will assess the pastors emotional health, vices, fears, mental stability and the importance of pastoral care for self versus others.

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Summary

Each question of the questionnaire was placed in an excel spreadsheet along with the corresponding responses. Those responses were then tallied up to produce the final results. Those results were then formulated into percentages in order to provide an overall view of how the study participants responded. Based upon the results of the percentages, the researcher was able to identify areas of weakness as well as strengths. The focal point of this study; however, is finding ways to intervene in those weaknesses with the hopes of turning them into strengths.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The results from the information provided in the questionnaire reveal the level of improvement required to ensure both the health of the pastor and the congregation. Having received back 30 of the 100 questionnaires distributed, an analysis was conducted to discover commonalities, trends, significant patterns and areas of opportunity. The results discovered lay the foundation for addressing the types of care needed for pastors and congregants alike. Prayerfully, pastors will recognize their need for care and actively pursue it after completing the questionnaire.

While many pastors know how to care for others, they are not so aware of how to submit to self-care. After completing the questionnaire, prayerfully the pastors who are in need will open the door to assistance. The recognition of a pastor for the need for help in tackling the things that plague them, will prove most helpful to the sustainability of both the pastor and the ministry.

Openness helps to develop a plan or program for navigating that pastors freedom while empowering others to care for the needs of the congregation. Of the most basic needs of humanity exists safety, security, self-esteem, recognition and self-actualization. Whenever a pastor is missing these foundational needs, they must position themselves to be replenished if they are to be effective. Those foundational imperatives are not limited to the physical condition of the pastor, but the emotional, mental and spiritual condition of the pastor is also factored into the equation.
Quantitative Results

Years of Service

The length of time a pastor serves in ministry has a direct impact on their perspective of ministry and the level of stress they operate under. The longer a person spends at anything in life the easier it should become. Becoming, no matter the length of service, will always be a factor or at least it should. While there are things pastors have already overcome, there are things they have not yet encountered. Ministry is a continuous process of growth, learning and evolving. Whitehead suggest, “Process is the rule of the world. Everything that is real is in the constant cycle of ‘becoming’; everything is undergoing transition.”\textsuperscript{97} So then, in certain high impact professions the duty does not become easier – people just learn to cope. Pastoring is one of those high impact professions where the duty and responsibility is continually weighty.

What makes it easier to maneuver through the pastoral call and the duties thereof is the pastor’s ability to surround themselves with people who are adequately prepared and trusted to help bear the weight. Furthermore, it exposes the pastor’s determination to remain consistent in their service to the Lord, the preaching of the Word and the betterment of the congregation. H.B. Charles states, “It is not enough to get it right now and then. Who cares if you know how to preach the Word if you choose not to for whatever reason? That’s treason?”\textsuperscript{98} Pastors who are effective are consistent. This study reveals pastors in the South Florida region have served from 3 years to over 25 years in ministry. Some have served the same church throughout their tenure while others have served multiple congregations. Table 1 below shows a breakdown of the years of service the participants fall within.


Table 1: Senior Pastor Years of Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Service as Senior Pastor</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5 Years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 Years</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15 Years</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 or more years</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the participants who completed the questionnaire, over half have served as a senior pastor for 15 or more years. The next largest sector of leaders have served between 5 to 10 years. Next were pastors who have served between 10 and 15 years. Coming last were pastors serving 0 to 5 years. The longest serving pastor has served for some 25 years. These results point to the wisdom of the pastors polled by reason of their experience. It also proves their steadfastness in resisting the temptation to walk away from their call and their church. Though they have resisted the temptation to quit, the temptation to quit is still a very real consideration.

Consideration to Quit

Quitting is often looked at as the easiest thing to do. It is suggested quitting does not take courage. That it is a sign of a person’s weakness when they succumb to the temptation to walk away. The suggestion is false. It is better for a person to walk away than it is for them to stay in a place or position that would cause more harm than good. Therefore, although quitting is difficult, it is also very courageous. It takes courage, mental fortitude, a commitment to the bigger picture and a desire to see what is being walked away from succeed.

Like any other leader nestled under the weight of their assignment, there are many pastors who have thought about quitting even if they did not. The reasoning for such thoughts vary. Pastors consider quitting when they serve churches that do not allow them to execute
vision; when they discover they are just the hired preacher and not really the pastor; when they have consistent administrative conflicts with the deacons and trustees; when the church is stagnant or recesses in its growth; when the church struggles financially; when the demands of the ministry outweigh their capacity to fulfill them; when they lack trusted assistance; etc.

While there are many who have walked away, there are many more who have thought about it but stayed. Table 2 below will show the sentiments of the participants of this study.

### Table 2: Pastors Who Have Considered Quitting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever considered quitting?</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While quitting may not be an option that is accepted by many pastors, pastors should not resist the urge to take a break. Taking a break is not a sign of weakness, but rather a declarative of strength. H.B. Charles encourages, “If you sense that you have lost your cutting edge, take a break. Rest. Pray. Reconnect with God. Get back into the Word. Spend time with your family. Clarify your purpose. Return to your first love. For God’s sake, please stop swinging! If you have lost your axe head, you are only getting in the way of the real work.”

When pastors push past their limits and serve in overdrive they hurt more than they help. They hurt both themselves and their churches without realizing the damaging effects.

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Charles, On Preaching, 146.
Number of Churches Pastored

While it is noble for a pastor to remain with the same congregation during the length of their pastoral tenure, it is likewise exciting to have been privileged to pastor multiple churches especially if they are in multiple geographical locations. The change offers a pastor the ability to gain multiple perspectives, engage multiple communities, experience multiple cultures and assist in the transformation of multiple lives. This study has assessed how many churches the participants have pastored during their time of service. The questionnaire considered pastors who have served either 1 to 2 churches or 3 to 5 churches. Table 3 below will reveal the findings.

