

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

TRANSITIONS: SURVIVING CONGREGATIONAL CHANGE

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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” (Revelation 5:13).

For Christ and His kingdom,

Reggie Weems
Johnson City TN, 2013

ABSTRACT

TRANSITIONS: SURVIVING CONGREGATIONAL CHANGE

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The Holston Baptist Association is the oldest Baptist Association in Tennessee. Established in 1786, the Association presently boasts 106 congregations. Yet for all of its success, statistics reveal that pastoral longevity is not the norm for its churches. This project will analyze the tenure of present pastors within the Holston Baptist Association and provide a blueprint for pastoral longevity in the midst of local church transitions. It will utilize the history of Heritage Baptist Church, Johnson City, Tennessee (USA) and the present pastor's 21-year tenure as a source of research and model for successfully navigating that change. Although specifically intended to benefit the leadership, pastors and churches of the Holston Baptist Association, such a study will profit any pastor and/or church seeking the benefits of pastoral longevity.

Abstract length: 126 words

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Every pastor is a Christian for whom the ultimate goal of all God's predestined activity is "to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:29), the Lord Jesus Christ. Each pastor is also the agent of such sanctifying work in the church. Conformity to Christ is not just for pastors. God desires every Christian to be conformed to Jesus' image so that Jesus "might be the firstborn among many brothers" (Romans 8:29). As such, pastors are simultaneously subject to change and agents of change. And change is synonymous with crisis and conflict. The necessary transition from sinner to saint places myriad pressures on both the pastor and congregation. This conflict is exponentially multiplied by the pastor's history and that of the congregation, the politics of the church, the number of congregants and the unnumbered, often invisible influences the pastor has in each church member's life. This is to say nothing of the spiritual warfare conducted by Satan against the body of Christ. While a pastor leads his congregation through the changes that challenge the status quo of the "old man" (Ephesians 4:22-24) and transformation into the "new man" (Ephesians 4:22-24) he is also undergoing supernatural change causing both internal and external conflict.

As "gifts" to the church God "gave the . . . shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ..." (Ephesians 4:8 & 11-12).¹ Peter spoke to the value of pastors when he wrote "the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood" (Acts

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

20:28). He then noted the eternal reward of pastoral ministry when speaking to under shepherds, he wrote “And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory (1 Peter 5:4). In other words, the Father granted pastors to the church, the Holy Spirit calls and equips pastors for the ministry and the Son will reward pastors.

The office of pastor is granted importance, value and worth by the Trinitarian effort involved in pastoral ministry. All of this adds to the seriousness with which pastors must consider fidelity to their divine calling. Pastoral longevity is certainly one aspect of that obedience. Warren Wiersbe writes:

Every Christian must make vocational decisions, it is true; but the pastor’s decisions in this are, I believe, most critical. What he does not only affects his family, but it also affects his own ministry and the welfare of the churches. Mistakes can be fatal. We are suffering today the tragic consequences of short pastorates. Local churches too often remain small and weak because they lack the long-term care of a concerned shepherd who will ‘stay by the stuff.’ Granted, some men are not made for longer pastorates; but I believe more men would remain with their charges if they better understood the dynamics of making this critical decision.²

Eugene Peterson is equally concerned about short pastorates. He writes “the norm for pastoral work is stability. Twenty- and thirty- and forty-year-long pastorates should be typical among us (as they once were) and not exceptional.”³ Yet such an ideal is not the majority case in Christian ministry. “In looking at the tenure of pastors, it appears that the dominant tendency is for pastors to move too quickly.”⁴

² Warren Wiersbe in the Forward to Gerald W. Gillaspie. *The Restless Pastor* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 7.

³ Eugene Peterson. “The Jonah Syndrome.” *Leadership Journal*
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/1990/summer/9013038.html?start=8> (accessed May 9, 2012).

⁴ Lyle E. Schaller. *Survival Tactics in the Parish* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1977), 25.

There are myriad reasons why this is not the norm for 21st century pastors but in reality only one of two possible scenarios exists for pastors; termination, which includes forced termination, a matter to be discussed later in this paper, or leaving of one's own choice. But neither Wiersbe, Peterson nor Schaller direct their comments toward forced terminations. They are concerned that pastors willingly leave pastorates too early and for invalid reasons. Peterson continues "Far too many pastors change parishes out of adolescent boredom, not as a consequence of mature wisdom."⁵ Lyle Schaller adds substance to Peterson's concern. He writes

First, research on the length of pastorates suggests that a substantial number of pastors find themselves feeling very receptive to the idea of moving to another congregation approximately thirty-five to forty-five months after arriving in that pastorate In simple terms, it appears that for a significant proportion of pastors there is a period of vocational depression that coincides with (a) the conclusion of the third year or the beginning of the fourth year in that pastorate. . . . from the congregation's perspective the most effective years of a pastorate rarely begin before the fourth or fifth or six or seventh, and sometimes even the eighth, year of that pastorate What does this say to the question, Has the time come for me to move? In a majority of pastorates it probably means that if the question is being asked before the fourth or fifth year of that pastorate, it is premature.⁶

And yet, pastoral longevity is in decline amongst evangelical pastors. "A pastor serving in numerous pastorates during his lifetime has become a forgone conclusion."⁷ Only a small percentage of modern pastors remain in a single pastorate for a sufficient amount of time to engage a congregation and community with enduring effect on either the pastor or congregation. "One of the enduring idiosyncrasies of mainline churches is the brief tenure of pastors in a church. On average, these pastors last four years before

⁵ Peterson, "The Jonah Syndrome."

⁶ Schaller. *Survival Tactics in the Parish*, 25.

⁷ James W. Bryant, Mac Brunson, *The New Guidebook for Pastors* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2007), 59.

moving to another congregation. That is about half the average among Protestant pastors in non-mainline churches.”⁸ The average length of tenure for UMC pastor at a church is nearly four years. Across denominations, that number is two and a half years.⁹ Simply put, “Most men move too much.”¹⁰ Until pastors stop dating the church, that all-important relationship will resemble little more than the tumult and insecurity of a puppy love. Such a model doesn’t appropriately represent God’s nature or work.

It is not as though pastors are unconcerned about this apparent crisis:

Three out of four pastors who get their jobs assigned by their denomination believe they don’t have enough time at each church – that’s something these denominations need to consider as they move people around. However, there is a common feeling even among clergy who are free to choose their own jobs that pastors don’t stay long enough at any one church. Individual ministers also need to consider that issue as they look at the possibility of taking a new job.¹¹

On the other hand, enduring pastors create a climate of ever increasing health for themselves and those to whom they minister. Enduring churches reflect mature spirituality; ensure their own congregational wellbeing and future success by living a gospel of life transformation that is real for pastors and congregants alike. Truth applied over time is essential to create authentic Christians of both the pastor and members. To

⁸ <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/17-leadership/323-report-examines-the-state-of-mainline-protestant-churches> (accessed April 7, 2012).

⁹ http://www.heraldsun.com/view/full_story/8102112/article-United-Methodist-pastors-meet-their-new-churches?instance=homesixthleft (accessed April 7, 2012).

¹⁰ Edward T. Hiscox. *The Hiscox Standard Manual* (Valley Forge: Judson, 1965), 58.

¹¹ *Study shows why Protestant clergy change jobs - promotions are a more common cause than God’s call.* http://www.greymatterresearch.com/index_files/Job_Changes.htm (accessed September 21, 2012).

that end, pastoral longevity is not only healthy for pastors but congregations, communities and the kingdom of God as well.

Every sincere Christian pastor seeks to honor God in fidelity to the Great Commission and its sovereignly created context. Yet the average tenure of a North American Senior Pastor in a single congregation is less than 4 years.¹² Richard Brown writes that “everyone knows (but no one wants to admit) that the North American church has developed a pattern of short-term pastorates.”¹³ This lack of pastoral longevity has created a scenario in which Great Commission success is hindered by a continually changing vision and direction for the local church. “It is no accident that, practically without exception, the most successful churches are those that have had long pastorates.”¹⁴

Gary McIntosh considers the short pastorate to be the primary reason why congregations fail to fulfill their divinely appointed task.

The number one reason many churches fail to fulfill their mission and advance the kingdom of God in their community is the issue of leadership tenure. Depending on whom you read, the average staff member stays at a church from thirty to forty-eight months. This has generated a leadership crisis in a majority of churches. If the position you are seeking to fill is vital to the ministry, longevity will be one of the keys to implementing this position successfully.¹⁵

In agreement Rick Warren writes “The truth is pastoral longevity is one of the untold secrets of church health. My experience is this—a long pastorate does not

¹² <http://www.pastorburnout.com/clergy-burnout-statistics.html> (accessed October 10, 2011).

¹³ Richard W. Brown. *Restoring the Vow of Stability* (Camp Hill: Christian Publications, 1993), 2.

¹⁴ Gaines S. Dobbins. *Building Better Churches* (Nashville: Broadman, 1947), 320.

¹⁵ Gary McIntosh, *Staff Your Church for Growth: Building Team Ministry in the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 65.

guarantee a church will grow, but changing pastors every few years guarantees a church won't grow."¹⁶ Edwin Byington wrote "Short pastorates generally create weak ministers as well as ill-conditioned churches."¹⁷ And Peterson furthers the argument noting "When this happens, neither pastors nor congregations have access to the conditions that are hospitable to maturing in the faith."¹⁸ There is very little question that a direct link exists between church health, growth and pastoral tenure. Theodore F. Schneider, Bishop for the Metropolitan Washing D.C. Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America notes believes "the long term pastorate is more effective for our congregations and more fulfilling for our pastors."¹⁹

It is interesting that as Southern Baptist short term pastorates are on the rise, both the membership of the SBC and Southern Baptist churches are in decline.

Membership in the Southern Baptist Convention dropped again over the last year, according to a new report. The largest Protestant denomination in the country now counts less than 16 million members... This marks the fifth straight year the SBC has lost members. Primary worship attendance has also dropped by 0.65 percent to around 6.16 million One Southern Baptist and researcher lamented that the denomination is not only experiencing decline but an acceleration of decline. Compared to a 0.15 percent drop from 2009 to 2010, membership fell by 0.98 percent from 2010 to 2011.²⁰

Although pastoral tenure is only one of several determinative elements in church growth there is a direct correlation between pastoral tenure and the growth of a

¹⁶ Rick Warren, "Pastoral 'Free Agency' Hurts Churches," in *Ministry Toolbox* (Lake Forest: Ministry Toolbox, 2010).

¹⁷ Edwin H. Byington. *The Minister's Week-Day Challenge* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1931), 213.

¹⁸ Peterson, "The Jonah Syndrome."

¹⁹ Ludwig. *In It For The Long Haul*, ix.

²⁰ *Southern Baptists Experiencing Accelerating Decline in Membership* <http://www.christianpost.com/news/so-baptist-membership-drops-for-fifth-straight-year-baptisms-are-up-76608/> (accessed September 22, 2012).

congregation. “The length of a pastor’s tenure . . . was found to have a direct correlation to the health of a church. A church’s likelihood to be healthy was much greater when the pastor had served there between five and 20 years.”²¹ If corporate Convention growth (in the Southern Baptist Convention) is based on the growth of the Convention’s individual churches and that growth is determined by pastoral tenure then it is of the utmost importance that Southern Baptists encourage pastoral longevity. But as pastoral tenure is declining there is a commensurate decline in the percentage of churches that are growing:

From 1978 to 1983, the Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources) found that 30.5 percent of churches were growing, 51.9 percent were plateaued and 17.6 were in decline. In the years studied by the Leavell Center, 1998—2003, 30.3 percent of churches were growing. And though that statistic has remained basically unchanged for 20 years, the number of declining Southern Baptist churches has increased by 6 percent from 17.6 percent to 23.9 percent. Plateaued churches now compromise 45.8 percent of all Southern Baptist churches. According to the SBC’s website, there are more than 42,000 Southern Baptist churches in the United States. Using the Leavell Center’s findings, fewer than 13,000 of them are growing churches. In other words, 70 percent of Southern Baptist churches are still plateaued or declining.²²

In addition to ministry stresses that result in short pastoral tenures, ministry stress also creates the situation in which “Every year 20,000 ministers in America leave the ministry for good.”²³ H.B. London Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman list twenty reasons for such pastoral burnout: 1) walk-on-the-water syndrome; 2) disastrous personal problems; 3)

²¹ Study Updates Stats on Health of Southern Baptist Churches.
<http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=19542> (accessed September 22, 2012).

²² Study Updates Stats on Health of Southern Baptist Churches
<http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=19542> (accessed September 22, 2012).

²³ Barfoot, D.S., B.E. Winston, and C. Wickman. *Forced Pastoral Exits: An Explanatory study*. Manuscript. Virginia Beach, VA: Regents University.
http://www.regentuniversityonline.com/acad/global/publications/working/forced_pastoral_exits.pdf.
 (accessed June 5, 2012).

church member migration; 4) technologically shaped preferences; 5) distracted people; 6) consumer mentality; 7) suffocating expectations; 8) decimated absolutes; 9) money struggles; 10) dysfunctional people; 11) pastoral defection; 12) sexual temptation and infidelity; 13) leadership crisis; 14) loneliness; 15) institutional baby-sitting; 16) self-saturated ministry; 17) emerging evil in society; 18) lost church members; 19) unempowered ministry and 20) clergy abusers.

Ron Sellers notes, “People who work in real estate, manufacturing, marketing research, and other careers change jobs in order to move to a city they prefer, get a promotion, start a new company, find better working conditions, and make more money, among other reasons,” Sellers stated. “This study shows ministers take new jobs mostly for these same reasons. Most pastors have not changed jobs simply because they felt God was calling them to a different church – for most, a job change is a result of a promotion, a move to a larger church, a desire to live in a different community, or even as a result of getting fired.”²⁴ Sellers’ research company discovered

The most common reason for moving from one church to another is a desire to serve in a different type of community or a different region of the country. Twenty-seven percent of all Protestant ministers have switched jobs for this reason. Other common reasons for changing jobs are getting promoted to a higher position, such as from an associate pastor at one church to the senior pastor of another church (20%), wanting to pastor a larger church (16%), being transferred by their denomination (15%), and leaving to start a new church (15%). Other reasons for moving have included feeling the move is God’s will, or being called by God to another church (12%), better pay and/or benefits (11%), being fired or asked to leave a church (10%), and switching to a different denomination (9%). Relatively few pastors have left a job because they wanted to pastor a smaller church (4%), or because their church closed down or ceased to exist (2%). Eighteen percent have had some other reason for leaving a job; these included reasons such as needing to

²⁴ “*Study shows why Protestant clergy change jobs - promotions are a more common cause than God’s call*” http://www.greymatterresearch.com/index_files/Job_Changes.htm (accessed September 21, 2012).

move for family needs, job frustration, seeking a new challenge, conflict within the church, and just wanting a change.²⁵

As noted by this study, the reasons for such short tenure among pastors may be voluntary or involuntary but they are also almost as numerous as the pastors and/or congregations. The reality is that most pastors do not remain with a single congregation for an extended period. “In the midst of all the complex cultural and societal change affecting congregations today, the end of many pastoral relationships appears to be happening sooner more often than later. Pastorates are tending to be shorter in duration.”²⁶ Hodge and Wenger summarize the changes in Protestant ministry since the 1960s are a cause for pastoral termination and list them as a more educated laity, less trust in centralized authority, decreased denominational commitment, lower clerical authority, changes in seminary graduate gender, age and experience and comparisons (financial, etc.) with other professions.²⁷

One other cause for ever-increasing pastoral turnover is undoubtedly the influence of worldly business principles practiced by pastors and churches alike. The advent of the pastor as the Chief Executive Officer has only been to the detriment of the church. Not surprisingly, turnover in pastoral ministry is similar to turnover in the business world after which the 21st century pastorate is often modeled.²⁸ Baptizing worldly business

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Roger S. Nicholson, ed. *Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministry* (Bethesda: The Alban Institute, 1998), xv.

²⁷ Dean R. Hodge, Jacqueline E. Wenger. *Pastors in Transition: Why Clergy Leave Local Church Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 3-17.

²⁸ Booz & Co., *CEOs Hold Steady in the Storm* (written 5-12-09), accessed 30 November 2009, http://www.booz.com/global/home/what_we_think/reports_and_white_papers/article/45574145 The average tenure of the American CEO is seven years.

principles espoused by secular ‘experts’ might prove to produce successful businesses, but they are lacking the genuine character needed in the pastoral office.²⁹

Regardless the reasons, the vast majority of pastors in the United States do not enjoy pastoral longevity. “Clergy and lay professional leaders in a congregation tend to burn out after four to seven years.”³⁰ This condition is to the detriment of the pastor, his family, God’s kingdom cause and the myriad congregations who both cause and suffer the consequence of pastoral departure. Howard Hendricks writes “It’s estimated that 53,000 people leave churches every week and never come back.”³¹ Evidently, the lack of pastoral longevity is a crisis that is both modeling the calamity of the 21st century local church and creating it. A lack of sustained leadership is mirrored in a lack of retained membership.

Transitions are often *the* defining moment for a pastor and congregation. They are certainly some of the most stressful. Yet no pastor can enjoy longevity without transitions. And transitions create problems for both pastors and churches. Ordinary men in ordinary professions usually dislike difficulty and attempt to escape it. Pastors turn it to the gospel’s advantage. “Comfortable Christianity is easy. Not to risk, not to put one’s all on the line is the least threatening approach to ministry. It may leave us unscathed but it will also leave our ministries unused and ineffective.”³² Nor can any

²⁹ John MacArthur, *The Book on Leadership* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2004), vii.

³⁰ A. Richard Bullock and Richard J. Bruesehoff. *Clergy Renewal: The Alban Guide to Sabbatical Planning* (Bethesda: The Alban Institute, 2000), 6.

³¹ William Hendricks. *Exit Interviews: Revealing Stories of Why People Are Leaving Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1993), p. 252.

³² Rick Ezell. *Strengthening the Pastor's Soul: Developing Personal Authenticity for Pastoral Effectiveness*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2001),14.

church enjoy the immense benefits of pastoral longevity without a pastor's ability to navigate transitions. These transitions may be personal to the pastor or people who make up the local church; they may be officially or unofficially corporate, physical, financial, emotional or spiritual. Yet just as the sun can either harden or melt clay, the same crisis that can make a pastor or church can also break him or it. But transitions cannot be escaped and neither can the change that either creates, accompanies or ensues those transitions. How a pastor negotiates transition is all-important to his life, ministry and congregation. "No change invites dissatisfaction while too much change too fast destabilizes the church to where the pastor becomes the sacrificial lamb."³³

Under duress, a pastor will deceive himself into thinking he will be better, or at least different, somewhere else; or that another congregation will be utopian.³⁴ But problems are rarely solved by turning from them or the circumstance that caused them. "The church is not in existence that does not have a problem. As long as churches are made up of human beings, even though redeemed, there will be problems arising from such imperfect human nature. There are no ideal churches. Preachers who are looking for such are wandering about aimlessly for a Utopia that never was in existence in this

³³ George Leslie Somers. "The Ministry Marathon: Exploring Longevity in the Single Pastorate." Unpublished DMin thesis. Acadia Divinity College, Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada.

³⁴ Sixteenth century Henrican lawyer, scholar, priest, and Lord Chancellor, Thomas More invented the word 'utopia.' It is derived from the Greek words *ou*, meaning "not", and *topos*, meaning "place," hence, "no place," or a land which does not exist. In like manner, the 'utopian' pastorate does not exist.

world and never shall be.”³⁵ It’s for this reason that Stuart Briscoe listed “the hide of a rhinoceros”³⁶ as one of the essential qualifications of a pastor.

Pastors may assume a particular pastorate with the idea in mind of using that congregation as a temporary assignment; a stepping stone to another position with perceived greater prestige. But “The pastor should treat the call as if it were for life. He should make plans for an indefinite period of service and not allow himself even to think of his present pastorate as a stepping-stone to something better. He should not give himself the luxury of even gazing upon greener pastures .”³⁷ Such thinking is certainly antithetical to the New Testament calls to pastoral endurance issued by the apostle Paul to his young protégé’s in Ephesus and Crete.

Then again some pastors are fired from their pastorates.

Forced termination is extremely detrimental to the overall well-being of clergy. The experience of forced termination significantly and negatively altered scores on depression, self-esteem, self-efficacy, burnout, and general health. That is to say, clergy who have been forcibly terminated at least once during their career are more depressed, have lower self-esteem, lower self-efficacy, more general health problems, and are more likely to burnout than those who have never been forcibly terminated from a ministry position.³⁸

³⁵ Clarence E. Colton. *The Minister’s Mission* (Dallas: Story Book Press, 1951), 36.

³⁶ Marshall Shelley. *Well-Intentioned Dragons: Ministering to Problem People in the Church* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1985), 35.

³⁷ Gillaspie, *The Restless Pastor*, 18.

³⁸ Marcus Tanner, Anisa Zvonovic, Charlie Adams. “Forced Termination of American Clergy: Its Effects and Connection to Negative Well-Being.” *Review of Religious Research: The Official Journal of the Religious Research Association* (Springer Netherlands, Volume 54, 1-17, 2012).

Victor Hugo wrote that the new bishop in Digne “had to submit [to criticism and mistreatment], although he was the bishop, and because he was bishop.”³⁹ Hugo’s point echoed Paul’s encouragement to Timothy that “I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do” (2 Timothy 1:11-12a). Pastors are not exempt from suffering and in fact, often suffer because they are pastors. Pastor and the crisis created by transitions are almost synonymous terms as naturally related as Noah and the ark. This is because pastoral ministry is wed to the transitions of personal and corporate transformation and as such, exists in almost perpetual crisis. The apostle Peter encouraged his exiled readers to contemplate suffering as a normal human experience when he wrote “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you” (I Peter 4:12).

It is true that the local church often endures crisis of a corporate nature but apart from those public crisis, pastors are more often, even normally involved in one crisis or another with various members of the congregation. “The church, indeed every Christian, is an odd combination of self-sacrificing saint and self-serving sinner. And the church, unlike some social organizations, doesn’t have the luxury of choosing its members; the church is an assembly of all who profess themselves believers. Within that gathering is found a full range of saint/sinner combinations.”⁴⁰ And the fallenness of pastor and congregation is only one of the difficulties faced by a pastor leading his congregation. Other problems are created by the scars of living in a fallen world.

³⁹ Victor Hugo. *Les Misérables*, trans., Charles E. Wilbur (New York: The Modern Library, 1992), 4.

⁴⁰ Shelley, *Well-Intentioned Dragons*, 48.

No sooner does a pastor step away from the crisis of a graveside than he is called to the home of a marriage in crisis. The nature and rapidity of crisis often leave him without the opportunity to exhale the sorrow experienced in caring for his flock. A pastor rarely approaches any church-wide crisis apart from the weight of daily ministry. After only a short time in any pastorate, a pastor can find himself suffering under a weight no one harmfully intended, only to be met by an intentionally created crisis; to say nothing of personal duress compiled through years of ministry. And there are those occasions in which a pastor leads a congregation through and is personally involved in a corporate transition such that a) his potential, b) the church's future and c) what the world thinks of the gospel are dramatically changed by its outcome.

Paul's charge to "Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:3) views persecution, opposition, slander, misunderstanding, disappointment, recrimination, weakness and danger as the normal portion of faithful pastoral ministry. Such endurance proves the gospel is worth believing to Christians and unbelievers alike. Yet in spite of this opportunity to showcase the value of the gospel, the percentage of pastors who remain with a single congregation for an extended period of time is nothing short of urban legend. Pastoral longevity is almost heroic in the modern era of American ministry.

Success for a pastor cannot be defined by what is out of his control. God is sovereign hence, ultimately in control of any results. He often gives a congregation exactly what it wants by removing the pastor using sinful people to accomplish this end. A pastor may want to stay with a congregation but be fired from leading a people whom he loves. Other mitigating factors often control a church's "success" and a pastor's

fortune. So success cannot be what is outside of a pastor. Rather, pastoral success is fidelity to the gospel and faithful submission to God's will. Success then is defined, not by the pastor's relationship to his peers, his congregation or the world but alone by his relationship to God. God uses many means to make men godly, to drive them into the wonder of himself and to "know him and the power of his resurrection" (Philippians 3:10).

Modern pastors are not the first to suffer in pastoral ministry yet suffering to any degree is certainly a divine tool.

When God wants to drill a man,
 And thrill a man,
 And skill a man
 When God wants to mold a man
 To play the noblest part;
 When He yearns with all His heart
 To create so great and bold a man
 That all the world shall be amazed,
 Watch His methods, watch His ways!
 How He ruthlessly perfects
 Whom He royally elects!
 How He hammers him and hurts him,
 And with mighty blows converts him
 Into trial shapes of clay which
 Only God understands;

While his tortured heart is crying
 And he lifts beseeching hands!
 How He bends but never breaks
 When his good He undertakes;
 How He uses whom He chooses,
 And which every purpose fuses him;
 By every act induces him
 To try His splendor out-
 God knows what He's about.⁴¹

Above all a pastor must not respond to criticism or conflict in an unbiblical fashion. Such a commitment to his own sanctification requires a lifetime of intentionality because “If you’re a Christian pastor, you’re always in a crisis – either in the middle of one, coming out of one, or going into one.”⁴² Paul encouraged his readers to “rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope” (Romans 5:3-4). Pastors should remember that sanctification’s “success is the product of growth through conflict.”⁴³ Even Christ “learned obedience through what he suffered” (Hebrews 5:8) and “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master (Matthew 10:24).

⁴¹ Robert J. Morgan, *The Red Sea Rules*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 11-12.

⁴² Shelly, *Well-Intentioned Dragons*, 135.

⁴³ Ron Susek. *Firestorm: Preventing and Overcoming Church Conflicts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 212.

God is rescuing a groaning creation (Romans 8:19-23) and in like fashion is also recreating a people for himself but not without equally passionate groaning. Nonetheless, every pastor should “consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18). This hope will save him in distress (Romans 8:18). That same long view of Christ’s redemptive agenda spanning from creation to new creation should remind the pastor that God’s work requires a submissive patience and enable him to minister with confidence and trust while God works all things “according to the counsel of his will” (Ephesians 1:11).

Such awareness arms the pastor “to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called (Ephesians 4:21); “to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:10). “To paraphrase John Claypool, if I become a beast in order to overcome a beast, all that reigns is beastliness.”⁴⁴ Yet a pastor is not simply called to respond passively or not respond at all. Suffering, hardship or conflict do not necessary sanctify Christians. God can do his best work in our weakest times. As Paul recounted, “For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10). These are what Bruce Thielemann calls “molten moments.” He

⁴⁴ Ibid., 61.

describes work in a foundry and that brief period in which metal has been heated enough to be shaped into something useful. And when things cool, it's too late.”⁴⁵

A pastor’s response to evil should not be evil or neutral but quite the opposite. He is to “overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21). Conflict, especially if it is centered on the pastor, affords him the platform to publicly display the glory of the gospel. In conflict everything a pastor has ever preached or will ever preach is either reinforced or undermined. His life is the “living epistle” (2 Corinthians 3:2).

Pastors regularly encourage parishioners to apply the biblical counsel concerning personal suffering but rarely apply those same biblical admonitions of endurance to themselves. Conflict in the pastor’s life proves Christianity’s claims and that the gospel works. Endurance models what preaching intends, holistic fidelity to God and his gospel. It also reflects the character and work of God to both believers and unbelievers. If the gospel is true then “the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18). From an eternal standpoint, no threat or action against a pastor can be conceived of as detrimental to his person or message. It all works together for his good (Romans 8:28).

The God revealed in the pages of the Christian Bible is the God who can take Egypt’s prison and turn it into an incubator to birth a nation. Because God is sovereign, nothing can ultimately defeat God’s work in a man or congregation. Thomas Manton wrote to an imprisoned Thomas Case and quoted Tertullian when he said, “You went out

⁴⁵ Marshall Shelley. *Molten Moments*
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2011/winter/moltenmoments.html> (accessed September 22, 2012).

of prison when you went into it, and were but sequestered from the world that you might converse with God.”⁴⁶ Ultimately, God is the sovereign smiling face behind every temporal frowning providence; even those created by transitions in the local church.

Statement of the Problem

F. A. Ager states that the “average pastorate in 1932 was less than two years.”⁴⁷

A new century did not improve pastoral tenure by much. Writing in 2000, Gary McIntosh noted that the average stay for a local church pastor is “from thirty to forty-eight months.”⁴⁸ In 2004, 2331 Tennessee Baptist Convention (the residence of this author) churches reported

- *45.7% of pastors had been at their current church less than 5 years
- *27.2% of pastors had been at their current church between 5 years and 10 years
- *12.3% of pastors had been at their current church between 10 and 15 years
- *7.9% of pastors had been at their current church between 15 and 20 years
- *5.0% of pastors had been at their current church between 20-30 years
- *1.9% of pastors had been at their current church greater than 30 years⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Thomas Case. *When Christians Suffer* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 6.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Gillaspie, *The Restless Pastor*, 15.

⁴⁸ McIntosh, *Staff Your Church for Growth*, 65.

⁴⁹ E-mail from Raymond D. Smith, Technology Services Manager of the Tennessee Baptist Convention to Bill Northcott, Church-Minister Relations Specialist, Tennessee Baptist Convention (dated May 26, 2011) and forwarded to this author in August of 2012.

In 2006 the North American Mission Board reported the Senior Pastor average tenure to be only five years.⁵⁰ That same year the Southern Baptist Convention polled 2221 of its churches to discover the “average time of service for a Southern Baptist pastor in Tennessee (the residence of this author) was 7.999 years.⁵¹ As of the time of this writing “the Annual Church Profile of SBC churches no longer asks this question nationally, but it was still asked nationally in 2010. Specifically churches were asked the year their current pastor came. Among churches reporting, the median year was 2005. So the median tenure was 5 years.”⁵²

H. B. London agrees writing “the average pastor lasts only five years at a church.”⁵³ Research from Lifeway Research contained in the 2008 Annual Church Profile of the Southern Baptist Convention revealed that for Convention churches the average (mean) was 7 years and the median was 4 years.⁵⁴ One year later, George Barna’s research revealed that mainline Protestant pastors “last four years before moving to another congregation.”⁵⁵ Such precedence is not without influence in the life of the pastor. “The dignity of the ministry is lowered by short pastorates. Such tenures

⁵⁰ Cited in J. William Egner. “Combining Biblical Principles and Best Business Practices for Hiring “Right Fit” Pastors.” Unpublished DMin thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, September 6, 2010.

⁵¹ E-mail from Raymond D. Smith, Technology Services Manager of the Tennessee Baptist Convention to Bill Northcott, Church-Minister Relations Specialist, forwarded to the author in August of 2012.

⁵² E-mail from Scott McConnell, Director, LifeWay Research to the author on September 5, 2012

⁵³ H.B. London, Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman. *Pastors at Risk: Real help for pastors from pastors who've been there* (Ventura: Regal Books, 2003), 38.

⁵⁴ E-mail correspondence from Scott McConne, Director, Lifeway Research, April 11, 2012.

⁵⁵ George Barna, “Report Examines the State of Mainline Protestant Churches,” in *Barna Update* (Ventura: The Barna Group, Ltd., 2009).

encourage the people to think of the minister as a hired man rather than one called of God to serve with them.”⁵⁶ As a result the pastor, the congregation and men considering ministry are all discouraged by shorter pastorates. This is not without a serious effect on pastors, candidates for pastoral ministries, congregations and the watching world.

“Everywhere jobs are quit too soon, schooling is cut too soon, marriages are severed too soon, friendships are broken too soon-switching and dropping out have become epidemic. It’s time to cry, ‘Hold it!’”⁵⁷ The record of short pastorates only reflects the unhealthy pattern exhibited by congregants and pastors, a record that is perpetuated by quitting too soon. “When a pastor leaves a church, all too often he moves on with unresolved feelings that will affect his next ministry. He carries with him patterns that will handicap his desire to stay longer in the next place. If those feelings and patterns are not acknowledged and dealt with as part of his transition, a pastor between churches is setting himself up for another early departure.”⁵⁸

Short-term pastorates create short-term mentalities in both pastors and congregations. It is a self-replicating dilemma. Regardless of the reason, pastors and congregations come to expect and even create the circumstances for pastoral turnover. A revolving door pastorate exponentially creates the probability of future short-term pastorates. Pastors fail to make an investment appropriate to their calling as shepherds responsible to God. Members of congregations also fail to invest in a new pastor’s life or ministry. The pattern of short pastorates has set up both pastors and congregations for

⁵⁶ Gillaspie, *The Restless Pastor*, 15.

⁵⁷ Anne and Ray Ortlund. *You Don’t Have to Quit* (Nashville: Nelson, 1986), front cover.

⁵⁸ Brown, *The Vow of Stability*, 165.

emotional distance from one another. Many sincere and otherwise willing people simply refuse to follow the leadership of a new pastor simply because they doubt his willingness to stay the course of pastoral endurance.

Too, some members are sinfully emboldened by short pastorates. Congregants can fold their arms in the pews daring a pastor to engage them. An individual or small group of people in a church can come to believe themselves the true spiritual leaders of a congregation and view the minister as someone to be bossed or even bullied and told when to leave at their whim. The term “clergy killer” has been coined to specifically point to such people.

No pastor would intentionally lay the groundwork for his successor’s failure but this is exactly what happens in the musical chairs of short pastorates. The pastor leaving and arriving each suffer under a fate the other created. Statistics verify that the pastor leaving a short pastorate is probably accepting a congregation pastored for only a short time and this has serious effects on his successor’s ministry. “With the exception of the minister who organizes a new mission, every pastor comes into a situation in which the life of the parish and the first few years of his ministry are influenced by who his predecessor was, what his predecessor did, what his predecessor did not do, and how his predecessor carried out his ministry.”⁵⁹ Sadly, the vast majority of established congregations don’t know anything other than “the first few years” of any ministry.

Long pastorates and congregations that enjoy long pastorates are in the vast minority of pastoral and congregational relationships. Nevertheless a repetition of shorter pastorates in a single congregation has created the environment of expected failure and

⁵⁹ Schaller, *Survival Tactics in the Parish*, 36.

early departure. The modern secular era is one in which employees often change jobs, marriage partners exchange one person for one another, adult children neglect aging parents and sports figures default on contracts to play for the highest bidder. It is an opportune time for pastors and churches to present a counter-cultural model of fidelity to and integrity in relationships. Sadly, instead of self-sacrifice, the modern relationship between a pastor and congregation is saturated with a self-centeredness on both sides. There is too often a vast gap between the stated and practiced values of a pastor who evidences such with short pastorates. Eventually the value system of a congregation is established by the values displayed in the life of its pastor. In effect, short term pastorates create short term congregations. This in turn creates a short term mindset that is extremely difficult for any pastor to reverse.

Pastoral and congregational infidelity toward one another has dug a deep furrow of disrespect in the hearts and minds of both pastors. Each is far more expendable than God intended for such a sacred relationship. A loss of respect and valuation exists in the minds of pastors for the body of Christ and equally so in the congregation for the pastor. Such little appreciation for God's redemptive work in saving the church and the Spirit's call on men to serve the church dishonors God and devalues the church, of which pastors and congregants are all members. It is diametrically opposed to the thought Paul intended to impress on the Ephesian elders when he charged them to "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

In such a scenario,

The efficiency of the church is usually hampered. When a pastor feels that his place is insecure and that he must constantly be ready to change places of service, he cannot do his best work. The pastor does not have time to become a true shepherd of the flock nor to activate any long-term projects in the area of Christian education or evangelism. Even the spiritual emphasis which is so vital to the work of the church may be neglected in the midst of an unstable atmosphere due to frequent pastoral changes. Discipling becomes very difficult if not impossible...The great work of Christ is hindered. A pastorate of two or three years cannot accomplish the implanting of missionary zeal and ideals nor the development of a missionary program. When all the energies of a church are consumed over the concern of losing one pastor and securing another, there is little left to invest in the great commission. No sooner does the church get settled in a rather shaky hope for some progress and challenged to commit themselves to Christ and His cause, than the hope vanishes and the challenge gets lost in the need to focus on the procuring of a new pastor.⁶⁰

Burnout is a term appropriately used for both pastors and congregations and each may be a cause and/or symptom of the other. A congregation experiencing burnout will also be “a congregation with frequent clergy turnover.”⁶¹ Any congregation unwilling to endure the fallenness of a pastor will discover their own fallenness magnified. No number of new pastors can answer that dilemma.

What is a long-term pastorate? How does a pastor know when he has exemplified the endurance this paper endorses? Ludwig writes “...there is no hard and fast line of demarcation as to when a pastor can consider him- or herself a long-term pastor.”⁶² He nonetheless suggests a ‘break-point.’ “When a pastor has served for seven years or more, we shall consider that a long-term in that setting.”⁶³ On the other hand, Brown defines a short term pastorate as one that is less than five years; a long term pastorate as

⁶⁰ Gillaspie, *The Restless Pastor*, 16-17.

⁶¹ Lynne M. Baab. *Beating Burnout in a Congregation* (Bethesda: The Alban Institute, 2003), 2.

⁶² Glenn E. Ludwig. *In It for the Long Haul: Building Effective Long-Term Pastorates* (Bethesda: The Alban Institute, 2002), 5.

⁶³ Ibid.

one exceeding nine years. He also defines a “short term church” as a “church that has had at least *three* consecutive pastorates of four years or less” and a “long term church” as a “church with at least one long-term pastorate in its recent past.”⁶⁴

Special Terminology

1. *Pastoral longevity* refers to the quantity of time a pastor leads a single congregation.
2. *Pastoral tenure* refers to the quantity of time a pastor leads a single congregation.
3. *Pastoral termination* is the forced resignation of a local church pastor.
4. *Forced termination* is the process by which a congregation forces the resignation of a pastor
5. *Long term ministry* is pastoral longevity of more than nine years.
6. *Short term ministry* is pastoral longevity of less than five years.⁶⁵
7. *Pastor* refers to the primary vocational Christian leader of a congregation.
8. *Senior Pastor* is the primary vocational Christian leader who serves either as the lead or sole pastor in a local church.
9. *Church* refers to the local, visible body of believers who unite under one congregational name.
10. *Elders* are appointed men who lead the local church as a team.

⁶⁴ Brown, *Restoring the Vow of Stability*, 9.

⁶⁵ Richard Brown. *Restoring The Vow of Stability: The Keys to Pastoral Longevity* (Camp Hill: Christian Publications, 1993), 25.

11. *Church member* is a person officially recorded in the membership rolls of a local congregation.

Statement of Limitations

This project intends to demonstrate the viability of pastoral endurance using the model of the author's present pastorate of twenty-one years at Heritage Baptist Church of Johnson City, Tennessee. It will however, only discuss those changes and transitions as they have occurred at Heritage Baptist Church. Further, it will only record, define and deliberate those changes and transitions as they have been employed by Heritage and delineated in the body of this project. Although the research may speak to those issues that terminate some pastor/people relationships, this paper will not discuss the specific changes or transitions that have occurred in any other congregations.

The Theological, Biblical and Historic Basis for Pastoral Longevity

The Theological Basis

It can be said that the very existence of God renders a model for pastoral longevity. It is because God is eternal that his promises endure and the church of Jesus Christ is safe in time. The triune God planned the church's salvation before time (Ephesians 1:4), secured it in time (Ephesians 1:7) and protects it (1:13) until glorification actually occurs (Romans 8:30). The church's eternal nature is safe in the eternal God. That same eternal nature reflects God's calling upon men whom He chooses to lead His earthly flock.

The majority of the New Testament is written to individuals, people or churches who are suffering. Peter wrote his first epistle “to those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1 Peter 1:1). His letter is intended to encourage faint hearts in times of great distress. In so doing the aged apostle calls on his readers to consider the fidelity of God toward all creation. He wrote “let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good” (4:19). Writing pastorally to his dispersed congregation as “an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1) Peter considered God's faithfulness an antidote to suffering. No matter the circumstance, God stood alongside His church. Early in the church's history, James modeled that faithful pastoral ministry to the congregation in Jerusalem (Acts 8). In its greatest distress he had not abandoned the fledgling congregation but remained in Jerusalem willing to suffer with and for them. But it was not James who was the source of strength in suffering. God himself is the “faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:19) who has begun and will see to completion His work of grace in His children (Philippians 1:6).

