

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Pastoral Burnout: Practical and Biblical Insights for Prevention and Rehabilitation within the
International Pentecostal Holiness Church

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

by
Jim Tunnell

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Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Thesis Project Approval Sheet

Mentor: Dr. Donald Hicks
Assistant Professor of Practical Studies

Reader: Dr. Fred C. Smith
Associate Professor of Theology & Biblical Studies

THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

Jim Tunnell

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Mentor: Dr. Don Hicks

With the excessive demands in pastoral ministry, the spectrum of ministry workload has become a stressful occupational peril that could trigger pastors to give in and ultimately abandon ministry altogether. Before and after secession, clergy, particularly pastors, experience a wide variety of maladies, including but not limited to physical and psychological distress, that may lead to intensive outcomes. As the number of resignations continues to rise, there is an emergent interest among leaders, particularly in the denominational sector, to determine the interposing contributing factors and to develop appropriate resources to be of assistance when pastoral burnout is recognizable. With the help of scholarly resources and biblical examples as well as interviews and surveys of pastors and denominational leaders, this thesis will endeavor to uncover an effective method for preventing burnout and recovering from it.

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Chapter 1

Statement of the Problem

The role of a pastor in the church is undeniably significant. Gleaning from the Apostle Paul's perspective, the pastor's role is listed with the five-fold ministries of teaching, apostleship, evangelism, and prophecy (Eph 4:11). Although the term "pastor" is omitted in the New Testament, its Latin counterpart *shepherd* offers a greater emphasis on the important responsibilities of those leading the church and caring for the people of God. "Time and time again the Lord uses the metaphor of the shepherd to describe and illustrate what he expects of those whom he places in roles of church leadership."¹ The role of pastor/shepherd is undeniably essential today just as it was in the early church.

Serving in pastoral ministry for the past twenty-five years, this writer can attest that the role of pastor/shepherd in the church is fundamentally important to church growth; however, the responsibilities of the office can be wearisome on the person serving in that particular role. In fact, through personal experience, the office of the pastor can "make or break" the best of pastors. Therefore, this project will use the term "burnout" when describing the condition that clergy may experience when they are prepared to leave the ministry altogether.

The calling of the pastor should never be taken lightly because with it comes great responsibility that can be a delight or displeasure depending on the circumstances. What is more significant, the ideological role of pastor/shepherd may have changed in recent years creating a more antagonistic expectation in the church and elsewhere in the world. In other words, the church as well as those outside the church body may have developed a distorted view of the pastor/shepherd's role. It is obvious from biblical accounts that Jesus Christ outlined the major

¹ E. Glenn Wagner, *Escape from Church, Inc.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 113.

responsibilities of the pastor/shepherd by urging the Apostle Peter to “simply feed and tend to the sheep or the flock of God” (John 21:15-17). The Apostle Peter took this responsibility to heart by exhorting other leaders to “care for the flock as they anticipate the appearing of the Chief Shepherd” (1 Peter 5:4). Unequivocally, the pastor/shepherd’s commission is simply to teach the flock the gospel message of Jesus Christ and care for them. The truth of this message guides people into a greater knowledge of God and cause them to “resist heresy” (Titus 1:9). Realizing this principle doesn’t constitute neglect of the flock’s needs, teaching God’s word and mentoring people toward maturity will inevitably follow through on meeting the needs of the church. The Apostle Peter recognized this important facet by proclaiming, “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:2-3).² Within this context, it is clear that the mandate given to pastors/shepherds is an unpretentious directive—humbly teach and care for the people to whom God places in your guardianship. However, could it be that this mandate has become muddied with pretentious beliefs? In other words, could modern expectations hinder a pastor/shepherd from carrying out Christ’s mandate to teach and care for the church? Could unrealistic expectations from the church and the general public contribute to pastoral burnout?

Generally speaking, the term *pastoral care* refers to the various services performed by those in pastoral ministry. However, regardless of the meaning, anyone serving in a pastoral role realizes soon enough the numerous duties that surround the position. Unfortunately, the various duties enveloping the pastoral role in the church can be overwhelming. In broader terms, the

² Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages are from the New International Version (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2017).

spectrum of ministry workload can become a stressful occupational peril that could trigger pastors to give up and ultimately abandon ministry altogether. Before and after secession, pastors experience a wide variety of maladies, including but not limited to physical and psychological distresses, that may lead to intensive outcomes. As the number of resignations occurs, there is an emergent interest among leaders, particularly in the denominational sector, to determine the interposing contributing factors and to develop appropriate resources to be of assistance when pastoral burnout is recognizable. With this in mind, this thesis will focus solely on pastoral burnout and present biblical and practical recommendations on how the International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC) can better provide resources and guidance to help prevent burnout. A portion of the project will also identify rehabilitation strategies for burnout recovery.