Table 3: Number of Churches Pastored

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many churches have you served?</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the pastors who participated in the study, 73% of them have pastored no more than two churches during their tenure as pastor. 32% (7 of 22) of those pastors have served for over 15 years. However, 27% of pastors that participated in the study have served between 3 to 5 churches during their time as senior pastor. 25% (2 of 8) of those pastors have served for over 15 years. While it may be adventurous to serve multiple churches, the stability of a leader comes to question. It shows while some leaders resist the temptation to quit, they do not resist the temptation to leave. There is a lot of damage done when pastors abandon ship without the clear leading of the Lord to do so. However, when led of the Lord, there can be a lot of restoration found in transitioning to a new work for both the pastor and the congregation.
Struggling with Stress

This research project asserts there are many pastors who suffer with stress. It suggests that those who suffer, often suffer silently. However, there are also those who are vocal about their stress and their stressors. Therefore, this study asked its participants whether they struggle with stress as pastors. As hypothesized, the findings of the questionnaire revealed more pastors than not struggle with stress. Table 4 reveals the study’s findings.

Table 4: Pastors Who Struggle With Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you struggle with stress?</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stress is a byproduct of ministry. Learning how to manage and overcome stress is difficult. 17% of the pastors that participated in this study assert they do not struggle with stress. It is worth noting 100% of the 17% of participants have pastored for 10 or more years. Those pastors are worth celebrating as they have figured out a way to balance both life and ministry. While the study does not give insight into the factors that allows them to be stress free, it does reveal an opportunity to assist those that are not. 83% of the participants of this study struggle with stress. That is alarming and traumatic. It must be both addressed and challenged. That proves that the helper needs help. An intervention is both necessary and essential. Stress is a silent killer. If it does not kill the body – it kills the spirit and the church cannot afford for either of those realities to manifest especially within its leadership. More importantly, the pastor cannot afford for either of those realities to manifest within them.
Pastors must be intentional about traveling the road of holistic living. To point others down the road of wholeness without being willing to lead them by example is counterproductive to their very call. It is hypocritical even. Robert Greenleaf indicates:

“A mark of leaders, an attribute that puts them in a position to show the way for others, is that they are better than most at pointing the direction. As long as one is leading, one always has a goal. It may be a goal arrived at by group consensus, or the leader, acting on inspiration, may simply have said, ‘Let’s go this way.’ But the leader always knows what it is and can articulate it for any who are unsure. By clearly stating and restating the goal the leader gives certainty and purpose to others who may have difficulty in achieving it for themselves.”\(^{100}\)

The same power must be harnessed for the leader themselves. The goal is freedom – the goal is wholeness. It is not a goal that should only be realized by the followers, but the leader also especially if the leader is to remain in full strength, power and effectiveness.

**Stress Effects on Ministry**

Stress is problematic, but it can be controlled. There are some who thrive in stressful situations while others suffer. Pastors are character driven leaders whose impact is realized in their ability to influence others while building the Kingdom of God. Stowell suggests, “character-driven leaders use their organization to build stellar people, who in turn build a thriving culture that produces maximum corporate outcomes to the fame and glory of God.”\(^{101}\)

The pressure of trying to build both people and the church while maintaining sanity can be overwhelming. This research project is meant to assess a pastors need for self-care as it considers the role stress plays in the health of the pastor and the ministry. Consequently, this study sought to discover whether stress affected the ministries that the participants serve. Table 5 reveals its findings.


Table 5: Does Stress Affect Your Ministry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does that stress affect your ministry?</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants of the study gave evidence to the notion pastors learn to cope with their stress. 40% of the participants assert the stress they are under does not affect their ministries as pastors. While it is good it does not affect their ministries, the question becomes what does it affect? That is a question that can only be unearthed through further probing. Therefore, this study would not be able to adequately discover the target of the stresses affect, but recognizes there is one.

Moreover, 60% of the participants admitted the stress they are under negatively affects their ministries. This study does not seek to discover the depths or lengths of those effects, but to make participants aware the stress they carry is showing itself in their ministry context. A very big part of that could be the ministry itself is a major source of their stress. Whatever the fueling source maybe, pastors must be equipped with the tools necessary to avoid an explosion that leads to others being a casualty of the war within them. The easiest resolve is simply taking a break; stepping away from it all for a moment to refocus and get reenergized to go at it again.

**Stress Effects on Family**

The first family becomes the foundation of the ministry. The stronger the foundation the stronger the ministry. When the foundation is weak the ministry suffers. Rick Warren writes, “The foundation determines both the size and the strength of a building. You can never build
larger than the foundation can handle.”

The first call of any pastor is to their family, unless they are single. Although the family is the first call, they are often left to deal with the scraps recovered from everyone else’s take away. The family is often forced to deal with the aftermath of the hurt, disappointment, fear, anxiety, lack of rest, lack of appreciation, lack of resources, lack of assistance, lack of understanding and lack of self-confidence is often felt by the pastor.

The pastor is called to serve, but the family is often drafted along with them to serve without the benefits. Families are tasked with trying to keep the leader encouraged when in reality all they want is a husband, a wife, a father or a mother. So then, the stress that rests on the shoulders of the pastor is often felt by the family either directly or indirectly if the pastor does not have safeguards in place to ward against it. This study polled its participants to see how many families are suffering under the weight of the pastors stress as shown in Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does that stress affect your family?</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants seem to have largely found ways to curb the effects of their stress on the family. 47% of the pastors polled assert their families are shielded from the effects of their stress. However, if the questionnaire dug deeper into this question, it is believed these results would be altered to some degree. It is worth noting 71% (10 of 14) of the pastors who answered

“no” have pastored 10 or more years. It is also worth noting 21% (3 of 14) of the pastors that answered “no” are not married.