It is to that enduring quality of a faithful Creator that Peter later appeals when speaking directly to those under shepherds who have followed in his footsteps as overseers of local congregations. Peter also draws their attention Christ, the “chief Shepherd” (5:4) who will reward the local pastor for exhibiting faithfulness under duress. Peter wrote:

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (5:1-4)

What was the believer's motivation to remain faithful to God in dire circumstances? It was God's faithfulness as their Creator. What was the under shepherd's reason for exercising fidelity toward God and those He served? It was the faithfulness of His Shepherd. God is eternal and eternally the same in faithfulness toward His creation.

Paul also drew on God's nature and character as the model of pastoral endurance. He wrote to Timothy that it was God himself who "gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12). "The Holy Spirit has made you overseers" he reminded the Ephesian elders at Miletus (Acts 20:28). Their ministry was a direct reflection of the God who called them. Paul also informed Timothy that the Lord Jesus was his model of sacrificial service and encouraged Timothy to hold Christ as a model of endurance when he wrote "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the Word of God is not bound! Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Timothy 2:8-10). Pastoral ministry was initiated by God and should reflect the divine commitment to the task. God's faithfulness from Genesis to Revelation is the supreme example of a pastor's faithfulness to God's people.

There is no question that Paul was an itinerant minister so his ministry "pastorates" cannot be employed as a model for either short-term or longer pastorates. The apostle's longest tenure was the three years he invested in Ephesus. Nevertheless Paul employed terminology that naturally intimated pastoral fidelity to a people. He referred to himself with the endearing term of *father* (1 Thessalonians 1:5; 2:7; 8, 11; 1

Cor 4:44, 15; 2 Cor 6:13; Galatians 4:19) and he considered the church body a family (Ephesians 2:19; Gal 6:10; 4:19; 1 Cor 3:2; 1 Thessalonians 2:7, 1 Peter 2:2). Both terms embody the concepts of a long-term commitment to others.

Endurance in the face of opposition is a hallmark of valuing Christ's redemptive passion. It was His incarnational task accomplished "by the blood of his cross" (1:20) with the intent of a comprehensive reconciliation (1:20) that the Colossian church was encouraged to appreciate as they fought against "philosophy and empty deceit" (2:8). Their faithfulness to God in the face of false judgment (2:16-18) which amounted to competition to the gospel of grace was grounded in and motivated by the triumph of the cross (2:13-15). Christ was faithful even "to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8) and Paul encouraged his Philippian readers to mirror that loyalty. In fact, the apostle's condemnation of the Galatians was based on the reminder that grace had been purchased in the public humiliation of the cross (Galatians 3:1). Pastoral endurance should equally model the sacrificial heart of God in sending His own Son to die for rebellious people.

God's covenants also reveal His nature and commitment; a twin concept that should be realized in pastoral leadership. From the very beginning of His relationship with humanity God created covenants as a means of association. In the Exodus God continually revealed himself as "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Exodus 3:6 & 15; 4:5) in His effort to remind Israel who He was and what He could and would do. The patriarchs took God's self-revelation and used it to encourage their own hearts and that of the nation, reminding the people that their God was the "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Deuteronomy 9:5). Israel's kings called upon the God of Abraham, Isaac and

Jacob” (1 Chronicles 29:18) as fuel to their prayers and the hope of the nation. As Israel re-gathered themselves to the Promised Land after a 70-year absence the Levites reminded them that their God was the God “who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham” (Nehemiah 9:7) making God’s covenant the foundation and framework for all he would do in the future. In like fashion, a pastor’s commitment to God’s flock should also remind the church of God’s covenantal character.

Too, creation itself is also a witness to the longevity of God’s intent in what he does and whom he calls. Many references throughout Scripture detail God’s ultimate intent for creation. Though fallen, God has not given up on the world. He intends to sustain creation until it is newly created. Working “all things according to the counsel of his will” (Ephesians 1:11) God remains a “faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:19) in His eternal endeavor. The record of Scripture evidences God’s determination to restore what has fallen and recreate His kingdom on earth.

This pattern of fidelity, promise and recreation sets a pattern for pastors and the local church. No matter the devastation or deviation, God’s original promise of Genesis 3:15 ensures the success of God’s reclamation efforts over creation. Although the perfect world was destroyed by human rebellion God is not finished with creation. In fact, His promises to humanity are tied to His work in the world. “The book of Revelation describes a fully restored kingdom: God’s people, Christians from all nations, in God’s

place, the new creation (heaven), under God’s rule and therefore enjoying his blessing. And nothing can spoil this happy ending.”⁶⁶

The salvation reality is comprehensive in nature and eternal in intent. It speaks not only to human beings but to everything that God has created. God has a plan of longevity for all creation. There is a sense in which all we know about God is God on mission to rejuvenate what was decimated in the Garden. Such a perspective is revealed in Jesus’ use of the word regeneration which occurs twice in Scripture; Matthew 19:28 and Titus 3:5. Eschatologically, Jesus employed the term to mean “the renewing of the world”⁶⁷ However, Paul utilized the same term when describing “the rebirth of the redeemed person.”⁶⁸ God is faithful to His creation even though it is fallen. Its depraved state has not thwarted God’s plan as much as it has been a part of God’s plan. Through the fallenness of all creation God has demonstrated His character; one aspect being His faithfulness. It was in this vein that Peter confidently encouraged his suffering readers to “entrust their souls to a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:19). As such, God’s own faithfulness revealed in the midst of his redemptive agenda sets a precedent for longevity of ministry.

Albert M. Wolters writes, “Acknowledging this scriptural emphasis, theologians have sometimes spoken of salvation as “re-creation” – not to imply that God scraps his earlier creation and in Jesus Christ makes a new one, but rather to suggest that he hangs on to his fallen original creation and *salvages* it. He refuses to abandon the work of his

⁶⁶ Vaughn Roberts. *God’s Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2002), 25.

⁶⁷ William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 611.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

hands – in fact he sacrifices his own Son to save his original project.”⁶⁹ Wolters goes on to write “The practical implications of that intention are legion.”⁷⁰ Indeed, such fidelity to God’s mission in the face of real disaster is an essential quality for pastors. In multiplied ways pastors represent God to people. There could be no greater transition than the one presently being endured by creation and soon to be enjoyed by human beings. Enduring leadership in the crisis created by the fall with hope generated by God’s promise is a pastoral quality worthy of any pastor who hopes not only to rightly represent God but also stir his own people to such faithfulness in their marriages, families, vocations, school, etc. Every aspect of a pastor and Christian’s life either mirrors or rebels against that model of fortitude in a time of crisis.

God is indefatigable in his redemptive agenda. He simply will not give up or surrender his eternal intent; to gather a people to himself in a place where he himself will be among that people. The Revelation describes the culmination of God’s redemptive drama:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.” (Revelation 21:1-3)

As such, God will be satisfied with nothing less than a complete redemption of everything that has been created.

⁶⁹ Albert M. Wolters. *Creation Regained: Biblical Basis for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B.Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 70.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 71.

This pattern of creation made, fallen and restored presents a pattern for pastors to exercise fidelity to God and his mission. Creation has fallen but will be revitalized. God is committed to that task. Pastors must also appreciate the creation, fall, redemption scheme in their own ministries. Of course, pastors must first endure their own fallen natures and then engage that reality in their congregants. But it is all part of any Christian's participation in God's redemptive agenda through the local church. No one, pastor or member, is exempt from the difficulty of living east of Eden. But God's eternal nature, his work throughout creation, the covenants he makes and keeps and Jesus' sacrificial character all point to the enduring style of ministry pastors are called to emulate. This is the kind of pastoral commitment the apostle Paul required of his young protégé, Titus when he reminded the young pastor why he left him in Crete. It is also the same obligation he assigned to Timothy when he wrote for him to "remain at Ephesus" (Ephesians 1:3).

The Old Testament Basis for Pastoral Longevity

In the Old Testament, fathers served as the first and primary models for shepherding God's flock. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were paragons of ministry longevity to their families and tribes. Pharaoh first sent for Joseph when the latter was 30 years old. He lived until the age of 110. In the interim, Joseph led both his own family, Egypt and a numerically growing Israel. Perhaps the most famous example of pastoral/shepherding longevity in the Old Testament is Moses who led Israel for 40 years. Thereafter Joshua led the nation for 28 years. Roland Harrison estimates the length of

service for a judge in Israel to be anywhere between 27.1 and 34.2 years.⁷¹ Once the monarchy was established, Israel's first three kings led the unified nation with an average of 40 years. Once the nation of Israel divided, that longevity of the respective kings of Israel and Judah was still longer than the average American pastorate. Kings in the North held onto the throne for an average of 10.4 years while Southern Kings possessed tenures averaging 18.1 years.⁷² While that time frame is short compared to other monarchs in history, it is certainly beyond the average tenure of a 21st century pastor.

It is impossible to gain a realistic picture of pastoral longevity from the ministry of the prophets whose lives and ministries were dependent on the whims of kings and the nation they served. Prophets were applauded one day and persecuted the next. Some benefited from the kindness of kings while others endured a torturous, unmerciful existence. Daniel enjoyed a long and influential ministry through the reigns of foreign but benevolent monarchs like Nebuchadnezzar (Babylonian), Darius (Mede) and Cyrus (Persian) who treated him kindly, appreciated his ministry and honored him accordingly. Jeremiah was persecuted by Pashur the temple priest, opposed by the prophet Hananiah, plotted against in an assassination attempt by the people of Anathoth, beaten, placed in stocks and imprisoned in a cistern by Zedekiah the king.

Some prophets were called by God to certain ministries, for specific time frames or precise ministry objectives after which they returned to their original lifestyles. Other prophets were called to serve God for the whole of their lives (John the Baptist). The

⁷¹ Roland Harrison. *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 178-179.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 735-736.

prophets evidence faithfulness to God's calling but can't be used as a template for ministry longevity because of the nature of God's calling or the circumstance of their ministries. "Because scholars don't agree on the prophets' lengths of service, there's no way to accurately figure the average length of their ministries On the other hand, the priests reflected a more stable ministry."⁷³

Priests began serving at the age of 30 and could remain active until 50 years old (Numbers 4:3). 1 Chronicles 23:24 lowered the entry age to 20. It has been estimated the average length of ministry for an Old Testament priest was 40 years.⁷⁴ Some served lengthy ministries while others did not serve for long at all. For example, Johanan, the son of Joiada served for 39 years from c. 410-371 but Jason, the son of Simon ministered for only three years (175-172 BC). In the Hasmonean dynasty, John Hyrcanus I, the son of Simeon Tassi served for 30 years (134-104 BC), but the last of the Hasmonean priests, Aristobulus III, was the priest for only one year (36 BC). The High Priest's position under the Herodians and Romans was not to be coveted at all. The turbulence caused by the relationship of the Jews and Romans resulted in frequent turn-over in that position. In fact, the majority of the 30 priests who held that position from 37 BC to 67 AD served for less than two years.

⁷³ Brown, *Restoring the Vow of Stability*, 94.

⁷⁴ Roland DeVaus. *Ancient Israel-Religious Institutions, Vol. II* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1965), 375.

The New Testament Basis for Pastoral Longevity

The concept of pastoral longevity is not of primary relevance in the record of the New Testament. For instance, there is no actual record of how long Timothy served in Ephesus or Titus on Crete. No criterion of success in ministry was set for time of service in the New Testament but the model and exhortations associated with pastoring a local church in the New Testament do not infer short pastorates. In fact, pastoral longevity can be derived from both the principles of Christian endurance in the New Testament as well as a theology of church leadership inferred and developed from New Testament narrative and didache. It was evident that what needed to be accomplished across the horizon of newly born Christianity could not be accomplished in diminutive periods of time or with short bursts of effort. In fact there are principles, models and historic precedents that enhance our understanding of what was intended and expected of men who served the local church.

The twelve apostles (Matthias included in this number) served the church in Jerusalem as elders of that particular congregation. In Acts 8 the Scripture records that after the death of Stephen (Acts 7), “there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem” (v 1). The persecution was of such impact that it dislodged a large number of people from their homes, community, vocation and family. The Bible records the diaspora as “they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria” (v. 1). Yet Scripture specifically states that the persecution did not dislocate the apostles from their leadership positions in the church at Jerusalem. Noting their steadfastness Luke records the exclusion of the apostles from that displacement as

“except the apostles” (v. 1). The apostles remained in Jerusalem, no doubt providing stability not only to the church in that city but to Christendom wherever it had extended to that time. Jamieson, Faucet and Brown define the apostles decision as essential to “to watch over the infant cause where it was most needful to cherish it.”⁷⁵

The decision for pastoral longevity in the church at Jerusalem as exercised by the apostles was deemed essential to the welfare of that congregation. It was better for the apostles to remain as bulwarks of stability, models of faithfulness and counselors to those suffering than for them to leave Jerusalem even if it meant leaving with and overseeing those believers who were seeking refuge in other cities. Simply put, the apostles deemed pastoral longevity as the better option between potential martyrdom and departure.

Even so,

The New Testament has no well-known models of pastoral longevity. This is because of the timing and dates for the books of the New Testament do not allow enough time for pastoral longevity patterns to develop...Most of the churches weren't in existence long enough to have any long-term leaders. The office of pastor wasn't as firmly established or as readily recognized in the first century as it would be by the middle of the church's second century. References to longevity in the letters to these churches are found in general instructions to church leaders, not in personal examples.⁷⁶

Simply put, even though the principles of pastoral steadfastness are presented in Acts and the Epistles, the New Testament after the Gospels simply does not cover a sufficient amount of time, approximately A.D. 29 to A.D. 96 at the latest, to verify any actual model. Nor was it any New Testament author's intention to do so.

Nonetheless, it was the apostle Paul's expectation that Titus, whom he had assigned to pastor the Christian congregation on the Greek island of Crete during the first

⁷⁵ <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/jamieson-fausset-brown/acts/acts-8.html> (accessed April 11, 2012).

⁷⁶ Brown, *Restoring the Vow of Stability*, 96.

century of the common era, would remain there as long as was necessary to exemplify fidelity to the task to which he was apportioned. Paul's pastoral correspondence to Titus indicates that whatever conflict or transitions, the aging apostle expected Titus to remain as pastor of that particular congregation. In fact, the entirety of the New Testament leaves little room for the concept of anything other than pastoral tenure.

Paul's greetings to his young protégé were minimal yet theologically rich. He certainly used the opportunity to invoke his apostolic authority (1:1) on what Titus was about to read. An intentionally short five verses later he wrote "This is why I left you in Crete" (Titus 1:5). There was no mistaking Paul's purpose for the correspondence. He sent Titus to Crete to model godly ministry (1:1-4), establish godly leadership (1:5-16) and develop godly congregants (2:1-15). To counter Crete's influence on the church Paul detailed what should be taught to the older men. More, he expected Titus to remain on the island until the job was finished. All of this was set in the context of what Paul and Titus both knew was true about Crete. The rock that made up the island was only a physical metaphor and visible reminder of the spiritual state of the people who lived there.

Titus faced difficulty in and outside of the church. The epistle makes it self-evident that he "was clearly in charge of a very young church in a very unpromising situation."⁷⁷ Cretan nationals were naturally "insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers" (1:10). The islanders were notoriously proud of a self-diagnosis as "liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons" (1:12). Those labels were no exaggeration. Paul adds an inspired, apostolic

⁷⁷ Carson, D.A. & Douglas J. Moo. *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 583.

affirmation of “This testimony is true” (1:13) to end his acknowledgement of spiritual conditions on Crete. Inside the church unbelievers masqueraded as Christians but were “detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work” (1:16). Judaizers were “upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach” (1:11). This “circumcision group (1:10) taught “Jewish myths” (Titus 1:14), perhaps a reference to Gnosticism. They also kept the church in knots and division through “arguments and quarrels about the law” (Titus 3:9).

Paul’s charge however, did not consider the strength or variety of opposition to the gospel as important considerations. Titus was to remain on Crete regardless of the difficulty. Ultimately, the church’s transformation did not depend on Paul or Titus. He reminded his young apprentice that “the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people” (2:11). He ended the letter with the hopeful words “Grace be with you all” (3:15). God’s salvation by grace was Titus’ most powerful ally. This grace would enable the new converts to “renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age” (2:12). Such a succinct reminder of the power of the gospel must have been an incredible encouragement to the freshman pastor.

It certainly contradicts Gerald Gillaspie’s advice to pastors. Gillaspie writes:

As a matter of policy, it is almost always unwise for the minister to fight a request for his resignation, even when it is not formally requested or there seems to be some subversion at work. Even when he is supported by a considerable group of his parishioners and he wins the fight, it will be at the cost of dismembering the church and leaving wounds very difficult or impossible to heal. His ministry will certainly be marred, if not crippled, and he himself may become embittered. Furthermore, the problem which caused the disruption may raise itself again. The general rule in this situation is that when a minister finds that a substantial or determined minority is against him, it is far better for him to endure what he may feel a gross injustice and find another place of service than to mar the image of the church in the eyes of Christendom by fighting for his rights. A few men advocate resigning immediately in the face of trouble. They feel that to resign promptly

in the presence of an incipient discontent enhances the minister's position and shows his own faith in his qualifications and calling.⁷⁸

Although sincerely offered, such thinking is diametrically opposed to Paul's admonition to Titus. It is contrary to the Old or New Testament model of spiritual leadership and the general nature of the "qualifications and calling" of a pastor to the extent that it cannot go without vehement opposition. Think through what Gillaspie is recommending in the light of the historical record in Scripture and the Bible's teaching on leadership endurance.

Had Moses entertained Gillaspie's advice Israel would have returned to Egypt out of an often desperate wilderness wandering in which his own siblings and vast numbers of people regularly opposed him. The wall around Jerusalem would have remained in ruins if Nehemiah had followed such counsel. David would have immediately resigned any thought of fighting Goliath when his brothers first rebuked him for his presence at the battle of Elah. Many Old Testament prophets would have quickly returned to their former vocations under Gillespie's supervision. Judas' betrayal of Christ certainly qualifies as "some subversion at work." Should the Lord have resigned his redemptive ministry in the face of such a "determined minority?" Was Christ mistaken to call Paul to a ministry "suffering" (Acts 9:16)? Would it have been appropriate for Paul to forsake his pastoral ministry to Corinth when he was rejected by its membership (2 Corinthians 10:10)? Timothy and Titus would have considered such teaching a welcome reason for retreat and relief against Paul's call to "suffer hardship" (2 Timothy 2:3) from the very church members they were called to serve.

⁷⁸ Gillaspie, *The Restless Pastor*, 30.

Yet Peter's counsel to remain steadfast for the elders who read his epistle was based on his own model of pastoral endurance (1 Peter 5:1-11). A pastor does not labor for his own rights. He suffers for the wellbeing of a congregation whom God has called him to love with the same life-giving sacrifice that Jesus displayed for the church (Acts 20:28-30). Pastoral resignation in such cases is often a resignation to sin and an incitement for such sinful behavior to continue toward the next pastor. As such, pastors who resign in the midst of such conflict become part of the ongoing problem for a people who reject the gift of God's leader.

Surely a pastor will never satisfy every member of a congregation; the Lord himself unable to do so among only twelve men. More, isn't it egotistical to think so? Perhaps the charge given to John Wesley at his ordination is more appropriate to the reality of pastoral ministry than Gillaspie's encouragement to a quick resignation upon the recognition of disapproving members. In his memoirs Wesley wrote "I have often thought of a saying of Dr. Hayward's when he examined me for Priest's Orders: 'Do you know what you are about? You are bidding defiance to all mankind. He that would live a Christian Priest, ought to know, that whether his hand be against every man or no, he must expect every man's hand should be against him.'"⁷⁹ And then Wesley made Dr. Hayward's counsel particular to his own experience and that of every pastor, when he continued "It is not strange that every man's hand, who is not a Christian, should endeavor to be against him that endeavors to be so. But is it not hard that even those who

⁷⁹ John Wesley. *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley: In Ten Volumes, Volume 1* (Philadelphia: D. & S. Neall and W.S. Stockton, 1826), 81.

are with us should be against us; that a man's enemies, in some degree, should be those of the same household of faith? Yet so it is."⁸⁰

Conversion and sanctification is an arduous task requiring omnipotence. Sinners are being converted to saints, taken from one kingdom of darkness and moved into a kingdom of light (Colossians 1:13). Satan has no love for people as though he were attempting to save them from the clutches of God. Rather he intends to damn everyone whom he can in hatred toward Christ. If he cannot damn them then he will do all he can to thwart the mission of God which is the church. The difficulty of a comprehensive salvation should not be underestimated. Paul was very transparent about the fight for Christian maturation. He did not try to deny its reality in his own life nor that of others. He also didn't attempt to hide the pain involved in such a process from the men he employed in Christ's service or the congregations for whom he cared. Pastors are wise to follow his model. On one occasion he wrote "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. (Colossians 1:28-29).

A pastor should not deny the reality of struggling with parishioners. He should not think the potential for strife and/or division to be unrealistic in his own congregation. Nor should he shirk from the responsibility to struggle along *with* his congregation as God transforms both pastor and people into the image of Christ. The struggle is great because the goal is great and the goal is certainly worth the struggle. A pastor should also recognize that any conflict is really God's work. Conflict identifies the very places a

⁸⁰ Ibid.

pastor should intercede in prayer and ministry. Pastors struggle “with all his energy” as it works in them and church members. It is because of strife between people inside the church as sinners are converted to saints while living and fallen flesh and under the influence of the world that such an acknowledgement of God’s power in grace was essential to Titus’ pastoral longevity.

Paul knew that ministry on Crete would not be a vacation. Titus would be personally rebuffed and his ministry rejected. No pastoral honeymoon was afforded or to be expected. So his initial instructions were summed up in three confrontational words. “Rebuke them sharply” (1:13) he wrote unapologetically. The rock island might have represented the soil of the Cretan heart but it should also epitomize the young pastor’s resolve to carry out his mentor’s charge. After offering a list of specific directions in chapter two Paul ended his charge to Titus. “Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you” (2:15). The challenge was undoubtedly filled with innuendo about how Paul knew the Cretans would respond to Titus’ pastorate.

Apart from the short epistle named for him, there is no supplementary record of Titus’ ministry in Crete. The only other biblical mention of Crete is Paul’s brief visit to the harbor of Fair Havens (Acts 27:8). The apostle’s charge to Titus was penned en route to Nicopolis where Paul intended to spend the winter (3:12). No additional information about Titus or his ministry on Crete is available; sovereignly hidden for God’s purposes. For this reason, there is no biblical or extra-biblical evidence whatsoever of Titus’ success or failure. This however is actually beneficial for 21st century pastors who read Paul’s pastoral epistle. Our common charge is fidelity to God as the gauge of our success. Knowing the outcome of Titus’ ministry might encourage or discourage our own pastoral

efforts and to the contrary of what we might think. Titus' success could discourage the pastor who is struggling to repeat such Herculean efforts. Titus' failure might be looked upon as an excuse for hardship in modern ministry. We do not know the outcome of Titus' pastoral efforts but the charge to remain faithful in ministry is undeniably clear.

The same God who was "able to keep [Titus] from stumbling [is able to] present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy" (Jude 1:24). It is to that intent this paper is written; so that pastors and congregations might joyfully respond in combined sentiment, "to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen" (Jude 1:25).

The Historic Basis for Pastoral Longevity

In an article intended to support the concept of pastoral longevity, Thomas F. Fisher laments the models available to modern pastors. He writes, "The momentum for short-term pastorates appears to perpetuate itself. As other pastors consider their present situations, they turn to their peers. Many peers, however, give counsel or encouragement which urges others to avoid long-term ministry. Without large numbers of pastors able to share the experience of the long-term pastorate, there is little if any encouragement for long-term ministry."⁸¹

⁸¹ Thomas F. Fischer. *Steps Toward Recovering the Long Term Pastorate*. http://www.ministryhealth.net/mh_articles/264_long_term_pastorate.html (accessed September 21, 2012).

Historians write that that by the sixth century the church was filled with a mobile clergy; monks on the move. These brown-robed clergy were spiritual individualists on a search for the best in holy living, which gave them a tendency toward wanderlust. It was not unusual for a monk to jump from monastery to monastery, looking for a greater challenge or a more austere holiness. When once place of ministry proved less than ideal, he just went to another-one with a “holier” Abbott or “more righteous” companions. He thought if he could find the right community, he could have a more effective ministry and a deeper spiritual life. It was St. Benedict who identified and attempted to stop the ministerial restlessness of his day. He added a fourth vow – a vow of stability to the standard vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. He then called upon the monks to “stay where you are.”⁸²

History reveals the influence of Benedict’s encouragement. David F. Wells, the Distinguished Senior Research Professor at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary writes that “The most remarkable thing about pastoral life in the eighteenth century was the extent to which pastors and their communities were bonded together.”⁸³ Prior to the 19th century, pastors in the United States “commonly settled for life” in what Gillaspie coined “life tenure,” a reality Gillaspie thinks may have contributed to the “short pastorate” in the American church.⁸⁴ “The tradition of the short pastorate developed early in the history of the American church. This may have been a reaction to the early

⁸² Brown, *Restoring the Vow of Stability*, 1.

⁸³ David F. Wells. *No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), 228.

⁸⁴ Gillaspie, *The Restless Pastor*, 13.

days of New England, where the minister was commonly settled for life. Legally, he had a life tenure with dismissal possible only on the basis of unorthodox doctrine, neglect of duty, or immoral or criminal conduct.”⁸⁵ But from that century onward and even into the present day, American pastorates have demonstrably declined in the years of service between a pastor and a single congregation.

In the 1700s, Jonathan Edwards’ 23-year ministry at Northampton, Connecticut reflected the average tenure of a Presbyterian or Congregationalist minister of 20 years. By 1810, however, that average had declined to fifteen years. Only twenty years later, the same denominations reported average pastorates of five years, and in 1860 pastors could expect to remain with the same congregation for only four years.⁸⁶ Brown discovered in his research that “the average length of a pastor’s stay was at its lowest in the 1920s (2.3-2.6 years and highest in the 1960’s (5.2-5.4 years).⁸⁷ Wells appropriately laments, “The terms of the contract had been reduced from life to five years at the most and sometimes to as little as one year, and from this time forward partings between churches and their pastors became commonplace and almost expected.”⁸⁸

Brown writes that short-term pastorates appear to be the normal length of ministry for the American church. He notes that “The American Lutheran Church anticipates a 20 percent turnover of its clergy annually . . . their pastors moved on the average once every four years. The Disciples of Christ denomination cites the average tenure of its

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Daniel H. Calhoun. *Professional Lives in America: Structure and Aspiration, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 116-157.

⁸⁷ Brown, *Restoring the Vow of Stability*, 29.

⁸⁸ Wells, *No Place for Truth*, 230.

pastors as being four years. In the Evangelical Free Church of America, it is 4.74 years; in the Baptist General Conference, it is 4.56 years; and in the Lutheran Church/Missouri Synod, the average length of stay for a pastor is between 3.3 years and 3.6 years. Statistics from my own denomination (The Christian Missionary and Alliance) reveal an average tenure of 4.5 years.⁸⁹ He then goes on to cite others whose research reveals the average American pastorate is at twenty-eight months with Southern Baptist pastors moving every 18-24 months.⁹⁰

Disregarding Benedict's advice, the average modern pastor remains with a single congregation for a fraction of the time his predecessors invested in local church ministry. Based on statistics from the late 20th century, the Alban Institute discovered "Clergy and lay professional leaders in a congregation tend to burn out after four to seven years."⁹¹ Contrarily, pastors from the earliest centuries of Christianity remained with particular congregations for such lengthy periods of time that the men became identified with the cities in which they ministered. One only has to mention such names as Clement (fl. 96) of Rome, Ignatius (ca. 35 or 50-between 98 and 117) of Antioch, Polycarp (69-155) of Smyrna, Papias (fl. 1st 3rd of 2nd century) of Hierapolis, Justin (100-165) of Neapolis, Tertullian (c. 160 – c. 225) of Carthage, Irenaeus (2nd century AD – c. 202) of Lyons and John (c. 347-407) of Antioch and Augustine (354-430).

⁸⁹ Brown, *Restoring the Vow of Stability*, 28.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁹¹ A. Richard Bullock and Richard J. Bruesehoff. *Clergy Renewal: The Alban Guide to Sabbatical Planning* (Bethesda: The Alban Institute, 2000), 6.

The modern era does not lack such notaries equally associated with churches or cities. In the United States, A.W. Tozer's (1897-1963) ministry at the Southside Alliance Church in Chicago, Illinois spanned four decades from 1928 to 1959. W.A. Criswell (1909-2002) served as pastor of First Baptist Dallas from 1944 until 1995 (51 years). His predecessor, George W. Truett (1867-1944) pastored the same congregation for 47 years. Adrian Rogers (1931-2005) pastored Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis from 1972 to 2005. Albert N. Martin (b. 1934) retired in 2008 as the pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Montville, N.J. after a forty-one year ministry. At the time of this writing, John MacArthur (b. 1939) has been pastoring Grace Community Church since 1969, Rick Warren (b. 1954) began leading his only pastorate, Saddleback Church, in 1980 and John Piper (b. 1946) who assumed the pastorate of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1980 has recently announced his retirement for 2014 (34 years).

In the United Kingdom, John Stott (1921-2011), "an architect of 20th-century evangelicalism"⁹² began his ministry at his boyhood church, All Souls Church in London, first as curate (1945) the same year he was ordained to the gospel ministry and then as rector (1950-75) but continued to preach there until September of 2007. Derek Prime pastored Edinburgh's Charlotte Chapel from 1969 to 1987. In Aberdeen, Willie Still led the Gilcomston South Church from 1945-1997. Author and pastor Brian Edwards led the Hook Evangelical Church for 30 years and Dick Lucas pastored St. Helens Bishopgate from 1961 to 1998. Ken Brownell, an American from Boston, has just completed 26

⁹² <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/julyweb-only/john-stott-obit.html> (accessed April 7, 2012).

years at East London Tabernacle Baptist Church and Jonathan Fletcher continues to lead Emmanuel Wimbledon since 1982 (forty plus years).

In between the Reformation and the 21st century, God's kingdom has been blessed with men pressed to serve God in single locations for such extended periods of time that both they and their congregations or cities made each other famous. Martin Luther (1483-1546) shared the pulpit at the Castle Church in Wittenberg with his friend John Bugenhagen from 1512 until his death (34 years). Huldrych Zwingli likewise (1484-1531) pastored Grossmünster in Zurich from 1518 until his death (13 years). John Calvin (1509-1564) pastored in Geneva from 1536 until his death albeit with a three-year hiatus in Strasbourg (1538-1541). Richard Sibbes (1577-1635) preached at London's Gray's Inn from 1617 until 1635 (18 years). Benjamin Beddome (1717-1795) pastored at Bourton on the Water for 56 years and resisted continual invitations to move.

Charles Simeon (1759-1836) was appointed rector of Holy Trinity Church in Cambridge and served in that position despite much personal hardship for 54 years (1782-1836). John Newton pastored in Olney, England for fifteen years during which both he and Olney were accorded fame on both sides of the Atlantic. Alexander Maclaren (1826-1910) ministered at Union Chapel, Manchester from 1858-1903 (45 years). Solomon Stoddard (1643-1729) pastored the Congregational Church at Northampton, Massachusetts, from 1670 until his death; such a length of time he was accorded the title "Pope of the Connecticut River Valley." Stoddard was succeeded by his associate and grandson, Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) who pastored the same congregation for 23 years until he was fired on June 22, 1750. Stoddard's and Edwards' were in fact the norm for American pastors of that era. "Of the 550 Yale College

students who graduated between 1702 and 1794, 71 percent were ordained into ministry for a particular local church and stayed in that location for life.”⁹³

Perhaps the most famous succession of tenured pastors in all of Christendom is that select group of men who pastored an individual congregation from the 17th century into the 19th century. This particular congregation began meeting circa 1650 in Widow Colfe’s house in Kennington and thereafter in an alley-way house on Jacob Street in London, England. William Rider first pastored the congregation from c1653 to c1665 (12 years). He was followed by Benjamin Keach (1640-1704), the famed architect of the 1689 London Baptist Confession. Keach built the church’s first chapel in Goat’s Yard Passage, Fair Street at Horseleydown and pastored the congregation for 36 years (1668-1704).⁹⁴ It was during Keach’s ministry that the Act of Toleration allowed for Baptists in England to worship freely and openly.

Benjamin Stinton next pastored the congregation for 14 years from 1704-1718. John Gill (1607-1771) assumed the pastorate in 1720. Gill was a supporter of George Whitefield’s ministry during the 1739 Awakening. He built and moved the congregation to Carter Lane Chapel on Saint Olave’s Street in 1757. Gill pastored the congregation for 51 years (1720-1771). Gill’s half-century of ministry with that single church was immediately exceeded by John Rippon (1751-1836) who pastored the same congregation for 63 years (1773-1836). When the new London Bridge approaches required the razing of the Carter Lane Chapel, Rippon erected the 1,200 seat New Park Street Chapel

⁹³ Elmer Towns and Douglas Porter. *The Ten Greatest Revivals Ever: From Pentecost to the Present* (Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 2000), 55

⁹⁴ Horse-lie-down is now Horsleydown Lane by the Tower Bridge on the Southside of London.

location, just south of Southwark Bridge. At his death, Joseph Angus assumed the pastorate for 2 years (1837-1839), James Smith for 8 ½ years (1841-1850) and William Walters from 1851-1853.

In 1854, 20-year old Charles Spurgeon assumed the pastorate of the New Park Street Chapel. In 1861 Spurgeon opened the famed Metropolitan Tabernacle in where attendance at the Tabernacle regularly exceeded 5,000 adults in addition to a Sunday school of 2,500 children. The man known as the Prince of preachers pastored the church he made globally famous until his death in 1892 (38 years). Spurgeon was followed by his son, Thomas, who pastored the congregation for 15 years. Thereafter, the Tabernacle endured a succession of short-termed pastors with the single exception of Harry Tydeman Chilvers who pastored the congregation for 15 ½ years (1919-1935). This included the famed American Amzi Clarence (AC) Dixon, the former pastor of Moody Church in Chicago, who led the congregation through World War I (1911-1919) as well as the famous English pastor W. Graham Scroggie (1938-1943) who was personally bombed out of the Tabernacle three times and once temporarily buried in the rubble of Hitler's blitzkrieg. However the present pastor, Peter Masters has led the congregation since 1970.⁹⁵

Previous to this author's present 22-year pastoral ministry at Heritage Baptist, the former pastor, Chester Phillips, set the stage for pastoral tenure with a ministry of fifteen years. Dr. Phillips's demeanor was of equal importance through his transition from the pastorate and this author's entrance into that same congregational ministry. For several

⁹⁵ The preceding information concerning the Metropolitan Tabernacle and its pastors was gleaned from a Tabernacle pamphlet entitled "Pastors at the Tabernacle" printed in *The Sword & Trowel*, 2003: Issue 2.

years until health concerns rendered him unable to perform ministry, Dr. Phillips maintained the position of Pastor Emeritus at Heritage. He continued to call on the elderly and visited the hospitals but always did so as a representative of the present pastor. His attitude, conduct, and conversations set the stage for the next pastor's success. Enough cannot be said of Dr. Phillips' character, demeanor, and ministry throughout the transition period and afterward.

There is every theological, biblical and historical precedent for pastoral longevity. Endurance is a characteristic of God himself and should be reflected by those men who have been called to represent him. As reflected in the fall, creation's turmoil, the depraved nature of humanity, the inner conflict within a pastor's own being, there is no question that ministry in the present time between Eden and the new creation is difficult to say the least. But crisis is consistent with the call. Transitions are what ministry is all about as sinners are transformed into the image of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). The individual is called from "darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9) and entire congregations are called to "put off the old self" (Colossians 3:9) in the regeneration and sanctification of people into Christ likeness. As witnessed by the necessity and sacrifice of the cross, nothing could be more demanding or costly, require the supernatural and yet be of more value. And the eternal value is inherently commensurate with the degree of difficulty endured the pastor who is himself simultaneously the object and purveyor of God's grace.

The Theoretical and Practical Basis for Pastoral Longevity

The Practical Benefits

It could be argued that short-term pastorates possess distinct benefits foreign to the concept of pastoral longevity. There certainly is a place and purpose for the short-term pastorate. Intentional interim pastorates are created short-term and are extremely beneficial to the church and its next pastor. Everything about the interim's opportunity sets the stage for a successful transition to a called pastor. This agenda may include giving the church time to redefine its unique mission as well as search for a pastor appropriate to that vision, afford emotional separation to occur between the former pastor and the congregation as well as healing any scars and enable the congregation to think proactively toward a new pastor and not reactively (for good or bad) toward the former pastor. The effective interim pastor basically provides the congregation with the time necessary to reflect, heal and direct itself toward the future.

Church planters also comprise an intentionally designed short term group of pastorates. Charles Wallace Malone Jr. was born on September 27, 1926, in Laurel, Mississippi, and lived there until he moved to Granite City, Illinois, in search for work. His spiritual life was greatly influenced by the revival ministry of his uncle and aunt who were Assembly of God ministers (as was his grandmother and another uncle). In Granite City, he and his wife, Ruthie, joined Tri-City Park Assembly of God where Malone was called of God into ministry in December of 1953.

Specifically called to home missions, the Malones planted their first church in the nearby town of Mitchell with the blessing and support of their home congregation. Mrs.

Malone remembers that the couple's first church met in a converted tavern. Stories abound of God's graciousness as the couple endured many unusual circumstances in their church planting ministry. Throughout his career Malone, his wife and two children planted twelve churches for the Assembly of God denomination. Undaunted by severe arthritis requiring two knee and hip replacements Malone refused to retire until a hospitalization forced the issue.

Every church Malone planted prospered under his ministry. As a result he was often tempted to remain with a church start. His call to church planting however ensured that he remained with a congregation only long enough for the church body to call and support a full-time pastor. It also meant that he endured the sacrifice of a family move approximately every three to five years.

God is greatly glorified in dispensing gifted men to the church as fits his divine agenda. Moreover, the global church of Christ is blessed by men who are called to intentionally invest their lives for a short-term. God certainly gifts certain men with the skill and personal attributes for that ministry. But such a ministry is specific to a cause and certainly not the norm for the church overall. God's own character and the display of faithfulness to his creation, Israel and the church evidence long-term stability. In addition, his challenges to Christian endurance as well as the specific charges in the Pastoral Epistles display an enduring character. Once healthy enough to call and support a pastor the church is blessed by the long tenure of a pastor who models and preaches such endurance.

Because this paper endorses the idea of pastoral longevity, however, it will concern itself with only that model and the benefits of such a template. With that in mind,

Jacob Eppinga writes, “I am not saying it is wrong to move. I believe the Lord has all kinds of ministers- some starters, some relievers, some sprinters, some milers. So the right length for one is not necessarily the right length for another. But all of us have to meet the challenge where we are, instead of leaving it unresolved.”⁹⁶ To a very great degree, pastoral infidelity to the local church has created a situation in which the vast multitude of pastors inherit congregations that expect limits on pastoral tenure, are prepared to ‘sit-out’ a pastor’s ministry and even unconsciously or conspicuously work against pastoral longevity. No pastor is immune from such congregants.

Yet the benefits of longevity are both personal for the pastor, his family and individual members while also corporate for the church, the community and God’s kingdom. Peterson writes:

Plenty of times sin or neurosis or change make it so difficult for a pastor and congregation to stay together that it is necessary that the pastor move to another congregation. The pastor who in such circumstances stays out of a stubborn willfulness that is falsely labeled committed faithfulness cruelly inflicts needless wounds on the body of Christ. But the norm for pastoral work is stability. Twenty- and thirty- and forty-year-long pastorates should be typical among us (as they once were) and not exceptional. Far too many pastors change parishes out of adolescent boredom, not as a consequence of mature wisdom. When this happens, neither pastors nor congregations have access to the conditions that are hospitable to maturing in the faith.⁹⁷

Pastoral longevity is essential to the health and growth of congregations. Richard Brown gleaned several benefits to both the pastor and congregation from his New Testament research. Among these were:

1. "The longer a person knows the people among whom he ministers, the greater the potential for ministry (Romans 1:12; 2 John 5).