Statement of Limitations

First and foremost, this project does not insist on offering a psychological analysis for pastors experiencing ministry burnout nor does it intend on offering a magical whim on how to recover from burnout. The sole purpose of this project is to identify the perils associated with pastoral burnout and present a wholesome dialogue on approaches to prevent burnout and recover if it should occur.

There are some credible statistics relating to pastoral burnout and why ministers are leaving the pulpit; however, the exact number may never be known. This reveals a potential problem in trying to compile a pastoral burnout report; however, it does not prevent the compilation of statistics within the framework of a particular church movement. There is an amount of sufficient evidence within the Appalachian Conference of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church that may suggest a trend among pastors leaving ministry altogether because of burnout. There may be a direct correlation to expectancy both on the church and the

pastor's part. In other words, churches and pastors may not have a clear understanding upfront of the respective roles they play. In this project, it is impossible to identify all the expectations that churches, and pastors have; however, it is the objective of this project to identify some of the potential issues that may arise out of unrealistic expectations and unexpected circumstances.

The distress of one pastor may not be the same for another. The goal of this project is not to characterize nor categorize every potential problem a pastor may face as a universal issue or solution for all. With over twenty-five years of pastoral ministry, this student found a direct correlation between pastoral burnout and pastoral resignations; however, the contributing factors were not the same in every incident. One of the causes of discouragement among pastors was the lack of leadership training. In one instance, a pastor was assigned to a large congregation in which he was ill-equipped to lead. In a few short months, he was discouraged and resigned. The reason for his resignation was not due to burnout; it was his lack of personal leadership skills. This seems to be a constant issue in preparing for this project. This student is not interested in compiling information to identify every contributing factor for pastoral resignations. This project is solely focused on pastoral burnout among those who are well-equipped for pastoral ministry but find themselves involved in futile duties that lead to burnout instead of contributing to the success of the church.

Church expectations can be futile as well. For example, it is unreasonable for a church that cannot financially support a full-time pastor to require/request one. Likewise, it is narcissistic for a church with a larger congregation to require the pastor to wear many hats to the point of physical exhaustion. The objective of this project is not to include data that reveals inflated expectations. The pastor/shepherd is not a "one-man-band." He cannot physically, emotionally, and spiritually carry out unrealistic expectancies. This project is a realistic view of

the conventional business of the church with a typical pastor. Therefore, churches and pastors that are atypical will be excluded from the emphasis of this project.

Finally, a misconception among leaders is the emphasis on intervention in pastoral burnout and recovery. It is unrealistic to suggest that one path to recovery is a universal remedy. This project will not suggest a remedy at all; it will look at the biblical and realistic approaches that will aid in the road to recovery. This project will leave clinical and psychological reform to those with the expertise to handle those cases. It will never be the intent of this writer to suggest a clear-cut method for minimizing pastoral burnout or to suggest a solid treatment once a resignation has occurred because of it.

Theoretical Basis

In a real sense, many people within the church and elsewhere may have a complete misunderstanding of the pastor's role in church work. Unfortunately, this pastor has overheard church members joke that pastors only work one day each week, on Sunday. This misconception couldn't be further from the truth. Aside from weekly sermon preparation, most pastors are involved in numerous biblical counseling sessions as well as other duties that require inordinate amounts of time (e.g., visitations, discipleship, social commitments, and spiritual guidance). Some pastors have additional responsibilities aside from their pastoral duties as well. For instance, they may serve as chaplains in the areas of military, hospitals, hospices, and prisons. In reality, the weekly sermon(s) are just a small part of the matters many pastors attend. In reality, pulpit delivery requires less than five percent of a pastor's ministry time whereas pastoral duties and efforts in futility require more than ninety-five percent. This sentiment seems to be a valid argument as this project progresses.

To understand the motives behind pastoral resignations, the term pastoral burnout may need more clarification. Of course, for anyone who has experienced burnout, they will unhesitatingly tell you that it is something that they never want to live through again. In unpretentious terms, pastoral burnout may refer to the exhausted condition where a pastor loses interest in their ministry role. As a result, the emotional, physical, and spiritual posture of the pastor can become impaired. Unfortunately, a person in this particular situation may also experience many health issues including, but not limited to, physical and psychological depravities. As with any high-stress occupation, pastors can easily lose focus and their priorities can be shifted to areas that are unrelated to the ministry function of the church. In simple terms, burnout can occur when the demands or responsibilities of ministry become unendurable.

Fortunately, there is hope in Christ before a person reaches the final stage of burnout. Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt 11:28-30). There is total sustenance in Christ Jesus. For those that have experienced a high amount of burnout, recovery may emanate from professional services (i.e., Christian counselor, medical professional, psychologist/psychiatrist); however, others with a less degree of burnout, recovery may come from an altered lifestyle or becoming involved in extracurricular activities that help relieve stress (e.g., fishing, golfing, etc.). Moreover, the Bible is filled with scriptures of encouragement. When all else fails, the Word of God will never fail. “In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ

Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:37-39). “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (John 15:7).