More than half (53%) of the pastors who participated in the study admitted their families are affected by the weight of their stress. The reality presents an opportunity for pastors to be aware of the damage their assignment is causing their families. Family members should be a source of support for leaders, but even they can only take so much. Home should be place of refuge – a safe place where pastors run to for comfort and strength. Yet, 16 out of 30 pastors and their families in the South Florida region are being robbed of the reality. It does not have to be if the pastor is able to redirect their stressors in a healthier way in order to free the family from the weight of supporting them and the things that plague them too.

**Ministry Causing Stress**

Stress often occurs when the capacity of one is stretched beyond their limit. There are many pastors are stretched beyond their limit. They are living and pastoring outside of their margins. While they have the power to make things happen, they are simply overloaded which creates a major dichotomy. Outside of preaching, the load of ministry can be overwhelming. Richard A. Swenson writes, “Load is made up of such factors as work, problems, obligations and commitments, expectations (internal and external), debt, deadlines, and interpersonal conflicts.”

Swenson continues, “When our load is greater than our power, we enter into negative margin status, that is, we are overloaded. Endured long-term, this is not a healthy state.” When the demands of ministry become too much to balance, pastors must resist the


104 Swenson, *Margin*, 70.
temptation to keep going in overload. Stowell adds, “Warning! If you believe leadership is ultimately measured by how well you can deliver the goods, then in the end you will fail in your calling as a leader.”

Though pastors are at times looked to as superheroes, they must come to grips with the fact they are simply human. This study sought to discover how many pastors are stressed because of ministry and table 7 gives insight into such.

Table 7: Ministry Causing Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is your ministry the cause of your stress?</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pastors who participated in the study where split down the middle on whether the ministry was the cause of their stress. The good news is half of the participants have been able to leverage their power with their load. They have created enough balance in their ministries that allows them to avoid stressors. However, the other half have not created such balance and are in need of an intervention before the stresses of the ministry push them to their limit. Foad Nahai adds, “All of us have stress in our lives, even if we tell ourselves that we don’t. Chronic stress can affect health on many different levels, often contributing to anxiety and depression, problems with memory, poor digestion, and impaired sleep.”

The study did not just assess if the pastor struggles with stress, how stress affects their families and their ministries, and if the stress they are under is caused by the ministry they

105 Stowell, Redefining Leadership, 27.

serve, but it also considered how they deal with their stress and the contributing factors of it. Tables 8 and 9 provide insight into those factors.

**Table 8: Dealing with Stress**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How Do You Deal with Your Stress? (based on multiple selections)</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not deal with my stress.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I cope with my stress.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I pray.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I seek counseling.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I withdraw.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>80</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants were able to select all ways in which they handle stress in this section. 5% concluded this section was not applicable to them. 37% of participants either do not deal with their stress at all or they simply withdraw. The number is alarming because it means there are 37% of pastors who could potentially be overtaken by the stresses they refuse to confront.

Half of the pastors either cope with their stress or simply pray about it. The notion that if nothing is done it will eventually go away is a false notion. It is a notion that is highly ineffective. Yes, prayer is essential, but when prayer is over, work must be done. Coping will only last so long before a vice is selected to fill the void. Resorting to vices that are inconsistent with the character standard of the pastor is what must be avoided at all cost. Lastly, only 8% of the participants have sought counseling to deal with their stress. The needle must be pushed forward on that percentage to ensure many more pastors are benefiting from the wisdom and
practicum of counseling. Being able to come to grips with the fact one is under stress is one thing, but being able to identify the contributing factors is another. This study offered a few contributors to stress to see if the participants of it could identify.

Table 9: Contributing Factors to Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are contributing factors to your stress? (Pick all that apply)</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discouragement</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure to succeed</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure to produce</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sickness</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal failures</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persecution</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>80</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the participants of this study are married, but the largest contributor of stress for these pastors is loneliness at 25%. This is evidence it is possible to be surrounded by or connected to people or loved ones and still feel alone. What it also suggests is those pastors lack a safe place for which to lay their heads. All pastors need a place where they can relax, release and relate. The silence of loneliness often rings louder than the noise that comes from distractions. Feelings of loneliness is a dangerous place for a leader who is charged with positively influencing the lives of others. Impulsive and erratic decisions are often the result of loneliness.
The pressure to produce (19%) is also a great source of stress on these pastors. In a day of limited resources, pastors are still expected to produce a ministry of excellence. Part of the pressure is self-inflicted because most pastors are not as transparent with their congregation thereby leading them to believe all is well when it is not. They do so because 13% of them are under the pressure to succeed. Pressure may be the result of the demands ministry places on them or the result of the lofty goals they have set for themselves. It is pressure nonetheless. Discouragement is another major contributing factor to the stress of these pastoral participants at 13%. Pastors often give courage while feeling discouraged and it is difficult.

This study was started at the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic. A pandemic that has grossly affected the way humanity relates to one another, but more importantly how church is done. Therefore, 10% of the pastors admitted pastoring in a crisis is stressful. What is most interesting about it is this study advocates for the rest, relaxation and break of the pastor as a means of self-care, but during this time of social distancing while all of those things are afforded the pastor the stress levels of the pastor are probably higher resulting from uncertainty. All of the above-mentioned contributing factors point to the need for some form of counseling and self-care. Preaching and praying over them is not enough – those contributing factors must be faced and conquered.