⁹⁶ Jacob Eppinga. “Shepherds Who Have Stayed,” *Leadership*, Fall 1983, 138.

⁹⁷ Eugene Peterson. “The Jonah Syndrome,” *Leadership Journal*
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/1990/summer/9013038.html?start=8> (accessed May 9, 2012).

2. A longer association between people and leader is a more meaningful setting for the application of the instructions about their relationship (Romans 12:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 3:7; 5:17, 22; Titus 1:5; James 3:1).

3. Principles about ministry gleaned from the ministry of Christ as our High Priest are enhanced in a longer term ministry (Hebrews 5:2; 6:1).

4. Many of the leaders of local churches in the early church were chosen from among their own people, who must have known these leaders for some time in order to accept them as leaders. Their longer relationship made their leadership more acceptable (2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 1:3; 1 John 2:19; 2 John 10).

5. One of the benefits of a longer association with people is the opportunity to make comments about relationships with a greater degree of credibility (2 John 12:3; John 13).

6. And finally, there is a place, on occasion, for shorter ministries! (3 John 8).⁹⁸ To that end, the church should be grateful to know that “Increasingly, churches that want to grow are shunning the revolving door approach and are seeking to develop long-lasting ministry partnerships.”⁹⁹ It is a trend with biblical foundations to be blessed of God.

However, Brown is not unrealistic in his assessment of the possibility and blessing of a long-term pastorate. He defines the obstacles to such longevity as:

1. A lack of awareness of the possibility, the requirements, the pitfalls, the benefits, cost,
2. A lack of personal growth.

⁹⁸ Brown, *Restoring the Vow of Stability*, 120.

⁹⁹ Gary Thomas. “Pastors for the Long Haul,” *Ministries Today*, September/October, 1996, 35.

3. Lack of self-understanding. leadership style, personality type, secret desires, insecurities,
4. Mismanagement of conflict. "Conflict management is a key to longevity."
5. Inadequate pastor/parish relationship.
6. Faulty early patterns
7. Unsatisfactory pastoral transitions¹⁰⁰

Brian J. Brglez also notes the possible detriments to a long term pastorate. He writes "While pastoral longevity may have its benefits, it certainly is not without its challenges."¹⁰¹ He then lists those potential disadvantages as

1. A Limitation of Ministry Depth – a ministry "characterized by a repetition of ideas, a narrowing of focus, a loss of vision, stagnation or just plain boredom."
2. A Problem of Over-Familiarization – A pastor is more concerned about his tenure or intimate relationships in the church than the spiritual wellbeing of the congregation
3. The Development of a Gap – The congregation is unwilling to share their concerns for change because of the value they place on the minister personally or their corporate relationship to him

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 128-162.

¹⁰¹ Brian J. Brglez. "An Examination of the Merits of a Long-Term Pastoral Position" (Unpublished DMin Thesis, Providence Theological Seminary, 1999), 20.

4. The Danger of Stagnation – A pastor can “lose joy, freshness or flexibility” defined by “sameness, tameness and lameness.”
5. The Danger of Pastoral Burnout – Causes include low pay, overwork, unfulfilled goals, crammed calendars, lack of intimacy.
6. The Danger of a Downward Spiral – Unhappiness on the part of the pastor or congregation creates a lack of communication that leads to mistrust. The troubled relationships affect the entire congregation which creates a negative attitude for both pastor and parishioner.
7. The Danger of a Deadlock – Unresolved conflict distance the pastor from the congregation but neither the pastor or parishioner is willing to move.
8. Reduced Benefits for the Pastor and his Family – A pastor’s annual financial increases may diminish over time while age diminishes other opportunities.¹⁰²

Leadership is synonymous with conflict. Potential danger lurks within every pastorate regardless of its tenure or lack thereof. Although the 1979 Alban Institute study on pastoral longevity began with the assumption that “the disadvantages of long pastorates outweighed, if they did not eclipse the advantages”¹⁰³ the group’s research led them to conclude that “While all the disadvantages of a long pastorate can be managed with skill and training, few of the enormous advantages of a long pastorate are available

¹⁰² Brian J. Brglez. “An Examination of the Merits of a Long-Term Pastoral Position” (Unpublished DMin Thesis, Providence Theological Seminary, 1999), 20-27.

¹⁰³ Oswald, *New Visions*, 27.

to shorter ministries.”¹⁰⁴ It further determined that “Virtually all the disadvantages of a long-tenured pastorate can be surmounted, yet few of the advantages are available to clergy who remain in a congregation for only a short period of time”¹⁰⁵ In effect the Alban Institute’s study “reversed the negative assumptions that were held by researchers and verified possibility of healthy, growing long-tenured pastorates for both clergy and congregations.”¹⁰⁶ What were those benefits?

1. A long-tenured pastorate makes possible greater in-depth knowledge of and relationships between the pastor and individual church members as well as between clergy and the congregation as a whole;
2. Experiencing a long-tenured pastorate makes possible cumulative developing knowledge and experience of each other for both clergy and congregation; as they observe and participate in each other’s growth over time;
3. Greater continuity and stability of leadership and program in a long-tenured pastorate makes possible events not possible during a short tenure;
4. A long tenured pastorate opens up possibilities of greater personal and spiritual growth for both clergy and the congregation;

¹⁰⁴ Oswald, *New Visions*, 7.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁰⁶ Ludwig, *In it for the Long Haul*, 15-16.

5. A long-tenured pastorate makes possible deeper knowledge of and participation by the clergy in the community (local, professional, ecumenical, larger denomination); and

6. A long-tenured pastorate allows additional personal benefits for both the clergy and his/her family.¹⁰⁷

Both evidence and anecdote point to the same conclusion. The benefits of a long-term pastorate greatly outweigh its negative possibilities and is certainly more advantageous than the shorter pastorate to God's kingdom expansion. The reality is that if a pastor asks himself the question "Is it time to move" within the first three or four years of his ministry, "it is probably not time to move."¹⁰⁸ A pastor and his church are both bettered for living together longer than the proverbial honeymoon. It is in the sanctifying process of marriage between the pastor and people that God's graces are needed, made available and grow God's people into citizens worthy of the calling and ultimate destination. The idealism and excitement of honeymooning must give way to the reality of fallen people navigating a fallen world in which everyone confesses to their equally depraved fallen nature and mutual dependency for God's will to be done in all of their lives.

If pastors and congregants are to exemplify Christian doctrine, the individualism of American idealism must surrender to the corporate nature of the body of Christ. None of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) can be demonstrated in isolation. Nor can the gifts of the Spirit be appreciated to their fullest value while one member says to another

¹⁰⁷ Oswald, *New Visions*, 29-30.

¹⁰⁸ Schaller, *Survival Tactics in the Parish*, 29.

“I have no need of you” (1 Corinthians 12:21). In the end, the nomenclature of short or long-term pastorates is simply a symptom of hardened hearts. It may be that whole scale repentance will be required of the majority of the body of Christ for the dilemma of short-term pastorates to be reversed.

Yet “if a minister wants to be an effective pastor in a parish setting, he or she must able to survive the trials and tribulations of a pastorate long enough to build the relationships with people that constitute any essential part of the foundation for reinforcing and expanding the total ministry and outreach of that congregation.”¹⁰⁹ With regard to same sort of meaningful ministry influence Rick Warren writes “Long pastorates make deep, trusting, and caring relationships possible. Without those kinds of relationships, a pastor won’t accomplish much of lasting value.”¹¹⁰

Trust is an essential part and natural outgrowth of relationship building. Trust doesn’t occur overnight. Church members respond with trust the longer a pastor cares for his people. It not only enables a pastor to minister effectively, it also protects his testimony and ministry. The deeper a pastor’s roots in the church the more wind it takes to topple who he is before the people. Trust can be compared to interest on a bank investment but like the return on any venture, the return is commensurate with the tenure of the investment. “Trust is neither quickly learned nor thoughtlessly given; it requires some serious ‘living together’ in the ministry of the church. Trust is rarely established in

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 11.

¹¹⁰ Rick Warren. “Pastoral ‘Free Agency’ Hurts Churches,” in *Ministry Toolbox* (Lake Forest: Ministry Toolbox, 2010).

any meaningful depth when folks believe their pastor will be “here today and gone tomorrow.”¹¹¹

Yet “[t]he typical pastor comes to the church without the determination to stay there long enough to make it a great church.”¹¹² Brown writes of many disadvantages to everyone involved in the shorter pastorate. His list includes such handicaps as

1. The church much adjust to constantly changing leadership.
2. The church's ministry to the community suffers.
3. The continuity of ministry is affected
4. There is a lack of church growth
5. The self-image of the church suffers
6. The pastor and his family suffer
7. There is a lack of in-depth personal relationships
8. There is a lack of personal growth¹¹³

A pastor’s personal life is also enhanced by pastoral longevity. Many pastors remain in congregations for a only a sufficient amount of time necessary to run the gamut of an unchallenged ministry that does not grow beyond a few years’ worth of sermons or ministry ideas. Pastors also stay only long enough for entrenched character issues to resurface in another pastorate. “There are many [short-term pastors] who keep running from themselves and their problems, and they should really come to terms.”¹¹⁴ The

¹¹¹ Ludwig, *In It for the Long Haul*, viii.

¹¹² Robert Schuller. *Your Church Has Real Possibilities* (Glendale: Regal, 1974), 73.

¹¹³ Brown, *Restoring the Vow of Stability*, 47-53.

¹¹⁴ Eppinga, “Shepherds Who Have Stayed,” *Leadership*, 142.

congregation is the pastor's place of ministry: we preach the Word and administer the sacraments, we give pastoral care and administer the community life, we teach and we give spiritual direction. But it is also the place in which we develop virtue, learn to love, advance in hope. By providing us contact with both committed and frustratingly inconstant individuals, the congregation provides the rhythms, the associations, the tasks, the limitations, the temptations-the conditions-for our own growth in Christ.¹¹⁵

Requirements of Pastoral Longevity

Knowledge, skill and passion are essential for any pastor to lead a single congregation for the long-haul. No one could do so without understanding the specific requirements that increase the potential for and enhance the actual long-term ministry. Brown lists seven such essential elements conducive to pastoral longevity. To accomplish this goal a pastor must

1. Increase awareness
2. Plan for personal growth
3. Deepen self-understanding
4. Strengthen conflict management skills
5. Improve pastor/congregation relations
6. Encourage longer early pastorates

¹¹⁵ Eugene Peterson. "The Jonah Syndrome," *Leadership Journal*
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/1990/summer/9013038.html?start=5> (accessed May 9, 2012).

7. Monitor pastoral transitions¹¹⁶

Many young pastors never consider the thought of pastoral longevity when entering the ministry or serving a first pastorate. It is just assumed that pastors will move; that the first pastorate is only a learning experience or a stepping-stone to another congregation. That assumption for young or freshmen pastors is possessed by both pastors and congregations. Most young pastors did not enjoy the fruit a pastor who served them from the cradle through college and don't have a model for such longevity. The succession of pastors and the resulting emotional turmoil wrought on children through the collegiate years who endured a lack of harmony between the pulpit and the pew concretizes the idea of short-term pastorates in the mind of a young man who is contemplating ministry.

It is easy to get into the rut of moving every so often if a pastor does not have a plan for personal growth in place. "The man who desires the effective longer pastorate must grow. He must keep pace with God. He must see and accept the challenge of the church he serves If he regards his people not merely as an audience to address but as an army to lead in effective community and world evangelism, then the longer he remains in a church, the more effective his plans and organization will become."¹¹⁷ Pastors who are not growing need to change pastorates in the effort to hide the lack of personal resources available to them and the lack of ministry resourcefulness employed by them in ministry. This author overheard one seminarian state "Once I graduate I will never read a book again." Such thinking is actually antithetical to book-driven (Bible) Christianity, to

¹¹⁶ Brown, *Restoring the Vow of Stability*, 171-185.

¹¹⁷ Gillaspie, *The Restless Pastor*, 14.

New Testament pastoring (1 Timothy 1:7; 2 Timothy 4:13) and the idea that God deserves our best and we can never be our best without continual personal and ministry growth.

One cause of pastoral turnover is undoubtedly the reality that some pastors and churches should not enter into such a relationship in the first place. Many pastors accept the call in the need of a job. Many churches call pastors who are not actually a “fit” for the church. Failure is often destined to become reality because of the lack that exists in the search, interview and call process between a pastor and a local church. Guilt in this scenario exists on the part of both pastors and churches. Churches often do not understand their corporate identity and pastors lack knowledge of their own calling, skill or passion. The mismatch and resulting disaster mirrors a young couple who marry with little real knowledge of themselves or each other.

Forced Termination

One reason for a lack of pastoral longevity that must be cited is the matter of forced termination, a concept rarely discussed as ministers enter into a life-calling. Yet “reports of being abused and forced out appear to be increasing exponentially.”¹¹⁸ Christian ministry is a high risk endeavor for pastors. Donald Hicks lists the top ten reasons for such 21 dissolution of pastor/congregational relationship as:

1. Control issues – who is going to run the church

¹¹⁸ G. Lloyd Rediger. *Clergy Killers: Guidance for Pastors and Congregations Under Attack* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 14.

2. Poor people skills on the part of the pastor
3. Church's resistance to change
4. Church was already conflicted when pastor arrived
5. Pastor's leadership style – too strong
6. Pastor's leadership style – too weak
7. Decline in attendance
8. Administrative incompetence on the part of the pastor
9. Sexual misconduct
10. Disagreement over doctrine¹¹⁹

Forced termination is a term defining the process by which a personnel committee, congregation as a whole, certain people or an individual within a congregation terminates or forces the resignation of a minister from a ministry position.¹²⁰ It could also be defined as “the severing of the formal relationship between the minister and the church either by coercion or a vote.”¹²¹

Such a scenario is not as foreign as one might initially think: “One estimate indicated that a pastor is force-terminated approximately once every six minutes in the

¹¹⁹ Donald Q. Hicks. “A Study of the Conflicts Within Churches that Lead to the Termination of Pastors Within the Southern Baptist Convention, Accompanied by a Proposal of Preventive and Interventional Solutions” (DMin Dissertation, Liberty University, Lynchburg VA, United States, May 2010), 139.

¹²⁰ Hugh F. Haverstadt. *Managing Church Conflict* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 7.

¹²¹ Norris Smith. “Forced Termination: Scope and Response,” *Search* (Nashville: The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Fall 1990), 6.

United States.”¹²² “It is estimated that 25% of Christian clergy in the United States experience at least one forced termination during their career.”¹²³ “One major denomination reported informally that early in 1996 approximately 2,500 of their pastors had been forced out of congregations already that year.”¹²⁴ G. Lloyd Rediger writes “In the Winter 1996 issue of *Leadership* magazine, the results of their national survey of Protestant clergy indicated that approximately 23 percent of pastors say they have been fired at least once, and 43 percent said a ‘faction’ (typically less than ten people) forced them out.”¹²⁵ In 2005, 1,302 Southern Baptist ministers were forcibly terminated.¹²⁶ As well, 34% of all pastors presently serve congregations that forced their previous pastor to resign.¹²⁷ And this is evidently a repetitive cycle for churches. In fact “41 percent of congregations who fired their pastor have done this to at least two previous pastors.”¹²⁸ From 1998 to 2011, 97 staff members of Tennessee Baptist Convention churches were forcibly terminated. That number included 44 bi-vocational and 40 full-time pastors and

¹²² Hicks. “A Study of the Conflicts Within Churches that Lead to the Termination of Pastors Within the Southern Baptist Convention, Accompanied by a Proposal of Preventive and Interventional Solutions,” 50.

¹²³ Crowell, Rodney J. (1995). “Forced Pastoral Exits: An Empirical Study (clergy, lay-clergy conflict, pastoral firings).” D.Min. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, United States -- Texas. Retrieved June 5, 2012, from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text. (Publication No. AAT 9531272).

¹²⁴ Rediger, *Clergy Killers*, 14.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 13.

¹²⁶ C. Turner. “Terminations: 1,300 staff dismissed in 2005.” *Facts and Trends* 53: 39-41, 2007.

¹²⁷ David and Diane Noble. *Winning the Real Battle at Church* (Kansas City: BHC Publishing, 2008), 171.

¹²⁸ Rediger, *Clergy Killers*, 13.

13 full-time staff members.¹²⁹ It is not incorrect to say that the fallen culture in which pastors minister is rife with everything necessary to destroy a pastor's dreams and murder his life.

Bill Northcott, Church-Minister Relations Specialist of the Tennessee Baptist Convention reports that between January 1 and December 31 of 2011 a total of 59 Tennessee Baptist Convention ministers were forcibly terminated. Of that number 11 were bi-vocational, 35 were full-time and 46 were Senior Pastors. Reasons for termination in the TBC study certainly vary but ranged from the pastors' leadership style as too strong (13), control issues over "who's going to run the church" (23), conflict carried over into the present pastor's tenure (8), sexual misconduct (4), ethical misconduct to include money or dishonesty (3), being at the church too long (4), disagreement over doctrine (3), administrative incompetence on the part of the pastor (5), conflict with other staff(3), decline in attendance (7), poor people skills on the part of the pastor (5) and the church's resistance to change (8). Other causes noted were "Pastor got involved in dispute between two deacon's children in deacon's meeting, conflict over home schooling and where the pastor should live and conflict with a spouse."¹³⁰

The Winter 1996 *Leadership* survey "included personality conflicts, 43 percent; conflicting visions for the church, 17 percent; financial strain in the congregation, 7 percent; theological differences, 5 percent; moral malfeasance, 5 percent; unrealistic expectations, 4 percent, other, 19 percent."¹³¹

¹²⁹ Tennessee Baptist Convention Force Terminated Ministers Report, 1998-2011.

¹³⁰ Tennessee Forced Termination Survey Results, 2011.

¹³¹ Rediger, *Clergy Killers*, 13-14.

Such dissolution of the pastor/congregation is not without negative consequences for the pastor, those associated with him and the congregation. “Anytime a minister or church staff member is forced to resign from a church, both the minister and the church suffer the loss.”¹³²

Ministry demands are intrusive to the degree that the wellbeing of a minister and his family are continually at risk. Although the majority of pastors depart willingly, too large a number of pastors suffer forced termination. At present, forced termination is an unacknowledged almost anecdotal aspect of ministry. It is an understudied aspect of Christian ministry and needs further attention from local congregations and denominational leadership. Little research has been scientifically developed and only a small amount of empirical data exists on the matter. Tanner, Wherry and Zvonkovic claim that “Christian organizations are unwilling to admit there is a problem and work with researchers to understand it.”¹³³ What is known is that a direct correlation exists between forced termination and multiple health issues for a terminated pastor and his family.

The reality is that ministry possesses demands unknown to other professions and constant anxieties that are actually “detrimental to the attitude and well-being of ministers.”¹³⁴ At least four ongoing, primary and universal stresses exist in ministry:

¹³² Brooks R. Faulkner. *Forced Termination-Redemptive Options for Ministers and Churches* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1986), 6.

¹³³ Marcus N. Tanner, Jeffrey N. Wherry and Anisa M. Zvonkovic. “Clergy Who Experience Trauma as a Result of Forced Termination.” *Journal of Religion and Health*, January 26, 2012, 1-15.

¹³⁴ J. Han and C. Lee. “Ministry demand and stress among Korean American pastors: a brief report.” *Pastoral Psychology*, 52(6), 473-478.

personal criticism, presumptive expectations, boundary ambiguity and family criticism.¹³⁵ In addition, “clergy are five times more likely than the rest of the labor force to hold two or more jobs.”¹³⁶ The repercussions of ministry stress have been noted in emotional exhaustion, chronic fatigue, diminished self-worth and even weight issues. One study has revealed that “76% of ministers are either overweight or obese, compared to 61 per cent of the general population.”¹³⁷

The causes of forced termination are as varied as personality conflicts, relational styles, a conflicting vision for the church, numeric or financial declines, poor administration or general dissatisfaction in the pew. “It doesn’t really matter what the problems are. In most cases the minister is blamed . . . so he is responsible for whatever is wrong in the church and its ministry.”¹³⁸ Such a scenario creates the platform for forced terminations which are more common than might be realized. Tanner, Zvonkovic and Adams’ research reveals that “28% of ministers among 39 denominations experienced a forced termination.”¹³⁹ R. Crowell’s research involved 386 ministers

¹³⁵ C. Lee. “Specifying intrusive demands and their outcomes in congregational ministry: A report on the Ministry Demands Inventory.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 38(4), 477-489.

¹³⁶ Marcus N. Tanner and Anisa M. Zvonkovic. Forced to Leave: Forced Termination Experiences of Assemblies of God Clergy and Its Connection to Stress and Well-Being Outcomes. *Pastoral Psychology* Volume 60: 713-726, February 16, 2011.

¹³⁷ B. Wells. *Which way to clergy health?* <http://pulpitandpew.org/which-way-clergy-health> (accessed June 6, 2012).

¹³⁸ Guy Greenfield. *The Wounded Minister: Healing from and preventing personal attacks* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 24.

¹³⁹ Tanner, Zvonkovic, Adams, *Forced Termination of American Clergy*, 1.

associated with 48 different Protestant denominations. He discovered that 25.3% of his respondents had suffered termination at least once.¹⁴⁰

Research has linked forced termination to diminished self-esteem, decreased life satisfaction, depression, increased levels of stress and a general reduction in well being.”¹⁴¹ Pastors who are terminated suffer through the cause of termination, the termination itself and continue to suffer for what may very well be the remainder of their ministerial career.

Forced termination is extremely detrimental to the overall being of clergy. The experience of forced termination significantly and negatively altered scores on depression, self-esteem, self-efficacy, burnout, and general health. That is to say, clergy who have been forcibly terminated at least once in their career are more depressed, have lower self-esteem, lower self-efficacy, more generally health problems and are more likely to burnout than those who have never been forcibly terminated from a ministry position.”¹⁴²

In addition, terminated “clergy (71%) and their family (67%) had a diminished ability to trust people. Sixty-nine percent faced long-term financial instability and had lower self-confidence. Ten percent experienced a major illness within 12 months of being forced out.”¹⁴³

To this author’s knowledge, no research has been conducted on churches that have terminated a pastor at least once, if not multiple times. Such information would be of immense value to the local churches, pastors and denominational leaders. There is no

¹⁴⁰ R. Crowell. “Forced Pastoral Exits: An Empirical Study,” Unpublished doctoral dissertation (Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas TX), 1995.

¹⁴¹ Tanner, Zvonkovic and Adams, *Forced Termination of American Clergy*, 3.

¹⁴² Ibid., 12.

¹⁴³ Marcus N. Tanner, Jeffrey N. Wherry and Anisa M. Zvonkovic. *Clergy Who Experience Trauma as a Result of Forced Termination*.

question that forced termination has far-reaching implications and ramifications for both the pastor and local church. The issue deserves more attention by everyone involved and although not the subject of this paper, deserves to be noted as one reason for the lack of pastoral longevity among Christian ministers. It must be acknowledged however that until this issue receives the further attention it most certainly deserves, the issue of pastoral longevity will not have been sufficiently considered.

Of course any separation between a pastor and congregation could be significantly diminished by appropriate hiring practices. Hiring the right person minimizes the risk of firing the wrong person. But the lack of pastoral longevity evidences that neither churches nor pastors are appropriately skilled in the hiring process. Yet there is a distinct correlation between successful hiring practices and pastoral longevity. The ability for pastors and congregations to appropriately match one another is essential to a pastor's tenure and the effectiveness of congregations in the fulfillment of congregational vision, mission and the Great Commission in general.

“Right Fit” Hiring Practices

There is no such thing as a “one size fits all” pastor. All of the Old Testament prophets were equally inspired by God but each also spoke a distinctive message to the appropriate people. Warren Wiersbe's observation has been

that many new church-pastor relationships get off to an unhealthy start simply because there was not sufficient investigation. The candidating encounter was not well planned, not thorough, and not of sufficient length. When the church does not provide for an adequate candidating encounter, the minister must request some modifications and state his reasons for such. Gracious honesty is always the best policy. The minister who hides

or camouflages information vital to the potential relationship is setting the stage for another short pastorate...Christian churches are strewn with casualties.¹⁴⁴

Brown asserts “The pastoral selection process must do more than just put a warm body in a pulpit vacancy Too many ‘blind dates’ and ‘rebound relationships’ have resulted in too-short pastorates.”¹⁴⁵ It has been said that the best way to keep from firing the wrong person is to hire the right person. In church ministry there is perhaps no more crucial moment than when a congregation interviews and hires a new pastor. To do so requires spiritual and practical criteria.

At the very least, there should be minimum acceptable objective standards what will alert either the pastor or church that one is not appropriate for the other. This does not speak ill of either but addresses respect for God’s will. God is sovereign but this does not alleviate the church or pastor from thoroughly vetting one another in an effort to discover a best fit for one another even if that will is not for the particular pastor and church to minister together.

Charles Olson cites character (a heart of godliness), competence (an ability to perform successfully) and compatibility with the local church suggested three fundamental criteria for enlisting ministers to a pastoral team.¹⁴⁶ Bill Hybels echoes Olson’s criterion for successful hiring but based on the apostle Paul’s comment

¹⁴⁴ Wiersbe in Gillaspie, *The Restless Pastor*, 12.

¹⁴⁵ Brown, *The Vow of Stability*, 165.

¹⁴⁶ Charles D. Olson. “Building and Leading a Pastoral Team” (Unpublished DMin dissertation, Talbot School of Theology, 1996).

concerning “the task the Lord Jesus has given me” (Acts 20:24) also considers “calling” to be an essential element in the best hiring practices of churches.¹⁴⁷

There is no question that calling is an important aspect of a pastor’s ability to endure. “Vocation to service, in my opinion, is one of the main sources of motivation for constancy in ministry.”¹⁴⁸ “Seventy percent felt God called them to pastoral ministry before their ministry began, but after three years of ministry, only fifty percent still felt called.”¹⁴⁹ This calling is both inward and external according to Albert Mohler.¹⁵⁰ Mohler quotes Spurgeon’s “first sign of God’s call to the ministry as ‘an intense, all-absorbing desire for the work’ inside of the minister, adding Newton’s remark that “None but he who made the world can make a Minister of the Gospel.”¹⁵¹ Along with that internal and subjective desire, “The congregation must evaluate and affirm the calling and gifts of the believer who feels so called. As a family of faith, the congregation should recognize and celebrate the gifts of ministry given to its members, and take responsibility to encourage those whom God has called to respond to that call with joy

¹⁴⁷ Bill Hybels. *Courageous Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 186.

¹⁴⁸ William H. Willimon. *Calling and Character* (Nashville: Abindon Press, 2002), 2.

¹⁴⁹ <http://maranathalife.com/lifeline/stats.htm> (accessed September 13, 2012).

¹⁵⁰ Brian Croft. *Test, Train, Affirm, and Send into Ministry: Recovering the Local Church’s Responsibility in the External Call* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2010), 12.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

and submission.”¹⁵² “Both calls, however-though essentially distinct in their character and source-are indispensable for the exercise of our commission.”¹⁵³

The ministry of Isaiah is a classic example of the necessity and power of God’s call upon an individual. One aspect of Isaiah’s call included the extent of the peculiar ministry demands God placed on him in the face of divinely ordained diminishing results. Isaiah’s ministry was destined to make his listeners’ hearts dull, their ears heavy and their eyes blind (Isaiah 6:10a). His congregation would not see, hear, understand or positively respond to his preaching appeals (Isaiah 6:10b). To add insult to injury God would personally insure Isaiah’s congregation dwindled in size. In response to God’s call Isaiah asked “How long, O Lord?” And God responded “Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, and the LORD removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land” (Isaiah 6:11-12). Minus the certainty of God’s unique call on his life Isaiah would have never endured what most men would consider such public ministry failure. A pastor’s sense of call is often the final barrier between ministry fidelity and walking away from the ministry altogether. “For if this commission is behind us in Christian work, remember, always we are sent out to be exceptional in ordinary things, among sometimes mean people, in frequently sordid surroundings. Only the man sent by the King of kings could take that, and only the man with a true burden will ever accept it.”¹⁵⁴ In such

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Charles Bridges. *The Christian Ministry; With an Inquiry into the Causes of its Inefficiency* (Charleston: Nabu Press, 2010), 89.

¹⁵⁴ Rene Rochester. *Models, Mentors and Messages: Blueprints of Urban Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 158.

instances the man of God must preach to himself in much the same way as the apostle Paul did when he wrote “But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).

It is at this point the congregation bears grave responsibility for affirming both those who enter into ministry and those who would enter into ministry at a particular local church. In the end, both pastors and local churches suffer because those in responsibility do not competently scrutinize pastoral candidates. “Many new church-pastor relationships get off to an unhealthy start simply because there was not sufficient investigation. The candidating encounter was not well-planned, not thorough, and not of sufficient length.”¹⁵⁵

Hybels considers character to be a “person’s walk with Jesus Christ,” competent people to be those whose “spiritual gifts have been developed and refined over many years” and “chemistry,” at the “relational fit with me as well as other team members.”¹⁵⁶ He writes “After experimenting with different selection criteria through the years, I have landed on three in the precise order in which they are mentioned.” He warns “I didn’t always place character above competence, but I do now. I have learned that incompetence can be accepted. But lapses in character create problems with far-reaching implications.”¹⁵⁷ In his comments Hybels is only reflecting the biblical criterion for local church leadership. The qualifications for elders listed by the apostle Paul in both 1

¹⁵⁵ Gillaspie, *The Restless Pastor*, 21.

¹⁵⁶ *Hybels*. *Courageous Leadership*, 81-84.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 81.

Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are primarily character driven. Both lists require a candidate to be “above reproach” as the determining factor in his character. And both lists are dominated by character issues with a man’s ability to teach as the only gift or skill qualification.

Nowhere is the character of both the genuine church and pastor called more into question than during the search, candidating, interviewing and affirming process. Such a process must be thoroughly saturated with a combination of appropriate and spiritual practices. To aid in discovering the will of God “There is no reason why the pastor as well as the church should not have a checklist or procedural outline concerning the candidating encounter.”¹⁵⁸ Transparency and honesty concerning the candidate and church are essential characteristics for a successful pastor-congregation fit. “The position of a candidate is both difficult and delicate. It demands humility, magnanimity, and courage; but it need not be regarded as undignified, humiliating, or unnatural. It is merely the position of one who, having been called to a sacred office, is seeking to learn the will of God as to the exact place where this office can best be exercised.”¹⁵⁹

At a minimum, a pastor and church must be 1) doctrinally aligned, 2) harmonious about the pastor’s role, and 3) in agreement concerning the church’s vision, mission, strategy, objectives and values. A pastor should not want to be where God does not want him to be and a church should not want to hire a pastor unfit for the congregation. A best fit might be for a pastor to compare his passion, gifts, skills and experience with the church’s ministry. The church should do the same; comparing its vision, mission and values with the pastor’s passion, gifts, skills and experience. Either party may move too

¹⁵⁸ Gillaspie, *The Restless Pastor*, 65.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

quickly if the church is in numeric decline and even more so if financial duress accompanies the diminishing number of people in the pew. A pastor may also be tempted to take whatever is available in an effort to fulfill familial responsibilities. A church may be willing to receive any candidate who holds out a hope of future success. But the end result for both pastor and church in such a scenario can be much akin to the man whose end state was “worse than the first” (Matthew 12:45).

The Holy Spirit calls men into ministry (Acts 20:28; Acts 1:23-26; Acts 13:2) so “while the local flock is asked to participate in the selection process, its job is not so much to elect or select such men as it is to confirm the Spirit’s work and thus His appointment and gift of certain men to serve.”¹⁶⁰ Every called man is gifted and skilled to serve but not every called man is called, gifted or skilled to serve in every church. God is equally particular in his calling, gifting and skilling.

God gifts members in the body “as he wills” (1 Corinthians 12:11). God not only gifts members of the body as he wills, he also places members in the local body as he wills. There is a general call to ministry but also a specific call to a certain place and perhaps for a certain time. For example, on one occasion God determined the time and place of Philip’s ministry when he personally moved Philip from Samaria to the desert (Acts 8). In another instance, the Holy Spirit did not see fit for the apostle Paul to minister in Asia (Acts 16:6) and redirected his efforts to Macedonia.

The Lord of the harvest is also Lord of the workers who harvest on his behalf. “The earth is the Lord’s” (Psalm 24:1) making every pastor a migrant worker dependent

¹⁶⁰ J. Hampton Keathley. “Qualifications for the Evaluation of Elders and Deacons,” <http://bible.org/article/qualifications-evaluation-elders-and-deacons> (accessed August 22, 2012).

on the Lord's grace for employment, placement, duration and reward. So the Spirit makes every pastor equally competent but not equally competent for every work. The right call to a particular congregation is enhanced by the right gifting and skill but the right gifting and skill can be diminished, even misused or abused by the wrong call. Good men and good churches are frustrated and often act ungodly toward one another simply because they are not an appropriate fit for each other.

Pastoral longevity is enhanced by a pastor's compatibility with the church. Too many pastors and churches view the addition of a Senior or lead pastor much as a potential bride who hopefully exclaims "But I can change him" to a disapproving mother. There are many reasons for a pastor or church to accept one another but none of them are acceptable if the pastor or church have a fundamental disagreement concerning the particular local church's vision, mission, objectives, strategy or values. There are many reasons the pastor-church relationship may fail but it should not do so because of an impoverished or untruthful hiring process. Hiring a pastor or accepting a pastorate under any circumstances other than honest in every arena speaks to the immaturity and multi-layered ignorance of both parties.

Thankfully there are many helps available to a congregation seeking God's man to lead their flock. Various Southern Baptist State Conventions have created guides to help pastors and churches discover the right fit pastor and congregation. For instance the Southern Baptist of Texas Convention highlights their process as:

Step One – In House Business consisting of advertising the position

Step Two – Resumes and Data Assessment to include receiving and disbursing resumes to the pastoral search team

Step Three – First Contact which involves Mailing appropriate candidates a questionnaire and receiving requested information from the candidate

Step Four – Getting Serious – Checking references, conducting background checks

Step Five – Making the Final Selection consists of pursuing one candidate at a time

Step Six – A unanimous decision by the committee settles on one candidate

Step Seven – The candidate is invited to spend a weekend at the church in view of a call

Step Eight – The candidate is presented, the vote is taken and the results are announced

Step Nine – Upon acceptance the committee assists in relocation¹⁶¹

In the end, hiring a pastor must be a combination of God's sovereignty and human responsibility. It requires spirituality and practicality. David understood that his victory over Goliath was ordained in heaven (1 Samuel 17:46-47) but this revelation did not hinder him from creating an arsenal that was appropriate to his enemy (1 Samuel 17:40). God's revelation to Paul that "I have many in this city who are my people" did not alleviate Paul's responsibility to "go on speaking" (Acts 18:9-10). Jonah understood the direct and essential correlation between his preaching and the extension of God's mercy (Jonah 4:2). In myriad instances the Bible combines the calling of God and the stewardship of men in the performance of his work on the earth. It is often the understanding that both sovereignty and responsibility have coordinated a pastor/church relationship that will enable either to endure the hardship of ministry. This was certainly

¹⁶¹ Jim Richards and Deron J. Biles. *The Pastor Search Handbook* (Grapevine: Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, 2004), 4-10.

the case in the ministries of men like Daniel, Jeremiah and Isaiah in particular, whose ever diminishing returns on his continuing ministry efforts were met with a fidelity undergirded by the Lord's prophecy concerning both the call and the results (Isaiah 6:8-13).

The assurance of this spiritual/practical hiring process can be accomplished in a win-win relationship between pastor and congregation. God calls, gifts and skills men for the work. The man and the local church must determine God's will in a possible ministry relationship. To that end, J. William Egner suggests a hiring outline such as

- (1) (The Conviction) Resolve to hire new team members for role and fit under the Spirit's constant direction.
- (2) (The Target) Resolve to define a new team member's role and the minimum degree of fit using outcomes and the 4 C criteria of Character, Calling, Competence and Compatibility.
- (3) (The Candidates) Resolve to seriously consider only candidates who meet or exceed the minimum required thresholds of fit.
- (4) (The Matching Process) Resolve to interview relationally, objectively and thoroughly before declaring a match for the team.¹⁶²

As the basis for a successful search M. Wayne Oaks suggests a process that affirms the congregation's autonomy, involves the congregation, respects the minister's relationship to his present church body, encourages a congregation to seek a minister whose vision is in line with the seeking body, involves only one candidate at a time, encourages the church to have a covenant agreement that clarifies the expectations of

¹⁶² J. William Egner. "Combining Biblical Principles and Best Business Practices for Hiring "Right Fit" Pastors." Unpublished DMin thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, September 6, 2010, 52-53.

both the congregation and the minister, and one that allows the committee to do background checks on the minister with his knowledge and permission but with integrity.”¹⁶³

Statement of Methodology

The aim of this project is to develop a history of the transitions that have occurred at Heritage Baptist Church over the last twenty-two years as those changes apply to pastoral tenure. Its source of research is Heritage Baptist Church in its relationship to the present pastor who has served the congregation for more than two decades. The intent is to benefit any pastor, Director of Missions and congregation as they respectively witness the potential benefits of ministry endurance in pastoral longevity.

The research component of this project will begin with an examination of the tenure of pastors presently in the Holston Baptist Association of the Tennessee Baptist Convention. It will then examine the history of Heritage Baptist Church, Johnson City, Tennessee and offer a picture of the transitions that have occurred in that congregation as it has maintained a single Senior Pastor/congregational relationship over the previous two decades. Beyond this Introduction the project will be divided into the following chapters:

Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter Two: The Holston Baptist Association and Pastoral Longevity.

¹⁶³ M. Wayne Oaks. *Finding A New Minister for Your Church* (Cary: Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, 1998), 3-4.

Chapter Three: The Heritage Story. This chapter will present a timeline of the existence of Heritage Baptist Church from its inception in 1937 until the present day of this writing in 2012.

Chapter Four: From Free-Will Baptist to Southern Baptist. Heritage began as a Free-Will Baptist Church but transitioned to an unaffiliated congregation. It then aligned itself with the Independent Baptist movement and eventually joined the Southern Baptist Convention.

Chapter Five: From Buses to Family Ministry. Central Free-Will Baptist Church was one of the largest Free-Will Baptist churches in the state of Tennessee primarily because of its successful bus ministry. Between the final day the last bus rolled off the church property until the present, the congregation has gone from a majority bus population to a ministry entirely comprised of people who are self-ambulating.

Chapter Six: From One Pastor to Six Pastors to Elders. Heritage was first established as a congregation pastored by a sole individual. In 2012, seven pastors serve the congregational body and this is in addition to a number of other ministry staff personnel. At the present time the church is moving toward elder leadership in an effort to emphasize a biblical model for shepherding the congregation and ensuring its future.

Chapter Seven: Ever-Changing Worship Styles. At its inception, Heritage did not have a music director and the congregation sang from hymnals with shaped notes. Today the congregation enjoys a music pastor who not only leads in worship but trains other worshippers to lead the congregation in its worship. The musical style is band driven with accompanying instruments while the words are displayed on PowerPoint slides and a large screen. A choir, praise team and soloists lead the church in robust music that is

doctrinally sound, God-centered yet relevant to the musical tastes enjoyed by the congregation.

Chapter Eight: Location! Location! Location! And Beyond! Heritage initially began as a home church. Its first property was located near the downtown of Johnson City at the corner of Delaware and Main Street as a neighborhood church. The church building is presently and prominently located directly across the street from the city's high school on the corner of two major thoroughfares, John Exum Parkway and North Roan Street. In addition, the congregation has become a regional church whose members live closely and as far away as surrounding counties other than the county in which Heritage is located.