Inevitably, dealing with potential burnout cannot triumph without complete reliance in Christ. One of the mistakes that may hinder a pastor from reversing the precipitous spiral toward burnout is self-reliance. Part of the motive burnout is so prevailing for pastors is because some may develop a “hero” factor in their leadership style. Some may refer to this as the “one-man-band” style. Rather than seeking God for his direction and wisdom, this type of pastor attempts to fulfill as many ministry roles in the local church as possible. This project will address leadership styles that exhibit signs of potential pastoral burnout.

Of course, one of the major factors in pastoral burnout is the issue of self-care or the lack of it. “Taking care of oneself requires conceding that we are finite human beings with limits. Our responsibility as creatures before the Creator is to nurture and steward our capacities for the glory of God.”³ Instead of embracing God’s love and care, most pastors usually embrace a chaotic lifestyle of trying to please others instead of caring for themselves. The consequences should be no surprise: lack of proper sleep due to overextended work hours, unhealthy eating habits, lack of quality family time, and personal neglect. These and many other maladies occur when the pastor assumes an autonomous lifestyle. Although the pastor may be healthy and knowledgeable upon entering the pastorate, the toll of the office will soon catch up. It can be easily noted at this point that nowhere in scripture does the Bible command or instruct anyone to labor to the point of exhaustion. However, the Bible does suggest being empowered by Christ as one works.

³ Bob Burns, Tasha Chapman and Donald C. Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2013), 249-250.

Scripture does not negate the importance of work and self-sacrifice. It validates the value of altruism. God’s instruction to humanity was to “be fruitful” (Gen 1:28) and then “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it” (Gen 2:15). Moreover, the Apostle Paul gave strong exhortation against laziness or slothfulness. He states, “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat” (2 Thess 3:10). However, the importance of rest is stressed unequivocally in scripture as well. In fact, after a busy day of ministering to the crowds, Jesus called his disciples to leave the crowds and rest: “Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest’” (Mark 6:31). It is clear that work is described as a vital asset to humanity; however, scripture does not corroborate working extremely hard so that it leads to burnout and possibly other things.

“Self-care is not destructive self-indulgence, but rather it is being a steward of some rather special gifts—the human body and soul, along with the capacity to bring joy to others as well as to experience it.”⁴ The Bible is filled with stories of spiritual leaders capable of great feats for God; however, without proper attention to their health and spiritual welfare, they soon realized their incapability. For example, without the wise counsel of Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro, he would have easily faced the debilitating faculties of burnout. As a great leader, Moses immediately found himself trying to lead the children of Israel as well as hear their complaints. His answer to Jethro for his overextended work habits is a common answer for many pastors, “Because the people come to me to seek God’s will” (Exodus 18:15). Jethro’s wise advice was to delegate leadership to help the people. Moses would eventually burn out if he had continued trying to satisfy all of the people’s requests. The apostles in the early church soon realized that

⁴ William L. Self, *Surviving the Stained Glass Jungle* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2011), 44.

propagating the gospel could not be accomplished by taking on the needs of everyone. In Acts 6, deacons were appointed to help facilitate their demanding requests. While the early apostles were preaching, teaching, and exhorting, the deacons cared for the body of believers.

The concept of delegation and deacon ministry within the local church is a persuasive defense for this project. Although many churches may only require a small staff and in many cases, the pastor is the only full-time staff, the role of a pastor is nonetheless a position that requires others to help carry out the ministry of the church. For this pastor, staff as well as volunteers are important for the administration of common church duties. This pastor considers volunteers to be just as important as paid staff inasmuch as volunteers usually have a passion for their work whereas paid staff may or may not. The church is intended to function as a whole. The Apostle Paul asserts, “From him [Christ] the whole body [church], joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Eph 4:16). He indicates “just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ, we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others” (Rom 12:4-5). The pastoral role is a component in the body of Christ that must function in the capacity that Christ intended. When a pastor operates outside that calling, the results possibly will be burnout.

Total reliance on Jesus Christ is the true remedy for burnout. In a practical sense, a healthy ministry involves continual self-examination and divine consultation. Through introspection, pastors should do some deep soul-searching to make sure their calling is a divinely called and ordained one. After a good self-analysis and checkup, a pastor that has made their “calling and election sure” (2 Pet 1:10), will be able to cope with the astringencies that may present themselves in ministry.

From a practical standpoint, burnout is a human depravity; however, it can easily spill over into one's spiritual life as well. Recovering from burnout cannot be accomplished alone. Only by resting in the assurances of God and his Word will recovery be attainable. Avoidance of burnout cannot be accomplished alone; staying connected with God's Word and his Spirit are the only true sources of strength. Fortunately, God has anointed people to assist in preventing and recovering from burnout (e.g., Christian counselors, etc.); however, constant support is only found in the presence of God. The Apostle Peter's instruction rings true today: "Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you" (1 Pet 5:7, ESV).⁵ Having close communion with God protects the mind, soul, and body.