Compensation

While the call of the pastor involves being the mouthpiece and representative of Christ in the earthly realm, it is also a vocation that requires a lot of time, energy and resources. Therefore, some form of compensation should be afforded the holder of such a position. 1 Timothy 5:17 charges, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.” The compensation packages given to pastors are not and cannot
be one size fits all. An anonymous contributor of the *Clergy Journal* said, “As expected, the packages given to pastors vary significantly according to the size of the church. Pastors of churches with an average of less than 100 adults attending their church services in a typical week - a group that represents a majority of the nation's Protestant congregations – receive compensation valued at $31,613 annually. Pastors of churches that attract 100 to 250 adults get 50% more ($47,368). The largest churches (251 or more people) get compensation that averages $58,332.”107 This study engaged participants to see if they felt they were adequately compensated for the demand placed upon them. Table 10 reveals the findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are you compensated well?</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am adequately compensated.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not adequately compensated.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am bi-vocational</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personal finance does not seem to be a place of struggle for majority of the participants of the study. 60% of the pastors polled in this South Florida region feel as if they are adequately compensated for the work they do. Above all else, the church makes every attempt to take care of their shepherd. It also says these pastors make every attempt to grow and develop their membership in order to ensure such compensation is in place. The other 40% of pastors do

not feel as though they are adequately compensated. 30% of those work outside of the church to offset their income with the other 10% make what they are given work for them.

While the majority is content, there is still a remnant that suffers while serving. Table 11 reveals how many pastors are stressed as a result of their financial standing.

Table 11: Stress Caused by Financial Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does your financial position add to your stress?</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the fact the majority of the participants felt as if they were compensated well and or are bi-vocational this data is logical. However, the 27% of pastors who are stressed due to their financial position cannot be overlooked. While it is a lower number, it is substantial enough to demand an intervention in order to assist those who are nestled under financial pressure.

**Place of Safety**

More than compensation, pastors need a place of safety they can run to take refuge. Pastors have so many battles they engage in daily outside of the pulpit and even more in the pulpit they need a place to retreat in order to be replenished for the battles ahead. One of the most dangerous things that can hit a congregation is a fatigued pastor. This study seeks to investigate a pastors need for self-care. Therefore, the participants were asked if they had a place of safety to run and find rest. Table 12 gives insight into their response.
Table 12: Place of Safety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you have a place of safety to run?</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

83% of the participants have a place of refuge which is great. However, 17% do not. Those pastors are at risk of burnout in various sectors of life. They are the ones who could benefit from this study. Now they are aware of a deficiency and will hopefully through encouragement discover such a place so they too can find relief.

**Counseling**

Pastors carry so much both spiritually and personally without having a place to unload and share their true and sincere thoughts or feelings. They must always be careful about what they say and how they say it. Diplomacy is their driving force, but their reality often stands in conflict. That is a truth not many will understand. Therefore, pastors are forced to deal with the burden of their internal thoughts. While they can be offended, their call of duty seems to prevent them from offending, at least on purpose. Pastors are often sought out for help in navigating life’s happenings when in short, they need help too. Consequently, this study asked pastors had they ever consulted a counselor, professional or pastoral, to assist with their personal struggles. The findings are revealed in table 13.
Counseling is something the participants of this study were split on. 50% of them had been to some form of counseling while 50% of them had not. It is not that the 50% who have not been to counseling cannot benefit from it – they have just chosen not to go. Furthermore, the 50% that has gone could still benefit by continuing to go as the benefits far outweigh the negligence. It appears as if both sects agree with this assessment as revealed in table 14. The overwhelming majority (93%) believe they could benefit from counseling. The small number that does not still must find a way to find relief.

### Table 13: Counseling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever been to counseling?</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 14: Benefit from Counseling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you think you could benefit from counseling?</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Age

The core representation of participants in this study was between the ages of 30 and 49 at 50%. They bridge the gap between the older and younger generation of preachers. They understand the wisdom of the fathers and are buffered by the strength of the sons. They also wrestle with trying to stay relevant in this modern era of church. 33% of the participants are...
between the ages of 50 and 79. This demographic represents those hardest to adjust. They are usually married to tradition and set in their own way. Only 17% of participants were between the ages of 18 and 29. Though small in number, it is the age demographic that could benefit the most from counseling and self-care as pastors. Not only are they properly positioned to shift the cultural norms of pastoring, but they are also able to be properly equipped to handle the weights of both life and ministry simultaneously.

Table 15: Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How old are you?</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-49</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-79</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender

The South Florida region is very diverse in its pastoral leadership. While gender still does play a major role in pastoral leadership, more and more women are taking the helm and doing well. While tremendous progress is being made in this area, there is still a lot of progress that must be made. There is this long-standing idea the pulpit has been set aside for men, while women make up the largest populous of church goers. Acts 2:17 records, “And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.” The position of this researcher is that women are qualified to preach the gospel.
Surely, if God can use Deborah, a prophetess, to judge Israel (Judg 4:4) – He can use a woman to pastor His church today. Table 16 reveals the role gender plays in this study.

**Table 16: Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Marital Status**

**Table 17: Marital Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are you single or married?</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the participants (67%) in this study are married. They can benefit from self-care practices the most to ensure not only they stay married, but their marriage is healthy and vibrant. 33% of the study participants are single. 23% have never been married and 10% of them have been married and are now serving while divorced. That is a dynamic itself which needs exploring through professional counseling especially since some pastors spend a lot of time saving other people’s marriage, but could not find a way to save their own. Consequently, they become married to the church and lose themselves in the process. Furthermore, depending on their age, sexual appetite, and ability the single and divorced pastors
are more prone to be found in a fault or moral failure resulting from unfulfilled needs.