In recent years, Heritage has thought more thoroughly through the implication of a Great Commission mentality not only with regard to life-to-life ministry and the multiplication of disciples but also as it related to the corporate body replicating itself as a whole, i.e., planting churches. The natural outcome of an individual discipling another person or a Community Group birthing another community group is the church body starting other church local bodies.

Chapter Nine: Lessons Learned. Tenure at Heritage throughout its many and myriad transitions has taught its pastor, this author, many lessons essential to pastoral longevity. What are these lessons? Are they transferable concepts or ideas particular to a single congregation? In fact, any pastor can apply certain principles that will enhance the potential for longevity in a single pastorate.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

Review of Literature

“The Jonah Syndrome” is a journal article written to discourage pastoral infidelity. The author compares modern pastors to the Old Testament prophet Jonah who attempted to vacate his divine call for work self-assessed to be more personally and publicly advantageous. Jonah was willing to serve God but only on the former’s terms. Pastors are human beings who, like everyone else, long for a utopian life and vocation. Unlike others, pastors should not attempt to create such an existence under the guise of spiritual activity. Pastoring consists of day-to-day activities that not only shape the pastor but model for congregants how to employ the Christian life. Pastors flee the divine ministry call for various reasons but none of them are adequate to justify a move that is not directed by God. The essential nature of pastoral ministry endures what others long to escape in order to prove the power of the gospel and hope in God alone.

Well-Intentioned Dragons claims that every church has people who are sincere and well-meaning but who create strain in the body of Christ. This book doesn’t consider such people to be intentionally offensive or consciously plotting hardship for church leadership. Nonetheless, such people undermine the staff’s effectiveness and the church’s harmony. Hence, the book offers direction to pastors and other staff members in dealing with difficult people. It helps the reader define and understand such people and then creates a template for responding to their hostility, resistance and interference. The authors employ real life stories of difficult people and present hope to both sides of the difficulty in an effort to create disciples out of dissidents.

Clergy Killers recognizes that conflict is normal in church but there are certain people in the church who have a history of meaning intentional harm to their leadership. Although many denominational leaders and even church leaders want to deny that such people exist, this book is written to the victims of such blatant sin. Such antagonists are not sincere or the normal difficult person but individuals who are suffering mentally, from some disorder or are simply evil people intent on harming the body of Christ and especially its leadership. These pathological antagonists are aggressively intent on undermining a pastor's ministry, career and family. Pastor abuse is a reality in many churches and this book warns leadership who are called on to support the pastor and staff with real strategies for healing for the pastor and ministry to the clergy killer.

Firestorm is all about preventing and overcoming destructive conflict in the church. It is written from the first-hand experiences of the author who has worked with many churches as they navigated through conflict. The author believes there are very few innocent people when friction occurs in a church. Both parties must be willing to engage in abrasive behavior for conflict to occur and reach such a height as to threaten the church's existence. It's not just that people are different but that people attempt to enforce these differences in ungodly ways by which they intend to dominate a person, a group or the church as a whole. This creates the kind of conflict that leads to a firestorm. But the author has great hope for the church so the very first section deals with the lifecycle of a firestorm assuring leaders that whatever comes to pass will pass. The causes of firestorms are then defined, the third section offers a paradigm for fighting the fires that are caused by conflict while the final section teaches leadership how to heal after being badly burned.

An Introduction to the New Testament focuses on “special introduction” that is historical questions dealing with authorship, date, sources, purpose, destination, and so forth. This approach stands in contrast to recent texts that concentrate more on literary form, rhetorical criticism, and historical parallels---topics the authors don't minimize, but instead think are better given extended treatment in exegesis courses. By refocusing on the essentials, *An Introduction to the New Testament* ensures that the New Testament books will be accurately understood within historical settings. For each New Testament document, the authors also provide a substantial summary of that book's content, discuss the book's theological contribution to the overall canon, and give an account of current studies on that book, including recent literary and social-science approaches to interpretation. This second edition reflects significant revision and expansion from the original, making this highly acclaimed text even more valuable. It affords the reader a new chapter provides a historical survey examining Bible study method through the ages; the chapter on Paul has been expanded to include an analysis of debates on the 'new perspective' and the discussion of New Testament epistles has been expanded to form a new chapter. This new edition will help a new generation of students better grasp the message of the New Testament.

Pastors in Transition examines the main reasons why pastors in five Protestant denominations have left parish ministry. The fruit of careful sociological research, *Pastors in Transition* presents the findings of the largest-ever study of recently ended ministries. More than 900 ex-ministers, representing the Assemblies of God, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the United Methodist Church, were surveyed or

interviewed. Besides gathering facts and figures, the book contains personal stories, forthright opinions, and concrete recommendations from former pastors for strengthening parish ministry in the future.

New Visions for the Long Pastorate is an Alban Institute study begun in 1979. The project involved four judicatories; three regional and one national, three Episcopal dioceses in Connecticut, Main and Massachusetts and the Unitarian Universalist Association. The study was intended to discover what was already understood about the long pastorate and also develop testable assumptions. The final paper was intended to summarize the primary disadvantages of a long pastorate and ways to overcome those obstacles. Although the authors of the project initially discounted the advantages of a long pastorate, the results of the study convinced each of them that the advantageous to pastoral endurance were enormous and far beyond that of the shorter pastorate.

The Restless Pastor was penned to encourage pastoral fidelity to a local congregation. The author is convinced pastors do not seek alternative ministry opportunities because of God's direction but because the pastor desires to escape problems or seek a church that appears more productive and will enhance his own sense of well-being and notoriety. It provides critical research into the reasons why pastors normally opt for shorter pastorates. The book intends to encourage pastors to look at the reasons why a change is considered and also to help pastors engage more critically with the thought process behind change and its influences. The author analyzes the average length of pastorates, provides reasons for conflict in churches, helps a pastor to resign if and when he does deem it appropriate and how to consider a future call.

Antagonists in the Church was written to help congregations and pastors survive those individual people or small groups of people whose DNA implies conflict in the church. It is written out of the author's own personal experience and a series of workshops conducted to help ministers and churches deal biblically and effectively with conflict. The disruptive influences that exist in churches cannot be avoided because the world is fallen. But pastors and congregants can prevent the influence and destructive nature of members whose hearts are set on their own way. Antagonists should be dealt with firmly but in hope; practically leading them to assess their own behaviors, consider the negative dynamics imposed on a congregation and work through solutions that diminish the antagonism while maturing the entire body.

Restoring the Vow of Stability is perhaps the classic text encouraging pastors toward longevity. The author contends that modern pastors need to take a vow of stability in the face of traditional shorter pastorates, the expectations of seminaries and congregations and the social trends that mitigate against longer ministries. Revolving door pastorates actually diminish a pastor's spiritual health and the well-being of a congregation. To prove his point the author employs his own experiences, the testimonies of other pastors and congregations, research and biblical models of longevity.

Lashed to the Mast is a journal article written to help pastors resist the siren voices that call him away from pastoral longevity. The author believes that unless a pastor lashes himself to the mast of the essential nature of pastoral calling he will be easily moved to accept the call of other voices. While it may be easy to impersonate a pastor because of the day-to-day functions that normally accord themselves with pastoral activity, genuine pastoral ministry is actually reflected in the invisible attributes

associated with the pastor himself; pastoral tenure being a reflection of personal wholeness. Many men perceive of pastoral ministry as a craft or job that can be accomplished without the intangibles of biblical pastoring. Unwittingly, the congregation may ask a pastor to deviate from the true, spiritual nature of his calling in order to meet their immediate, physical and apparent needs but to accept that lure is a betrayal of the call to the word and sacraments.

Survival Tactics in the Parish is based on its author's personal interaction with more than four thousand congregations. Schaller thinks the pastor must build relationships with his people if he is going to endure the trials of pastoral ministry. To do this, the pastor should involve the people in ministry creation. In this way the pastor kills two birds with one stone: he creates meaningful relationships that make him an effective leader and he creates the kinds of ministry that naturally drive his people to think and look outward. All of this protects the church from infighting. He offers insight and suggestions to strengthen local church leadership and insure it is conducting effective ministry. The author employs a fictitious pastor and congregation as a model for doing so. Along the way he teaches readers how to teach a congregation to create realistic expectations and then direct the members toward realistic goals. The process creates a bond between the pastor and people that demonstrates the kind of reconciliation the church is intended to demonstrate to the world. These relationships also constitute the foundation for creating, exercising and expanding the ministries of the congregation.

Pastoral Ministry is a compilation of articles written by professors from The Master's Seminary. The subtitle states the book intends to help pastors "shepherd biblically." It includes chapters on what a pastor is to be and do to do. The character of

a pastor and his calling are discussed before the book offers a template for pastoral ministry. He is to be humble, trusting, above reproach, committed to God's word and glory, commissioned by God, possess Bible knowledge and ministry skills and ordained. For John MacArthur and his associates, a pastor's primary responsibilities are to feed, to lead, to worship, to model, to reach out, to disciple, to watch and warn and to employ the Lord's table and baptism.

The Shepherd Leader calls pastors to return to the shepherding quality of ministry rather than accept the modern definition of a pastor as a CEO. A shepherd knows his flock, feeds his flock, leads his flock and protects his flock. The author unpacks those four characteristics of a true shepherd and demonstrates how they work on the micro (personal) and macro (church-wide) levels. The book also offers seven essential elements for creating an effective shepherding plan. It must be biblical, comprehensive, systematic, relational, include the four shepherding functions, accountability and prayer, for creating an effective shepherding plan.

Humility is not only the title of a book but one of the essential ingredients to genuine Christianity, effective ministry and pastoral endurance. Simply put God resists proud people and is drawn to people who live and breathe humility. Pride and humility cannot coexist in the life of a pastor. Pride will defeat a pastor internally and externally, privately and publicly. The author defines pride and then identifies the manners in which it regularly attacks Christians. He first demonstrates the blessing of humility and the perils of pride. Jesus is characterized as the perfect example of humility by which the author redefines greatness from a biblical perspective and then shows how Jesus lived

that life as a model for all who follow him. Finally, the author offers practical steps for creating and maintaining the humble life.

Five Steps to Forgiveness takes the subject of forgiveness out of the theological realm and places it squarely in the practical day-to-day life of Christians. There is no question that pastors will be offended both by sincere congregants and intentional naysayers. The lack of forgiveness is one of the major reasons pastors quickly transition from one congregation to another. Out-of-sight is out-of-mind is the guiding mantra for the unforgiving pastor. So how can a pastor overcome the hurts that keep him from emotional and spiritual wholeness and leadership effectiveness? The author offers a five-step program to forgive anyone of anything. He develops the character of a forgiving person, shows how a lack of forgiveness brings harm to the embittered person and then explains how a person can go about forgiving others. Forgiveness is a mandate for any pastor who desire to remain in one congregation for any length of time.

CHAPTER TWO

THE HOLSTON BAPTIST ASSOCIATION AND PASTORAL TENURE

Roger Williams founded the first Baptist church of the future United States of America in 1638-39 in Providence, Rhode Island. Thereafter the first Baptist church established in the South was founded in 1682 as the First Baptist Church of Charleston, South Carolina. The first Baptist Association in the colonies, the Philadelphia Baptist Association, was established in 1707. The first Baptist Association in the South, also named after the first Southern church (the Charleston Association), was founded in 1751. In all, Baptists established only 10 Associations in the new land before 1775.

Before Associations came into existence groups of Baptist churches tended to form councils. Councils were established on a temporary basis in an effort to cooperatively further the gospel in the establishment of new churches, ordaining or disciplining ministers and maintaining and defending the Baptist faith. Once the organizing purpose had been reached, the council was then disbanded. Generally speaking, councils were called to handle single purposes. Associations on the other hand became permanent fixtures in Baptist life. Whereas councils cared for single or once-in-a-lifetime items such as the ordination of a new minister, Associations multi-tasked the ongoing work of Baptist churches who covenanted with the Association and its fellow churches in doctrine and purpose.

In reality, the small number of Baptists in America reflected the lack of need for Associations and their work. Only 20 Baptist churches comprised of approximately 500 members existed in the United States in 1707. Their work was complemented by the

single Association necessary for these geographically connected churches to carry on the Great Commission. As the Baptist faith followed the Eastern coastline down into the Appalachian mountains the number of Baptists in America began to exponentially grow. Only 11 Baptist churches totaling 300 members existed in the South in 1740. Forty-six years later 872 churches served 68,067 Baptist parishioners and were covenanted in 33 Associations. By 1814 the number of Southern churches had multiplied to 1,282 with 110,000 members. Such a large body of Baptist believers required the assistance and direction of 60 Associations.

The Holston Baptist Association is Tennessee's oldest Association. It was founded by an alliance of seven churches on October 30th, 1786; thirteen years before Tennessee joined the United States (1796). Once statehood was gained, Tennessee's three major religious organizations reported their respective sizes as:

- Baptists: 28 churches, 2 Associations and 2,500 members
- Presbyterians: 27 churches and 1,500 members
- Methodists: 5 circuit riders and approximately 500 members

Five years before statehood "five or six churches formed a temporary association, which reported to North Carolina's Sandy Creek Association."¹⁶⁴ But it was in 1786 that seven churches formed to create the first Baptist Association in Tennessee.¹⁶⁵ Those seven churches are listed as: Kindrick's Creek (1780), Bent Creek (1785), Beaver Creek (1786), Greasy Cove (1779), Cherokee Creek (1783), North Folk of Holston (1778) and

¹⁶⁴ Albert W. Warden. *Tennessee Baptists: A Comprehensive History 1779-1999* (Brentwood: Executive Board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, 1999), 22.

¹⁶⁵ Warden contends that one of the seven, North Folk of Holston, was actually located near Abingdon, Virginia and joined a Virginia Baptist Association in 1811.

Lower French Broad (1785). Interestingly, neither of the first two churches established in Tennessee were a part of the state's original Association. Sinking Creek Baptist Church was chartered in 1775 but ceased to meet for one entire year because of Indian raids. Thereafter Sinking Creek met intermittently until 1924 at which time it reconstituted itself in a continual ministry until the present. Buffalo Ridge Baptist Church was established in 1778 and is Tennessee's oldest continually meeting Baptist congregation. However the church ceased its affiliation with the Holston Association in 1973. In spite of such subtractions, the Association continued to grow and presently boasts 106 churches.

The chartered Confession of Faith for the Holston Baptist Association was an adaptation of the Westminster Confession of Faith known in America as the 1742 Philadelphia Confession of Faith. That doctrinal statement remained Holston's stated doctrinal statement until 1845. At that time it adopted the "Articles of Faith and Church Covenant." The AFCC was actually the first draft of the 1833 New Hampshire Confession of Faith.¹⁶⁶

The Tenure of Holston Baptist Association Pastors

Ninety of one hundred and six Holston Baptist Churches participated in the survey requested by this author. The Associational office was kind enough to send an e-mail to every member church asking the single question, "How long have you or your

¹⁶⁶ Glenn A. Tooney. *Bi-Centennial Holston: Tennessee's First Baptist Association and Its Affiliated Churches, 1786-1985*.

pastor ministered in your/his present pastorate?” Each of these responses was placed in a chart based on an alphabetical listing of the congregations that responded to the survey.

This chart is located in Appendix A. The documentation reveals that as of 2012, the average pastorate in the Holston Baptist Association is 9.14 years. The median tenure is six years. The standard deviation (how variable the lengths of time are) is 7.37 years.

The duration of these pastorates ranges from zero to 33 years. The average tenure is 9.14 years.

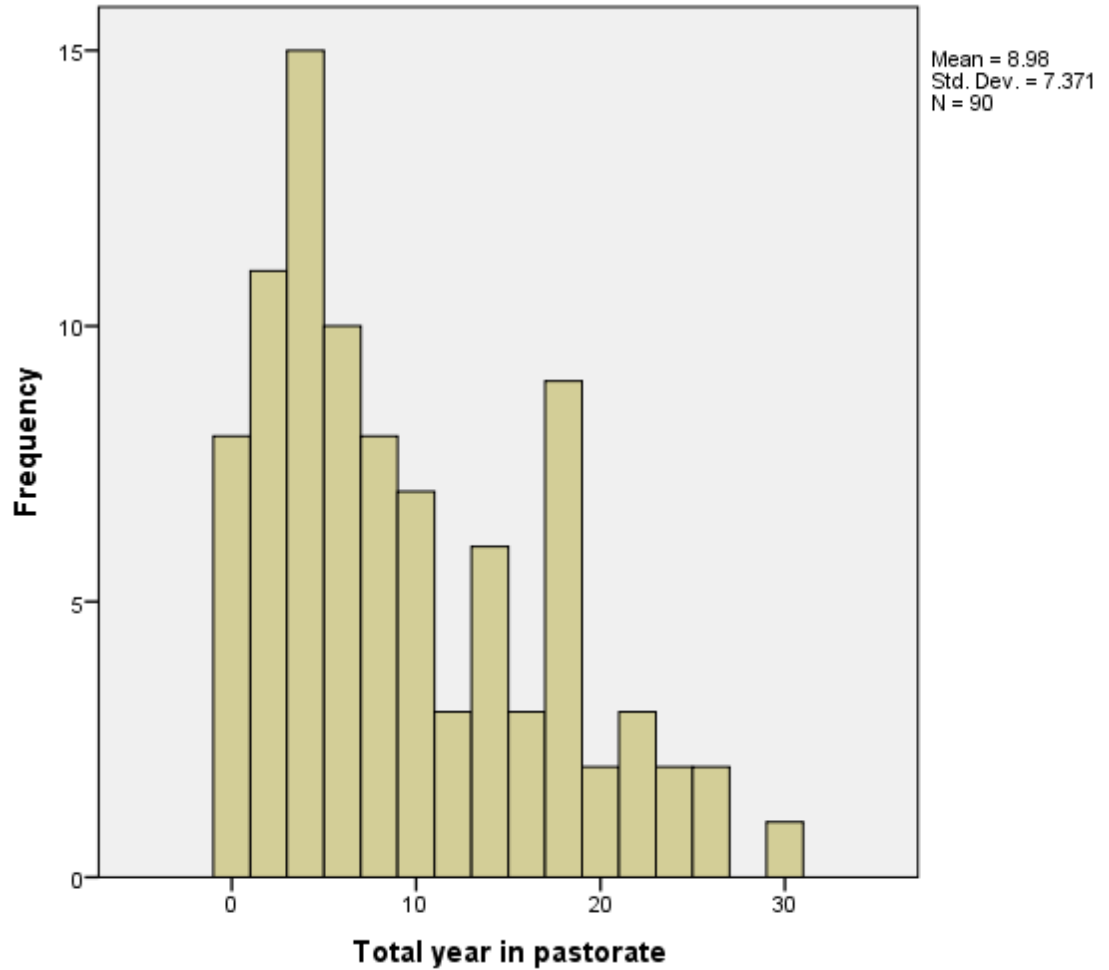
Holston Baptist Pastoral Tenure
Alphabetical Listing of Churches

Church	Year Started	Tenure
Antioch	2010	2
Baileyton, First	2010	2
Believers*	2001	11
Bethany	1998	14
Bethel	1993	33
Bethel View	2006	6
Beulah	1994	18
Blountville, First	1986	26
Bluff City	1995	17
Bluff City, First	2003	9
Boones Creek	2005	7
Bowmantown	2004	8
Calvary (B)	1997	15
Calvary (E)	2005	7
Calvary (JC)	1996	16
Calvary Memorial	2003	9
Casa de Restauracion	2008	4
Central (E)	2006	6
Central (JC)	1995	17
Cherokee	2007	5
Cherokee Mountain	2005	7
Cherry Grove	2006	6
Chinquapin Grove	2008	4

Clark Street	2010	2
Clear Branch	2010	2
Clifton View	1999	13
CrossPointe Community*	2006	6
East Watauga	1989	23
Erwin, First	2012	0
Fall Branch, First	2012	0
Flag Pond	2009	3
Fordtown	2002	10
Freedom Road	2008	4
Friendship (G)	1993	19
Friendship Chapel	1982	30
Grace	2008	4
Green Pine	2007	5
Greene Hills	2012	0
Greeneville, First	1999	13
Greenwood	1998	14
Harmony	1994	18
Heritage	1991	21
Higgins Chapel	2000	12
Holston Valley	1988	24
Hulen	1995	17
King Springs	1998	14
Liberty	1998	14
Living Water	2009	3
Lovelace	2010	2
Midway	1994	18
Mount Zion	2009	3
Mountain View (G)	2010	2
Mountain View (JC)	2012	0
New Lebanon	2000	12
New Life	1994	18
New Salem	2003	9
New Victory	2012	1
Ninth Street	2005	7
Nolichucky	2002	10
North Johnson City	2006	6
NorthPointe	2007	5

Community *		
Oak Dale	2009	3
Oak Grove	2004	8
Pinecrest	2012	0
Piney Flats First	1991	21
Pleasant Grove	2008	4
River Bend	2007	5
Roan Hill	2008	4
Skyline Heights	2002	10
Snow Memorial	2010	2
Southside	2009	3
Southwestern	2009	3
Sulphur Springs	2007	5
Sunrise	2009	3
Sunset Village	2002	10
Telford	2008	4
Towering Oaks	1990	22
Trinity	1995	17
Tusculum	2010	2
Unicoi	2010	2
University Parkway	1994	18
Valley Hills	2004	8
Virginia Avenue	2012	0
Volunteer	2004	8
West Hills (B)	1997	15
West Hills (J)	2012	0
Westerly Heights	2008	4
Woodlawn	1986	26
<i>Timberlake Church</i>	2010	2
Victory Bible Fellowship	2011	1
		823

Average Tenure – 9.14 Years



As the above chart indicates, it is easily noted that the duration of ministry time in a single pastorate increases, the number of pastors with tenure decreases. The largest group of pastors, thirty-nine, has pastored HBA churches for less than five years. The second largest group of twenty pastors has been in HBA pastorates for a maximum of ten years. Ten churches have benefited from pastoral longevity lasting up to fifteen years while twelve churches have been pastored by a single person for as many as twenty years. Five HBA pastors have been with a single congregation between twenty to twenty-five years, three churches between twenty-six to thirty years and only two pastors have pastored their respective churches for longer than 30 years.

In five-year increments the statistics reveal that pastors have led their respective churches for: 0-5 years: 39 churches

6-10: 20 churches

11-15: 10 churches

16-20: 12 churches

20-25: 5 churches

26-30: 3 churches

31-35: 1 church

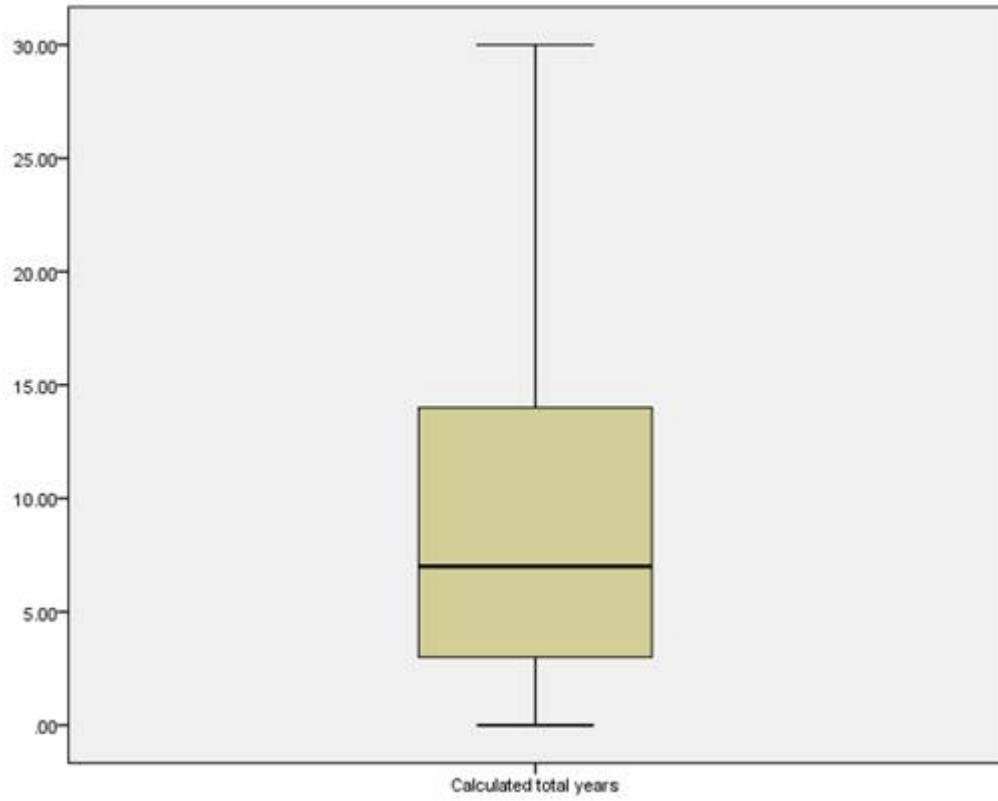
In ten year increments the statics reveal that pastors have led their respective churches for: 0-10 years: 59 churches

11-20 years: 22 churches

21-30 years: 8 churches

31 year and beyond: 1 church

This paper has defined a long term ministry as one that exceeds nine years. Using that standard as the definition, the average pastorate in the HBA of 9.14 years can be defined as a long term ministry. In actuality however, the distribution is skewed because no pastor can report tenure below zero and the two pastors who report tenure above thirty years increase the average for the entire reporting group. For that reason the median of six years may better reflect the tenure of pastors in the HBA. Only thirty-eight reporting pastors have actually reached the tenure mark of at least 9 years. This means fifty-two pastors, the majority of Holston pastors who responded to the questionnaire are below the line marking longevity of ministry with the vast majority of that number (39) below five years. Further, six pastors have enjoyed ministry with the HBA for less than a year.



CHAPTER THREE

THE HERITAGE STORY

Throughout its 75-year history, Heritage Baptist Church has endured innumerable transitions of many kinds. This reality makes the congregation a valid model for research into pastoral longevity. The congregation was founded in the home of Brown L. Street in Johnson City, Tennessee, in October of 1937. The infant church was begun by E. F. Drayne and W. L. Gilton. It was initially comprised of 13 charter members. The first financial offering received by that tiny Christian community amounted to \$2.65. The fledgling congregation was named the Central Free Will Baptist Church, and Charlie Elkins became its first official Pastor. As the congregation grew numerically, the corporate gatherings were moved to the City Hall of Johnson City.

The first permanent location of Central Free Will Baptist Church was constructed in 1940 at the corner of Delaware and Main. Elkins served the congregation for two years. In 1942, W. L. Gilton became the pastor and served the congregation for 17 years until 1959. While Gilton was the Pastor, seven men were ordained into gospel ministry. In 1950, Glenn Parris began his thirty-two year service as the music director for the ever-growing congregation. From 1959 to 1962, Central Free Will enjoyed the short-term pastorates of Frank Thompson and John Cansler.

On an early morning in 1961, the wooden building on the corner of Delaware and Main Street was destroyed by fire. The total damage exceeded \$70,000, but only a \$24,000 insurance policy existed to cover losses to the physical plant. As a result, the congregation began meeting in the Henry Johnson School located less than half a mile from the original property. In 1962, the razed structure was replaced by the brick

building that still stands at 522 West Main Street. At the time of this writing, the building is occupied by Friendship Baptist Church, a Baptist congregation unaffiliated with the Holston Baptist Association.

Soon after the new building was completed, George P. Higgins became the congregation's fifth pastor in 1962. Under Pastor Higgins, the church adopted the slogan "The Church of the Green Light" and defined its ministry as "An Exalted Christ—An Excited People" and "Friendly, Fervent, Fundamental." The church body met each Sunday at 9:45 for Sunday School and boasted 40 teachers and officers. Reverend Jack Cox served as the minister of Christian education until he assumed the pastorate of Canah Chapel Free Will Baptist Church in Erwin. The Sunday morning worship hour was held at 10:50 a.m. with an evening worship time of 7:30 p.m. and a Wednesday prayer and Bible study at 7:30 p.m. The church enjoyed an active visitation program with the ladies visiting on Thursdays at 10:00 a.m., a general church visitation evening on Thursdays at 7:00 p.m., and bus visitation each Saturday at 10:00 a.m. The church also began a daily radio broadcast titled "Forward in Faith" which was heard every weekday on WJCW from 12:30-1:00 p.m.

Under Higgins's guidance, the church continued its numeric growth and branched out into new and innovative areas of ministry, including a successful bus ministry. As a result, Central Freewill Baptist Church became one of the largest Free Will Baptist congregations in the state of Tennessee, with an average of over 400 in Sunday morning attendance. In 1968, Rev. Jack Cox began a two-year service as the first Christian Education Pastor.

It was also during Pastor Higgins's leadership that the church obtained the property that is located at 1512 John Exum Parkway, the present home of Heritage Baptist Church. Two and a half acres were purchased for \$125,000. On a Wednesday night in 1975, an \$18,000 offering was taken for the steel of the new building and a steel shell was constructed. The John Exum property was dedicated in a service on the grounds in the mid-1970s just before Pastor Higgins resigned to begin a new work.

Dr. Chester Phillips became the pastor of Central Free Will Baptist Church in May of 1977.¹⁶⁷ Dr. Phillips (1922-2011) served two and a half years overseas in the European Theater as a medic in the Army Air Force during World War II and graduated from Bob Jones University in 1954. Three days after graduation Phillips accepted his first pastorate at Smithfield, North Carolina. He remained there for seven and one-half years.

It was during Dr. Phillips's tenure as the pastor of Heritage that the church hired Dwight Whitworth as the associate pastor in August of 1982. Whitworth and his wife, Debra, served Heritage until July of 1990. He served as the Associate Pastor from 1982-1987 and as Associate Pastor/Music and Youth Director from 1987 to 1990. Debra ministered as the Administrative Assistant and Children's Music Director from 1984-1990.

Shortly after his arrival, Pastor Phillips led the church to sell the Main street property in an effort to expedite the building process at the John Exum location. During that interim period, the church met in the Science Hill auditorium located across the street

¹⁶⁷ Bob Jones University, Chester Phillips's alma mater, awarded him an honorary Doctorate of Divinity on May 25, 1985.

from the new church property. Central Free Will Baptist Church moved to its existing building at 1512 John Exum Parkway in 1979 and changed its name to Heritage Baptist Church.

The original building consisted of the sanctuary and three of the current surrounding wings. In addition to the geographical relocation, the congregation underwent several philosophical changes during Dr. Philipp's ministry. The music program was emphasized and, as a result, the church called Whitworth as its first full-time music pastor. In addition, teacher training became a priority; several young men were called to full-time ministry. It was also during Phillips's tenure that an organized youth group was established and a full-time youth pastor, Lonnie Ray, was called to serve the church. In 1985, the Heritage Manor and its approximately one-acre property were purchased for \$188,000. The 3400 sq. ft. property initially served as a manse for church staff, but the church's continued growth required the removal of staff offices to that property. At present, all Heritage staff is housed in the three floors of the Manor.

Phillips retired from active pastoral ministry at the age of 69 on April 10th of 1991. The church ceased its affiliation with the National Association of Free Will Baptists, became an Independent Baptist church, and changed its doctrinal statement to reflect a theological perspective of eternal security. On Father's Day night of June that same year, this author began his ministry as the Senior Pastor. The first official act was to incorporate the congregation as Heritage Baptist Church of Johnson City, Inc. Philosophically, the author brought an "every member a minister" and small group mentality to the congregation. The first message title "Will the Real Church Please Stand Up?" was preached from Ephesians 4:11-13 and reflected that ministry perspective.

A Southern Baptist church growth method centered on small groups was enacted. To endorse that philosophy, a church slogan was changed to “Creating a Committed Christian Community in the Tri-Cities.”¹⁶⁸ From 1991, the church grew from an average of 250 Sunday morning attendants to an average of 620 people. The Sunday School increased from an average of 158 to more than 400. In January of 2012, the Sunday school averaged 86% of the Sunday morning corporate gathering attendance. During these 21 years, the sanctuary has been expanded twice, and the church has moved to two worship services, a simul-cast and three Sunday school hours.

A Heritage Baptist Church tract dated circa 2003 states the church offered Sunday school at 8:30 a.m., 9:30 a.m. and 10:45 a.m. and gathered corporately at 9:30 a.m. and 10:45 a.m. The Sunday evening service was held at 6:30, and Wednesday night Bible study occurred at 7:00 p.m. In addition, as a part of this equipping philosophy, the church added its first full-time Education Pastor (1993), its first full-time Children’s Ministries Director (1995) and its first full-time Pastoral Care Pastor (2001). In the autumn of 1997, the Wednesday night programming changed to begin Life University; topical classes were offered to the membership and community. Life University’s highest attendance averaged over 400 attendees. Life University changed its name to GROW in 2008 in an effort to align every ministry name to the new strategy of Connect, Grow, Impact (a strategy change discussed later in this paper).

In December of 2000, a three million dollar Family Life Center building was completed. A full-page advertisement in the *Johnson City Press* notes the building

¹⁶⁸ The Tri-Cities is a triangle of three Northeast Tennessee cities: Johnson City, Bristol, and Kingsport.

emphasis as “Building for the 21st Century; Declaring God’s Power to the Next Generation.” The new addition added 34,500 sq. ft., which includes a regulation high-school sized gymnasium, a commercial cafeteria/kitchen, fellowship hall, seven preschool classrooms, six elementary classrooms, preschool and elementary children's worship areas, a 4,000 sq. ft. youth center, two pre-teen game rooms, youth Sunday School classrooms, and full men’s and women’s shower rooms.

A decade after the author’s arrival, Heritage voted to become affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention in September of 2001. In February 2007, the church acquired the property adjacent to the Manor known as the Henry home. The 3000 sq. ft. home plus three acres cost the congregation \$800,000 and was named the Manse. At present, this property houses Sunday School classes on the first floor, and the second floor serves as a prophet’s chamber for visiting ministers and missionaries. This addition increased the overall property size of Heritage Baptist Church to ten acres.

In 2008, this author led the church to re-strategize its vision and mission statements in an effort to more simply align its vision, mission, and strategy. The vision of the congregation became “A God-Centered, Great Commission Congregation” (GC²). Its mission became “Connecting People to God, Growing with Others and Impacting the World” (CGI). The “CGI” balance is intended to create a “Christ-Generated Image” (CGI) in each member. In addition, the strategy for fulfilling the mission statement became the same as the mission statement. The church’s mission is to connect people to God, grow them with others, and impact the world. What is the strategy to accomplish that mission? It is exactly the same. To connect people to God, grow them with others, and impact the world, the church connects people to God, grows them with others, and

impacts the world. In reality then, the church's vision, mission, and strategy statements are embodied in GC^s and CGI. Heritage is a God-Centered Congregation that connects people to God (Sunday morning worship) grows them with others (Community Groups/Sunday School), and impacts the world (IMPACT projects outside of the congregation, in the community). Accomplishing this naturally makes Heritage a God-Centered, Great Commission church. The two statements are reciprocal in nature enabling each to fulfill the other and making the vision, mission, and strategy of Heritage simple for its members to live.

CHAPTER FOUR

FROM FREE-WILL BAPTIST TO SOUTHERN BAPTIST

Heritage Baptist Church was established as Central Free Will Baptist Church in 1937. It remained associated with the National Association of Free Will Baptists¹⁶⁹ until the spring of 1991, when this author became the pastor, effectively serving as the congregation's first non-Free Will Baptist pastor since its inception in 1937. Between then and 2001, when the church joined the Southern Baptist Convention, it existed as an unaffiliated congregation and then an Independent Baptist Church associated with the Southwide Baptist Fellowship.

According to the National Association of Free Will Baptists (NAFWB) web site,

The Free Will Baptist Denomination . . . began in 1727. [It presently comprises] nearly 300,000 individuals from 2,500 congregations across 40 states . . . Free Will Baptists are fundamental in doctrine, that is, they share the historic Christian Faith with all other genuine Christians. They are, as the name indicates, Baptist in doctrine, teaching that immersion-not sprinkling or pouring-is the correct method of baptism. Finally, Free Will Baptists are free will in doctrine . . . The denomination supports missionaries in 20 international locations as well as the United States, Canada, Mexico, the Virgin Islands, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico.¹⁷⁰

The distinctive doctrine that divides a Free Will Baptist congregation from an Independent Baptist or Southern Baptist congregation is the perseverance of the saints.

The NAFWB website states

We believe that there are strong grounds to hope that the saved will persevere unto the end and be saved because of the power of divine grace pledged for their support. We believe that any saved person who has sinned (whether we call him a backslider or sinner), but has a desire to repent, may do so and be restored to God's favor and fellowship. Since a man, however, continues to have free choice, it is possible because of

¹⁶⁹ Hereafter written as NAFWB.

¹⁷⁰ <http://nafwb.org/> (accessed April 16, 2012).

temptations and the weakness of human flesh for him to fall into the practice of sin and to make shipwreck of his faith and be lost.¹⁷¹

It is because of that “free choice” emphasized both in how a person is saved¹⁷² and how a person may lose his or her salvation that the denomination is known as “Free-Will” Baptist.

The doctrine of Central Free Will Baptist Church was stated as a series of axioms.

1. The verbal inspiration of Scripture
2. The infallibility of the Bible
3. The virgin birth of Christ
4. The victorious and substitutionary death of Christ on the Cross
5. The bodily resurrection of Jesus
6. We believe the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin
7. We believe baptism is a symbol of death, burial, and resurrection and that baptism is by immersion.
8. We believe that Jesus commands us to be soul winners.
9. We believe that every Christian should be a tither.
10. We believe that where we cannot go that we are to plan and support a missionary program.
11. We are evangelistic in our approach.

¹⁷¹ ¹⁷¹ http://nafwb.org/?page_id=325 (accessed April 16, 2012).

¹⁷² Contrary to Baptists who emphasize God’s sovereignty in election and salvation grounded in the finished work of Christ, Free Will Baptists root salvation in humanity’s choice. The NAFWB website states “it is God’s will that all be saved, but since man has the power of choice, God saves only those who repent of their sin and believe in the work of Christ on the cross.” http://nafwb.org/?page_id=325. (Accessed April 16, 2012).

To celebrate the church's new location from Main Street to John Exum Parkway, Heritage paid for a full-page ad in the local newspaper, the *Johnson City Press*. The advertisement noted that the dedication occurred on Sunday, June 3. The date "1979" is written in pen at the top of the page. It states that Heritage Baptist Church (formerly Central Free Will Baptist Church) is a member of the NAFWB and cites Rev. Chester Phillips as the pastor and Rev. George Hippe as the Associate Pastor.

A Heritage brochure dated during the ministry of Dr. Phillips and Dwight Whitworth defines the church's ministry as "dedicated to bringing glory to the Lord Jesus Christ." The Heritage doctrine is stated as:

1. The verbal inspiration of the Bible, both the Old and New Testament
2. The creation of man by the direct act of God
3. The incarnation and virgin birth of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ
4. The vicarious atonement for the sins for mankind by the shedding of his blood on the cross
5. His power to save men from sin
6. Man's salvation through the personal acceptance of Christ as Savior
7. The baptism of believers by immersion
8. The necessity of the fellowship of believers
9. The need for spreading the gospel to all mankind
10. The pre-millennial, second coming of Christ.

Central Free Will Baptist Church changed its name to Heritage Baptist Church when it moved from the Main Street facility to its present location on John Exum Parkway. Although the church maintained an affiliation with the NAFWB, the name

Heritage Baptist no longer publicly identified it with that denomination. In addition, the primary distinctive of a Free Will Baptist congregation versus Baptists of other persuasions, i.e., the loss of one's salvation, was no longer emphasized in the preaching or teaching. For the remainder and majority of Dr. Phillips's tenure, the majority of people who joined the congregation were not aware the church was affiliated with the NAFWB.