Statement of Methodology

To fully grasp the biblical and practical applications relative to pastoral burnout and recovery, it is necessary to evaluate the issue by recognizing the progression and intervention. Therefore, the steps in the course are worth exploring.

The first part of the project will attempt to identify the term "burnout" as well as the contributing factors relative to the causation of this stumbling block for pastors within the International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC). With the increasing number of pastors prematurely exiting ministry, there may be an underlining issue for the enigma. From a biblical viewpoint, pastoral burnout may occur when the spiritual vitality of the pastor is hindered due to either an attack from Satan or personal anguish. Utilizing internal research within the IPHC, the cause of burnout may be a universal issue rather than a confined denominational problem. However, for the sake of this project, the research will focus on the causations within the IPHC.

⁵ *English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

Additionally, the project will focus solely on the contributing factors that bring a pastor to discouragement within the pastoral role. The elements may include personal depravity in the areas of training and preparation for ministry. However, the majority of issues that will be discussed will include personal ministry focus and expectations. In conjunction with the varied expectations that come from the local church and the community, the pastor's role in church ministry can be hindered and sometimes halted if there is no cohesiveness in ministry togetherness. The pastor may focus on church growth and development whereas the church may be focused on purely maintenance and conventional ministry endeavors. This part of the project will shed light on the numerous, and sometimes frivolous, demands placed on pastors that could lead to burnout.

The project will also focus on when burnout occurs. Knowing that this part of the project will emphasize the unfortunate realities of this unscrupulous condition, the goal of this part is to recognize the different faces of burnout within the pastoral ministry. For some pastors, they may not realize the condition until they are ready to throw up their hands and quit. Understanding the common and unique facets of burnout should help pastors in this phase to cope with the realities and seek strength and guidance toward recovery.

The second element of the project will focus on maintaining posture toward recovery. This part will recognize the different stages of recovery. Using practical examples of pastors who have recovered from burnout should guide those experiencing burnout at the moment to have hope that recovery is feasible. Also, using examples of pastors who did not recover but gave up and left the ministry altogether will aid in discovering items and situations to avoid. This will help a struggling pastor to recognize the consequences of self-reliance and leaning to their

understanding. The need for self-care will be included in this section to identify areas in which a pastor can recognize the need for safeguards.

The last part of the project will emphasize the glorious properties of recovery. Burnout can be difficult and distressful; however, the resurgence into pastoral ministry/roles can be blissful and uplifting to others. Using examples, practical and biblical, the project will attempt to emphasize the revival of renewal for pastors that are positioned to recover from the agony of burnout. The process of spiritual, physical, and emotional healing is not instantaneous; however, with time and patience, the recuperation that occurs can give a burned-out pastor a new sense of hope. The term “restoration” will be a common expression used throughout this section. “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jer 29:11).

Biblical References

Burnout is not a new problem in church ministry, there are numerous biblical examples. This project will reference scriptures that point to spiritual restoration and renewal. One of the most prevailing instances of burnout referenced in scripture is the narrative found in 1 Kings chapters 18 & 19. It is the story of one of God’s generals in the faith, Elijah, experiencing a drudgery time of his life. The narrative is best described in chapter 19. After an exhausting encounter with Jezebel and the false prophets of Baal, Elijah is faced with a perplexing situation. He reached a point of despair and preferred to give up. He reached a point in which he said, “I have had enough, Lord. Take my life” (1 Kings 19:4). However, he was restored and renewed by God’s simple instructions. In verses five through seven, it reveals that God provided Elijah some much-needed sleep and food for refreshment. In verses nine through fifteen, God afforded him reflection, redirection, and restoration.

It is also possible that David was a victim of burnout. He writes, “Why are you cast down O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me?” (Ps 42:11). A closer look at his writings reveals the classic symptoms of someone who is experiencing burnout. Experiencing many downturns in his personal life (i.e., adultery, loss of a son, etc.), he is faced with physical, mental, and spiritual exhaustion. The words of Psalm 22 validate his hopelessness and despair—“My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the sound of My groaning?” (Ps 22:1). However, his writings do not indicate a complete surrender to his circumstances. For example, in Psalm 30:5 he asserts, “Weeping endures for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” His reliance upon God certainly brought him to the place of restoration and renewal.

Of course, a New Testament example serves as a contemporary example of burnout as well. Epaphroditus was a friend and co-laborer to the Apostle Paul and others. Scripture reveals that he was doing the work that several people should have done in the church. The Apostle Paul explains, “Because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service to me” (Phil 2:30). Fortunately, “God had mercy upon him” (v. 27) and restored him so that he could continue the ministry of the gospel to the Philippians.