**Vacation**

As a self-care practice it is advisable for pastors to take time away from the pulpit and all pastoral duties for a designated period of time to ensure their longevity. Furthermore, it ensures they are refreshed and able to serve at maximum capacity. Dr. Nahai said, “Vacations are a proven method of breaking the stress cycle. They also assist personal and social development by broadening learning opportunities and improving family relationships through what is termed crescive bonding, or shared experience. An active vacation that offers new challenges is likely to be most beneficial.  

Table 18 shows the results of those who prioritize vacationing.

**Table 18: Vacation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often do you take vacation?</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 times per year.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 time per year</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 or more times per year</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thankfully 90% of the participants of the study take a vacation throughout the year. 50% of them go once per year with the other 40% going at least twice per year. This raises the question, is vacationing enough? While vacationing surely helps, it may not be enough depending on the dynamic of the ministry structure, the demands of the ministry, the size of the ministry, the budget of the ministry, the staffing of the ministry, the pressures placed on the

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pastor to perform or produce desired results, or the focus of the church (whether on God or the pastor). Therefore, outside of vacationing some other self-care practices may be necessary. Furthermore, some professional counseling may also be needed to discover better ways of managing both stress and the ministry.

Unfortunately, 10% of the participants do not take a vacation throughout the year. Part of the intervention process for those who do not take a vacation would be helping them discover a way to do so for their health depends on it. To avoid being frustrated by their call, pastors must be intentional about caring for both themselves and others. The key is self-care first. Unfortunately, pastors operate in the reverse – caring for others and then themselves. The practice is unsustainable and must be challenged if the pastor is to operate out of their full potential.

**Preparedness**

Preaching is a small percentage of the duties of a pastor. Therefore, pastors must be prepared for ministry outside of their ability to preach. They are charged with the administrative functions of the church, the financial stability of the church, ministry creation and sustainability, meeting the needs of the sick and shut in, meeting the needs of the community at large, engaging social ills, being involved in the political process to advance the agenda of the people they serve, etc. Most preachers have been trained to preach, but not pastor. This study sought to discover how prepared pastors in this South Florida region were for the position of pastor outside of preaching as shown in Table 19.
Table 19: Pastoral Preparedness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outside of preaching, do you feel you were adequately prepared for your ministry assignment?</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

57% of the study participants were adequately prepared for their ministry assignment. It is likely the 43% of the pastors who were not prepared either struggled with or struggles with stress in ministry. One of the problems with seasoned pastoral leaders is they make it look easy. The reality is ministry in any context is not easy, but especially pastoral service. So then, prepared or not, what works for one does not work for all. The challenge becomes finding out what works best for the pastor in their specific ministry context.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to enlighten pastors within the South Florida region about mental, emotional and physical stress and its effects on both them and their ministries. More than enlightenment, this study also seeks to provide workable solutions involving the elements of self-care and professional counseling as remedies for those stressors. This study sought to prove to pastors their need to be good to themselves first and above all others. Pastors can no longer afford to ignore their personal challenges, feelings, hurts, fears, anxieties, abandonments, depression, rejection, loneliness and stress. This awakening of sorts is meant to prevent another pastor from feeling like suicide is their only option. This study is meant to show pastors they are not alone and it is ok to give voice to their pain so they too can be free.

This study assumed the stresses of pastors in African American Pentecostal and Baptist churches in South Florida have been left largely unchecked. It assumed those pastors have allowed their stress to go unchecked because they were largely unaware of the amount of stress they are under. Furthermore, this study assumed if those pastors were made aware of the high levels of stress they are operating under, they would seek solutions for reducing and or controlling them. It assumed a remedy would be sought by those burdened with the demands of navigating both family and ministry. In large part, those assumption were true.

The results of the study prove there are some pastors who fit within the context of each assumption. The reality of the study is all pastors who participated in it were made aware of deficiencies within their families, their leadership and their ministries. The goal of this study is to have some of those pastors move past awareness and actively pursue ways to overcome those deficiencies. This is needed so they may be the best person, husband, wife, father, mother
and pastor they can possibly be.

It is unfair and unjust even, for pastors to usher their members and communities into a type of liberation they do not know about. That is not the plan of God. He would that all of His children be free. Preachers often suffer with an imbalance because they are robbed of a social life in order to provide for their spiritual life. However, balance must return to the life of the preacher if they are to be true, effective, whole and sustained. Pastors catch people by showing them their cape, but they connect with people by showing them their scars. Therefore, no longer can pastors afford to hide their pain for the healing of both the pastor and the congregation requires their freedom.

The study presents one major problem – pastoring is difficult and added to that difficulty are high levels of stress which often go unaddressed leading to unhealthy lifestyles and ministries. Pastoring was never meant to be easy. Paul teaches if believers are to reign with Christ, they must be willing to suffer with Him (2 Tim 2:12). Taking it a step further, believers must not only be prepared to suffer with Christ, but also to be crucified with Christ as Paul suggested in order to live (Gal 2:20). While at first glance that sounds impossible, the reality is when it is all over the believers that submit to such processes will come out victoriously.

God never calls an individual into ministry to defeat them although sometimes it feels that way. Pastors must contend with the highs and lows of ministry. They must serve through crises, pandemics, conflicts and moments of isolation just as much as they serve through explosive church growth, unrestricted budgets, unity and moments of great influence. The difficulty is found in managing both the highs and lows effectively. If not careful, the mismanagement of those highs and lows could easily cause a pastor to have a love and hate relationship with the very thing they are called to do – ministry.
The road to victory was never promised to be straight. However, if one stays on the road, they are destined to make it to their prescribed destination. The problem many pastors face is they trust the promise, but they do not trust the path because it does not look nor feel as if they are moving in the right direction. Pastors see God moving in their visions without realizing He fleshes out those visions in their pain. Consequently, many use preaching as a coping mechanism to conceal their pain. They keep busy doing the work of the church so they do not have to confront themselves, their struggles, or their decaying families. The thing pastors try to avoid they create – stress.