When Dr. Phillips retired and a search committee was convened to seek a new pastor, that team discovered the church's affiliation with the NAFWB and brought it to the attention of the congregation. Since the majority of members were unaware of any association with the NAFWB or its doctrine, the Heritage membership voted to dissolve its relationship with the National Association of Free Will Baptists and begin its existence as an unaffiliated congregation. The pastoral search team conducted its search for a pastor who believed in and preached the doctrine known as the eternal security of the believer. Once the author of this project assumed his pastorate, the congregation began an unofficial relationship with the Independent Baptist movement under the auspices of the Southwide Baptist Fellowship.¹⁷³

Independent Baptist Churches are so called because of their lack of official affiliation with any denomination or convention. Generally speaking, however, Independent Baptist congregations are represented by entities such as the Southwide Baptist Fellowship, the World Baptist Fellowship, the Independent Baptist Fellowship, and/or the Baptist Bible Fellowship International. Because Independent Baptist

¹⁷³ The Southwide Baptist Fellowship formed in 1956 and serves as a network of Independent Baptist Churches in North America.

churches are just that, independent, no consensual doctrinal or philosophical statement exists. Such churches are, however, noted for their allegiance to the King James Version of the Bible, separation from what is considered worldly, and the dislike of evangelical movements that create cooperation across denominational lines and separation from the world. In 1969, Dr. Elmer Towns published *The Ten Largest Sunday Schools and What Makes Them Grow*.¹⁷⁴ Towns's top ten list included eight Independent Baptist Churches. Forty-two years later, a 2011 Pew Foundation study found that the membership of Independent Baptist Churches comprised three percent of the American adult population and less than 15% of American adults who identify themselves as Baptists.¹⁷⁵

While in the previous pastorate of an Independent Baptist congregation,¹⁷⁶ this author discovered the Southern Baptist philosophy of church health and growth. He employed those measures during the first years of his pastorate at Heritage. To become more knowledgeable and proficient in Southern Baptist church growth ideologies, the staff of Heritage regularly attended Southern Baptist church growth opportunities, including those sponsored by the Holston Baptist Association and the Southern Baptist Convention. In addition, the author visited the foreign mission field approximately every 18 months, where he became aware of the work of the International Mission

¹⁷⁴ Elmer L. Towns. *The Ten Largest Sunday Schools and What Makes Them Grow* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969).

¹⁷⁵ <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/affiliations-all-traditions.pdf>. (accessed April 16, 2012).

¹⁷⁶ The author's first pastorate was an Independent Baptist Church also located in Johnson City, Tn. He pastored that congregation for twenty-eight days shy of ten years.

Board, the Southern Baptist Convention agency dedicated to spreading the gospel on foreign soil.

As part of the strategic plan to increase Heritage's presence and global influence, the author encouraged Heritage to consider joining the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).¹⁷⁷ Five reasons for joining the SBC were placed before the church body. First, Heritage ministerial students were paying higher tuition rates at Independent Baptist colleges and universities, but the tuition of Southern Baptist students was subsidized by the Cooperative program. As an SBC-affiliated congregation, the members of Heritage who desired ministerial education could take advantage of lower education costs.

Second, the Heritage staff paid a higher rate for attending training seminars sponsored by the local Holston Baptist Association.¹⁷⁸ In many events, SBC churches paid nothing for such training, while Independent churches were charged for such opportunities. As well, in-house specialists associated with the Tennessee Baptist Convention offered myriad training and consultation for SBC congregations who did not pay for such benefits.

Third, the SBC Annuity Board¹⁷⁹ afforded Southern Baptist pastors health, medical, and life insurance. As an Independent congregation, the individual pastors were

¹⁷⁷ Hereafter the Southern Baptist Convention will be referred to as the SBC.

¹⁷⁸ Southern Baptist congregations participate in Southern Baptist life in a variety of ways. A congregation may choose to be part of the local, geographic Association of churches, its state Convention and/or directly to the Southern Baptist Convention as represented by the Executive Committee of the SBC.

¹⁷⁹ Founded in Dallas in 1918 by the Southern Baptist Convention, GuideStone Financial Resources began operation as the Board of Ministerial Relief and Annuities. For several years its major ministry was distribution of relief funds for aged ministers, their widows and orphans. The work was initially funded by a \$100,000 gift from the Baptist Sunday School Board. Later, nearly \$1 million was contributed by industrialists John D. Rockefeller and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. For the first 30 years its role was to provide for the immediate needs of pastors and families seeking financial assistance and assisting others in their

required to obtain their own insurance and often at much higher rates than could be obtained in a group. As an SBC congregation, the pastors would be eligible for all of the services provided by the Annuity Board.

Fourth, the International Mission Board¹⁸⁰ of the SBC is recognized as one of the most effective mission agencies in the history of Christendom. The Cooperative Program¹⁸¹ of the Southern Baptist Convention supports its national and foreign missionaries, effectively releasing missionaries to minister without the added encumbrance of fund raising. Heritage members who desired to serve God in a foreign location endured years of deputation and often suffered the lack of appropriate funding once on the field. As SBC-sponsored missionaries, Heritage members could access all of

retirement needs by providing annuities. In the 1960s both life and health insurance programs were added to the offerings and the forms of coverage continued to expand. The rollout of mutual funds in 2001 made IRAs and non-retirement personal investment accounts available to participants and their spouses. In 2004, GuideStone received approval to expand its market base. GuideStone now makes available competitive financial products and services to evangelical churches and institutions.

- 1918 — Institution chartered as the Commission on Ministerial Relief and Annuity
- 1920 — Charter was amended and the name changed to the Relief and Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention
- 1961 — The name was shortened and changed to the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention
- 2004 — Messengers to the 2004 Southern Baptist Convention approved recommendations to change the name to GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention and to expand its products and services to evangelical churches and ministries

¹⁸⁰ The Southern Baptist Convention was formed in 1845. It's emphasis was the creation of two mission boards – the Foreign Mission board and the Domestic Mission Board (now North American Mission Board)...The Foreign Mission Board, in Richmond, VA., held its first commissioning service in 1846. Since then more than 20,000 missionaries have been appointed.
<http://www.imb.org/main/page.asp?StoryID=4487&LanguageID=1709>. (accessed April 16, 2012).

¹⁸¹ In 1919, the leaders of the SBC proposed the 75 Million Campaign, a five-year pledge campaign that, for the first time, included everything—the missions and ministries of all the state conventions as well as that of the Southern Baptist Convention. Though falling short of its goals, a God-given partnership of missions support was conceived—The Cooperative Program. Since its launch in 1925, the effectiveness of the Cooperative Program has been dependent upon individuals, churches, state conventions, and SBC entities cooperating, working toward a common goal of sharing the gospel with every person on the planet.
<http://www.cpmiissions.net/2003/what%20is%20cp.asp>. (accessed April 16, 2012).

the resources of either the International Mission Board or the North American Mission Board.

To aid the Heritage congregation's understanding of what it would mean to be affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, the author invited Paige Patterson to speak with the Heritage leadership and then the congregation about the pros and cons of Southern Baptist life. Patterson visited Heritage twice. At the time of the invitation, Patterson was President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. When Patterson actually addressed Heritage, he had also assumed the Presidency of the SBC. In his presentation, Dr. Patterson spoke of the doctrinal resurgence taking place in the SBC. He encouraged Heritage to join the SBC so that (fifth), as a doctrinally conservative Baptist congregation, Heritage could lend its voice to the resurgence taking place within the SBC.

On the first occasion, Patterson addressed the church leadership, approximately 60 people who comprise the various leadership teams: staff, missions, finance, trustees, deacons, and personnel. He then answered any questions the leadership team raised. Afterward, the leadership team served as cheerleaders for the move into the Convention. They were able to introduce the concept to the various teams and their families, answer questions, and calm concerns. When the pastor finally approached the congregation for a vote, the vast majority of the congregation had already been engaged in small group and one-on-one discussions about the matter. As a result, there was very little discussion at the business meeting during which the vote was taken to join the SBC.

On September 23, 2001, the congregation of Heritage Baptist Church voted to join the Southern Baptist Convention. Founded in 1845,¹⁸² “The SBC is the largest evangelical denomination in the country, with over 44,000 churches in all fifty states”¹⁸³ and “more than 16 million church members.”¹⁸⁴ One hundred ninety-nine people voted in the affirmative to join the Southern Baptist Convention, and fourteen people voted against the measure. There were no abstentions. Not one voting member left the church because Heritage joined the SBC.

At present, the congregation possesses two doctrinal statements, one enjoyed by the congregation after the church body voted to become an unaffiliated church and the other *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, the doctrinal statement of the SBC. The transition to elder leadership will require a new set of by-laws for Heritage, and that change will also eliminate the church’s own doctrinal statement in favor of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.

All five of the reasons elucidated for joining the SBC have been realized by Heritage. The congregation has maintained a number of students in SBC seminaries, and a number of these students have joined the International Mission Board (IMB) as missionaries to foreign countries. Heritage continues to benefit from training and material offered by Lifeway, the latest of which will be the use of *The Gospel Project*, a

¹⁸² Ergun and Emir Caner. *One Sacred Trust* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2003), p. x.

¹⁸³ David S. Dockery, ed. *Southern Baptist Identity: An Evangelical Denomination Faces the Future*. (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2009), 13.

¹⁸⁴ David S. Dockery. *Southern Baptist Consensus and Renewal: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Proposal* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Academic, 2008), 2.

three-year Sunday School program. All of the pastors have benefited from *Guidestone Financial Resources*. Finally, the Senior Pastor has engaged in discussions in matters facing the SBC and the TBC. To date, Heritage's association with the SBC has been a mutually beneficial relationship realized in kingdom advancement both in the United States and on foreign soil. One prime example is that, at the time of this writing, Heritage has just entered into a long-term ministry relationship in Italy sponsored by the International Mission Board and the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

The Next Five Years

On the first Sunday of 2012, the author presented a five-year plan to Heritage through a series of messages intended to set the stage for future growth and influence of the congregation both locally and globally. Prior to that date, only the staff and Board of Directors were privy to the new vision for Heritage. The five-year vision marked the most dramatic intentional transition in the author's tenure.

Since 2008, Heritage's vision has been to be a *God-centered, great commission* congregation (GC²). This is what makes the congregation distinctive in Northeast Tennessee. That vision is the heart-beat of the congregation and directs its mission. That mission is five-fold and includes.

1 – CGI

- a) Connect to God – Worship – Upward (heart)
- b) Grow with others – Study & Fellowship – Inward (mind)
- c) Impact the world - Evangelism – Outward (hands)

To be successful in its vision, CGI must permeate the corporate gathering, CGs, families, and every member of the congregation. That mindset should undergird every

meeting. It should permeate every conversation the staff or any leadership team member has with the congregants. If God-centered, great commission is the heart-beat, then CGI are the vessels that carry that blood throughout the body.

CGI offers direction and balance to Christian living.

- a) Every member should be able to articulate CGI.
- b) Every CG should employ it.
- c) Every family should apply it.
- d) Every person should live it.

2 – Large- Group, Small-Group

Throughout Scripture, God has led and cared for his people in a large-group, small-group philosophy.

- a) Moses led all of Israel but cared for them in a small-group format
- b) Ezra preached to all of Israel but gave them the understanding and application of his teaching in small groups
- c) The early church met in the large group of thousands but cared for one another through house-to-house gatherings

Every believer should be involved in a large-group and small-group ministry.

Heritage intends to increase the percentage of people who attend CGs and to create others. CGs are the core of the congregation. The larger the core, the larger the circumference. The church is not in a church-building business, but the leadership does want to influence for Christ as many people as possible, and the primary vehicle for this is the small group. There are 52, 570 people in Johnson City, and Heritage presently has 26 adult CGs. The Senior Pastor envisions 53 adult CGs sponsored by Heritage, one for every 1000 people in Johnson City. To accomplish this feat, the church will need to think outside the box and create some CGs for Wednesday nights and off-campus. CGs need to go public. It will require the constant employment of the “XO” principle in every CG and move from discipling disciples to discipling leaders. These small groups will afford

Heritage the opportunity to extend its Christian influence into the lives of many people.

3 – Multi-Site

In actuality, Heritage has already multi-sited in two church plants and other church starts sponsored by or affiliated with the congregation. However, none of these congregations retain the Heritage DNA of GC² and CGI, each to varying and ever-lesening degrees. To reproduce a valid local church with its core values, Heritage needs to multi-site in other places with the eventual goal of the site becoming a self-sustaining, thriving, impacting congregation.

Specifically, the senior staff intends to target faltering congregations who will seek help in rejuvenating themselves in their existing facilities enabling Heritage to fulfill this vision with minimal cost and taking advantage of strategic locations. Apart from the other congregations planted by Heritage, Crosspointe and Roan Hill, this will be Heritage’s most intentional, strategic and powerful IMPACT project.¹⁸⁵

Heritage will continue to plant churches but not in Johnson City.

Multi-siting will enable Heritage to:

- a) Continue numeric growth unencumbered by physical issues; parking, sanctuary, CG, scheduling, etc.
- b) Impart a GC² core to other congregations
- c) Rejuvenate faltering congregations
- d) Be present/expand Heritage influence in multiple neighborhoods inside of and immediately around Johnson City
- e) Disciple the Heritage congregation to be leaders who are spiritual, skilled and confident to assume primary leadership in other congregations
- f) Remain focused on God’s kingdom agenda

To accomplish this feat, Heritage will need CGs who are willing to “seed” these

¹⁸⁵ Impact projects are the congregation’s formal evangelistic endeavors. A formal project implies ministry staff leadership, is placement on the Heritage calendar and small group involvement larger than one family.

sites by gathering in other locations on Sundays. However, all GROW/Wednesday night programming will continue to take place at this main campus until the site becomes an independent congregation or until the main campus will not manage the number of people. Heritage will also create a leadership team for each other campus consisting of:

- 1) a site director/campus pastor
- 2) a worship leader
- 3) a CG director
- 4) a youth director
- 5) a children's director

Staff will certainly be responsible for raising up such leadership within their own ministries at Heritage, but they will also be responsible for raising up leaders who disciple other leaders. These second generation leaders will not only enhance the ministry at Heritage but also provide called, skilled, and gifted church members for the core of a congregation elsewhere. Many variables will exist from site to site and every aspect of what those ministries will look like cannot be determined with exactness. These will include the choice between live preaching or DVD and progress in Heritage assuming full control of the site until it can create its own identity and sustain its own mission. It is important to note that the Heritage leadership will not put its own people at vision/mission risk by placing them in situations where the CG² concept or CGI philosophy will be compromised.

4 – The Family Ministry Plan

The Family Ministry Plan calls for a “Family Pastor” to direct, oversee, and coordinate the children's, youth, and adult ministries of Heritage while personally directing the adult ministries of the church with regard to the Heritage goal of making “every home a little church.”

Utilizing the *Family Ministry Plan*, Heritage meets and ministers to the whole family as the whole family. Heritage leadership recognizes parents as a teen and/or child's primary spiritual influencers. To minister only to children and/or teens is to miss a greater opportunity, ministry to parents who most powerfully influence those children and teens. It reminds, places, and then enables parents to be the God-ordained leaders of their children. It removes Christianity from the Sunday-only syndrome and makes it an everyday life experience. It makes children's and youth pastors of every parent, which is a biblical opportunity, joy, and responsibility. Just as the congregation ministers to the whole person, the Family Ministry Plan ministers to the whole family.

5 – An Elder-Led Congregation

Not all the details of a local church's governance are specified in Scripture. The Heritage goal is to be informed by the Word, use godly wisdom for our particular situation, and preserve the essential character of the New Testament church.

- a) An elder-led congregation is biblical
- b) An elder-led congregation has historic Baptist roots
- c) An elder-led congregation involves laity at the same level as pastors raising the biblical bar for the whole congregation
- d) An elder-led congregation increases the size of the primary leadership team
- e) An elder-led congregation represents the congregation more fully
- f) An elder-led congregation gives the congregation more voices in vision and direction
- g) An elder-led congregation shares the opportunity, burden and blessing of vision, ministry, and prayer
- h) An elder-led congregation affords greater accountability of the vocational staff
- i) An elder-led congregation exercises the giftedness of the body through its elder team
- j) An elder-led congregation ensures stability during pastoral changes

This vision will be exercised in the following order:

- 1 – Heritage builds the foundation of CG² / CGI
- 2 – The Senior staff train leaders through CGs

- 3 – The church creates godly/strong families through Family Ministry
- 4 – Heritage models an elder-leadership team/style for governance
- 5 – Heritage expands/exports through multi-sites

In so doing, Heritage will create such a mature congregation that anyone/family can leave Heritage and serve as a missionary and in leadership to any other congregation.

The staffing plan at Heritage is designed to fulfill the Senior Pastor's vision for the congregation. Rather than staffing to Heritage's present situation, the new staffing plan will enable Heritage to fulfill a new vision and ensure the congregation's viability into the near future. It will also ensure that Heritage continues to engage the community and globe with the gospel. Such God-centeredness will result in a new great commission passion.

CHAPTER FIVE

FROM BUSES TO FAMILY MINISTRY

The Central Free Will Baptist Church bus ministry began in January of 1968. At the height of its success, the bus ministry transported “hundreds” to the Main Street location. An undated brochure states “We now have one of the largest bus ministries of this kind in upper East Tennessee.” For many years, the bus ministry was an effective tool for reaching people for Christ and children in particular. Unnumbered adults can testify to God's good grace toward them as children in a ministry designed to reach the masses in Jesus' name. There was a time when the bus ministry was a major, cutting edge kingdom-building strategy for American Christianity.

Elmer Towns writes,

At the beginning of the 1970s Sunday school busing was introduced to the Christian education world as a technique of growth used by the independent Baptist churches. Quickly, most conservative denominations adapted busing as an outreach technique. But the Arab oil embargo was the main influence to reverse the trend. Also, those Sunday schools that had gotten into busing for the wrong reasons found that busing was expensive, involved hard work, demanded extra teaching staff, additional facilities, and usually introduced to the Sunday school children from lower-class areas who brought discipline problems.¹⁸⁶

The bus ministry in America grew so fast that it never fully developed a common ethos. Among Independent Baptist churches, it seemed no church could do without such a ministry. It was often viewed as a mark of Great Commission mindedness or a lack thereof: “The purpose of the bus ministry is to carry out the Great Commission. To have

¹⁸⁶ Elmer L. Towns, John N. Vaughan, David J. Siefert. *The Complete Book of Church Growth* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1981), 15.

any other purpose will not have God's blessing."¹⁸⁷ And yet many other churches did engage in the bus ministry for reasons other than a Great Commission mindedness. The bus ministry's rapid success was also its greatest weakness. Multitudes of churches became involved in an effort to prove their evangelistic fervor or simply for the numeric growth it afforded. It was a phenomenon that never fully developed a proper theology or philosophy. Every church seemed to assume its own version and the aggressive or outlandish aspects of the ministry cajoled other churches to race for the largest bus ministry. And, in the end, the mass appeal of the bus ministry disappeared as quickly as it appeared. Dave Smith correctly assessed the situation when he wrote, "the bus ministry is less popular today than ever before."¹⁸⁸

During its heyday, there was no more influential name in bus ministry than Walter Beebe. Beebe was born in Columbus, Ohio, on February 27, 1934. His leadership in the bus ministry movement eventually earned him the title of "Mr. Bus." Beebe hosted 31 national bus conventions. He also directed some of the largest bus ministries in America, among them Thomas Road Baptist Church and the First Baptist Church of Hammond Indiana. For Beebe, the bus ministry enabled the church to reach children who otherwise could not come to church, gain new teachers and soul winners, solve the dilemma of unresponsive invitations, disciple young preachers, and avert a decline in membership.¹⁸⁹ In 1975, Beebe listed the five largest bus ministries in the United States as "First Baptist,

¹⁸⁷ Dave Smith. *The Soul Winning Bus Ministry: A Complete How-To-Do-It Manual*, 1.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 4.

¹⁸⁹ Wally Beebe. *All About the Bus Ministry* (Murfreesboro: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1970), v.

Hammond, Indiana; Landmark Baptist Temple, Cincinnati, Ohio; Trinity Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida; Canton Baptist Temple, Canton, Ohio; Highland Park Baptist Church, Chattanooga, Tennessee.”¹⁹⁰ Beebe’s own statistics determined it impossible to distinguish between “who is first or second in the nation,”¹⁹¹ but the front cover of his book alerts the reader to an introduction by “Dr. Jack Hyles with the world’s largest bus ministry at Hammond, Indiana.”¹⁹²

Jack Hyles pastored First Baptist Hammond, Indiana, from 1959 until his death in 2001. In 1975, Elmer Towns accredited the church as “the fastest growing Sunday school in America.”¹⁹³ As late as the early 1990s, based on attendance figures provided by First Baptist, Hammond ranked it as the largest church in the nation.¹⁹⁴ Few churches employed the bus ministry in a comparable fashion to this particular congregation. In 1970, Hyles personally estimated that the church operated “over eighty buses which bring well over 2,000 people a Sunday to Sunday school and preaching . . . approximately 1,600 to 1,700 people a Sunday attend because of this ministry.” Five years later, *Time* magazine attributed the congregation’s “super church” size to its bus ministry comprised

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 13.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 12.

¹⁹² Ibid., Front cover.

¹⁹³ Elmer Towns. *The Ten Largest Sunday Schools and What Makes Them Grow* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969), 33.
http://www.elmertowns.com/books/online/10_largest_ss/10_Largest_SS%5BETowns%5D.PDF (accessed October 3, 2012).

¹⁹⁴ H. Paul Chalfant. *Religion in Contemporary Society* (3rd Edition), Itasca, Illinois: F.E. Peacock Publishers (1994), 363-364.

of more than 1,000 workers and 230 buses.¹⁹⁵ Estimates on the number of bus riders ranged from 7,000 to 15,000.¹⁹⁶

In his 1970 *Jack Hyles' Church Bus Handbook*, Hyles listed the assets and liabilities of a bus ministry. He noted the assets as an increase in attendance and conversions, transportation for those who could not otherwise afford transportation to church, providing the church with an opportunity for sacrificial service, developing soul winners, offering ministry opportunities, training preacher boys, and enabling church members to attend. The liabilities consisted of the financial cost, delinquent or lost children, destruction of property, lack of space, and opposition from people in the church.¹⁹⁷

The bus ministry began as a sincere attempt to rescue the perishing in as great a number as was possible. It was deemed an effective tool for reaching masses of people, particularly children but also in the hope that families could be reached through their children. In reality, that hope was never fully realized. Tony Kummer, a bus ministry proponent who remains active in the bus ministry to this date, writes “Very few churches, ours included, have really figured out how to get the families of our bus kids involved in our church.” He also notes significant flaws in a bus ministry that does not engage parents or whole families. “We reinforce poor parenting habits. We preach parental

¹⁹⁵ Superchurch. *Time*, December 1, 1975.
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,913788,00.html> (accessed October 3, 2012).

¹⁹⁶ Cathleen Falsani. Brother Jack Hyles of Hammond Dies at 74. *Chicago Sun-Times*, February 8, 2001. <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-4581296.html> (accessed October 3, 2012).

¹⁹⁷ Jack Hyles. *Jack Hyles' Church Bus Handbook* (Hammond: Daniels Publishers, 1970), 10-20.

responsibility, but contradict it by picking up these kids while their parents stay home.”¹⁹⁸ Because of this inability to reach parents who then reinforce a Christian ethic in the home, Kummer laments, “We see very few conversions. Bus kids are often very open to the Gospel, but we don’t see much long-term fruit. This may be because they move away or because the home environment counteracts what we teach.”¹⁹⁹

It isn’t as though the bus ministry has disappeared from the Christian landscape. For instance, North Valley Baptist Church in Santa Clara, California, has been operating the bus ministry since 1975. The church’s web site states it has seen tens of thousands of souls saved, lives changed, and families helped as more than 1.2 million riders have ridden its buses.²⁰⁰

But for all its good intentions, the bus ministry was never effective in its ultimate goal. Originally it was thought that reaching children would afford the church a foot in the door of many homes, thereby enhancing the potential for household salvation. It was a logical assumption. In the end, however, unsaved parents were all too happy to send their children to church, but they never attended. In fact, it tended to grant parents a sense of fulfilled responsibility without personal involvement in the lives of their children’s religious education or spiritual upbringing. Instead of reaching whole families, the multitude of riders and converts were children whose parents were not reached with the gospel.

¹⁹⁸ Tony Kummer. <http://ministry-to-children.com/church-bus-ministry/> (accessed September 19, 2012).

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ <http://busministryworks.com/keep-the-buses-rolling/> (accessed December 29, 2012)

To some extent, the bus ministry sowed the seeds of its own demise. The bus ministry created at least two false environments for children and their families. Busing children to church created an environment of biblical reality, one that existed for only a few hours of the week for the bused children who attended church. Once home, parents inadvertently or intentionally undermined everything taught to their children at church. This undoubtedly created conflict within the family. Children expected one reality, and parents produced a reality in diametric proportion to the biblical parameters taught and endorsed in the church setting. What at first seemed like a good opportunity for parents to fulfill their moral obligation to raise their children with a sense of God really showed children the ungodliness of their parents and home environments. Parents felt in competition with church teachers. Ignorant of the Bible and unable to fulfill God's commandments with joy, parents were unable to enforce, maintain, or support the spiritual education of their children.

This scenario also taught children to segregate Sunday from the remainder of the week. Children witnessed the hypocrisy of parents who sent children to church but did not attend church or live the Christian life. It was a life very easy to duplicate and much easier than the life presented by well-meaning adults who did not live with the children they taught. Without any real platform for the implementation of Sunday School lessons or the preaching of the Bible, children lost the Sunday investment in competition to every other day of the week.

This author is aware of many children who professed Christ via the bus ministry and who presently live for Christ. But the simple record cannot be denied of the number of bus riders who continue to live the Christian life versus the number of children whose

professions lacked reality or whose lives were eventually and permanently overwhelmed by the influence of the world. The bus ministry had every good intent but it lacked influence in the one essential and biblical environment necessary to the wellbeing of a child's faith: the divinely instituted family.

Eventually, Heritage transitioned out of the bus ministry and began placing an emphasis on family ministry. In the place of bus ministry and ministry that targets children as the door to a family's salvation, Heritage began to emphasize family ministry through its calling of a Family Pastor in 2011. The Senior Pastor presented the need for family ministry from both a biblical and practical perspective.

From the practical perspective, it was noted that *LifeWay Christian Research* reports, "The overwhelming majority of children from evangelical families are leaving the church before they enter adulthood."²⁰¹ Glenn Schultz at *LifeWay Christian Resources* estimates that 75% of young people leave the church in their late teens and aren't reconnecting later.²⁰² Ron Luce in *Battle Cry for a Generation* estimates that "88% of kids raised in Christian homes do not continue to follow the Lord after they graduate from high school."²⁰³ Josh McDowell estimates, "69% of youth are leaving traditional church after high school."²⁰⁴ Finally, in a recent survey on the importance of religion by generation, the following results were discovered.

²⁰¹ Steve Wright and Chris Graves. *reThink* (Raleigh: Inquest Ministries, 2007), p. 19.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

% Who Said Religion is Very Important

Greatest (-1928) 75%

Silent (1928-45) 67%

Boomer (1946-64) 60%

Gen X (1965-80) 52%

Millennial (1981-) 40%²⁰⁵

To accommodate the emphasis on family ministry, Heritage voted to adopt a family-sensitive ministry model for family, youth, and children's ministries. The proposed change would place a Family Life Pastor (pastor to parents) above the youth and children's pastor as their immediate supervisor. A recently hired Ministries Coordinator is responsible to the Senior Pastor and acts as the immediate supervisor to remainder of the ministry staff, including the Family Life Pastor. The youth pastor, Mike Richards, was deemed an appropriate candidate for the Family Life Pastor position and moved to that position. Richards was called to Heritage as the youth pastor in 2008. He had just completed his MDiv at Southern Seminary and came to Heritage with his wife, Kathryn, and children. In effect, Richards served as a pastor to parents and would be involved in the formal call of a youth director and a children's director.

²⁰⁵ *Faith @ Family Values* The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Commission. 2010/Issue 1.

Planning for Restaffing

At the bequest of our personnel chairman, a team was created to lead a search team for a children's pastor. At that time, the Senior Pastor initially proposed the change to a family ministry model to the team leader and our personnel chairman. In that conversation, the Senior Pastor also offered his perspective on ministry to upcoming generations. After the leader entertained the Senior Pastor's proposal, prayed, and contemplated it for two weeks, he returned to acknowledge its merit. Thereafter, the team leader and the Senior Pastor recognized that the church's greatest need at Heritage was not a children's pastor but a reorganization of the staff based on a transformation in priorities. The transformation would require the hiring of a family pastor and then directors of the youth and children's programs. These "directors" could be pastors, but in actuality they would be hired for their organizational skill set and not their pastoring abilities. The Family Life pastor would oversee the care of parents, and the youth and children's directors would act as a youth pastor in every traditional sense of the word. The primary difference between this and any traditional church mode would be that an overarching philosophical model of family ministry would direct all three ministries (parents, youth, and children) led by the Family Life pastor who would also strategically target parents in the fulfilling of Deuteronomy 6 and Matthew 28 within the context of their own families.

The Senior Pastor and the team leader next met with the personnel chairman who enthusiastically endorsed the new model. Together they formed an initial strategic planning team. Thereafter, the three men met with the staff and unveiled the proposal to

them. The intent was to proceed slowly but strategically enlarge the circle of influence for the new plan. The initial strategic planning team also hoped to gain the support of these various teams such that they would become advocates of the new change with their own circles of influence. The team interacted with the staff on questions and gave them a week to contemplate the change.

Thereafter, the team approached the Board of Directors and proceeded to share a PowerPoint presentation, organizational chart, and philosophical shift in ministry. As with the staff, they also interacted with the Board and gave them a week to pray and contemplate the change. After gaining the Board's approval, the team next met with the deacons and finance team to share the new plan. After gaining the Deacon Board and Finance team's agreement, the team approached the 27 adult Community Group leaders. At that time, 74% of Heritage Sunday morning corporate gathering attendees also attended small groups.²⁰⁶ As such, Community Group leaders are an integral part of influencing the congregation. Any major transition at Heritage has always been easier to propose and enact when the Community Group leaders have been in on the change from the ground floor, understand the change has been given time to assimilate the potential advantages and disadvantages, and can then effectively communicate what is happening.

It was at the Community Group level that the plan for Family Ministry first met resistance. Several Community Group leaders also had children in the youth ministry. Community Group leaders approved of the Family Ministry plan but did not approve of the plan to move the Youth Pastor to the Family Life pastor position. The youth pastor had been at Heritage for two years, but, from the perspective of these parents, he had not

²⁰⁶ In 2012 CGs averaged an all-time high of 86% of the Sunday morning congregation.

successfully fulfilled his ministry description such that he should be given an enlarged ministry responsibility.

Immediately after that meeting, the Senior Pastor e-mailed those Community Group leaders individually and asked for a meeting with them and the Ministries Coordinator. The new Family Life pastor would be directly responsible to the Ministries Coordinator, so it was imperative for him to also attend the meetings. On the following Monday, the Senior Pastor and Ministries Coordinator met with one of the Community Group leaders and on Tuesday met with the other two leaders. The same material presented in the Community Leader meetings was reviewed in that meeting. In addition, the Ministries Coordinator provided background information to the need and reason for the desired change and then asked the leaders about their points of contention.

In effect, two of the three Community Group leaders accepted the idea of the change after they were given more information about the transition and were assured that the Ministries Coordinator would affect an oversight program that would ensure the new Family Pastor was held accountable to his new ministry description. The third Community Group leader remained unconvinced that the Youth Pastor would successfully transition as the Family Life Pastor. The new ministry description and the plan for oversight were presented, but the Community Group leader would not agree to the plan. He simply did not believe the present Youth Pastor should be given authority over two other directors/pastors and an enlarged ministry opportunity when, according to this Community Group leader, the youth pastor had not proven successful in his present job. The Community Group leader was, however, willing to meet again, and future meetings were planned.

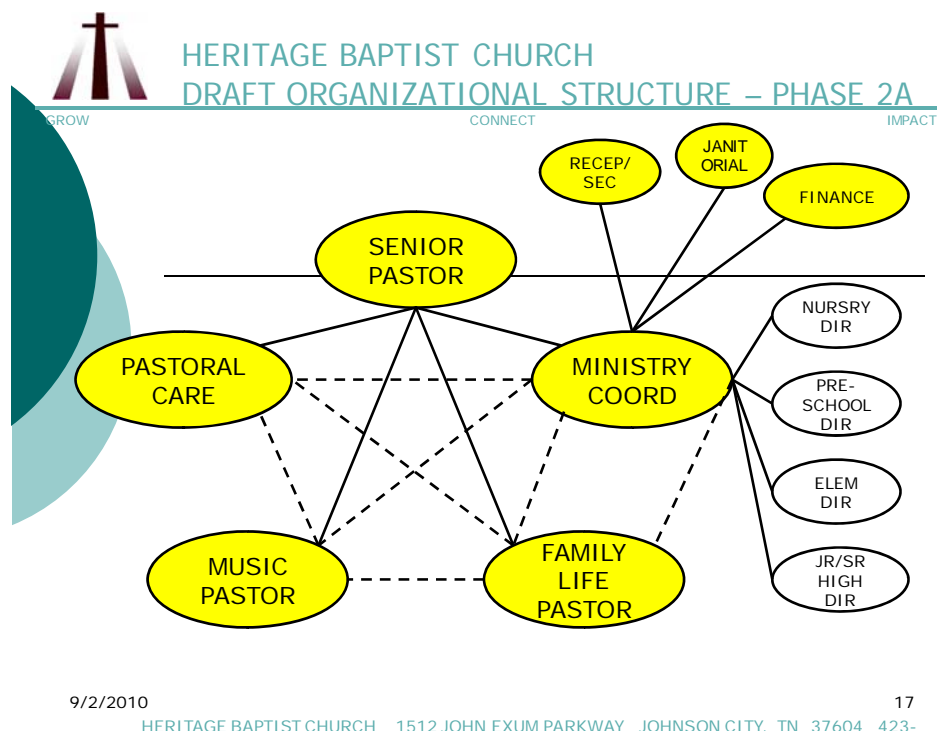
The contesting Community Group leader was a good friend of the Senior Pastor, a supporter of the ministry at Heritage, and heavily invested in the church. Any interaction with this particular leader would only provide the Senior Pastor and Ministries Coordinator with valuable information about perceived weaknesses that exist in the new staff plan. It is also important to keep open the lines of communication. This shows the Community Group leader and other members that senior staff is listening even if there is disagreement and enhances the position of the senior staff with all other church leaders.

The next item on the agenda was to meet again with the Community Group leaders and ask for their further input and the input they had received from their classes since the last meeting. Alert to that information, the Senior Pastor began preaching a series of messages intended to reveal the strategic plan and garner support for the vision. At that point, however, most of the church was already aware of the situation, had spoken with their various Community Group leaders, friends, etc., and formulated their perspective on the plan. In reality, the large group meeting was only a necessary formality intended to inspire the congregation toward the possibilities of the ministry plan. Afterward the church was given two weeks to pray about and contemplate the proposed changes. At that meeting, the congregation voted overwhelmingly to accept the proposal in its entirety.

Not every person in the church was in agreement about the change. Nor did the church vote 100% for the change. But every person who desired to interact on the matter and every person of potential influence was afforded an opportunity to discuss the matter and then vote on the change at hand. This enabled the church to follow its by-laws and give the congregation time to ask important questions that only gave further direction to

the family ministry strategic planning team. This is important for, in the author's experience, it is often not the transition itself but the manner in which the change is effected that most discourages Baptist parishioners.²⁰⁷

The Proposed Organizational Chart



Four ministry models present the spectrum of family ministry in the U.S.

- a) Programmatic ministry – Ministries are segregated into silos and family ministry is one of those ministries

²⁰⁷ Although the proposed restructuring of the Heritage staff was approved by the congregation it will not be fulfilled. At the time of this writing Richards has been voted as Senior Pastor at Pinecrest Baptist Church also located in Johnson City. The church will continue its family emphasis by hiring a youth pastor with a family emphasis. The chairman of the personnel team is overseeing a youth pastor search team whose task is two-fold. The first job is to continue the development of the family ministry plan and ensure the congregation is aware of and acknowledges Heritage's family ministry emphasis. To accomplish this in part, the team will suggest that the congregation ordain Mike Foreman, the Children's Director and retitle him as the Children's Pastor. Mike Foreman will then determine the staff map essential for him to faithfully fulfill his ministry description. With a Youth and Children's Pastor the congregation will ensure that its family emphasis continues to be recognized as a core value of the congregation.

- b) Family-based model – The programmatic structure remains unchanged but each separate ministry plans and programs in ways that intentionally draw generations together
- c) Family-Equipping model – Organized programs still exist but the church is completely restructured to draw the generations together, equipping parents, championing their role as primary disciple-makers
- d) Family-Integrated model – Eliminates all segregated programs and events. All or nearly all programs and events are multi-generational with a strong focus on parents’ responsibilities to evangelize and disciple their own children.

The Heritage’s Family Ministry exists somewhere between “b” (Family-based model) and “c” (Family-equipping model). Children’s and youth programs are valued, but opportunities abound for families to minister and grow together. In addition, parents are viewed as a child/teen’s primary spiritual influence and the church as an aid to strengthening that parental leadership role and family bond.

The church maintains a programmatic structure in CGs and youth ministry. The Family Ministry encourages multi-generational CGs. The youth ministry is operated by parents under a youth director. The Family Ministry also plans multi-generational opportunities for fellowship and ministry. The Family Ministry equips parents as the primary evangelists and mentors of their own children’s walk with God, providing resources and encouraging accountability.

Family is central to the congregation’s mission, and every ministry consistently plans environments that draw families and generations together. Every ministry asks “What is best for families?” It seeks to avoid programming that tends to divide rather than unite families. The church creates opportunities to draw families together through

Sunday School materials and evangelistic ministry projects. Every ministry co-champions the church's ministry to family and parents' responsibility. This is because the Genesis-patterned family is God's primary means of propagating the gospel throughout Christian history. It is the fundamental building block of church and society. Family is the first and most significant institution created by God. Heritage seeks to evangelize and disciple children and youth in the context of the corporate body and family in the leadership of fathers, the nobility of mother, and the wonder of childhood.

The genesis for *Family Ministry* at Heritage is Genesis 12:3. Its motivation is a sincere passion for God's glory on the earth and the exaltation of Jesus Christ among all peoples, a goal which God, by virtue of His very self-existent nature, will accomplish, I suggest, primarily by the propagation of the Christian faith through believing families who teach and reach their own children thus insuring the fulfillment of Revelation 5:9. Hence, Family Ministry at Heritage begins, ends with, and centers upon Scripture with the first book of Genesis as its reason and the last book of Revelation as its rejoicing.

Heritage Family Ministry is humbly offered as encouragement to families within our congregation. It exists to equip families to fulfill the Great Commission within their own families and throughout all generations, previous, present, and future. As generations of families before the 21st century, Heritage intends to raise its Ebenezer to the certainty of God's victorious conquest when "all the families of the nations shall worship" (Psalm 22:27) our God - our own children first and foremost.

CHAPTER SIX

FROM ONE PASTOR TO SIX PASTORS TO ELDERS

In 1972, Elmer Towns published the book *America's Fastest Growing Churches: Why 10 Sunday Schools Are Growing Fast*. Towns dedicated the book to two men, one of whom was Beauchamp Vick. Vick was the pastor of the one-time largest Sunday school in the United States. He was also a former President of the Baptist Bible College, a school associated with the Independent Baptist movement, the same tradition in which this author began his own pastoral ministry. Part of that dedication notes that Baptist Bible College was “responsible for pastors of 23 of the largest 75 Sunday Schools, according to the 1970 listing in *Christian Life* magazine.”²⁰⁸ Three years earlier, in his *The Ten Largest Sunday Schools And What Makes Them Grow*, Towns highlighted the ten largest Sunday schools in America, seven out of ten being Independent Baptist.