Likewise, within the same scripture context, the Apostle Paul suffered burnout as well. Many would assume that he was such a hero of the faith that nothing would bombard him. However, Philippians 2:27 states, “The Lord had mercy on Epaphroditus, and on me also.” This confirms that this hero of the faith felt the wounds of burnout; however, he did not succumb to the pressures. His New Testament writing confirms his faith until the end. His words to Timothy are a summation of his victorious life, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim 4:7).

Various scriptures encourage the church as well as pastors. The best encouragement was from the Lord himself who affirmed, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). Christ’s emphasis was to give hope to those oppressed by the strains of life, including pastors.

The Old Testament scripture, Isaiah 40:28-31 provides universal inspiration. Any pastor, or a believer for that matter, can be uplifted by the words, “He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak...those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

When a pastor is overwhelmed with the duties of ministry and when the responsibilities of the pastoral role are tremendous, the words David gives can be a direction to look to the one who can help. “When my heart is overwhelmed; Lead me to the rock that is higher than I” (Ps 61:2). This scripture uplifts the person who is at the lowest point of their life.

Of course, when a pastor has reached a point of total exhaustion, the Apostle Paul’s instruction to the Philippian church is worth including, “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:7). To get to this point, the previous verse (v. 6) instructs the believer to pray with supplication, give thanks to God, and communicate with God.

Again, the Psalmist David understood the real source of help. In Psalm 28:7 he states, “The Lord is my strength and my shield, my heart trusts in him, and I am helped.” A struggling

pastor can always be encouraged that the Lord will always assist in the battle. He will assist in the time of trouble.

The Apostle Paul wanted the Corinthian believers to be well assured that their work was not valueless. Their labor of love for the church was a hope that would sustain it. He asserts, “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be firm, steadfast, always fully devoted to the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (1 Cor 15:58).

Lastly, this project will conclude with a biblical narrative that culminates and supports the spiritual priority of resting in God. After a long journey with the people of Israel, Moses started to question his leadership abilities and his faith to continue. The words that God spoke to him next are words that no pastor should ever forget in ministry, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest” (Exod 33:14). These words are the greatest encouragement for pastors facing burnout, amid burnout, or recovering from burnout.

Review of Literature

It is important to understand the elements of pastoral resilience and burnout recovery. The article, “The Pastors Empowerment Program: A resilience education intervention to prevent clergy burnout” by A.D. Abernethy and other scholars, examines the topic fittingly. The article will aid in the discovery of recovery techniques specific to this project.

In a compelling article entitled *Clergy Burnout: A Comparison Study with Other Helping Professions*, C.J. Adams associates the perils of burnout from secular occupations with those experienced by clergy members. This information provides a credible resource for developing a questionnaire to aid in collecting information for this project. The perils listed in this article provides information to help guide in that process.

To become a Christ-like leader, Boyd Baily, in his book *Learning to Lead Like Jesus: 11 Principles to Help You Serve, Inspire, and Equip Others*, suggests modeling his attitude, conversation, and actions. To provoke influence among others, faithful living and humility are desired in every leader. Successful leadership is mirrored after Christ.

Unfortunately, burnout can lead to ministry failure. In his book *FAIL: Finding Hope and Grace in the Midst of Ministry Failure*, J.R. Briggs offers insight into the everyday living of a pastor. Happily, it will provide a voice of encouragement for this project by exclaiming the simple fact that failure is not the end; it can be a transitional mechanism for doing ministry the right way—by trusting God!

In a personal testimonial format, *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving*, serves as a textbook dialogue for this project. Through the book, Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie provide questions for ministry reflection and evaluation. The real-life stories of pastors on the verge of burnout and pastors who survived burnout give this project a good voice for other pastors.

In his book, *Leading on Empty: Refilling Your Tank and Renewing Your Passion*, Wayne Cordeiro shares his testimony of burnout and recovery. He shares insight on how God can lead to greater ministry opportunities. This book serves as a bookmark for this project.

Zach Eswine's book, *The Imperfect Pastor: Discovering Joy in Our Limitations Through a Daily Apprenticeship with Jesus*, is an honest evaluation of daily pastoral work. It helps to identify the humanity involved in pastoral work and formulate a thought process for pastors. Being a pastor does not produce a superhero, but rather makes them realize their humanity.

It is important to evaluate the varying leadership styles among leaders. Ruben W. Exantus' book, *Pastoral Burnout and Leadership Styles: Factors Contributing to Stress and*

Ministerial Turnover, is a comprehensive overview of the different leadership styles in pastoral ministry. This work will particularly benefit this project because it reveals the approach to pastoral ministry by giving a kaleidoscope of leadership techniques that may or may not help avoid burnout.