This study sought to address the problem head on and encourage pastors to seek help, to take a break, to confront themselves, to talk with a professional counselor, to reconcile with their families, to restore their marriages, to build better relationships with their children and more importantly to become one with themselves – to be whole. Sadly, the world knows a better version of the pastor than their family does. That is a dynamic that must be changed. The change starts with the transformation of the pastor from the inside out. While pastoring will always be difficult, the pastor’s approach to it does not have to be.

The church is the bride of Christ – not the pastors. The pastor is only charged to watch over it. However, it is hard to keep watch when a pastor is forced to do so through flickering lights. The South Florida region has within it pastors of both Pentecostal and Baptist churches that have been plagued with high levels of unaddressed stress leading to unhealthy lifestyles and churches. This study sought to recognize the problem, address it and challenge pastors to alter their course.

Pastors have difficulty in bifurcating the practice of pastoring from the joys of preaching. Unfortunately, many pastors are hypocritical in that they preach a message of hope and
wholeness while they are living life in the wilderness wounded. Just like congregants and community recipients, pastors need care. They need to be allowed self-care without feeling guilty about it. Self-care must be an intentional act insisted upon so pastors can live a whole and free life by defeating the demons of maintained image, perceived success, busyness, unsafe environments and familial conflicts. As much as pastors are gifted preachers and spiritual practitioners, they are more than anything else human. Humans that deal with traumas of all kinds, both internal and external. Therefore, not only is self-care needed, but some form of professional counseling would be recommended.

Professional counselors are able to ask the question posed by Jesus to the man who sat at the pool of Bethesda for 38 years in John 5:6 which was, “Wilt thou be made whole?” Answering the question is essential to the process of moving forward because only the willing will do the work necessary for obtaining their desired result. Based on the answer, professional counselors will be able to help pastors work through the gray and dismal areas of their lives which have been ignored, masked and preached through for years. A professional counselor is recommended because a pastoral counselor, friend or confidant will often times make the mistake of spiritualizing a practical issue. Facing those practical issues could often times be difficult to face and re-live, but they are necessary for the healing and wholeness process. Professional counselors are able to provide pastors with the tools necessary for not only obtaining wholeness but maintaining it. Wholeness will show itself in both the pastor and the congregation which is ultimately the goal.

**Considerations**

The researcher entered this project with the goal of trying to help other pastors deal with their stress without realizing the impacts of this study would be personally felt. The effects of
stress are often negative and the weight of it could be deadly. Stress produces burnout, exhaustion, depression, anxiety and feelings of rejection. None of which is helpful or useful in the life of a pastor. With the understanding of stress this study put forth, there are three considerations that must be raised in an effort to give direction to these pastoral participants, this researcher and those who will review the study in the future.

The first consideration is pastoral stress is a monumental issue plaguing pastors today. Pastors who once were filled with anticipation and excitement about ministry have become hard pressed about the same. The passion has dwindled away while fatigue takes its place. To be in a position where love and benevolence is giving out lavishly only to be returned with disappointment, heaviness and grief makes the journey difficult to traverse. However, if pastoral stress is to be overcome, it must first be recognized and faced head-on.

The second consideration is for pastors to recognize they are not alone both physically and spiritually. This study shows there are a number of pastors who are battling through pastoral stress, but more than this study – scripture offers multiple characters who did the same. When the lives of David, Moses, Paul, Jeremiah, Elijah, Ruth and even Jesus Christ are examined, high levels of stress will be exposed. They all wrestled with it, but they all knew where to take it and leave it – to God. The work of the Lord must go forth and while most pastors do not prefer to be chosen for such a work, none can deny the immense honor it is to work for the Lord. So then, a shift in perspective could prove helpful. The stress that comes with serving in ministry is not punishment as much as it is preparation. It is vitally important that pastors do not fold under the weight.

The final consideration is overcoming pastoral stress is possible if one is willing to do the hard work. Those serious about overcoming pastoral stress must prioritize self-care and
seek balance in managing the demands of both their lives and ministries. The discipline and commitment required for such a drastic change would need to be purposeful and intentional. The results; however, will far outweigh the struggle.

If adjustments are made, the stress levels of pastors will be manageable. This researcher urges every pastoral participant to accept the challenge of these considerations. Beverly Potter writes, “Those who accept the challenge find an opportunity to actualize a richer, fuller life.” A richer, fuller life is not only the desire of the researcher, but of Christ. John 10:10 records, “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” The abundant life that Jesus came to give was so that others can live off of the overflow of the pastors life. The work of Christ should never leave the pastor depleted and drained because God never intends to rob those who serve Him. God fully intends to provide all that is needed for the journey and more for those who put their trust and confidence in Him.

**Recommendations**

**Set Realistic Goals**

As visionaries it can be very difficult setting realistic goals. The goals most pastors set are vague and abstract making them difficult to reach. Realistic goals are refined, centered, streamlined and most of all clear. Setting unrealistic goals equates to clutter and clutter could easily equate to stress. When clutter is a part of the equation, the pastor will be busy doing stuff while accomplishing nothing. The end result of minimum return for maximum output is stress. Therefore, part of defeating pastoral stress is setting realistic goals. Realistic goals work in

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concert with the strengths of the pastor. Hart writes, “Identify your strengths and the talents God has given you, and then concentrate on these.” Setting goals outside of the pastors strengths give access to defeat which is counterproductive.