This author remembers Dr. Curtis Hutson (1934-1995) state that 33 of the largest 100 churches in America were Independent Baptist churches.²⁰⁹ But by 1984 John Vaughan's *The World's 20 Largest Churches: Church Growth Principles in Action* recorded Independent Baptist churches as only three out of the ten largest churches in America. If any single church growth factor was emphasized by the American early church growth movement it was the leadership of the pastor. Quoting Dr. Charles Blair

²⁰⁸ Elmer L. Towns. *America's Fastest Growing Churches: Why 10 Sunday Schools Are Growing Fast* (Nashville: Impact Books, 1972), dedication page.

²⁰⁹ The author remembers Dr. Hutson making that statement at Temple Baptist Church in Kingsport, Tennessee, in 1974 or 1975. The author contacted Dr. Elmer Towns, the researcher who put the list together, and Towns feels that that number is close to the truth.

of Calvary Chapel, Towns writes “Dr. Blair believes the minister should give leadership to the total program of the church. He quotes John Mott, the missionary statesman, “Whenever the church has failed it has failed because of inadequate leadership.”²¹⁰ Yet dependence on a single man for the success of a local congregation has historically proven tenuous at best as is evidenced by the one-time fastest growing churches and their high-profile pastors.

Converted at the age of 17, this author began his ministerial career during the national church growth success of such Independent Baptist luminaries as Lee Roberson, Jack Hyles, Curtis Hutson, Bob Gray, and Jerry Falwell to name only a few. Among the congregations led by those men, only Thomas Road Baptist Church, founded by Jerry Falwell, would be considered an influential church in America in the 21st century. It has been generally true of Independent Baptist churches that the church’s success is directly tied to its founder or charismatic leader. Once that person is absent, those churches have historically begun a numeric and ministry decline. There are certainly other factors to be considered, but the reality is that Independent Baptist churches no longer hold preeminence on the American religious landscape. Elmer Towns acknowledges the deficiencies of the Independent Baptist model when he writes, “Church growth experienced by independent Baptists in the first part of the 1970s shifted to many other conservative/ evangelical groups in the last part of the decade.”²¹¹

²¹⁰ Elmer L. Towns. *The Ten Largest Sunday Schools and What Makes Them Grow* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969), 18.
http://elmertowns.com/books/online/10_largest_ss/10_Largest_SS%5BETowns%5D.PDF (accessed August 29, 2012).

²¹¹ Towns, Vaughan, Siefert, *The Complete Book of Church Growth*, 15.

The pastoral leadership issue of the local church is a major component in that shift. The longer a pastor remains with a single congregation, the more the congregation's health is tied to that man. Reflecting on these realities in the 20th year of his pastorate, this author began to formulate a plan for a successful transition of leadership. Specifically, he encouraged the Heritage congregation to move toward an elder-led model of church polity. He based that vision on Acts 20:17-28 and a summary of that message is as follows.

Elder polity is a biblical model. Paul's words to Timothy in Ephesus and Titus on Crete still hold authority in the local church of the 21st century. The Greek word for elder is found 75 times in the New Testament. Nine times it means a person of advanced age. Four times it is used of the Hebrew ancestors. Twelve times it referred to the rulers of heaven. Twenty-nine times it defined the Jewish leaders of the synagogue, and 20 times it references the leaders of various churches in Jerusalem, Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, Ephesus and Crete. Finally, there are four general New Testament references (1 Timothy 4:14; 6:17; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1, 5), and two times the apostle John referred to himself as an elder.

In the New Testament, pastors are shepherds, are bishops, are overseers, men who bear final responsibility before God for the wellbeing of "the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). There are basically four words used to designate that same person. Acts 20:17 employs *presbyteros* (elders). Acts 20:28 uses *episkopos* (overseers). 1 Peter 5:1-2 utilizes *poimaino* (shepherd), and Ephesians 4:11 uses *poimen*, shepherds. In the King James, the New American Standard, and the New

International versions, shepherds are pastors. In the aforementioned four verses, two apostles refers to church leaders as elders, overseers, shepherds, and pastors. Paul called elders *presbyteros* in Titus 1:5. So the New Testament uses the terms elders, shepherds, bishops, pastors and overseers interchangeably. Further, in the New Testament elders are a plurality of men who lead the local congregation (Acts 20:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; Philippians 1:1; Acts 14:23).

But are elders a Baptist concept? This is a question that must be asked and answered if Heritage is to consider elder polity. The 1689 London Baptist Confession states

A particular church, gathered and completely organized according to the mind of Christ, consists of officers and members; and the officers appointed by Christ to be chosen and set apart by the church (so called and gathered), for the peculiar administration of ordinances, and execution of power or duty, which he intrusts them with, or calls them to, to be continued to the end of the world, are bishops or elders, and deacons (Acts 20:17; Philippians 1:1).²¹²

As such, Baptists have historically viewed church government as a two-tiered structure consisting of elders and deacons. “The New Testament only mentions two offices, elder and deacon, that were instituted for the management of church affairsThe office of elder is the *sole* position in the church created for the governance of the church.”²¹³ Indeed, the office of an elder was upheld among English Baptists throughout the entirety of the 17th century. At the end of that century, famed London Baptist pastor and subscriber to the 1689 London Baptist Confession, Benjamin Keach wrote in 1697

²¹² <http://www.vor.org/truth/1689/1689bc26.html> (accessed August 29, 2012).

²¹³ Richard H. Swartley. *Eldership in Action Through Biblical Governance of the Church* (Dubuque: Emmaus College Press, 2005), 14.

about “Bishops, Overseers, or Elders” as one person holding one office.²¹⁴ In the United States the first President of the Southern Baptist Convention, W.B. Johnson (1782-1862) wrote “each church had a plurality of elders.”²¹⁵

In the 19th, century Basil Manly Jr. (1825-189) was a primary architect of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the first Southern Baptist seminary. In the 14th article of his *Abstract of Principles*, he wrote “The regular officers of a church are Bishops or Elders, and Deacons”²¹⁶ And as late as 1925 the Baptist Faith and Message stated:

A church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ, governed by his laws, and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by his word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Its Scriptural officers are bishops, or elders, and deacons. (Matt. 16:18; Matt. 18:15-18; Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; Acts 2:41-42; 5:13-14; 2 Cor. 9:13; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 4:14; Acts 14:23; Acts 6:3,5-6; Heb. 13:17; 1 Cor. 9:6,14.)²¹⁷

But the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message changed the word “elder” to “pastor,” a change maintained by the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. The 1963 version reads

This church [A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ] is an autonomous body, operating through democratic processes under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In such a congregation, members are equally responsible. Its Scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. (Matt. 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephes. 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:18; 1 Tim. 3:1-15; 4:14; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Rev. 2-3; 21:2-3.)²¹⁸

²¹⁴ Benjamin Keach. *The Glory of a True Church*, in *Polity*, ed. Mark Dever (Washington, DC; 2001), 65.

²¹⁵ W.B. Johnson, *The Gospel Developed in Polity*, 192.

²¹⁶ <http://zachterry.wordpress.com/tag/basil-manly/> (accessed August 29, 2012).

²¹⁷ <http://www.utm.edu/staff/caldwell/bfm/1925/12.html> (accessed August 29, 2012).

²¹⁸ <http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfmcomparison.asp> (accessed August 29, 2012).

But one year later, in 1964, Herschel H. Hobbs who oversaw the 1963 BF&M revision committee, wrote “Pastor-this is one of the three titles referring to the same office. The other two are ‘bishop’ and ‘elder.’”

Because a biblical model is always the best formula for success, the elder-led congregation enjoys certain benefits unknown to pastor-led churches during the transfer of leadership from one man to another. When Paul directed Timothy and Titus to locate men worthy of serving as elders and install them in leadership in their respective churches, he did not intend for these men to be professionally, seminary-trained, vocational leaders. Rather the elders to whom Paul referred were men of the community. It’s for this reason that their character, Paul’s primary concern in selecting leaders, could be examined. These were men who had lived in the community for an extended period of time. Their character earned them a respect that was well known among believers and unbelievers. When Timothy and Titus left their leadership positions at Ephesus and Crete, the elders provided stability for the church’s internal wellbeing and for its testimony in the community.

Note the implications of longevity in the community that are inferred in the list of qualifications for elders in Timothy and Titus. How could a man be “above reproach” unless his character had been already proven? A man on the move might have another wife or family on another island or country, but “the husband of one wife” was clearly demonstrated by a man’s stability in the community where he served as an elder. The same holds true for managing his household well and with dignity. His tenure in a city also proved he was not a recent convert. Finally, he could not “be well thought of by outsiders” unless he had demonstrated that lifestyle over time and in various ways such as

business, etc. (1 Timothy 3:1-7). In the same way, the “above reproach,” “husband of one wife,” children as believers, the man’s stewardship, lack of a violent spirit or greed and hospitality qualifications of an elder on Crete could only be validated by the time a man had invested in his life on that island (Titus 1:5-9).

Most of the qualifications in either epistle require the witness of time. This implies that elders were not vocational ministers whose testimonies were dependent on a former church experience from another place. Rather these were men whose geographic stability provided health for the congregation and a witness to the community. This characteristic would be essential to the church’s success as Timothy and Titus transitioned out of their leadership roles and accepted assignments to other congregations. This multi-layered stability found in several men (elders) of a congregation provides the spiritual leadership requisite to a church’s ever-increasing influence.

On the basis of that biblical and historic information, this author proposed that Heritage create an elder study team whose ultimate purpose would be to present the biblicality and practicality of Heritage moving to an elder-led model of congregational polity. The church responded by creating such a team, and that process is ongoing at the time of this writing.

After a year in careful study of the Scriptures, the elder study team has compiled the following consensus statement regarding elders in the church after a careful study of the Scriptures.

- I. The biblical offices in the church are elders and deacons (1 Tim 3, Titus 1:5)
- II. The local church should be governed by a plurality of elders (Acts 11:30, Acts 14:23, Acts 20:17, Titus 1:5, 1 Peter 5:1)

- III. Elders are godly men consisting of vocational and/or laity membership (Eph 2:13 – 19, 1 Peter 2: 9 – 10, Rev. 1:6)
- IV. The role of elders in the local church is to humbly shepherd and exercise oversight for the care of God's people (Acts 20:28 – 35, 1 Peter 5:2 – 3).
Duties include:
 - a. Teaching sound doctrine and refuting false doctrine (1 Tim 3:2)
 - b. Judging doctrine issues (Acts 15:6, 19 – 29)
 - c. Providing counsel and resolving conflict (Acts 21:18 – 25)
 - d. Receiving and administering money (Acts 11:29 – 30)
 - e. Helping the needy (Acts 20:35)
 - f. Caring for the sick (James 5:14)
 - g. Modeling unity and living in peace with one another (I Thes 5:13b)
- V. Elders are first appointed by the Holy Spirit and then confirmed after careful examination based on the scriptural qualifications of the man. (Acts 14:23; 20:28, 1 Tim 3:1 – 7; 5:17, Titus 1:5 – 9)
- VI. The role of the believer in an elder led local church is to appreciate, love, and esteem its elders (I Thessalonians 5:12-13). This is manifested by:
 - a. Living in peace with one another (I Thessalonians 5:13b)
 - b. Submitting and laboring with them (Hebrews 13:17, I Cor 16:16)
 - c. Honoring them (I Tim 5:17 – 18)

At each quarterly business meeting since the inception of the elder team, the chair of that team has kept the congregation aware of the team's research and conclusions. Opportunity has been given for the congregation to ask valuable questions which serve at

least two purposes. Such questions allow the congregation to participate in the team's work. The interaction also makes the team aware of the congregation's heart-felt concerns about elder leadership. The elder study team summarized the most often asked questions in an effort to make the congregation wholly aware of the principle of its work, its scope, purpose, and conclusions to date. Those questions have been summarized and are presented below.

Why is Heritage considering elder-led governance? Transitioning to an elder-led church was one of Pastor's vision goals for Heritage. It adheres to a biblical model of church governance, it provides stability in church leadership, it protects the church, and it increases the spiritual maturity of the congregation.

What is the difference between elder-led and elder-ruled model? What type of model would be at Heritage? Elder-rule is a form of church governance in which a plurality of elders preside in a determining role in matters of church doctrine or business with minimal congregational involvement. Elder-led is a form of church governance in which a plurality of elders preside in a shepherding role in matters of church doctrine or business but do so in conjunction with congregational affirmation. The elder study team supports an elder-led model for Heritage.

Where are elders discussed in the Bible? Elders are found in the churches of Judea (Acts 11:30, James 5:14-15), Jerusalem (Acts 15), the churches established by Paul (Acts 14:23, Acts 20:17, I Tim 3:1-7, I Tim 5:17-25, Phil 1:1, Titus 1:5), and the other churches throughout Europe and Asia (I Peter 5:1, I Thes 5:12, Heb 13:17). The words we translate as elder might also be translated as shepherd, pastor, or overseer. The root words include the Greek *presbuteros* (elder), *poimenas* (pastor, shepherd or overseer),

and *episkopous* (overseer or bishop). These words are used interchangeably in many places throughout scripture, so we should interpret, in our translations, the words shepherd, pastor, bishop, overseer, or elder to be synonymous in most contexts.

Heritage currently has deacons, so what is the difference between deacons and elders? Deacons serve the body by meeting the physical and material needs of the congregation, while elders shepherd the congregation and oversee the spiritual needs of the church. In other words, deacons, along with members in the church, play a vital role in implementing, coordinating, and executing much of the ministries that are prayerfully planned by elders.

Is there any evidence of elders in Baptist congregations? The office of elder has a rich Baptist heritage. The office of elders was included in the original 1689 London Baptist Confession where it states “the officers appointed by Christ . . . are Bishops or Elders and Deacons.” It remained until 1963 when the Baptist Faith and Message changed its language to read “pastors and deacons.” However, Hershall Hobbs, who oversaw the revision committee, said in 1964 “Pastor – this is one of three titles referring to the same office. The other two are “bishop” and “elder.”

Where in Scripture are the qualifications for elders listed? Qualifications for elders can be found in 1 Tim. 3:1 – 7 and Titus 1:6 – 9. The overarching qualification is being “above reproach,” and Paul lists several personal characteristics/abilities that further define a man who is “above reproach.”

What does the elder qualification of “husband of one wife” mean? 1 Tim 3:2 states that an Elder must be “the husband of one wife.” Many questions that are frequently asked about this verse include: Must an elder be married? Can an Elder be a

widower? Can an Elder have been divorced? The phrase that is translated in Scripture as “Husband of one wife” in Greek is *mias gynaikos andra*. *Mias* translates directly as “one,” *gynaikos* is “wife or woman,” and *andra* is “husband or man.” Another translation could be “one-woman man.” This portion of Scripture does not define what that looks like beyond that statement. This means that many of those frequent questions are not answered here, and the potential Elder will have to be found “above reproach” in his marital/relational life in light of the whole of Scripture.

What does the elder qualification of “not addicted to wine” mean? While the focus of this verse is typically upon the word wine, the focus is actually on the word addicted. As with the verse on “husband of one wife,” the verse suggests no more restriction than that he may not be addicted. Again, all of Scripture will have to be consulted to determine if the man is still “above reproach.”

What is next for the Elder Team? The elder team will begin contacting churches that are currently modeling elder leadership. The team has compiled several questions to ask these churches as they gain more insight into this leadership structure. The team expects to complete the church interviews later this year, and, immediately following those interviews, the team will begin working on a model proposal for the Heritage congregation to review, discuss, and vote on.

The further work of that team to this point has led to a first draft of the following model of elder leadership and church governance at Heritage.

The responsibilities and duties of elders at Heritage Baptist Church are to humbly shepherd and exercise oversight for the care of God's people. Duties include:

- a. Teaching sound doctrine, judging doctrinal issues, and refuting false doctrine (1 Tim 3:2, Acts 15:6, 19 – 29)
- b. Providing counsel and resolving conflict (Acts 21:18 – 25)
- c. Receiving and administering money (Acts 11:29 – 30)
- d. Helping the needy (Acts 20:35)
- e. Caring for the sick (James 5:14)
- f. Modeling unity and living in peace with one another (I Thes 5:13b)
- g. Providing oversight over church growth and long-term vision planning for all ministries at Heritage Baptist Church (1 Peter 5:1 – 3)

At present, no maximum number will be prescribed, but plurality is maintained consisting of at least a 1:1 ratio of lay to staff elders. In addition, the call of an elder at Heritage Baptist Church has no term limitations. The eligibility requirements to serve as an elder at Heritage are

- a. Scriptural qualifications as described in 1 Timothy 3:1 – 7 and Titus 1: 6 – 9
- b. Agree and affirm to the doctrines of the Baptist Faith & Message 2000
- c. Member of Heritage Baptist Church in good standing*

Heritage will employ a progressive plan for placing elders on the elder body whereby the nominee for eldership will continue through the process only as each stage is successfully completed.

- a. First Stage
 - i. Any church member in good standing may nominate prospective elder(s) by completing the *Elder Nomination Form* and submitting it to the elder board for review.
- a. Second Stage
 - i. Nominee will meet with an elder to discuss aspiration to office and affirm candidate's qualifications and readiness.
- b. Third Stage
 - i. Nominee completes an *Elder Application* and returns it to the elder board. A three-member elder council will meet with the nominee to examine his application, giftedness, and calling to the elder office.
- c. Fourth Stage
 - i. The three-member elder council will report their findings to the entire elder board.
 - ii. The nominee will meet with the entire elder board.
 - iii. Affirmation process requires 100% vote by elder board.
- d. Fifth Stage
 - i. The elder board presents the nominee to congregation. Any church member in good standing with reason to believe that the nominee is unqualified is to express such concern to the elder board as soon as possible.
- e. Sixth Stage

- i. Nominee receives public affirmation by the congregation six weeks later to close the application process.
- ii. Congregational affirmation is least three-fourths vote in favor from church members in good standing.

It is certainly hoped that no elder will ever be terminated from that position, but Scripture does speak to that issue, and Heritage has also addressed it. An elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two or more church members in good standing with reason to believe that an elder should be dismissed should express such concerns to the elder board. Any such action shall be done in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Timothy 5:17-21.

After examination of the charges, if the elder board finds the charges are valid and breaching the trust of the congregation that the elder has been called to lead:

- i. The elder board will make known the charges to the congregation and will ask for the resignation of the elder.
- ii. If the elder refuses to resign, the elder board may call for a special church business meeting at which time the elder board will ask for a vote, by secret ballot, on continued service of the elder. A two-week notice must be given for the special business meeting and a majority vote against the elder will bring a request for dismissal from office. A quorum for this special business meeting will be one-half of the church membership in good standing.

- iii. If the elder refuses to resign after the congregation votes against him, the elder will be subject to church discipline by the elder board.

After examination of the charges, if the elder board finds the charges are not valid, the accusing members will be subject to church discipline by the elder board.

At Heritage, all elders will be affirmed by at least three-fourths vote from qualifying members. Thereafter, the congregation's voting opportunities will include

- a. Calling of deacons
- b. Annual budget
- c. Property purchases and sales
- d. By-Law changes

Eventually, the board of elders would assume senior staff team responsibilities, including primary oversight and long-term vision all ministries at Heritage Baptist Church. There will, however, be no "grandfathering" of current staff pastors to the elder board. Each individual will be required to complete the Nomination/Examination/Affirmation Process outlined in #5

Scripture affirms two offices of the local church body, elders and deacons. Heritage will continue to possess a deacon body, which will serve the church body by ministering to physical and spiritual needs of the congregation under the leadership of the board of elders. Each portfolio should have one or more deacon representatives who will report regularly to the elder responsible for oversight. Eligibility for deacon office is based on Scriptural qualifications as described in 1 Timothy 3. Any church member in

good standing may nominate prospective deacon(s). Congregational affirmation is least three-fourths vote from church members in good standing. Deacons will serve a three-year term and cannot succeed himself. After one year, he may then be reaffirmed by the congregation for another three-year term

In addition to the elders and deacons, Heritage will also be served by at least four other teams. The trustee team will continue its current responsibilities of caring for the physical plant. The trustee team chairman will report to the elder overseeing the Facility Portfolio (see organization table). The finance team will continue its current responsibilities. The Treasurer will report to the elder overseeing the Administrative Portfolio (see organization table). The personnel team will also continue its current responsibilities of receiving, managing, and disbursing funds received by the church. The personnel team chairman will report to the elder overseeing the Administrative Portfolio (see organization table). The missions team will continue its current responsibilities of overseeing Heritage's local, national, and foreign mission interest. The missions team chairman will report to the elder overseeing the Missions Portfolio (see organization table).

Finally, members must be eligible to vote at Heritage. Eligible members are considered those who confess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior, who give evidence of regeneration by a living consistent with their profession and with the views of faith, doctrine, and practice of this church, who have been baptized by immersion, and who have been received into its membership according to its By-Laws of this church.

On the two consecutive Sunday nights of July 29 and August 5, 2012, the elder study team made their presentations to the congregation and received positive and

constructive feedback, which has led to the continued revising of the model and its implantation at Heritage. That work is ongoing even at the time of this writing.

The author's tenure at Heritage has garnered him the trust of the congregation. With his own retirement now in view, the church understands his passion for the church's wellbeing. The congregation also recognizes that his passion is to ensure a successful transition to the next leader. The tenured relationship of pastor and congregation has created an environment of unity and productive conversation even though the majority of the congregation is unfamiliar with the concept of elder leadership.

CHAPTER SEVEN

EVER-CHANGING WORSHIP STYLES

The church had experienced difficulty just before the present pastor arrived. A music pastor²¹⁹ had been forced to resign the church and threatened a lawsuit against the congregation. Evidently the music pastor was under the assumption that he had been brought to Heritage as part of a pastoral transition in which he would assume the Senior Pastor's position after Chester Phillips retired. The church leadership informed the congregation that it was unaware of any plan of that nature. The music pastor did not succeed Phillips as pastor and resigned his position in frustration. The resulting tension carried great impact on the emotional wellbeing of the congregation. In spite of the controversy, however, the church body supported and followed its leadership.

When this author began his ministry at Heritage, the church consisted of a choir with approximately 35 members who sang and led the church in worship. The musical program reflected what would be considered a traditional Southern style. Each service opened with a congregational song, followed by a choir song and at least two other congregational songs. Instrumental music was presented during the offering and a "special music" selection of solo, duet, or trio singing normally preceded the preaching message. The vocal(s) in "special music" were most often supported by taped instrumental music. The church also enjoyed a women's ensemble and a mixed ensemble. Since the music pastor had resigned just previous to this author's arrival, no

²¹⁹ Because of the difficult nature of the situation under discussion and the complexity of perspectives held by various and opposing parties, the name of the music pastor has been withheld to protect his testimony and that of others in church leadership who are also anonymously spoken of as "church leadership."

vocational pastor served as the minister of music. Instead, a long-time member of the congregation served the church as the music director.

The church called its second vocational music pastor in 1993. The music pastor was a traditional worship leader who was young enough to be influenced by and have experience in the praise and worship movement as it made its entrance into the churches of Appalachia. During his tenure, the music pastor emphasized choral music but also introduced praise and worship music to the congregation. Under his leadership, the choir became much more professional in their musical presentations but also began to experience the concept of every member worshipping.

The tension felt by the congregation as praise and worship music increased its presence in Appalachia and Heritage in particular eventually created unrest in the congregation. Interestingly, it was those members who were of a “free will” persuasion who most opposed to the introduction of music that did not reflect a Southern gospel persuasion. Members of the choir and leadership team were also concerned about other issues in the music program. Eventually those concerns collided, and the deacon body of the congregation asked the Senior Pastor to ask for the music pastor’s resignation. Although the ultimate choice was left to the pastor, he recognized the tension felt in the congregation would not subside and that the other concerns were sufficient to require a resignation. As such, that music pastor served the congregation for less than two years.

Kenn Hecht assumed the position of music pastor in 1995. Hecht earned his undergraduate degree at Moody Bible Institute and his master’s degree in piano performance from Michigan State University. Previous to Heritage, Hecht served as the music pastor at South Baptist Church in Lansing, Michigan, for 17 years. Hecht served

the Heritage congregation in that capacity until 2000. Then, at the age of 60, he assumed the role of Pastoral Care ministering to the church's senior saints and overseeing hospital and shut-in visitation. In 2012, Hecht announced his retirement from vocational local church ministry. The Hechts will retire in May of 2013 and move to California to be near their daughter and two grandchildren.

Marcos Gatz arrived at Heritage in 2002 and is the present music pastor. Gatz is a native Brazilian who earned his M.Div. at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth Texas, where he met his American wife, Carol. After graduation, the two returned to Brazil for five years and then moved to Sarasota, Florida, where the Marcos ministered in an Independent Baptist congregation. Gatz was hired at Heritage for the specific purpose of introducing the congregation to praise and worship music, a band and praise team which he has successfully accomplished. His repertoire of musical influences consists of Chris Tomlin, the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir, Christ Community Church Choir, the Getty's and Sovereign Grace, Passion, and Hillsong music.

Gatz introduced a large screen into the sanctuary on which sermon notes and words to congregational music can be viewed. He also began a band comprised of drums, rhythm guitars, bass guitar, piano, and trumpet. Just before his arrival, the youth pastor, Lonnie Ray, had created a praise team which Gatz has continued to refine. Gatz leads the congregational music, playing the piano while a praise and worship team leads the congregation in worship.

At Gatz's arrival to Heritage, the choir loft spanned the entirety of the width of the sanctuary. He removed that choir loft, flattened it, and expanded the stage. To accommodate the choir, he bought risers that can hold a choir of approximately thirty-two

people. Soon after Gatz's arrival, the author mentioned to the congregation that drums would soon be introduced to the worship experience. One member attempted to hide her disdain for drums stating, "Pastor, that stage isn't large enough for drums." The author responded simply, "I agree, the stage is not large enough for drums." Several weeks later, to support a band and the choir, an expansion of the platform began.

The church also began a second morning worship hour. This required moving the only morning worship hour to 9:30 so that another worship hour could begin at 11:00. In addition, a simul-cast service was also begun. The simul-cast takes place at the 9:30 worship hour but is held in a center built with the simul-cast in mind and is located on the far end of the Family Life Center approximately 300 yards from the sanctuary. The simul-cast is led in worship by a second Heritage band. The musical selections are basically the same as are sung in the sanctuary but with an up-tempo. The pastor's sermon is taped and broadcast into the simul-cast. This "third" service is both appealing and concerning to the majority of the congregation who worship in the sanctuary. In 2008, a majority of the people who attended the simul-cast served as the core group for a church split from Heritage. In 2012, the simul-cast leadership and the majority of its population will again serve as the core for a church start. Many people who meet in the sanctuary carry a concern for an ongoing tension in the relationship between the congregation and the simul-cast. At the present, the Heritage leadership has yet to discuss the future of the simul-cast after the church start.

These musical transitions at Heritage have been both challenging and rewarding for the congregation. The pastor has attempted to root every change in Scripture showing the congregation how it is possible to remain faithful to God yet present music in a

modern style. During these particular transitions, some members have felt it appropriate to move their membership to other congregations. The vast majority of the church body has remained at Heritage and continues to enjoy the music. The changes in musical styles have also encouraged new members to attend. At no time has any musical change been detrimental to the church's health or numerical attendance.

In effect, worship wars have not existed at Heritage, although the changes have spurred interesting conversation. Behind it all, the pastors and congregation have all grown in their understanding of the place of music in corporate worship and in the life of the individual believer. To a very great degree, the pastor's tenure at Heritage has aided the success of these changes. His length of ministry has engendered trust from the church body. As well, the membership sees his willingness to grow along with them, to enjoy the musical success and to endure its failures. At every turn, the church's leadership has been willing to humbly coach the congregation. The changes have been approached by a mutual willingness to submit to Scripture, to engage in edifying relationships, and a willingness to confess wrong when appropriate.

CHAPTER EIGHT

LOCATION! LOCATION! LOCATION! AND BEYOND!

The original Heritage facility opened its doors at the corner of Delaware and Main Street. Fire created the opportunity for a new facility located at 522 West Main Street. Eventually, Heritage moved to its present location on John Exum Parkway, where its facilities continued to expand to its present physical size. In recent years, Heritage has thought more thoroughly through the implication of a Great Commission mentality not only with regard to life-to-life ministry and the multiplication of disciples but also as it related to the corporate body replicating itself as a whole, i.e., planting churches. The natural outcome of an individual discipling another person or a Community Group²²⁰ birthing another Community Group is that the entire church will eventually duplicate itself as a whole. Discipleship naturally leads to church planting. As the natural result of a strong discipling mentality, Heritage has also begun to plant other churches in North America. Church multiplication was one of this author's points in his 2011 visioning message. One aspect of that vision is to incorporate church planting and church revitalization as part of Heritage's ministry to the larger body of Christ.

Roan Hill Baptist Church was planted in downtown Johnson City as part of Heritage's efforts to reach people disenfranchised from the traditional church environment. Charlie Scalf launched a church ministry known as Assembly of the

²²⁰ Heritage intentionally changed the name of its small group ministry from Sunday School to Community Groups in an effort to employ a large group-small group church growth concept in which the DNA of the large group was also present in the small group. This would allow the church as a whole to simplify its vision/mission, to increase the influence of the large group in the small group, to cause the small group to effectively reflect the large group and to ensure the small group could sustain itself and function as the core for a large group start or church plant.

Outcasts in February of 2003. Three years later, the church purchased a building in the central Johnson City downtown location where it could minister to young people who frequented bars and other late night establishments. By 2008, the congregation was ministering to 20 to 30-year-olds but felt the church body needed to be influenced by the wider body of Christ. That same year, Assembly of the Outcasts merged with Roan Hill Baptist Church.

Roan Hill Baptist Church was organized as White Rock Baptist Church in 1929 and joined the Holston Baptist Association that same year. It possessed 21 charter members, and J.F. Reece served as its founding pastor. The church changed the name to Roan Hill in 1935. Statistics on the church's numeric history are unavailable, but by 2008 the congregation had dwindled to 12 people, all over the age of 70. Roan Hill's leadership contacted the Holston Association to ask for assistance. At the same time, Assembly of the Outcasts was looking for an opportunity that would afford it fellowship with a wider demographic of the body of Christ at large. The Roan Hill and Assembly leadership met, and it was eventually decided that Assembly and Roan Hill would merge their respective congregations. Assembly sold their downtown property and moved into the Roan Hill building. As a result, Roan Hill inherited a congregation of young people, young couples, and children, while Assembly inherited the wisdom and experience of an older congregation.

In 2008, the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention recognized the potential growth of an area in Northeast Tennessee and made church planters aware of the great need for churches that would soon exist in that region. Lonnie Ray, the former Youth Pastor at Heritage and then Executive Pastor of a church in a

bordering state, contacted Heritage in an effort to coalesce support for a church plant in Jonesborough, Tennessee's, oldest town. Lonnie came to Heritage and made an appeal for any Heritage members living in that area to join the effort to plant a church. In response, Heritage encouraged families to move their membership to Crosspointe in a strategic effort to provide the new church plant with mature disciples who could be immediate spiritual, material, and financial assets. Approximately five families accepted the challenge and joined the core team. Crosspointe Church officially launched on Easter Sunday morning of 2010 in Jonesborough, Tennessee, approximately 10 miles from Heritage. Five people accepted Christ on Crosspointe's launch date, and four more accepted Christ the very next Sunday. The congregation purchased its own facility and is constantly adding new Christians to its membership. And at the time of this writing Heritage is rejoicing in its third and fourth church starts.

Spencer Teal graduated with a Bible Certificate from Torchbearers International in Estes Park, Colorado, a BA in Christian Ministry from Williams Baptist College in Walnut Ridge, Arkansas and a Master of Divinity in Christian Ministry from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He invested three years of his college years as an Assistant Campus Minister, Williams Baptist College, Walnut Ridge, Arkansas and then seven years as the Director of Leadership Development at Doe River Gorge Ministries in Hampton, Tennessee.

Spencer, his wife Nicole, and children attended Heritage for the first time in the autumn of 2006. Teal writes, "During our tenure at HBC our passion for the gospel, love for the local church, and realization of the power of deep and lasting relationships came into sharp focus. The pastor was and continues to be a mentor who shapes how I view

ministry and the power of the gospel inside the local church. We continually look upon the days at Heritage as very moment when we felt a call into local church ministry.”²²¹

According to Teal, God's call on his life is to the gospel and its foolishness to the world's ears (I Corinthians 1:26-31) and then to an overwhelming confidence in Jesus' church (Ephesians 5:25-33). In particular, this call is most assuredly a calling to plant the gospel, within a church context, as a planter.

After a two-year search for God's certain will concerning their lives, God spoke very clearly to Spencer concerning his next step in ministry, church planting. During his time at Heritage, Teal accepted a church planting residency position at Redeemer Community Church, Johnson City, Tennessee. Building on the foundation forged at Heritage, his passion for the local church became a reality.

The Teals have now stepped out in faith to plant a Red Rock Church approximately 10 miles from Heritage. In response, several families from Heritage have committed to the church plant project. Heritage also continues to seek ways to resource the Teals and their fledgling congregation.

In addition to the Teal start, the Heritage simul-cast²²² leadership and college ministry Community Group leaders and approximately 25 people from Heritage are in the process of leaving the congregation to start a home church environment. The Heritage Board of Directors and this church start group have been working together toward the church start's success and Heritage's wellbeing in their absence. Dale and Andi

²²¹ E-mail communication dated November 20, 2012.

²²² The Heritage simul-cast was begun in 2008 as an overflow from the sanctuary after the church was already worshipping in two morning services (9 & 11am) in the main sanctuary. Originally utilized as an overflow, it was also thought the simul-cast could serve as the core for a new church plant.

Clements have been members of Heritage for approximately 17 years. Andi is a tenured professor at East Tennessee State University, and Dale is also employed by the school. Together they have overseen the college ministry at Heritage for six years and have overseen the simul-cast at Heritage for approximately four years. At the present time, the Clements and three college CG leaders are making plans to start a new church intent on greater engagement with the various colleges in our area, a population of more than 20,000 people.

Heritage is also benefiting from the longevity of a single pastor and ministry in the discipleship of its own young people who leave Heritage to attend seminary and plant churches in North America. In 2004, Jeremy and Tori Young came to Heritage as a young couple and immediately became involved in a small group. Tori accepted the position as Assistant to the Children's Pastor and served in that capacity until they moved to Durham in 2006 when Jeremy entered Southeastern Theological Baptist Seminary. He graduated in 2010, and the couple moved to Murfreesboro, where Jeremy helped plant and serves as one of the pastors of City Church. The congregation has targeted the Middle Tennessee State University campus of 26,000 students. The church began with 40 people and less than two years later enjoys a Sunday gathering vibrancy of 140 worshippers. Jeremy writes, "Our goal is to make God famous in Murfreesboro."

A long vision in the same Great Commission direction has enabled Heritage to build up its own congregation sufficiently that the local church has grown and its DNA has been exported to other churches, cities, the nation and even the globe. The strategic nature of a global endeavor requires consistency in leadership. It could only have been accomplished under a ministry of longevity.

CHAPTER NINE

LESSONS LEARNED

Every Christian enjoys and sometimes endures the lessons learned in God's school of sanctification. There are many paths a person would rather not tread but does so in God's sovereign design. Transitions are an often difficult but necessary part of life and ministry. The wise person learns from both successes and failures, interpreting neither as such before its appropriate time. Tenure of any amount provides the Holy Spirit time and room to grow a pastor. This in itself increases his opportunity to enjoy longevity. The longer a man stays in a single pastorate, the longer he might stay simply because his length of ministry has educated him with regard to the potential and pitfalls of ministry endurance.

Eugene Peterson writes:

A job is what we do to complete an assignment . . . professions and crafts are different . . . With professions the integrity has to do with the invisibles: for physicians it is health (not merely making people feel good); with lawyers, justice (not helping people get their own way); with professors, learning (not cramming cranial cavities with information on tap for examinations). And with pastors, it is God (not relieving anxiety, or giving comfort, or running a religious establishment) . . . Most of the people we deal with are dominated by a sense of self, not a sense of God. Insofar as we deal with their primary concern – the counseling, instructing and encouraging – they give us good marks in our jobs as pastors. Whether we deal with God or not, they don't care overmuch . . . It is very difficult to do one thing when most of the people around us are asking us to do something quite different, especially when these people are nice, intelligent, treat us with respect, and pay our salaries.²²³

The reality is that as long as a Pastor keeps God at the center of his ministry and his ministry emphasis is moving people – unbelievers and believers – toward God, transitions will be a necessary element in what the Bible calls discipleship or conformity

²²³ Eugene Peterson. *Lashed to the Mast. Leadership*, 1986, 53-54.

to Christ. All creation is being saved as God works toward the consummation of his kingdom agenda. That process involves “groaning” (Romans 8:22), a transaction synonymous with “change” and “conflict.” When this occurs, the pastor is faced with a monumental decision, fidelity to God and the gospel or satisfying people. Peterson writes, “We can impersonate a pastor without being a pastor. The problem, though, is that while we can get by with it in our communities, often with applause, we can’t get by with it within ourselves. At least, not all of us can Being a pastor that satisfies a congregation is one of the easiest jobs on the face of the earth – if we are satisfied with satisfying congregations.”²²⁴ In those short lines, Peterson has distinctly delineated the difference between a hireling and a pastor. He has also defined the pastoral call, challenge, and conflict. At its core, pastoring is not about being true to oneself or people but God. But just like Isaiah’s painful cleansing (Isaiah 6:6-7) or Peter’s tearful confession (Luke 5:8), no person or church moves toward or walks with God without personal transformation or corporate transitions, all of which create stress for everyone involved.

The ability to objectively, biblically assess one’s own pastorate is essential to endurance. There are concrete disadvantages to the longer pastorate. This should not imply that “long-term pastorates are by their very nature bad for the church.”²²⁵ By far, however, equally concrete evidence proves the long-term pastorate is a more healthy and productive model for the pastor, his family, the congregation, community, and Christ’s kingdom.

²²⁴ Ibid., 53.

²²⁵ Ludwig. *In It for the Long Haul*, 8.

For this reason if no other, constant personal reflection is essential for any pastor and for myriad reasons other than longevity in the pastorate. Pastors need to regularly evaluate their calling and gifting in the light of ever-changing church settings. A fan of enduring pastorates, Ludwig nevertheless acknowledges that “there are times when our calls must be reissued, if you will; times when we will need to reassess our call to serve in a particular setting to discover what God has in mind for us and for those who called us.”²²⁶

Earlier in this paper, it was suggested that a pastor’s success is determined by what he can control. For this reason, the lessons this author presents in this paper during his 21-year pastorate at Heritage Baptist will be only those things a pastor can control. The list is certainly not exhaustive but representative and intended to cause pastors and congregations to think about the elements essential to a template for pastoral longevity.

Humility

Any hope for pastoral longevity begins with the pastor. The first essential element for pastoral longevity is a personal characteristic of the pastor himself and that characteristic is humility. The Scripture teaches that “God opposes the proud” (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). What right-minded pastor would be knowingly proud? Stuart Scott notes,

It is probably safe to say that humility is the one character quality that will enable us to be all Christ wants us to be. We cannot come to God without it. We cannot love God supremely without it. We cannot be an effective witness for Christ without it. We cannot

²²⁶ Ibid., 6.

serve God and others without it. We cannot lead in a godly way without it. We cannot communicate properly without it. We cannot resolve conflict without it. We cannot deal with the sin of others rightly without it. We especially cannot resist sin without it. In short, we must embrace and live out humility in order to truly live and be who God means for us to be.²²⁷

Although not written specifically for pastors or to address pastoral ministry, Scott's picture of the life of humility exemplifies the essential characteristics and ministry of a pastor. According to Scott, without humility a pastor cannot "come to God," "love God supremely," "be an effective witness," "love and serve others," "lead in a godly way," "communicate properly," "resolve conflict," "cannot deal with the sin of others," and cannot personally "resist sin." In effect, without humility a pastor cannot "be all Christ wants us to be" or conduct pastoral ministry.