Presenting a spiritual emphasis and providing a scientific approach to mental health issues, *The Church Leader's Counseling Resource Book: A Guide to Mental Health and Social Problems* is a great addition to a pastor's library. The author, Cynthia Franklin, contributes a great amount of time outlining different problem areas in mental health and then provides an outline for the best possible care. Each chapter is designed as a quick reference for the reader.

Congregants need to have somewhat of an understanding of the pastoral workload. In Cameron and Frederickson's book, *That Their Work Will Be A Joy: Understanding and Coping with the Challenges of Pastoral Ministry*, they present a dialogue for mutual understanding between the church and pastors about pastoral roles. This book will prove to be extremely helpful in this project because the premise of practical application is addressed.

To have clear and concise boundaries in life, authors Henry Cloud and John Townsend offer advice in setting boundaries in the areas of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. The book, *Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life*, offers an outline approach to setting boundaries in everyday life. This book will be helpful in the subject of recovery in this project.

Congregates have so many expectations for pastors. Dodd's book *Pastors Are People Too*, offers suggestions on how to take good care of the pastor. From showing appreciation to a kind word, this book was designed for the parishioner; however, it provides good material for pastors as well. This book will give insight into parishioners who may see this project.

Although Herbert Freudenberger's book, *Burnout: The High Cost of Achievement*, is older, its content is relative to the twenty-first-century pastor. Many of the questions that pastors have about life, in general, are answered in this book. The applications presented will provide a good outline material for the project.

The article, "Discerning the Signs of Pastoral Burnout" by John Henderson, provides insight into the definition of burnout. It also provides recovery suggestions. This article will help define burnout and develop a recovery strategy for this project.

It is important to spend time with God for spiritual growth. In his book, *Alone with God: Rediscovering the Power and Passion of Prayer*, John MacArthur gives practical advice on making prayer a key element of the day. Using the Lord's Prayer as a thematic backdrop, he emphasizes each segment of the prayer for a look into a more fulfilled prayer time. This book will prove to be great reference material in the recovery section of this project.

John C. Maxwell provides a list of twenty-one qualities that a leader should possess in his book, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*. The book is intended to offer professional advice to help leaders become more effective. This book will provide substantial insight into this project.

In the context of ministry roles and functions, Fred Meadows's book, *Reforming the Broken Heart of Leadership: The You Beyond What You Do*, gives a full rendition of ministry recovery. By ascribing an appropriate definition to the term "busyness," the author denotes a new realization into the correct role of pastors. This project will focus on a good number of those issues.

In the medical reference book, *Principles and Techniques of Mental Health Consultation*, Mitchell describes the potential issues of burnout among the clergy. He contends that burnout is

universally common in the secular world as well as the church. This book is a great reference work to understand the commonalities of burnout across many occupations.

Offering personal contemplation and experience as a backdrop, Kirk Jones examines the need for self-care for clergy as well as other professionals in the field of helping others. His book, *Rest in the Storm: Self-Care Strategies for Clergy*, offers practical and biblical encouragement to caregivers. This book provides a good theme for pastoral self-care in this project.

The article, “Maintaining personal resiliency: lessons learned from evangelical protestant clergy” by various authors in the psychology field, identifies burnout symptoms in clergy. The close comparison to other professions helps set the tone for recognizing the need for care and support. This article will prove beneficial in the recovery section of the project.

Robert Morris, a long-term pastor, explores exemplary ways for pastors to rest their mind, body, and spirit. Focusing primarily on the Sabbath, in his book *Take the Day Off: Receiving God’s Gift of Rest*, he emphasizes the biblical mandate to rest. This book offers a great explanation of why rest is essential for everyone.

The authors of *Saying No to Say Yes: Everyday Boundaries and Pastoral Excellence* make a wonderful argument toward ministry effectiveness by ascribing the art of knowing when to say no. The realization that saying no in certain circumstances opens the door to say yes to the right ministry situations. The authors, David Olsen and Nancy Devon, present an overview of how to make the workload less stressful.

A Guide to Ministry Self-care offers a basis for stress in ministry and an effective strategy for healing. Gleaming from different life situations, Richard Olson, gives insight into physical,

relational, and spiritual self-care options. This project will benefit from the insight offered especially in the physical and spiritual sections.

Considered by many to be an expert in clergy development, Oswald's book, *Clergy Self-Care: Finding Balance for Effective Ministry*, is a concise look at balancing the matters in life for holistic living. He concedes that ultimately God gives perfect balance; however, he emphasizes the need for clergy to implement strategies that will aid in the balancing process. The examples and resources in this book are invaluable to this project.

In the book *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Healing the Shattered Soul*, Rogers gives a first-hand look at the damage from pastoral burnout. While offering insight into other stressors besides those that affect pastors, she emphasizes a holistic and spiritual approach to healing. The section on pastoral care will contribute greatly to this project.