To monitor the effectiveness of the goals that have been set, pastors must set times for evaluation to ensure they are moving in the right direction with their goals. It should become a common practice to set moments of evaluation throughout the year for the accomplishment of both ministry and life goals. When goals are evaluated timely, proper adjustments can be made to see if the continued pursuit of the goal is necessary. Failing to do so could lead to waisted time, money, resources, disappointment and stress. On the other hand, doing so will allow the pastor to celebrate and be encouraged by small bouts of success. One way or another the evaluation process helps to identify if the goal is realistic or unrealistic. The purpose of this recommendation is to ensure the pastor is not event driven, but purpose driven.

When a pastor is purpose driven, they appreciate the process just as much as the results. While achieving the desired results brings great joy, the process of meeting a goal is more valuable. The results were envisioned from the start, but what was not considered was the process. The process is always twofold. The process may be difficult, and it will be educational. Both elements will be used for the growth and development of the pastor in both life and ministry. Edelwich advises pastor, “Focus on the process, not the result.” The advice will take a deliberate shift in perspective but once it is achieved the insights of the pastor will be drastically increased.

110 Hart, Coping with Depression in the Ministry and Other Helping Professions, 19.

Set Limitations

Pastors are often guilty of trying to meet the expectations of others, often to a fault. Every human being has limited resources. Attempts to meet the expectations of so many others inevitably lead to stress and burnout. More than the expectations of others, the expectations pastors place on self can often be ambitious too. They overextend themselves often resulting in the disappointment of others and in self. Part of the pastors’ responsibility is to be of support for those under the sphere of their influence. At some point, as influence grows, pastors must realize they cannot do it all. They must resist the desire to be wanted. When pastors give people their hearts and not their hands the people will release them from unrealistic expectations. The problem is it is easier to give what is in the hand than it is to give what is in the heart but pastors must do it anyway.

The resolve is simple – say no! Setting limits requires establishing priorities. When priorities are established, the pastor is obligated to meet those and no more. Dealing with things within that framework allows the pastor to allocate their time and access. Doing this gives the pastor back the control of their time and ultimately their lives. Pastors are able to focus their attention in areas of most need for the greater good of the ministry and for the greater good of their families. Not to mention, when appropriate limits are set, pastors have more time to pursue their own personal passions, hobbies or self-care activities.

Setting boundaries will not be easy but will be necessary for the protection and longevity of the pastor. Pastors must first know their boundaries and respect those boundaries. More than that, they must insist all others respect their established boundaries. The moment exceptions are made is the moment control is forfeited. Those boundaries should include not being everywhere and doing everything for everybody. Pastors must train their congregants to trust in
God and not depend solely on them. Doing this would put things in proper perspective while creating balance in the lives of the congregants and the pastor. Balance brings with it liberation and reduces stress.

Though this is mentioned last, it should be in the forefront of the pastor's mind when setting boundaries, pastors who are married must prioritize family time. Just as there is a church schedule and a pastor's schedule, there should also be a family schedule. The family schedule must be referenced and considered when scheduling things on the pastor's personal schedule. God is first, but family is second. It is a dangerous thing to gain the world and lose the family. If possible, pastors should invite their spouses to help them carry the weight of the ministry. Prayerfully, in so doing the load will become lighter and the family will become tighter as the marital union serve the Lord together.

**Delegate Tasks**

Pastors need help with doing ministry effectively. Though they are made to look like superheroes, an effective supporting cast is required. The challenge is found in empowering, trusting and utilizing the cast to produce desired outcomes. Pastors who rise to the challenge are able to focus their attention on the meatier matters of the ministry. They are able to pray more, obtain and cast vision more and grow and develop leaders. Delegating task to other capable individuals reduces stress.

One of the major drawbacks of pastors for delegation is the loss of control. Pastors who have a need to be in control of all things at all times will fail. They will lose it all because they refused to utilize the help God sent to them. One of the elements of control that is not widely considered is that control does not require one's hands as much as it requires one's heart.
People who have the heart of the leader operate like the leader to produce desired outcomes.

The release of control does not hurt the pastor – it helps them unless there is some insecurity that needs to be addressed through professional counseling. The pastor who delegate tasks is responsible for building people, fortifying resources, increasing their depth, widening their scope, increasing their revenue and more importantly creating disciples all while eradicating their stress. This recommendation is a win for all parties involved. The ultimate goal is for pastors to work smarter not harder. When this is accomplished it will show itself in the reduction of the weekly schedule and appointment load of the pastor.

Rest and Renewal

Pastors need a time of rest and renewal. Jesus took time away to pray and be refreshed in private places and pastors must follow in His example. A personal time of rest and retreat is not only necessary but vital to the sustainability of the leader. Doing this will not only decrease stress levels but it would also ward against burnout. Taking time away from the source(s) of a pastors stress is not only advisable but it is required. Furthermore, getting adequate rest would increase patience and offer clarity during times of chaos.

Pastors are often guilty of being workaholics. Even when home, they are always in preparation or execution mode. The brain does not rest, consequently impacting quality family time and sleep. Therefore, pastors need to hit the stop and reset button to focus on nothing but themselves. The benefits of a renewed and rejuvenated pastor far outweighs those of a stressed and burned out pastor. More than ministry, the pastors very life demands a time of rest and renewal. Pastors, just like most, are giving one life to live. It is prudent to use it wisely so it can have the most impact possible.

Just because a pastor has served long does not mean they have served well. Well from the
standpoint of ministry effectiveness and well from the standpoint of their emotional, mental and spiritual health. Today, the need is for pastors who will serve well from every imaginable standpoint. Pastors cannot give from empty cups. A time of rest and renewal will ensure their cups will never run dry.