There is no reason for pride in the life of any person, much less any Christian and even less in the life of any pastor, a man whose mind and heart is dedicated to knowing and loving God. Fundamentally the gift of life and the certainty of death, neither of which a person can control, should humble humanity. John Owen wrote, "There are two things that are suited to humble the souls of men A due consideration of God, and then of ourselves."²²⁸ Any pastor who saturates his mind with God's word will be humbled. Passages like "Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord; be assured, he will not go unpunished" (Proverbs 16:5) should humble the hardest of hearts. Pastors should be humbled by the thought of wrath deserved by every human. They should be humbled by their own sinfulness. They should be humbled by an

²²⁷ Stuart Scott. *From Pride to Humility: A Biblical Perspective*, excerpted from *The Exemplary Husband: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji: Focus Publishing, Inc.), 1.

²²⁸ John Owen, as quoted in J.I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 193.

unmerited salvation at the expense of Christ. Pastors should be humbled at God's calling to ministry. There is every reason to be humble and no reason to be proud.

The incarnation began with the humility of the second person of the Trinity who was "born of woman, born under the law" (Galatians 4:4). He, according to Paul, "though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:6-8). Jesus provides the perfect model for humility. His example sets the stage and paves the way for pastors to imitate Christ in this essential characteristic of any pastor but especially that of the longer pastorate.

Almost everything about who a pastor is and what a pastor does militates against humility. It is certainly true that disciplines such as prayer and Bible study encourage humility, but the vast majority of a pastor's ministry life is not spent in prayer and Bible study but in scenarios with the potential to increase pride and diminish humility. Appropriately a pastor must be intentional about cultivating humility in his life.

The word *pastor* is derived from the old French term *persone* and its equivalent Middle English term *persone* or *person*, both of which simply meant *person*. In effect, the *parson* was *the* person in a given town or community. He was normally the most well-educated person. His schooling and ministry often made him the most well-travelled individual, which broadened his horizon of knowledge and experience. For these reasons, he was often called upon to represent the community and was sought out as

a person of influence. This scenario eventually ensured that the pastor was a person held in high esteem, an assessment often given to ministers of the gospel.

Humility is no less essential for the modern pastor. Every Sunday, a pastor has multiple eyes on him as he dispenses truth that makes or breaks the lives of his congregation. People of worldly esteem pay homage to a pastor's education and experience as they listen to him expound the Scripture. During the week, he leads a staff of equally educated and trained individuals who submit to his leadership. He regularly counsels people who seek his wisdom on matters of the utmost importance to their lives. It is no wonder Paul encouraged Timothy not to choose a novice "or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:6). There are multiple warnings against pride in the Bible, and pastors are not exempt from the advice. Because of his position in the church and the community, a pastor may very well be more prone to pride than others in his flock. But any thought of a pastor as more than a sheep among God's flock or a servant called and gifted by God is diametrically opposed to the gospel.

It is on this basis that Peter appeals to pastors (1 Peter 5:1-4) as shepherds of God's flock (v2). This implies that a pastor's primary role is to care for God's people as a shepherd cares for his sheep. He is to minister in the context of several reminders Peter associates with God's call for all shepherds. Each topic is intended to be used by God's Spirit to inculcate the pastor with humility.

Shepherds are one of a cast of men whom God has called to care for his sheep. At best, he is "a fellow elder" (1) while Christ is the eldest. God has gifted men particular to the calling assigned them. When Paul shared his testimony with King Agrippa, the

apostle confessed that he was “not disobedient to the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19), testifying to the origin of his call. The converted Pharisee understood that his ministry was at God’s pleasure. A pastor’s calling and gifting are entirely of God. There is no room for human pride in pastoral ministry.

No human being can take credit for his calling, gifting, or assignment. In *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis told the story of a young man who asked money from his father to buy the latter a gift. The father distributed six pence to his son who appropriately provided the father with a gift on the dad’s birthday. The father, Lewis noted, was appreciative of the gift but also recognized he was six pence none-the-richer for it. And so it is with God’s grace to pastors. God is not enriched by a pastor’s service. He is, in fact, the source of every ministerial call, gifting, and assignment. He even provides the energy by which pastors serve him. In Colossians 1:29, Paul confessed, “For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.”

This lack of humility will make a pastor critical of his congregation or its leadership. That criticism will separate him from the very people whom he has been called to love, serve, and give his life for in pastoral ministry. How does this happen? This occurs when a pastor forsakes humility and thinks on his calling, gifting, or assignment as something he deserves or has earned. When a pastor thinks he deserves better, he then begins to look for something else, something he deems better, more appropriate to what he deserves. But this proud attitude severs him even more from his present calling. It causes him to think on himself differently than Christ views the entire church body, the pastor included, as sinners saved and being sanctified by God’s grace.

Nor has any pastor shed his blood redemptively. No pastor's work can compare with that of Christ (1) who suffered that others, under shepherds included, might be "a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed (1). Too, pastors are to shepherd "willingly" as Christ willingly served the Father's redemptive agenda. Jesus said, "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father." (John 10:17b-18). Humility keeps a man in line with God's work and away from assuming too much credit or blame for God's work. If a pastor won't take credit when the ministry goes well, he also won't have to take the blame when ministry poverty robs him of the world's definition of success. Remembering the flock is God's by Christ's work on the cross protects a pastor from domineering over it (3). The pastor and flock alike are God's, purchased with Christ's blood. There is a strong reminder from Peter that the church is God's flock, never the pastor's flock. The pastor is ultimately accountable to Christ (the "Chief Shepherd" (4) who will appropriately reward leaders.

It is Christ's will that is to be pressed on the congregation and not that of the pastor. He instead devotes his time and energy to modeling the humility expressed by Christ in the incarnation and passion. He does not have to react to carnality with fleshly responses. He can prayerfully trust God who alone can change hearts. In effect, all change is dependent on God who alone can create a godly heart in the pastor and congregation. This is one arena in which the pastor has no real effect. God commands that Christians love him from the heart (Deuteronomy 6:5). He then promises to turn those hearts toward himself (Ezekiel 36:26). In reality, the heart is the pastor's business

and bottom line. The demands of ministry can easily sidetrack a man from his pastoral calling. The prestige of a title like “CEO” is appealing. But Paul summarized pastoral ministry when he wrote, “The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Timothy 1:5). Everything else he does is secondary to that internal endeavor.

Humility, according to Andrew Murray, is “the root of every sin and evil.”²²⁹ The same can be said of a pastor’s ministry among his people. Ministry is a call to continual repentance, i.e., change, and change can be spelled “conflict.” These personal or corporate transitions to which a pastor constantly calls his church is the seedbed of a contest of wills. As such, many ministry transitions are sabotaged by the pastor’s pride. Many men attempt to move the church in a direction that is not conducive to the church’s history or traditions, to say nothing of God’s will. In anger, pastors sometimes berate the church for its lack of gifting, which is actually an indictment against the Holy Spirit. Frustration in moving an unwilling congregation or directing a church contrary to God’s will can lead to anger on the pastor’s part. This author once counseled with a pastor who angrily threw his Bible toward the congregation as he was preaching.

Pride was the source of Adam and Eve’s initial sin against God. The natural bent of fallen humanity is toward pride, and pastors are not exempt but are rather in a position that sets them up for this particular sin. As such, pride is an epidemic among pastors. A pastor may leave a church because he is embarrassed that his plan was contested, not approved, or did not work. He may be too proud to be confronted about his own personal sin or need to enhance some aspect of his pastoral ministry. For all of the difficulty

²²⁹ Andrew Murray. *Humility* (Springdale: Whitaker House, 1982), 10.

involved, it is emotionally easier for a man to simply change pastorates than be confronted or confront himself with the shortcomings that remind him he is only human and also a wayward sheep in God's flock. But pastors do not encourage congregants to live selfishly. Nor should they model such selfishness that a man will undermine his own public preaching ministry and effectiveness as a personal witness for Christ by caring for himself more than Christ's name or the church's health. Contrast that mentality with Paul's confession to the Ephesian elders that he did "not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

In such cases, pastors willingly play the part of a victim hoping that sympathy will turn the tide in their favor. Or they turn to self-pity. But these are also examples of pride. Victims and people who pity themselves are thinking too highly of themselves. Such tactics are manipulative and simply the opposite end of the pride spectrum. Much of God's redemptive work in sanctification is aimed at freeing people from focusing on self which is the root of sin. This may be a constant battle for pastors, but it is a victory that is essential for pastoral longevity.

Without accountability concerning his own shortcomings, a pastor cannot become the person or pastor God intends. He is part of the body of Christ, which is built up in love by the mutual accountability of every member of the congregation serving one another (Ephesians 4:16). A pastor will find great blessing in parishioners, board members, deacons, and others who will care enough about him to confront him in God's shaping process. But pride will keep a man from receiving such counsel. It will also create a scenario in which neither he nor the church is willing to accept godly counsel.

The result is that both the pastor and congregation suffer from immaturity for the duration of each respective life.

In his booklet *From Pride to Humility*, Scott lists the blinding manifestations of pride that can so easily terminate a pastor's ministry and cause him to become a bouncing ball from one pastorate to another rather than facing the reality, the real causes of such instability. Among other things, he lists a lack of gratitude in general. He then contrasts that attitude with Paul's celebration that "I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service" (1 Timothy 1:12). Scott goes on to list a number of debilitating pastoral attitudes. Among them he lists "anger, seeing yourself as better than others, having an inflated view of your importance, gifts and abilities, seeking independence or control, being devastated by anger or criticism, being unteachable, being defensive or blame-shifting, a lack of admitting when you are wrong, a lack of asking for forgiveness, a lack of biblical prayer, being impatient or irritable with others and having no close relationships."²³⁰ Any one of these shortcomings could derail a pastor. Yet it is unlikely a pastor who has served a single congregation for any length of time will be assailed by only one of these sinful behaviors.

Pastoral ministry is simply no place for pride. In humility appropriate for any pastor Paul confessed:

I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came

²³⁰ Scott, *From Pride to Humility*, 6-10.

into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life (1 Timothy 1:12-16).

Notice the multiple reasons for humility. It is God who strengthens pastors, whose judgment determines ministry employment (12). Of course, any sinner's past is sufficient to disqualify them from salvation (Romans 5:8) and service (13a). It is only God's mercy that overcomes a pastor's former ignorance and unbelief. Left to himself, any sinner called to be a pastor would have died in his sin (13b); God's grace generates faith and love from Christ toward men called into ministry (14). The fundamental doctrines of Christianity, studied by pastors at great length, should create humble hearts in ministry men (15) as pastors daily contemplate the wonder of God's salvation. The only reason God saves men and places them in ministry is to display his grace (16).

Pastors need humility to demonstrate God's grace to sinners yet converted. They need humility to confess their own sin, reminding the church of its constant need to repent. They need humility to live a life of prayer concerning God's will for their own lives and that of the church. They need humility to hold the church with an open hand. They need humility to be corrected, even rebuked for teaching errors, ministry misdirection and other mistakes natural to a fallen nature. Pastors need humility during transitions they did not create. They also need humility during transitions they originate. Without humility, a pastor serves his own cause and not that of Christ as a servant leader.

Servant Leadership

The New Testament commands leaders to serve as Christ served. Pastors are to be respected as God-ordained leaders, but that respect is earned and deserved only as the

pastor mirrors Christ the ultimate servant. Good followers make the good leaders, and the best followers follow the best follower/leader, Jesus. Jesus came to make much of the Father (John 6:38 & 17:4), and, in return, the Father made much of him (Philippians 2:9-11). This makes servant leadership the only biblical model of leadership. It was to Christ's servant heart that Paul appealed for Timothy's obedience as a gospel minister (Philippians 2:12).

Simon Greenleaf turned the leadership world upside down with his book on servant leadership, but it is to the church's shame that a secular leader popularized the concept for a generation of modern church leaders. The first sin was Lucifer's rejection of God's authority. The first human sin was an act of rebellion against God's authority. Both are a refusal to serve someone other than self. Everyone serves someone or something. Salvation would not be possible without Christ's service to the Father on behalf of the church. But everyone serves. In Romans 6:13, Paul contrasted service to the flesh and service to God acknowledging the fact that everyone serves. It's not a matter of "if" but "when" and "how." Accepting Christ's service generates humility, and humility generates one's own service. Service is humility in action.

The concept of servant leadership is often considered oxymoronic as though a man might become a doormat for disgruntled congregants. The distance between a servant who leads and a leader who serves is thought to be 180 degrees. In the spiritual realm, the two are not only compatible but one naturally generates the other. Christian leadership is service. In the Christian realm, any other definition of leadership is truly oxymoronic.

There was, of course, no greater example of servant leadership than Jesus. As God incarnate, all Christian leadership emanates from that model. By his service to the Father and on behalf of the church, Jesus became the leader who saved his followers. According to the book of Hebrews 2:9-10, Jesus' servant hood is demonstrated in his willingness to lower himself beneath angels and taste death as a common criminal. The success of his leadership model is described in that passage by his "bringing many sons to glory." As such, he is the perfect servant leader.

The secular world was popularly introduced to the idea of servant leadership through such authors as James McGregor Burns²³¹ and Robert K. Greenleaf.²³² However, two millennia earlier, Jesus demonstrated the philosophy of servant leadership in his life, words, deeds, and death. Everything about Jesus Christ concerns itself with the idea of servant leadership. Even his resurrection, exaltation, coronation, and eternal status at the right hand of the Father demonstrate Jesus' perfect realization of servant leadership. However, with regard to Jesus, this paper will limit itself only to chapter ten of the book of Mark.

Insofar as the secular world is concerned, Robert K. Greenleaf (1904-1990) is the founder of the modern American servant leadership movement. The Greenleaf Center website states, "The phrase 'Servant Leadership' was coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in

²³¹ J.M. Burns J.M. *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row (1978). Burns (1918-) is a Pulitzer Prize winner (1971), presidential biographer and an expert in leadership studies. He was also the Woodrow Wilson Professor (emeritus) of Political Science at Williams College and a scholar in residence at the James MacGregor Burns Academy of Leadership at the University of Maryland, College Park.

²³² Robert K. Greenleaf. *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*. (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1977).

The Servant as Leader, an essay that he first published in 1970.²³³ Greenleaf was an AT&T executive who researched management, leadership, and education while employed for 40 years as an executive with AT&T. His book, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, originally published in 1977 was a groundbreaking treatise in the philosophy of organizational leadership and management. It was also the first book this author ever read on the subject of leadership. In 1964, Greenleaf took advantage of an early retirement to begin *The Center for Applied Ethics* and the ensuing *Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership*.

About the origination of the concept of servant leadership Greenleaf wrote

The idea of the servant as leader came out of reading Herman Hesse's *Journey to the East*. In this story we see a band of men on a mythical journey, probably also Hesse's own journey. The central figure of the story is Leo, who accompanies the party as the servant who does their menial chores, but also sustains them with his spirit and his song. He is a person of extraordinary presence. All goes well until Leo disappears. Then the group falls into disarray and the journey is abandoned. They cannot make it without the servant Leo. The narrator, one of the party, after some years of wandering, finds Leo is taken into the Order that had sponsored the journey. There he discovers that Leo, who he had known first as servant, was in fact the titular head of the Order, its guiding spirit, a great and noble leader. One can muse on what Hesse was trying to say when he wrote this story But to me, this story clearly says that the great leader is seen as servant first, and that simple fact is the key to his greatness.²³⁴

Accordingly, Greenleaf perceived of the servant leader as the person and/or leader whose primary and deliberate goal is to place the needs, dreams, opportunities, and joy of others above his or her own interests. In so doing, servant leaders model and, by that example, encourage others to "grow healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants."²³⁵

²³³ <http://www.greenleaf.org/whatissl> (accessed 10/13/10).

²³⁴ Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, p. 21.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 13-14.

Throughout his career, however, Greenleaf continued to expound on his ideas of servant leadership. In his first essay on the subject, *The Servant as Leader*, Greenleaf defined servant leadership:

The servant-leader *is* servant first It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is *leader* first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. . . . The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?²³⁶

In his second essay on the subject, *The Institution as Servant*, Greenleaf expanded his definition to include servant organizations:

This is my thesis: caring for persons, the more able and the less able serving each other, is the rock upon which a good society is built. Whereas, until recently, caring was largely person to person, now most of it is mediated through institutions - often large, complex, powerful, impersonal; not always competent; sometimes corrupt. If a better society is to be built, one that is more just and more loving, one that provides greater creative opportunity for its people, then the most open course is to raise both the capacity to serve and the very performance as servant of existing major institutions by new regenerative forces operating within them.²³⁷

B. M. Bass later agreed. He wrote, "The strength of the servant leadership movement and its many links to encouraging follower learning, growth, and autonomy, suggests that the untested theory will play a role in the future leadership of the learning organization."²³⁸ As such, and according to Greenleaf's definition of servant leadership and its resulting organizational existence, the church led by servant leaders may become

²³⁶ <http://www.greenleaf.org/whatissl> (accessed 10.01.2010).

²³⁷ <http://www.greenleaf.org/whatissl> (accessed 10.12.2010).

²³⁸ B. M. Bass. The Future of Leadership in Learning Organizations. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 7(3), 18-40.

the incubus for Christian disciples who replicate the servant leadership modeled by Christ.

Greenleaf was primarily concerned that a critical eye should be cast upon the issues of power and authority. The idea was conceived during the eventful, even chaotic era of the American 1960s. It was a period that Stephen Covey coined as a “low trust culture that is characterized by high control management, political posturing, protectionism, cynicism, and internal competition and adversarialism.”²³⁹ In that scenario, Greenleaf perceived servant leadership as a new and emerging moral principle, “which holds that the only authority deserving one’s allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to, the clearly evident servant stature of the leader.”²⁴⁰

Jesus Christ as the Ultimate Servant Leader

“True leadership” writes Larry Spears, the present President of the Greenleaf Center, “emerges from those whose primary motivation is a deep desire to help others.”²⁴¹ Jesus exhibited that “primary motivation,” is a motivation that moved him from eternity to time, from heaven to earth and from divinity to humanity. His “deep

²³⁹ Greenleaf, *The Servant Leader*, p. 2.

²⁴⁰ Robert K. Greenleaf. “*Who is the Servant Leader?*” www.serve05/productn/G/GIN/1-1/118.txt. Seq: 1. 4-May-05. 9:55. (accessed 10.11.2010).

²⁴¹ Larry Spears. *Practicing Servant Leadership*. <http://www.viterbo.edu/uploadedFiles/academics/msl/PracticingServantLeadershipbyLarrySpears.pdf> accessed September 7, 2010.

desire” was so deep it created the circumstances for his death; a death borne out of his passion to “help others” with the greatest help possible, escape from God’s wrath and entrance into an eternal kingdom.

C. Gene Wilkes defines a servant leader as one who “serves the mission and leads by serving those on mission with him”²⁴² Christ indeed served the divine mission. He said, “I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me” (John 8:28); “I came from the father and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me” (John 8:42) and “the Father has sent me” (John 20:21). Where Adam and Israel both failed, Jesus succeeded as the ultimate servant of God.

For Don N. Howell, Jr., the three essential elements of character, motive, and agenda distinguish the true servant leader.²⁴³ In that regard, Christ fulfills each in stellar fashion. His character was of a divine nature and without sin. His motive was entirely selfless. The Scripture records of him that “though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:6-8).

At no point should the servant aspect of leadership be considered an inappropriate perspective of one’s own being or worth. L. Ford makes a point of stating that it was not weakness in any form that motivated Jesus to wash the disciples’ feet. Rather it was his

²⁴² C. Gene Wilkes. *Jesus on Leadership: Timeless Wisdom on Servant Leadership* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 1998), p. 18.

²⁴³ Don N. Howell, Jr. *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2003), p. 296)

sense of worth and mission concerning the divine agenda that enabled him to "operate out of a sense of being deeply secure in his identity."²⁴⁴ William Pollard, chairman of The ServiceMaster, notes that "the real leader is not the "person with the most distinguished title, the highest pay, or the longest tenure . . . but the role model, the risk taker, the servant; not the person who promotes himself or herself, but the promoter of others."²⁴⁵ Finally, in connection with Howell's definition of servant leadership, Jesus' only agenda was that of his father and on behalf of his people. As such, he was distinguished above any human being who ever lived.

Jesus as Servant Leader in Mark 10

The Gospel according to Mark in chapter 10 presents Jesus as the commensurate servant leader. Although Christ exemplified this ideal in each of the four gospels and throughout his life, Mark 10 offers a specific, clear, and concise glimpse of Jesus as the model servant leader. The foundation upon which Jesus' statements in Mark 10 represent his servant leadership also reflect his understanding of his fulfillment of divine Old Testament prophecies. This is demonstrated in Mark 10:45 as the fulfillment of Isaiah 53:11.²⁴⁶ There Jesus definitively aligned himself with a servant mindset and revealed the purpose of that servant hood – giving his life as a ransom in fulfillment of the divine

²⁴⁴ L. Ford. Ford, L. (1991). *Transforming Leadership: Jesus' Way of Creating Vision, Shaping Values & Empowering Change* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), p. 153.

²⁴⁵ William C. Pollard. The Leader Who Serves. *Strategy and Leadership* (September/October, 1997), pp. 49-51.

²⁴⁶ Ben III Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 288-289.

mission to which he submitted his person, fame, and agenda. In addition, “There are also other texts in the Old Testament that are echoed in Mark 10:45, particularly those about sacrifice and offerings for sin and Yahweh’s redemptive work for Israel (Isaiah 35:9, 41:14, 43:1,14 44:22-24, 52:3, 62:12, 63:9).²⁴⁷ Clearly, “The servant motif is the background or the cultural intertexture of this particular pericope in Mark.”²⁴⁸

This sense of self-awareness and purpose is an essential characteristic of the servant leader. Such understanding is essential to the servant leader’s motivation and endurance in the face of continuing adversity and the temptation to disengage from those characteristics that define him in favor of more popular or personally advantageous principles.

The occasion on which Jesus so succinctly spoke of and demonstrated servant leadership bears acknowledgement. In part it reads:

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

²⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 288-289.

²⁴⁸ Stephen Crowther. *The Spirit of Service: Reexamining Servant Leadership in the Gospel of Mark. Inner Resources for Leaders.*
http://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/innerresources/vol1iss3/crowther_spirituality.pdf

In the passage under consideration, James and John, two of Jesus' disciples, requested positions of unique authority in the future kingdom. Although omniscient, Jesus entertained the requests undoubtedly because he intended to capture the moment as a teaching opportunity and utilize their desires for an important lesson. Upon hearing their request, the remaining disciples became frustrated by James' and John's audacity and also approached the Lord. However, their anger was not so much at the audacity of the brothers' requests as it was competition for the same positions asked for by James and John. In allowing all of the disciples to reveal their true nature and human passions, Jesus built a perfect platform for his teaching on servant leadership.

In his response to the disciples' requests, Jesus first affirmed the "Gentile," or worldly, set-up for leadership as the norm for human beings outside of his kingdom. Gentiles are "lords" who "exercise authority." In the original language, "lord it over" is *katakyrieuo* from *kurio*. It implies 1) to bring under one's power, to subject one's self, to subdue, master and 2) to hold in subjection, to be master of, exercise lordship over someone or something.²⁴⁹ In 1 Peter 5:2-3, the aged apostle admonished church leaders, writing "shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock."

Interestingly, Peter employed *katakyrieuō* for the English word "domineering." It is the exact Greek word used by the Lord in Mark 10 as an example of Gentile leadership. However, much as Jesus insinuated in his remarks, Peter definitively charged the

²⁴⁹ Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for diakonos (Strong's 1249)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2010. <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon> (accessed September 23, 2012).

church's leadership *not* to “subdue” or “master” the flock of God. Church leaders should distinguish themselves from worldly leadership precisely at the point of their perspective on and demonstration of how they lead God's people. Gentile leaders lead by compulsion. Church leaders lead by example (I Peter 5:3). As will be demonstrated, Jesus' example is one of service and servant hood (v 43). Jesus also informed his disciples that Gentile rulers “exercise authority” over their followers. “Exercise authority” is the Greek word *katexousiazō* and means “to wield power.”

In contrast to Gentile leadership, Jesus' disciples are to imitate his example not just in doing but in being. Jesus references Gentile leaders by what they do. His references to kingdom leadership, however, imply what a person should be or become, a servant or slave (Phil. 2). The Gentile idea of leadership has its basis in what Gentile leaders do. Jesus' idea of leadership in this passage twice grounds itself in what leaders are versus what leaders do. The distinction between Gentile leaders and kingdom servant leaders is marked by the conjunction “but,” a primary particle that can be used in either a continuative or adversative fashion; in this case, it is used adversatively to demonstrate the contrast between Gentile and Christian leadership. Thereafter, Jesus ensured the difference was noted and emphasized the contrast stating, “it shall not be so among you” (Mark 10:43).

Immediately thereafter, Jesus again emphasized the distinction between Gentile and Christian leaders by employing the “but” of contrast stating, “But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all” (v. 44). Jesus then defined greatness with the terms “servant” and “slave.” “Servant” is the common term *diakonos* employed throughout the New Testament.

Rather than executing one's own vision and directives, a *diakonos* is "one who executes the commands of another, esp. of a master, a servant, attendant, minister a) the servant of a king; b) a deacon, one who, by virtue of the office assigned to him by the church, cares for the poor and has charge of and distributes the money collected for their use; c) a waiter, one who serves food and drink."

In the preceding chapter, Jesus used *diakonos* when informing his disciples that "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and *servant* of all" (Mark 9:35). The position, passion, and duties of a *diakonos* are clearly delineated in Mary's comments to the *diakonos* at the wedding at Cana when "His mother said to the servants [*diakonos*], "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5). Jesus stated the eager compliance and whole surrender of his followers as *diakonos* when he stated "If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also" (John 12:26). The term is used of Paul and Timothy (Philippians 1:1), of Tychicus (Ephesians 6:22), of Phoebe (Romans 16:21) and of Christ himself (Romans 15:8). It is the common, if not universal, term for those in the leadership of God's people and kingdom work.

In verse 45, Jesus turns the attention from his disciples and their request to himself and the manner in which he lived upon the earth. He stated, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"(Mark 10:45). While the word "ransom" is often attributed to God's economic salvation, the word used by Jesus only here and in Matthew 20:28 is unique to Jesus' application of a servant leader mentality. It was impossible for the disciples to offer their lives in redemptive exchange for others so his use of the word "ransom" can only imply service. "Mark does not view people here needing ransom from sin, but instead, from bondages

like demonic powers and legalism. Christ serves them by freeing them. Therefore, by calling his death a ransom, it is the initiative of God to remove these bondages so people can live in God's *basileia*."²⁵⁰ By that definition, Jesus' use of "ransom" only further identifies him as a servant leader who acts in the best interests of others. Further, he is encouraging the disciples to follow his example and exchange their lives in service to others.

It is here that Jesus publicly and undeniably linked his existence to the Father's eternal mission (Isaiah 53:11); his passion for God's will and his life to that purpose. Thomas Schreiner considers Mark 10:45 a "crucial text for Jesus functioning as the servant" of God.²⁵¹ In contrast, the Gentile leadership and the mentality of the disciples was infected by that skewed interpretation of leadership. Jesus sets himself in juxtaposition to the world's interpretation of greatness and leadership. In so doing, he effectively revolutionized the concept of leadership for any person who would follow him. There is simply no place in God's kingdom for those who wish to exercise Gentile-like autocratic or domineering authority/leadership. John MacArthur writes, "Jesus was the supreme example of servant leadership. The King of kings, and Lord of lords relinquished His privileges and gave His life as a selfless sacrifice in serving others."²⁵²

²⁵⁰ Mitzi Minor. *The Spirituality of Mark: Responding to God* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 57.

²⁵¹ Thomas R. Schreiner. *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), p. 267.

²⁵² John MacArthur. *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005), p. 1233.

All authority in the life and ministry of modern church leaders is ordained of God, not to be exercised in a manner consistent with modern culture or as a local leader might suppose but under the authority of Jesus Christ who, by his condescension and fulfillment of God's will, has been given supreme authority over all creation. Jesus stated "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18). From his throne room, Jesus offers authority to church leaders, but it is always an authority that is given by him and intended to model his authority. The authority exercised by any leader in God's kingdom is intended to represent and reflect the heart and mind of him who gave it. No servant in God's kingdom has the right to determine the bounds of his or her authority. Christ is the head of the church, and the church, including its leadership, is his body, functioning as he deems appropriate.

In addition, the exercise of that delegated spiritual authority is intended to serve the well-being of God's people. Christian leaders are to be "eager to serve" (1 Peter 5:12) in the same capacity as Jesus, "not to be served but to serve, and to give . . . life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). A Christian leader's leader assumes his or her position of leadership for the revealed purpose of God, not to one's own benefit.

To ensure that Christian leaders do follow the example modeled by Jesus, the Word of God is present to illustrate that model and to direct leaders in their appropriate responsibilities as "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20). God's will and wisdom for Christian leaders is discovered in his word, a word written down so as to ensure its revelation and accessibility to both leaders and followers (Hebrews 13:17). A Christian leader's authority is defined by God's Word. The parameters for Christian leadership are clearly delineated by Christ's example and by his word in both the Old and New

Testaments.

For this reason, every person who exercises leadership in God's kingdom is ultimately responsible to God. "They [leaders] are men who will have to give account to God, and this solemn consideration should affect not only the quality of their leadership but also the quality of the obedience with which the Christian community responds to that leadership."²⁵³ The writer to the Hebrews encouraged the allegiance of his readers to valid Christian authority partially on the basis that Christian followers acknowledge that their leaders will one day "give account" (Hebrews 13:17). Indeed, the day will occur "when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory" (1 Peter 5:4).

All Christian leadership is defined by Jesus' incarnational ministry. Yet it is also reflected in the present service he renders to his people in prayer (Hebrews 7:25) while consummating all things to himself (Hebrews 1:13 and 10:13) such that his people are delivered from the presence and power of evil. Before and better than any definition or example of servant leadership that Greenleaf or modern interpreters of the concept can produce, Jesus stands as the stellar example of such service and leadership.

The servant leader ideal is a viable concept. It was perfectly demonstrated by the historical figure of Jesus Christ. The distinctive evidences for servant leadership are found first and foremost in the leader's self-definition of leadership. This is a definition Jesus clearly demonstrated in the tenth chapter of Mark's gospel. It is that definition that creates the leader's identity out of which his or her service (or lack thereof) manifests

²⁵³ Philip E. Hughes. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 586.

itself. On that basis, Jesus leadership (versus a conceptual model only) and the nature and role of both leaders and servants.²⁵⁴

There is nothing for a pastor to brag about or claim as his own, either the gifting or the church. A pastor cannot be committed to the truth without an equal commitment to display the characteristics of Christ who leads the pastor. In Acts 20, Paul reminds pastors that they must keep watch over themselves and the flock as shepherds of the church (v. 28). The pastor must watch over the church, but he must also watch over himself first. The first responsibility of a pastor is to guard his own spiritual life as a servant leader under God. This implies the humility requisite to serve and a service that views the pastor as one of God's flock. It is the Holy Spirit who makes pastors overseers of the church (28). People may lay hands on a man and ordain him or call him to the pastoral ministry of a church, but the calling, gifting, and skill that enables him to fulfill his role originates in heaven and not on earth. All of this reminds the pastor that he is a servant leader, and, without a servant's heart, he is not God's leader.

Robert K. Greenleaf introduced the concept of servant leadership to modern audiences but he certainly did not invent the idea. Rather, it was Jesus Christ who both taught and modeled the concept of servant leadership thousands of years before Greenleaf's "discovery." It is a concept the Old Testament prophesied about an eventual servant who would perfectly demonstrate its reality. As the Gospels illustrate, and Mark

²⁵⁴ James C. Sarros. Servant leadership: Its origin, development, and application in organizations. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*. October 1, 2002.

10 in particular evidences, no single person exemplifies the modern definition of a servant leader better or more adequately than Jesus Christ.

A Ministry Description²⁵⁵

It may seem too apparent for discussion, but that is the very reason it is important for a pastor and church to agree on a ministry description. God's glory is the first priority of a pastor and church. The gospel is of such value and the ministry so important to that glory and the gospel witness that a ministry description should not be taken for granted. Fundamentally, a pastor's ministry description outlines what he is responsible for and what he is not responsible for in ministry at the church he pastors. Fundamentally, a ministry description defines what the pastor and congregation agree on as a picture of pastoral success.

A pastor is divinely required to "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed" (2 Timothy 2:15). According to Scripture, doing one's best for God's approval keeps a pastor from shame. He ministers in the light of that time when "when the chief Shepherd appears" (1 Timothy 5:4). For these reasons, it behooves a pastor to view his duty as delight, a love for Christ and the church ransomed at the expense of Jesus' life (Matthew 20:28). That duty must be clearly defined for the pastor to minister well.

²⁵⁵ This author found multiple resources for churches looking for pastors but in comparison only a limited number of available to help pastors assume pastorates. For instance, of 27 resources offered by *The Pastor Search Handbook of the Southern Baptist of Texas Convention*, only a possible seven could be considered for the potential pastor.

According to the apostle Paul, the pastor is much like any other “worker.” In 2 Timothy 2:15, the apostle employed a general word for “worker” or “laborer.” The Greek word for worker, *ergazomai*, defines anyone who works for hire and implies that a pastor is responsible to God and the congregation. A ministry description ensures that reality receives the full consideration due Christ’s calling. It also protects the pastor who, “in contemporary culture has many unrealistic expectations to fulfill in his ministry.”²⁵⁶

No pastor should assume a pastorate without a clearly defined and written ministry description. That ministry description should be acknowledged by the pastor and pastoral search team and then accepted by the ruling body of a congregation as well as the congregation itself. There should be no secrets between a potential pastor, the pastoral search team, the church leadership team, and/or the congregation. Yet pastors are often hired to do one thing and then fired for doing another or not doing something else. Often they are hired by a pastor search team that doesn’t appropriately represent the congregation’s interests.

The 2005 *Forced Pastoral Exits: An Explanatory Study* listed conflicting visions with the church, personality conflicts, interpersonal incompetence, and contentious individuals or rival power groups” as the four primary reasons for forced pastoral termination.²⁵⁷ The study did not assess any of these conditions changing or coming into existence after the pastor was hired by a local congregation. In other words, all of the conditions for the pastor’s termination were in place when the pastor was hired. But if

²⁵⁶ D. Scott Barfoot, Bruce E. Winston & Charles Wickman. “*Forced Pastoral Exits: An Exploratory Study*,” (Regent University: School of Leadership Studies), June 2005, 6.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

there were no changes in vision or new personalities included, each of these considerations could and should have been satisfied by a more thorough investigation into the church itself and the pastor before a pastor was hired by the congregation.

Churches often employ a wide range of parishioners to represent the congregation on a pastoral-search team. This is done in the hope that all parties in the church will be equally represented. But that well-meant sincerity creates inherent problems. It is numerically impossible to represent every age and life situation on a pastoral search team without enlarging the search team to an unrealistic number. Further, just the idea that every age or life situation in a local church should be represented on a pastoral search team creates an intrinsic complexity to the search process. Often the scriptural qualifications for pastoring are not well represented at all. Beyond that, it is only natural that a senior saint, a single person, or a married couple with children should be subjective concerning the pastor's potential ministry to them. In other words, every person on the search team brings his or her acknowledged or unacknowledged agenda to the table. But is a pastor required to serve the church beyond Scriptural expectations?

The ministry description should be fully understood and agreed to by all parties before the pastor accepts the call to a local church. A pastor should not accept a pastorate with the ministry description still in the works or on the promise of eventual revision. Neither he nor the congregation should engage in ministry together with any misunderstandings on the part of either party. At the very least, a pastor's ministry description should possess a theological foundation, follow a biblical model, and include practical considerations. At minimum, it should contain the following elements:

1) A summary statement defining the pastor's duties (Anything that will require more than five percent of the pastor's ministry time should be included.)

2) The specific and detailed functions of the position (How many times a week does the pastor preach? Is he required to lead a Sunday School class? Does he lead or is he *ex officio* on boards? Is the pastor the primary counselor, and, if so, does he counsel members only?)

3) Attributes necessary to successfully fulfill the job (Spiritual gifts, passion, skills, and education should be minimal elements.)

4) Reporting (If the pastor and congregation have not previously decided who will hold the pastor accountable for his ministry, each should be assured that someone will eventually step forward to claim that right. The pastor and congregation should create/set that relationship before the pastor assumes the pastorate. To whom does he report and who reports to him? Who sets the pastor's annual goals and offers a review of those goals?)

5) Termination (Who can "fire" the pastor? What are its causes and how does it transpire? What time frame exists if the pastor resigns or is asked to resign?)

A pastoral termination procedure is essential to the health of a pastor and any congregation. During the interview process, a pastor is not prone to think about the circumstances of his exit from the church. However, every pastor will leave a church one way or another. The *Forced Pastoral Exits* study found that each pastor interviewed had been

"blind-sided" as a small group came to the minister with the recommendation that he should resign This small group represented themselves as special messengers of the church . . . loaded guilt on the pastor requesting that their conversation be kept secret . . . implying that any negative effect from the pastor's resignation would be his/her fault . . . [placing] undue pressure on the minister to make an abrupt decision while using the

possibility of withdrawing a severance package if the pastor did not comply with their wishes.”²⁵⁸

Such scenarios are as sad as they are common.

6) Evaluation (Who will evaluate the pastor, how often and what is the criterion for these evaluations?)

7) Compensation (What is the salary range and the expectation for raises? Is there a salary limit? How/when will the pastor be paid? Are there Christmas bonuses? Is there a ‘package’ that includes on-going education, medical/health policies, vacation, Sabbaticals, sick days, personal days, etc.)

8) Physical Location (What are “office” hours? Does the pastor study from home?)

9) A man would also be wise to ask for an Appendix that includes what is expected of his wife and/or family as it pertains to ministry at the church.

Every pastor possesses a particular set of skills, gifting, and passion. Every church asks a pastor to fulfill a particular role. However, on many occasions, a church’s desire may be more ambiguous than specific. This can also be true of a pastor’s thinking. Pastors or churches may assume the ministry description will be the same from one congregation to another. This is an inaccurate understanding of the particular calling for certain pastors and the definite expectations of certain churches. A specific ministry description directs the pastor’s heart, energy, and time. It keeps him and the congregation from frustration. It honors the church’s investment. Much difficulty is

²⁵⁸ Barfoot, Winston & Wickman. “*Forced Pastoral Exits: An Exploratory Study*,” 6.

created by the gap between differing expectations and what is unspoken but should be said.

What items should be included in a ministry description? The job title will acknowledge what role the pastor is expected to perform in the church. His reporting responsibilities should also be clearly delineated. Is the pastor responsible to a particular board, to the deacons, to the whole congregation? The pastor's accountability will not only keep him safe in ministry, but it will also keep him from the frustration of trying to please everyone, a task even the Lord Jesus could not complete. Whom does the pastor oversee? Do the other pastors and/or support staff report to him or someone else. This will let the pastor know what interaction he has with the rest of the staff. Is he one among them or their superior? Can he set their annual goals, etc? Can he hold them accountable for ministry performance?

The functions of the pastor's role are also crucial to a ministry description. His functions define his primary purpose for serving as the pastor. This portion of the ministry description will set the criterion for success. Is he accountable for church numeric growth and/or for preaching the gospel biblically from the pulpit? His main tasks and those people to whom he is accountable for those tasks should be clearly delineated in this portion of the ministry description.

Annual reviews of the pastor's ministry description are also essential. The pastor and church both should appreciate this time of reflection. An annual review reminds everyone of the pastor's responsibilities and the church's requirements. It effectively protects the pastor and congregation, the pastor from doing something other than the church expects and the church from expecting what has not been agreed upon by the

pastor. As a pastor's tenure increases, he and the church may forget the specific details of what was agreed on when he arrived.

Annual reviews will remind everyone of rights and responsibilities. Of course, such submission to a review will require humility and servant leadership as prerequisites. Unless a pastor suffers a moral failure, his termination should never take him by surprise. Annual reviews and/or other forms of review agreed upon by the pastor and church leadership should make everyone aware of disagreement, stress, or the possibility of an end to the pastor/church relationship. The personnel manual should address the manner in which such disagreements between the pastor and ruling body of the congregation are handled. It should also include the manner in which a pastor can be terminated.