From a ministry veteran's point of view, William Self's book, *Surviving the Stained Glass Jungle* directly confronts the prevailing issues of pastoral workload including burnout, conflict, stress, and social concerns. The author gives a poignant overview of potential reasons that pastors suffer from burnout and other perils. Pointing to recovery, the author gives hope to those who exhibit the signs of burnout.

When serious medical conditions arise, it is important to recognize the symptoms before something tragic happens. In the book, *Your Body's Red Light Warning Signals: Medical Tips That May Save Your Life*, the authors are physicians that give practical information on what to do when certain symptoms develop. For pastors, recognizing those symptoms, especially when burnout occurs, could be invaluable.

The book, *Escape from Church, Inc.: The Return of the Pastor-Shepherd* by Glenn Wagner, capitalizes on the prevailing thought that people go into pastoral ministry because they

have a distinct concern for the lost, the author sets the tone to describing the effects of long and tedious work ethics especially those that become efforts in futility. This project will focus on some of those efforts.

In his book, *Preventing Ministry Failure: A ShepherdCare Guide for Pastors, Ministers and Other Caregivers*, Wilson and Hoffmann offer personal direction for those in the ministry who may experience pressures. The book recognizes the encompassing presence of God in each circumstance. This book will offer great suggestions on facing the challenges of everyday life.

In his book, *Replenish: Leading from a Healthy Soul*, Lance Witt offers insight on how pastors can prioritize their lifestyle to live a healthier and happy life. He identifies matters of the soul, mind, body, and spirit. This book provides a fresh look at how pastors can find relief in the struggles of life.

An Amazon bestseller, *Burnout: What is Burnout? & How to Bounce Back* offers a concise definition of burnout, prevention, and recovery. Wilson-Worst identifies the stressors involved to identify each situation. This book loaded with statistics and facts for this project.

Chapter 2

BURNOUT SYNOPSIS

In general terms, burnout is “exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation usually as a result of prolonged stress or frustration.”⁶ However, the characterization of burnout varies depending on the profession. One of the earliest and more contemporary definitions describes the burnout person as “someone in a state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, way of life, or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward.”⁷ Therefore, the term burnout is described as that moment when the person has exhausted themselves both physically, mentally, and in some cases spiritually. From a psychological perspective, the Mayo Clinic identifies burnout as “a special type of work-related stress — a state of physical or emotional exhaustion that also involves a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity.”⁸

Concerning pastoral ministry, burnout is “the moment or season when a pastor loses the motivation, hope, energy, joy, and focus required to fulfill his work, and these losses center upon the work itself.”⁹ Consequently, the description of burnout is consistent across the workplace regardless of the occupation; however, pastoral ministry conveys a greater demand because it focuses on the spiritual well-being of those who are entrusted to the pastoral oversight and care. “Pastors play a crucial role in promoting well-being and justice in communities throughout the

⁶ "Definition of Burnout", Merriam-Webster.Com, Last modified 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/burnout#h1>.

⁷ Herbert Freudenberger, *Burnout: The High Cost of Achievement* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1980), 13.

⁸ "Know the Signs of Job Burnout," Mayo Clinic, Last modified 2019, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/burnout/art-20046642>.

⁹ John Henderson, "Discerning the Signs of Pastoral Burnout," 9Marks, Last modified 2019, <https://www.9marks.org/article/discerning-the-signs-of-pastoral-burnout/>.

world.”¹⁰ Therefore, it is important to recognize and promote efforts to care for those who dedicate themselves to others.

Recognizing the Symptoms

With the case of any debilitating illness, it is important to recognize the possible warning signs. If a person can identify a few key factors that are making them feel the way they do, they may be able to seek the appropriate help and support. If the symptoms are ignored, burnout may inevitably be the result. Some indicators of burnout are easy to identify while some are more complicated to ascertain.

Physical Exhaustion

One of the first indicators of burnout is tiredness or fatigue. This is a distress signal generated innately by the body. It is the body’s way of telling the person that proper care is required for it to function as it was intended. It is possible for those experiencing this symptom to not recognize its impact primarily because they are used to maintaining a high level of momentum and passion in their work ethic. The potentially burned out “think living in a state of exhaustion is normal.”¹¹ In reality, the road to burnout starts at the brink of fatigue.

In pastoral ministry, physical exhaustion seems to be a common thread to the issue of clergy leaving ministry altogether. Reflecting over the past twenty-five years, this pastor recognizes there is a high degree of expectation from the congregation and church leadership concerning a pastor’s day to day duties. Unfortunately, many congregations demand the so-called *perfect pastor* only to be disappointed in their search. Some of the requested mandates are

¹⁰ A.D. Abernethy et al., “The Pastors Empowerment Program: A resilience education intervention to prevent clergy burnout,” *American Psychological Association—Spirituality in Clinical Practice*, no. 3 (2016): 175, assessed June 5, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1037/scp0000109>.