**Restore A Relationship With God**

As ministry progresses, it could be easy to lose sight on who and what it is all about. Everything pastors do should be for and about God and the building of His Kingdom. Admittedly, pastors can easily get sidetracked as the grind of ministry becomes the focus. There is so much time being expended doing the work of God, without really consulting God. Pastors are stellar at building relationships with congregants, ministry leaders, community leaders, governmental leaders, and business leaders, but often suffer in maintaining their relationship with God. It is not that they do not pray or read their word, but those things are often done for the benefit of others. God wants His child back. He does not want the pastor – He wants the person.

While it is difficult to separate the pastor from the person for most others, it is essential to do so for God because He does not care about the title or position as much as He cares about the person wearing it. The church already belongs to Him – He wants to make sure the pastor does too. Unfortunately, there are many doing awesome works for the Lord, but have no relationship with Him. What a tragedy it would be for a pastor to come to the end of their journey and parish for the lack of a maintained relationship with God. The business of ministry does not compare to nor should it substitute for the priority of being in proper relationship with God.
Seek Help

Often the pastor is tasked with being the helper when at times they need help. When those time arise, it is vitally important the pastor seek the help that is needed. When a pastor is sick in their body either they decide to go to the doctor or they are forced to go, but they go. The same should be true when a pastor is sick in their emotions, in their minds or in their spirits. Pastors live their lives in the public leaving it subject to scrutiny from outsiders. The dynamic alone reveals the need for help. When life is lived in the public, the thoughts and opinions of others could either make or break you. Unfortunately, success has a slow spread, but scandals have a tendency to spread like wild fire. Either way, pastors need to be equipped with the best tools necessary to progress in both their lives and their ministries.

Like Jesus, the same people who celebrate the pastor also crucify them for the same stuff they walked others through. That truth alone is hurtful. Church hurt is often considered through the lens of the pew. The reality is the most hurt person in the church does not sit in the pew, but the pulpit. Unfortunately, the pastor does not have the right or get the opportunity to spew out how they feel about people, circumstances, situations, mistreatment, disappointment, and lies from the pulpit. The standard they are held to by both God and man is lofty and causes them to extend hush mouth grace. However, just because they are silent does not mean they are not wounded. For too long, pastors have resisted their urge to be weak, even for a moment, because so many others were depending on their strength. Therefore, the researcher wishes to apologize on the behalf of all of the congregants, family members, community members, business influencers, and governmental officials who forgot although the pastor is anointed – they are human.

God will take care of the pastor, but He gives the pastor the ability to take care of
himself. Often the pastor preaches through some deep rooted emotional scars that have been passed down generationally, that have occurred relationally, were received in ministry, and were self-inflicted. Though they preach through the pain it is still there and often compounded. The reality is just unhealthy. Therefore, pastors need to seek professional help. Professional counselors are able to not only assist in providing the tools necessary for overcoming pastoral stress, but they are able to deal with the scars of the person from the root in order to produce a level of freedom and wholeness so desperately needed.

**Summary**

This researcher has offered considerations and recommendations for himself, pastoral participants and readers alike that serve as the starting point of overcoming pastoral stress and insisting on a life of self-care. As this project is being finalized, the world is in a global pandemic and many pastors, especially in the African American community, are transitioning from time into eternity. It is a difficult time for the church. Some are dying from complications with the Coronavirus while others are dying from complications with stress. If the mantle is to be picked up and carried beyond this moment, pastors must prioritize self and family.

The results of this study have shown the impact of stress on both the pastor and the ministry. It has also provided an opportunity to change course. Although stress can be harmful, it can also serve as an awakening to the wise. Pastors can never be to others what they are not first to themselves. In order to fully stand in the truth – self-care must be the new way of life. The researcher is not suggesting in any way self-care will resolve all matter of stress in the life of the pastor. However, it will establish boundaries, invoke accountability, strengthen family units and restore the passion for both God and His church.
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March 4, 2020

Remiel Lockwood
IRB Exemption 4135 030420: Pastoral Stress: The Urgent Need for Self-Care

Dear Remiel Lockwood,

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.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971
APPENDIX 2: PASTORAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Pastoral Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How long have you served as Senior Pastor?</th>
<th>Responses by Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5 Years</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5-10 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-15 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 or more years</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever considered quitting?</th>
<th>Responses by Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many churches have you served?</th>
<th>Responses by Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you struggle with Stress?</th>
<th>Responses by Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does that stress affect your ministry?</th>
<th>Responses by Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does that stress affect your family?</th>
<th>Responses by Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is your ministry the cause of your stress?</th>
<th>Responses by Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do you deal with your stress?</th>
<th>Responses by Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Pick all that apply)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not deal with my stress.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I cope with my stress.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I pray.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I seek counseling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I withdraw.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are contributing factors to your stress?</th>
<th>Responses by Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Respond to all that apply)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Discouragement</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure to succeed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure to produce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss</td>
<td>Sickness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you compensated well?</td>
<td>Responses by Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your financial position add to your stress?</td>
<td>Responses by Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have a place of safety to run?</td>
<td>Responses by Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever been to counseling?</td>
<td>Responses by Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think you could benefit from counseling?</td>
<td>Responses by Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How old are you?</td>
<td>Responses by Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your Gender</td>
<td>Response by Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you Single or Married?</td>
<td>Response by Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If single, were you married and divorced due to your ministry assignment?</td>
<td>Response by Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you take vacation?</td>
<td>Response by Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 times per year</td>
<td>1 time per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you frustrated with your Calling/Assignment</td>
<td>Response by Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you intentional about taking care of you or others?</td>
<td>Response by Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am intentional about taking care of self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am intentional about taking care of others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am intentional about taking care of both.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside of preaching, do you feel you were adequately prepared for your ministry assignment?</td>
<td>Response by Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
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</tbody>
</table>