The apostle Paul encouraged slaves to serve their masters "not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man" (Ephesians 6:6-7). Pastors and church leaders should seek to honor Christ first and one another as well. Everything about the pastor-congregation relationship should be handled with an integrity that displays the life-changing power and value of the gospel. God in Christ is reconciling the world to himself. The manner in which pastors and churches relate to one another should reflect that ministry of reconciliation, of people loving and serving one another. But in spite of how a church acts, a pastor can respond in a godly fashion. Above all others, the pastor is called "for the defense of the gospel" (Philippians 1:16) in both word and deed, proclamation and practice, belief and behavior.

Disciple Making

If a pastor is going to stay in any pastorate for any length of time, he cannot do everything by himself. He can't even do most things by himself. Pastors, like the vast majority of earthlings, can do very few things well. If a pastor attempts to do everything, he won't be able to do anything well and few things poorly for very long at all. The jack of all trades is the master of none. He is also a very weary and joyless person who cannot mentor others. But pastors should not work alone because God doesn't minister alone. God has never done anything alone, nor should pastors.

Elton Trueblood wrote:

Perhaps the greatest single weakness of the contemporary Christian Church is that millions of supposed members are not really involved at all and, what is worse, do not think it strange that they are not...There is no real chance of victory in a campaign if ninety per cent of the soldiers are untrained and uninvolved, but that is exactly where we stand now. Most alleged Christians do not now understand that loyalty to Christ means sharing personally in His ministry, going or staying as the situation requires.²⁵⁹

Trueblood is correct. But the responsibility for informing the church body of its responsibilities, training congregants, deploying them, and holding them accountable for faithfulness in Christian mission belongs to the pastor.

One of Jesus' great priorities in his earthly ministry was the training of men who would continue the proclamation of the gospel after his ascension. Recruiting, training, and deploying these men were essential to the Father's kingdom agenda. Jesus told the twelve, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go

²⁵⁹ Elton Trueblood. *The Best of Elton Trueblood: An Anthology* (Nashville: Impact Books, 1979), 34.

and bear fruit” (John 15:16). From the time Jesus recruited the disciples, everything he did was intended to prepare them for ministry in the Spirit but without him.

Mentoring others is key to pastoral longevity. An enduring pastor seeks to train men who can maintain multiple ministry opportunities and effectiveness. In effect, a pastor works to put himself out of a job. Disciple-making guru Bill Hull insists that a pastor must possess at least three essential values to be an effective discipler.

1. The pastor must possess convictions concerning disciple making and declare it as top priority from the pulpit.
2. The philosophy and its goals should be published in church literature and placed in the constitution as the criteria for measuring success.
3. The disciple-making philosophy must be modeled at the church-leadership level. The pastor and leaders should be effective disciple makers themselves.²⁶⁰

In Ephesians 4, Paul depicted pastoral ministry as disciple making. Pastors are given to the church “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ . . . to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-16). This paper has already noted that 20,000 pastors leave the ministry every year. H. B. London and Neil Wiseman attribute the vast majority of those disappearances to burnout. There are many causes of burnout, but one of them is certainly the multi-tasking required of a pastor. The reality is, however, that no pastor is good at everything or equally good at all ministry functions. Discipling not only ensures a pastor’s longevity but simultaneously matures the saints “to the full measure of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

²⁶⁰ Bill Hull. *The Disciple Making Pastor* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell, 1988), 25.

Discipling is not only a pastor's responsibility but a safeguard to his own health and ministry wellbeing. Many pastors are held responsible for elements of church life that are outside of their ministry description or pastoral calling, and too many churches terminate pastors for ministry performance that is not the pastor's responsibility. But it is the pastor's responsibility to protect his ministry and the church's health and mission by discipling others to perform ministry. This author often accepts compliments on his preaching ministry by giving thanks for the pastoral care pastor of Heritage. For 17 years, Kenn Hecht has served the congregation by visiting hospitals, shut-ins, and ministering to the physical needs of the congregation. This, in turn, has enabled the author to focus on the preaching ministry, which, according to his ministry description, is his primary responsibility.

Too many pastors accept a pastorate that is simply impossible to be fulfilled by one man. No pastor possesses all the skills, strengths, or knowledge required by and for the church: "The expectation that one person can pastor the church is both a mistake and tragedy. It's a mistake because no one person has the time, energy, or gifts to pastor a church and do it right."²⁶¹ In addition, no single person has the time required to minister effectively to a local congregation and its surrounding culture. The ministry was meant to be shared. Jesus is the great example of this. For that reason alone, it must be shared. Any pastor who does not make disciple-making a high priority will not be able to sustain the weight of a congregation for a long period of time.

It is true that many churches require things from their pastor that is outside of any biblical context, but discipleship is a biblical requirement for all pastors. Pastors burn out

²⁶¹ Ibid., 85.

from fatigue because they fail to employ the church body. One of the pastor's jobs is making every member a minister of the gospel. God never intended that the Great Commission should be wholly dependent on one man, one day of the week, and one hour of that day. The Great Commission is great in part because it involves every Christian. Its fulfillment requires the elevation in status of every member. More than once Paul referred to the church as a body and encouraged members to fulfill their divinely-placed roles in that body (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4). But that possibility remains only a concept unless the pastor commits himself to disciple making.

It should be noted that the Ephesians 4 passage on pastoral discipleship was not addressed to a pastor but to a church body. Paul was reminding the church of their pastor's responsibilities and their corresponding responsibility to be discipled. A pastor is commanded to disciple, but the church is likewise commanded to be discipled. He literally directed the church to "grow up so that it builds itself up" (16). "The work of the pastors/teachers is 'to prepare God's people for works of service' (Ephesians 4:12). Simply stated, the preparation is designed to "build up" (vv. 12-14) the body so it may "grow up" (vv 15,16)."²⁶²

Several years ago, this author visited the hospital to pray with a Christian but not a member of the pastor's congregation. The scheduled surgery had been moved to an earlier time, and the pastor arrived at the patient's room just as the gurney, patient aboard, was leaving the room. "Pastor," the patient's wife exclaimed, "We are so glad you are here. If you had not come who would have prayed with my husband?" The author did pray with the couple but afterward reflected on the situation. It was his perspective that

²⁶² Ibid., 89.

the patient's wife could have prayed for the patient. The patient could have prayed for himself. But the young couple belonged to a church body that evidently was not permeated with the concept of biblical discipleship.

Too many Christians are pastor-dependent. Needy pastors are antithetical to the call of God for pastors. It is the pastor's job to disciple Christians, but it is also the church leadership's responsibility to applaud his efforts and lead the congregation to maturity. Together, the pastor and congregation work to mature every believer "until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13-14).

Early in his ministry, this author became familiar with Bill Hull, his ministry, and books and credits such a disciple-making philosophy as one of the reasons he has been the pastor of a single congregation for more than two decades. Hull recommends a six-step process for disciple-making that should be employed by every pastor. That progression is:

1. "Tell them what." – "Each time Jesus confirmed commitment with the disciples, He seasoned it with the vision."
2. "Tell them why." – "The axiom says, 'If a person knows why, he can bear almost any how.'"
3. "Show them how." – "Jesus spent time demonstrating, explaining, experimenting, and clarifying over and over."
4. "Do it with them." – "The most effective teaching tool is a model."
5. "Let them do it." – "During this phrase the disciples become disciple makers."

6. “Deployment.” – “The disciple-making pastor as coach makes sure that those chosen for deployment have mastered the necessary skills.”²⁶³

This author has implemented this process for many years to the extent that the church has been able to grow based on a core group of members who minister. However, it has been his practice to use step five, “Let them do it,” as the deployment stage and change step six to “Hold them accountable.”

In response to a two-decade discipling strategy, the author has led the Heritage congregation to create eight self-sustaining teams to carry out the Great Commission.

1) The Senior Pastor sets the vision, and the other pastors carry out that vision by creating various teams who do the actual work of the ministry making every member a minister.

2) Community group leaders serve as under shepherds to the larger congregation through a small group context in which every member is known, loved, matured and sent into each member’s world as well as the globe.

3) The Board of Directors²⁶⁴ serve as counsel (Proverbs 15:22), encouragement and accountability to the pastor.

4) The Finance team receives, manages, and disburses tithes and offerings to their maximum potential for kingdom growth.

5) The personnel team directs the hiring and accountability of staff who lead the congregation by example.

²⁶³ Ibid., 190-201.

²⁶⁴ The Board of Directors is comprised of the chairperson of each of the five ministry teams (finance, personnel, trustees, mission and deacons. These men serve on the Board for one year as they chair each respective team.

6) The Trustees ensure adequate facilities are available for the large and small group philosophy of the church to serve the congregation.

7) The Mission team envisions the global supremacy of the gospel, financially supports missionaries and creates local, national and global mission projects for the congregation.

8) The Deacon team serves the physical and material needs of the congregation as an extension of Christ's love for his church.

In 21 years of discipleship, the church has raised the maturity level of the congregation such that it now seeks to be elder-led by men who have grown up in the church to a stature worthy of leading the entire congregation. Along with the pastor and staff, each of these men will disciple others to take his place on the various teams with a view to possible eldership in the future. In addition, the church has witnessed its own members serve on the national and foreign mission field, while those who remain have begun to invest in other local congregations.

Pastoral Integrity

No pastor will enjoy pastoral longevity in a substantially qualitative and quantitative measure without personal integrity. If he is not a person of internal character, his frame will not withstand the inherent, natural burden of ministry. Nor will he be able to endure the external, intentional antagonistic attacks levied against him. In fact, pastors often move and move often because their personal frame cannot withstand the constant duress of pastoral ministry.

Insofar as the pastor and the local church are concerned, this integrity is first tested during the interview process. During that process, only the man knows if he is honestly answering the questions proffered by a search team. This is true only initially because time is the truest test of character. Time will reveal if the man who ministers at the church is the man who candidated for the church. But a man sets up himself, his family, the church, and the community for heartbreak if he is dishonest during the interview process. The same can be said of the church.

During the interview process, some churches do not tell the truth about the circumstance that caused a predecessor's departure. Pastor-killing churches exist. Many possess such a deeply ingrained pathology that a return to health would require the resignation of 100% of its leadership and the exodus of many members.

Several years ago, this author was asked as a tenured pastor to counsel a young pastor on difficulty in his first church. Within only months of accepting the call to a local Northeast Tennessee church, this particular pastor discovered the deacon body was holding secret meetings to rid themselves of his leadership. Sadly, it was his first experience in the pastorate. To make matters worse, his wife was pregnant with the couple's first child. After sharing his heartache, the young man asked the author for advice, counsel, which, when given, no doubt seemed of the most radical nature. But it was given with a knowledge concerning a history of the church that the young pastor did not possess, a history replete with firing pastors after very short-term pastorates. "If you do not act dramatically and quickly, you will not remain there long," the author concluded. "On the other hand, if you will act quickly and decisively, you can be the pastor who transforms this congregation." Contrary to that advice, the young man acted

sincerely and in a fashion he thought appropriate but with an inevitable result. Less than three months later, he was terminated from the congregation. Some congregations do not want genuine, biblical pastors and, as such, do not deserve true pastors.

A pastor must act with personal and pastoral integrity for his own benefit as well as to survive and thrive in the church. Personal godliness is his first and most important order of business. Every other aspect of Christian integrity is directly related to a pastor's private integrity in his relationship to God. A pastor really is what he is before God alone. But how can a pastor maintain a godly character in a "present evil world" (Galatians 1:4) when the church he loves and serves so often mirrors that world? And how can a pastor create the time and environment for God to fill him with Himself in such a fashion that the pastor can minister to the very people whose needs and demands potentially undermine his personal time with God?

George Muller understood the stresses of ministry. The cause of Muller's anxiety was not the result of antagonistic church members, but it was the result of sincere obedience to God's call in ministry. Muller established and operated orphanages in Bristol, England, that assumed the care of thousands of orphans. Muller considered much of his ministry to be the creation of "large and liberal things for the Lord's cause."²⁶⁵ But the largeness and liberality of his life created unrelenting personal stress. Muller didn't respond with organizational structure but with intentionality about his daily devotions. Living in that tension for multiplied years, he concluded, "I saw more clearly than ever, that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was, to have

²⁶⁵ George Muller. *A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealing with George Muller, Written by Himself, Jehovah Magnified. Addresses by George Muller Complete and Unabridged*, 2 vols. (Muskegon, Mich.: Dust and Ashes, 2003), 1:80.

my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not, how much I might serve the Lord, how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how *my* inner man might be nourished.”²⁶⁶ Like King David, Muller understood that public success was dependent on private victories.

It was out of that personal necessity and its resulting benefits that he counseled others similarly:

According to my judgement the most important point to be attended to is this: above all things see to it that your souls are happy in the Lord. Other things may press upon you, the Lord's work may even have urgent claims upon your attention, but I deliberately repeat, it is of supreme and paramount importance that you should seek above all things to have your souls truly happy in God Himself! Day by day seek to make this the most important business of your life. This has been my firm and settled condition for the last five and thirty years. For the first four years after my conversion I knew not its vast importance, but now after much experience I specially commend this point to the notice of my younger brethren and sisters in Christ: the secret of all true effectual service is joy in God, having experimental acquaintance and fellowship with God Himself.²⁶⁷

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²⁶⁶ Ibid., 1:271.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 2:730-731.

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A pastor's first responsibility is to God, to maintain his own personal holiness before the Lord. To minister effectively, the pastor must not love himself, his family, his ministry, or his congregation more than God. Pastoral integrity comes with a price, loving God's praise more than that of people. It is a great cost but one that will richly reward the pastor and his congregation. Ezra ministered successfully because he "set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel" (Ezra 7:10). Ezra's heart was set on God's law and its personal application before he had any interest in teaching others.

A pastor can only give for so long what he does possess. An empty soul can satisfy no one, least of all the pastor. In order for a pastor to remain with any congregation beyond the American average, he, too, must set his heart on God first and foremost. This personal integrity will grant him a personally rewarding relationship with Christ that displays the worth of God. It will also provide the "well" from which God can supernaturally resource the pastor's ministry. Minus this personal integrity of a walk

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 2:730-731.

with God, a pastor cannot possess public or ministry integrity for a sufficient length of time equating to an enduring pastorate.

The Pastor as a Shepherd

The Psalmist recorded, “You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron” (Psalm 77:20). But the shepherding motif has fallen out of grace with modern pastors, American mega-church pastor Andy Stanley being one of them. In a 2005 *Leadership Journal* article, an interviewer asked Stanley, “Should we stop talking about pastors as “shepherds”?” Stanley replied “Absolutely. That word needs to go away. Jesus talked about shepherds because there was one over there in a pasture he could point to. But to bring in that imagery today and say, ‘Pastor, you’re the shepherd of the flock,’ no. I’ve never seen a flock. I’ve never spent five minutes with a shepherd. It was culturally relevant in the time of Jesus, but it’s not culturally relevant any more. Nothing works in our culture with that model except this sense of the gentle, pastoral care. Obviously that is a facet of church ministry, but that’s not leadership.”²⁶⁹

When the interviewer asked about the biblicality of a pastor as shepherd, Stanley replied,

It’s the first-century Word. If Jesus were here today, would he talk about shepherds? No. He would point to something that we all know, and we’d say, yeah, I know what that is.” Jesus told Peter, the fisherman, to “feed my sheep,” but he didn’t say to the rest of them, “Go ye therefore into all the world and be shepherds and feed my sheep.” By the time of the Book of Acts, the shepherd model is gone. It’s about establishing elders and deacons and their qualifications. Shepherding doesn’t seem to be the emphasis. Even when it was,

²⁶⁹ Andy Stanley, Marshall Shelley and Eric Reed, “State of the Art,” *Leadership Journal* (Spring, 2006) <http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2006/spring/stateofart.html> (accessed October 17, 2012).

it was cultural, an illustration of something. What we have to do is identify the principle, which is that the leader is responsible for the care of the people he's been given. That I am to care for and equip the people in the organization to follow Jesus. But when we take the literal illustration and bring it into our culture, then people can make it anything they want because nobody knows much about it.”²⁷⁰

There is much that could be critiqued about Stanley’s comments, but perhaps the most telling indictment is his response to the question, “What is distinctly spiritual about the kind of leadership you do?” Stanley replied, “There's nothing distinctly spiritual.”²⁷¹ Evidently Stanley is not hesitant at all to divorce church leadership from its divine calling or the influence of the Scripture and the Holy Spirit.

Stanley may be at the forefront of the movement to make CEOs out of shepherds, or he may simply be representative of it. But the loss of the Christian pastor’s biblical identity is all the more grievous because no other metaphor has equal biblical support. The pastor as a shepherd is divinely inspired. This necessarily implies that it best defines and describes pastoral ministry. It also infers that all other symbols fall short of God’s design for the pastoral call. Simply put, shepherding is the dominant biblical metaphor for Christian leadership.

Shepherding is a thoroughly biblical concept for the men who lead God’s people. Most importantly, God portrays himself as a shepherd (Genesis 48:15; Psalm 23, Ezekiel 34:15). The revered patriarchs of Israel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were all shepherds as were its two most esteemed deliverers, Moses and David. Moses was raised in Pharaoh’s house with all of its educational and social advantages, but God did not let him

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

lead his people until Moses became a shepherd. David's abilities to battle Goliath and lead Israel were a direct result of his tenure as a shepherd.

Leader, CEO, and coach are the modern metaphors for the 21st century church leader. Each speaks to some aspect of shepherding God's people, but none of them portray the inclusive array of shepherding qualities or activities. The Middle Eastern shepherd of whom Jesus spoke led his sheep. Jesus explained, "The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice" (John 10:3-4). A shepherd is necessarily a leader. The Lord described one of the shepherd's skills as leading sheep "beside still waters" and "in paths of righteousness" (Psalm 23:2-3). But a leader doesn't necessarily shepherd people. The leadership of some of America's most infamous companies certainly did not shepherd their employees or shareholders. Apart from the "spirituality" of Christian leadership, a secular leader does not lead people in righteousness at all. The secular leader is wholly unconcerned with the spiritual state of his followers. The spiritual leader may be equally as negligent, depending on the goal of his leadership.

The shepherd also acted as a CEO of his flock. His bottom line was the welfare of each and every sheep. Shepherds possessed rods for that very reason. Jesus' words about sheep hearing their shepherd's voice is set in the particular context of shepherds protecting their sheep (John 10:4-5). Shepherds would often gather their respective flocks into a single walled pen with the shepherd himself serving as the human gate. In the morning, shepherds would call to the several mixed flocks, and the sheep would respond to their particular shepherd.

While CEOs may be prone to break up a company and sell off unprofitable parts a shepherd is concerned with every sheep in the fold, even the unprofitable. Jesus questioned the integrity of a shepherd who would not “leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost” (Luke 15:4). This author has personally heard Andy Stanley encourage young pastors to abandon present members in preference for potential members who were more aligned to the pastor’s vision. God condemns such self-interest and disinterest in the welfare of the least of his people (Zechariah 11:16-17). Such is the CEO mentality.

But Peter warned against the CEO mentality lauded by Stanley and for the “gentle pastoral care” dismissed by Stanley. He encouraged church leaders to “shepherd the flock of God that is among you . . . not domineering over those in your charge” (1 Peter 5:2-3). Modern pastors need to understand that even if pastors cease to act as shepherds the church is still comprised of sheep. And God warned church “leaders” about their lack of shepherding (Ezekiel 34, Jeremiah 21). The church of Jesus is not products but people, not inanimate objects but flesh and blood images of God himself who shed his blood to redeem them. As C. S. Lewis wrote, “I wish they’d remember that the charge to Peter was to feed my sheep; not try experiments on my rats, or even teach my performing dogs new tricks.”²⁷²

Shepherds also act as leaders. Flocks in the Middle East were always led. And Middle Eastern shepherds did not use dogs. The flock was not driven but led by a loving shepherd who “coached” the flock to “still waters” and “paths of righteousness” (Psalm 23:2-3). Shepherds led their flock to fertile pastures, away from natural antagonists and

²⁷² C.S. Lewis. *Letters to Malcolm: chiefly on prayer* (New York: Harcourt, 1992), 5.

into the kind of rest in which a lamb could say, “I will fear no evil” (Psalm 23:4).

Leadership is inherent to the shepherding vocation, but not all leaders are shepherds.

Leaders may lead for various reasons, some selfishly motivated and others for the interest of others, but shepherds lead for God’s glory and the welfare of the flock. Leaders create their own vision, but God’s word presents His vision for shepherding and the care of his sheep.

It has been said that a coach is someone who encourages you to do what you do not want to do so that you can become what you want to be. This is certainly a valid definition for pastoral ministry. Paul’s ministry toward each of his young protégés was nothing less than a coaching/mentoring relationship. “This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you” (Titus 1:5) and “remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine” (1 Timothy 1:3) were both examples of Paul’s coaching relationships. Timothy was coached to “share in suffering as a good soldier” and “an athlete . . . [who] competes according to the rules.” (2 Timothy 2:4-5). In like manner, pastors publicly coach whole congregations and privately coach individuals to resist the siren call of worldliness and to daily choose Christ regardless of the temporal cost. Pastors remind Christians that Christ “became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him” (Hebrews 5:9).

Shepherding enables the sheep to be “anxious for nothing” (Philippians 4:6), possessing “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). CEOs may depart for a better financial package, leaders may opt to lead a more thriving organization, and coaches may choose people with a greater chance of winning. But

Christ has promised, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So the flock of God can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?” (Hebrews 13:5-6). In the interim, God the Chief Shepherd of all under shepherds will equally care for all the flock until he appears with crowns of glory for every faithful shepherd (1 Peter 5:4).

Shepherds may act as CEOs, leaders, or coaches, but CEOs, leaders, or coaches are not shepherds, nor do they act with the heart of a shepherd. Not one of those alternative motifs is comprehensive enough to fully explain all that is involved in shepherding. Nor do they call pastors to the biblical mindset, skills, passion, or responsibilities divinely mandated. The CEO concept also fails the grace God requires of congregations in relationship to a pastor.

The shepherding metaphor does not fail the leadership, CEO, or coach motif, but the opposite is not true. A true shepherd is a leader, CEO, and coach. Leaders, CEOs, or coaches are not necessarily shepherds, nor do they possess or exhibit a shepherd’s heart, knowledge, intent, or skill. So if a shepherd is and does what the CEO, coach, or leader metaphor implies, is there a reason the pastor should not be called a leader, CEO, or coach? Absolutely, and for the sake of the shepherd and the sheep.

The pastor as a shepherd implies a relationship not present in any other metaphor. The term pastor “suggests a moral or spiritual relationship.”²⁷³ A CEO may act immorally or without concern for his personal relationship with employees. Such was the infamous case of Enron. Is that really the image any pastor desires for himself or his

²⁷³ W. R. Harris, “Pastor,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 679.

church? However a pastor recognizes that his divinely-bestowed leadership of God's flock rests on his personal and professional morality. In the Pastoral Epistles, a pastor's character or morality is the only criterion for leadership qualification in the church. Pastoring is wholly moral. Leadership may be moral or immoral. For example, Winston Churchill was an incredible leader but so was Joseph Stalin.

A pastor's morality provides authority to lead in the spiritual relationship that exists between him and God and him and God's people. Business can be conducted without such a personal relationship but ministry cannot. As Christianity, ministry is relationships (Acts 17:3). Leading as a CEO does not require any personal relationship to those being led, much less that of a spiritual nature. Pastoring is all about a spiritual relationship. A pastor's "business" is to "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:9-13). Pastoral ministry is entirely spiritual and entirely a spiritual relationship.

Shepherding requires a deeply moral and spiritual relationship between a shepherd and his sheep. In fact, the difference between a shepherd and a hired hand (CEO, leader, coach) is entirely one of relationship. Jesus illustrated the difference when he said, "He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep" (John 10:12-13). A pastor may possess the skills of a CEO, leader, and coach; all would be beneficial to his pastoring ministry. But a pastor should not be a CEO, leader, or coach.

No other metaphor apart from that of shepherd appropriately or as comprehensively describes pastoral ministry. Shepherds possess a sacrificial even self-sacrificing love for their flocks. Evidently the world knows this better than the church. While many ministry leaders choose to abandon the biblical terminology that creates health for the pastor and congregation, secular leaders are adopting biblical nomenclature such as “evangelists”²⁷⁴ to describe their attitude and activity.

It isn't simply that the designation of a pastor as a pastor has left its biblical foundation. The term doesn't simply describe the ministry; it eventually defines the person who begins to behave as he sees himself. A CEO, leader, or coach will not pastor, but a pastor will act as CEO, leader, and coach does when the positive attributes of those titles can or should be appropriately employed. On the other hand, Jesus said of true shepherds and himself “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep I am the good shepherd . . . and I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:11, 14a, 15b). The CEO's bottom line is self-love. The shepherd's bottom line is his love for the sheep. No CEO ever died for a sheep.

It is for these reasons a pastor needs to gladly own the title and ministry of a shepherd. A pastor cannot be biblically faithful to a congregation minus this understanding and its application. Nor can the church appropriately relate to its pastor. The CEO, coach, or leader mentality sets the stage for the congregation to treat a pastor as a CEO, coach, or leader. This mindset creates unstable ground for long-term relationships. If the church is led by a CEO, certain teams, if not the entire congregation,

²⁷⁴ Leonard I. Sweet and Edward H. Hammett. *The Gospel According to Starbucks: living with a grande passion* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2007), 13-16.

may feel it appropriate to relate to the pastor as his board of directors. CEOs, coaches, and leaders are fired for reasons inappropriate to terminate a pastor. Yet modern pastors suffer under that nomenclature and its resulting mindset. It does not create a spiritually enriching environment seeking God's glory and the best interests of every member of the family of God, including and especially pastors.

Forgiveness

There is perhaps no joy greater than pastoring. The same can be said for the sadness inherent to that calling. The call to pastoral ministry is a call to harm's way. The pastor and his people are both fallen creatures maturing by God's grace. Yet there are exponentially more members than the pastor, making it obvious the opportunity for hurt is exponentially increased for a pastor. In addition, the local church is comprised of members who are not Christians (tares among wheat). Only God knows who is and who is not a Christian. No matter a member's actions toward the pastor, he must respond with the forgiveness commanded him, modeled for him, given to him, and instilled in him by the Spirit of Christ.

It isn't as though pastors haven't been forewarned. Paul encouraged Timothy to "not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil" (2 Timothy 2:24). It may be, however, that enough attention has not been given the subject of forgiveness in pastoral training. The perfect Son of God was crucified; therefore, any Christian leader should expect to be hurt. But pastors in particular are not equipped to handle hurt because they are not forewarned about the potential for personal hurt. No

seminary offers a course entitled “Forgiveness 101: The Essential Element to Ministry Endurance.”

As this paper has earlier mentioned, any church may possess pathological clergy killers whose nature is to harm ministers. As well, members may unintentionally harm a pastor. It isn't as if the pastor doesn't also hurt people. For instance, any lack of attention toward a congregant by a pastor can be misinterpreted as uncaring. And members can speak words unintended to produce the inadvertent consequences endured by a pastor or his family. He and his congregation are tainted by Adam's fall, and that depravity often shows itself in the harm caused to other people. As a result, a man may move from one pastorate to another because of a hurt caused to himself, his wife, or his family. Forgiveness is an essential ingredient to pastoral endurance.

A pastor may also falsely think that distance will replace bitterness as he tries to put people or situations both out of sight and out of mind. Yet he most assuredly does so only to be hurt in another congregation. If he moves once for this reason, he will do so again. This will, in turn, create a self-fulfilling pattern of a pastor running from problems, hurt, or unforgiveness. Worse, he may infect his wife and children with a philosophy of running from God's sanctifying grace rather than confronting the reality of his fallen state and that of others.

God places men in ministry both to preach and model grace. One is inefficient without the other. Trust in a sovereign God means a pastor recognizes that God has provided moments of suffering to ensure that the pastor appreciates, relies on, and models grace, that he understands the heartache of his own people and that his preaching is not void of the emotional realities of living in a fallen world amongst fallen people. Of

course, no one suffered as Christ who forgave his enemies (Luke 23:34). As Christians, pastors are called to forgive on the basis of and as Christ has forgiven them (Matthew 6:12).

Shortly after her release from Ravensbruck, the German concentration camp in which her dear sister Betsie had perished, Corrie Ten Boom met one of her Nazi captors. He was, in fact, the very SS officer who had seen her naked body pass through the showers when she was initially processed into the camp and who later served as one of her personal jailers. “And suddenly” Corrie penned, “it was all there –the roomful of mocking men , the heaps of clothing, Betsie’s pain-blanching face.”²⁷⁵ Ten Boom immediately wrestled with extending kindness to the man, much less forgiveness but did so. In response to that horrific encounter, she wrote

His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who had preached so often to the people in Bloemendaal the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side. Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more. Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him. I tried to smile, I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer. Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me Your forgiveness. As I took his hand the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger t pastor’s personal life.

In his first epistle, Peter links the forgiveness pastors have in Christ with the forgiveness they extend to others. In chapter two, he wrote to encourage servants who suffered under “unjust” masters (1 Peter 2:18). Peter didn’t want his Christian readers to simply endure akin to the response of unbelievers but to treat their employers “with all respect” (1 Peter 2:18). But how is it possible for Christians to return unkindness with

²⁷⁵ Corrie Ten Boom with John and Elizabeth Sherrill. *The Hiding Place: The Triumphant True Story of Corrie Ten Boom* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), 238.

grace? Peter reminded them, “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21). But Peter wasn’t commanding moralistic behavior as though Jesus was simply a worthy model of forgiveness. He continued, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed” (1 Peter 2:24). Christ’s suffering doesn’t simply call pastors to follow his model. His death redeems pastors from the sins that keep him from forgiving others. Christ’s death frees pastors from the natural responses to personal harm, enabling pastors to “die to sin and live to righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24). The death of Christ heals Christian hearts of unforgiveness.

As well, a pastor does not have to pick up an offense and carry it in his mind or on his heart. David wrote, “Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble” (Psalm 119:165). The King James translation renders the latter portion of that verse “and nothing shall offend them.” If a pastor remains true to Deuteronomy 6 and loves God more than himself, his family, or his congregation, it will enable him to disregard many hurts, intentional or otherwise. The man whose heart is set on God’s word will not be easily offended. And the man who loves God more than anything else will not let anything else carry more weight in his life than loving God. Simply put, a pastor does not have to accept intended or unintentional hurt. If unforgiveness or bitterness impedes his fellowship with Christ, the pastor will consciously choose to focus on God and to love him more than the adulation or criticism of people.

For a pastor to endure, God must be viewed as God, and people must be seen as people. An enduring pastor must lose his life for Christ’s sake (Matthew 10:39), even to

the point of being hated (Matthew 10:22) and considering it a joy to be “counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name” (Acts 5:41). In reality, pastors serve Christ through the church; they do not serve the church. A pastor’s first love is for Christ, not the church. A pastor must hold God tightly and the church loosely.

It is, after all, God’s church. Peter encouraged elders not to dominate the church (1 Peter 5:3). This doesn’t simply imply being its boss. It also means thinking or behaving in a way that the pastor loses sight of Christ being the head of the church. The church does not belong to the pastor. He is Christ’s servant in it. As a fellow sojourner, the pastor does not have the power to save or sanctify anyone. He is called to fulfill certain responsibilities but not others. If a pastor confuses what he can do versus what God can do, it will lead to hurt and frustration. Forgiveness flows in the name of Christ and for Christ’s sake. Love for and service to Christ foremost will enable a pastor to endure the “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” rather than suffering the thousand deaths incurred by unforgiveness.

If a pastor is to remain in one pastorate for a long period of time, it will require him, his wife, and his family to exercise constant forgiveness. This is the real interpretation of Jesus’ comment to Peter that a Christian should forgive seventy-seven times (Matthew 18:22). Unlimited forgiveness creates a similar heart and mind for ministry. Bitterness impedes a pastor’s ministry in more ways than can be enumerated in this paper. A pastor whose heart is hardened to a portion of his congregation will not work with them or in their best interests. He will not employ those people in ministry or care for them as a shepherd. And the difference between how he treats people who have hurt him and others will be discerned by both parties. A pastor who cannot move beyond

the hurt caused him by his own congregation will be ineffective in leading the entire congregation to health and other growth.

How can a pastor negotiate with the hurt caused to him in ministry? A pastor should first reflect on the forgiveness extended to him in Christ. He, along with his parishioners, is a sinner whom God has forgiven. He is perhaps “the foremost” (1 Timothy 1:15) sinner in his congregation and should model constant repentance and forgiveness of other sinners. No human being will ever forgive to the extent he or she has been forgiven. And no forgiveness offered by one human being to another could ever be as costly as the forgiveness delivered by Christ at Calvary. Considering one’s own sinfulness will keep a pastor from focusing on the sins of another. It will also remind a pastor of the grace he needs to extend to others as God has extended grace to him.

One of two primary Greek words for forgiveness in the New Testament is the word *aphiemi*. This word is found 143 times in the New Testament and has multiple uses that can advantage a pastor’s understanding and practice of forgiveness. In Matthew 4:20, the word is used of Peter and Andrew as “they left their nets and followed” Jesus (Matthew 4:20). It is also used to dismiss or release as in the case of divorce (Matthew 13:36) and to leave behind (Mark 1:18) and even abandon (Mark 7:8).²⁷⁶ The implications are enormous. A pastor must leave behind the sin and harm caused him, or he will not be able to follow Jesus. He can choose to follow Christ or remain entangled in web of unforgiveness, but he cannot do both. He will be encumbered by emotional

²⁷⁶ H. Vorlander, “Forgiveness,” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 700-701.

weight that will not enable him to focus on ministry or engage parishioners. Simply put, unforgiveness is debilitating to ministry.

This does not imply a pastor has to confront someone who has offended him, nor does it encourage a pastor to overlook sin. There are occasions when someone who sins against us should be alerted to the offense (Matthew 18:15-17). There are also occasions when it is to our wisdom and honor to overlook an offense (Proverbs 19:11). In either case, the ultimate goal of forgiveness is reconciliation. Paul wrote, “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19). God’s forgiveness is intended to reconcile all of fallen creation to Himself. But even God’s forgiveness is conditioned on repentance.

In like manner, a pastor may choose to overlook the offense entirely. Or a person who sins against a pastor may be unwilling to repent. In either case, forgiveness is not complete. But this does not imply a pastor cannot or should not forgive insofar as choosing to overlook the matter or let it go. This implies the pastor has an attitude of forgiveness toward the offender even though forgiveness has not been granted. Ken Sande writes:

When an offense is too serious to overlook and the offender has not yet repented, you may need to approach forgiveness as a two-stage process. The first stage requires *having an attitude of forgiveness*, and the second, *granting forgiveness*. Having an attitude of forgiveness is unconditional and is a commitment you make to God . . . By his grace you seek to maintain a loving and merciful attitude toward someone who has offended you.²⁷⁷

Pastor and author John Piper preached

One last observation remains: forgiveness of an unrepentant person doesn’t look the same as forgiveness of a repentant person . . . there’s a sense in which full forgiveness is only possible in response to repentance. But even when a person does not repent (cf. Matt. 18:17) we are commanded to love our enemy and pray for those who persecute us

²⁷⁷ Ken Sande. *The Peace Maker* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004; reprint, 3rd), 210-211.

and do good to those who hate us (Luke 6:27). The difference is that when a person who wronged us does not repent with contrition and confession and conversion (turning from sin to righteousness), he cuts off the full work of forgiveness. We can still lay down our ill will; we can hand over our anger to God; we can seek to do him good; but we cannot carry through reconciliation or intimacy.²⁷⁸

Such forgiveness is absolutely essential if a pastor is to remain in a single pastorate for any length of time.

Finally, a pastor should remember that, as the Lord's servant, he is protected by the Lord who called him to serve. Faith in God will keep a man from bitterness and revenge. The assurance of God's holiness will keep a pastor from becoming a vigilante of God's judgment. When Paul was harmed by Alexander, he wrote "Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds" (2 Timothy 4:14). Paul's response to Alexander ensured the apostle's heart remained right with God. His written words also laid down a path for Timothy to follow in the young pastor's own ministry in Ephesus.

As Paul stated to Timothy, God is the avenger of all wrong. Paul warned his Roman readers about revenge with the certainty that God will, at and in his appropriate time and way, exact judgment on all wrong. He wrote "Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all" (Romans 12:17). As such, a pastor should never take judgment into his own hands but should trust God with all judgment of motives and actions. This enables the pastor to remain focused on his own

²⁷⁸ John Piper, *As We Forgive Our Debtors: What Does Forgiveness Look Like* (Desiring God Ministries, 1994, accessed December 3, 2012); available from http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByDate/1994/868_As_We_Forgive_Our_Debtors/.

relationship with Christ, thereby enhancing his life, that of his family, and the ministry to which God has called him.

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

The calling to Christian ministry is of divine origin, purpose, blessing, and reward. As the apostle Paul contemplated his own ministry, he wrote, “I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life” (1 Timothy 1:12,16). Paul recognized God’s grace in calling him to ministry, but he also understood the responsibility that came with that calling. He “received mercy” so that “Christ might display his perfect patience as an example.” Paul was the living canvas on which God painted the glory of his grace for “those who were to believe” God’s intent is the same with every pastor who leads a flock, not only through the faithful exposition of the word but equally by the example of his life.

One of those who believed was Paul’s own protégé, Timothy. And so it was that, after he reflected on God’s grace in his own life, Paul immediately wrote, “This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith” (1 Timothy 1:19). It was the elder apostle’s hope that Timothy would imitate the former’s faithfulness to Christ’s calling and not shipwreck the ministry entrusted to him.

Surviving transitions provides the Holy Spirit with the context necessary to transform children of wrath into children of obedience. These transitions may be of the pastor's liking or dislike. But surviving transitions is essential to pastoral longevity, an endurance characterized by spiritual transformation. This conversion occurs in the membership as it also takes place in the pastor. Pastoral longevity is the key to such life transformation in the pulpit and the pew.

The norm for pastoral ministry is longevity, which, in turn, produces the most good for the people in and the advancement of God's kingdom. By it, God works all things together for the good of both pastors and congregants (Romans 8:28). Sainthood requires a lifetime of cooperation with the Holy Spirit. This is true for both pastors and members. For this reason, everything that can be done to enhance the possibility of pastoral longevity should be undertaken. And whatever can be done to teach men to survive transitions in the local church should also be encouraged.

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Adjunct Instructor
Undergraduate program in Religion

2012-Present Liberty University On-Line Lynchburg, VA

Instructor
Undergraduate program in Religion

Education:

John Jay High School 1974 San Antonio TX

Graham Bible College 2005 Bristol TN
Bachelor of Religious Education

Liberty University 2009
Lynchburg VA
Master of Arts (Theological Studies) / Magna Cum-Laude

Liberty University 2010
Lynchburg VA
Master of Divinity (Leadership) / Magna Cum-Laude

Liberty University 2010
Lynchburg VA
Master of Sacred Theology (Theology) / Magna Cum-Laude

Liberty University 2012
Lynchburg VA
Doctor of Ministry Candidate (Pastoral Leadership & Church Management)

Publications:

Writer: Autumn Sunday school lessons 2007 *Baptist and Reflector*

Article: *The Positive Side of Conflict* Growing Churches Magazine

Book: <i>On Wings of Prayer</i> 2009	Day One Publications
Book: <i>Help! My Baby Has Died</i> 2010	Day One Publications
Book: <i>Help! I'm Living With A Terminal Illness</i> 2012	Day One Publications
Book: <i>Make the World Your Parish</i> 2012	Day One Publications

IRB APPROVAL

January 25, 2012

Dear Reggie,

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 that no further IRB oversight is required unless your data collection extends past the one year approval granted by this memo, in which case you would submit the annual review form attached to your approval email.

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:

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), **survey procedures**, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:

(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and that 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 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,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
IRB Chair, Associate Professor
Center for Counseling & Family Studies
(434) 592-5054