¹¹ Kirk Byron Jones, *Rest in the Storm: Strategies for Clergy and Other Caregivers* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2001), 87.

almost hilarious; however, many of the requirements are graceless. The following list is a personal compilation of unrealistic requests this pastor has collected through the years from congregates in search of the perfect pastor:

- Capable of pleasing everyone in the congregation and meeting everyone's expectations.
- Never steps on anyone's toes but is demanded to speak the truth.
- Work around the clock accomplishing the tasks of the church including janitorial work as needed.
- A person as close to thirty years old that has ministerial experience spanning fifty years.
- A person interconnected with the youth while at the same time spends the majority of time with the other age groups in the church.
- A person who can call on every member of the church while at the same time evangelizes the lost while maintaining eight hours of office presence.

Unfortunately, the perfect pastor does not exist but if they did they would certainly burn out quickly. Physical exhaustion is not hard for others to detect; however, it can be challenging for the potentially burned-out person to identify because of their passion. Self-examination is necessary to maintain a healthier lifestyle and work ethic.

Disconnection

“It is essential that pastors remain connected to God in body, mind, and spirit or lest they risk disconnection from themselves. When disconnection sets in, the pastor will not be able to recognize spiritual neglect.”¹² It is also important that pastors remain connected to the congregation. Not surprisingly, when a pastor is disconnected from God, it is easy to become

¹² Dalene C. Fuller-Rogers and Harold G. Koenig, *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Healing the Shattered Soul* (Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press, 2002), 92.

detached from the congregation. Whether a pastor withdraws from ministry obligations partially or entirely because of overload, disengaging in ministry could produce a drawback from the congregation because they feel neglected.

Misplaced pastors soon realize that they cannot meet the obligations of the ministry by hiding from them. A pastor with a “head in the sand” approach will more than likely be an unsuccessful leader. They also become oblivious to the harm they cause themselves by trying to run from problems rather than confront them.

It is difficult to recognize when a pastor is creating too much distance from the congregation; however, some common notions are easy to recognize. In his article entitled “How to Know If You’re a Disconnected Leader,” Bumgarner cites seven signs of a disconnected leader: “(1) You have no margin in your life, (2) You act like you are bulletproof, (3) You are willing to burnout for God, (4) You keep the Holy Spirit on the bench, (5) You make plans and ask God to bless them, (6) You stop being willing to learn because you are the leader, and (7) You are comfortable with unconfessed sin in your life.”¹³

Pastors must set boundaries. When pastors are overwhelmed with church work and ignore their spiritual wellness, they may soon find themselves spiritually disengaged. As a result, spiritually exhausted pastors find themselves separated from church life and church work. Inevitably, a pastor’s physical, mental, and spiritual health are extremely important and essential to be an effective leader. A pastor engaged in the work of the church at the expense of personal well-being is poised to fail.

¹³ Bob Bumgarner, “How to Know If You’re a Disconnected Leader,” Lifeway Leadership, accessed January 7, 2020, <https://leadership.lifeway.com/2017/07/05/know-youre-disconnected-leader/>.

Pastors need to understand that they are not invincible. They are not superheroes. Pastors should surround themselves with dedicated intercessors and helpers. Moses was a great leader; however, he needed the assistance of two men, Aaron and Hur. Aaron, the priestly figure, represented spiritual support. Hur, the strong man of Judah, characterized the physical support. “When Moses’ hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset” (Exod 17:12). A pastor that is overly confident in their strengths should immediately recognize that ministry is enhanced in the company of fellow laborers.

Chivalry is a great quality in pastoral leadership; however, pastors who sacrifice personal and family health for the interests of the church create contemptible conditions. Taking time for physical, emotional, and spiritual nourishment is not a sign of weakness; it is an indication of wisdom. Christ emphasized rest and renewal. After feeding thousands, Christ recognized that his disciples were exhausted and famished. They served food to thousands of people and neglected their well-being. “Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, [Jesus] said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest’” (Mk. 6:31). Pastors need to remember that self-care is practical and biblical.

The Holy Spirit is a constant source of strength and pastors should never forget that! Jesus reminded his followers that the Holy Spirit would be a constant “help” (John 14:16) throughout life. Self-reliance deprives the pastor of the Spirit’s resources. Instead of depending on the Holy Spirit as a backup or a second choice, pastors should make the Spirit’s presence and power a priority.

The prophetic words of Jeremiah are an encouragement for the contemporary pastor: “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to

harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jer 29:11). Planning is a tool in leadership to assist the pastor in effectively carrying out daily responsibilities. However, seeking the plans of God in ministry should be a priority over personal agendas.

Ministry is a constant learning arena. A pastor’s leadership skills must be sharpened to be able to meet the demands of the ministry. Ill-equipped pastors will burn out quickly. “Leaders who won’t learn start looking and behaving like the Pharisees. They were preoccupied with keeping the religious program running, and they missed God walking among them.”¹⁴

Disconnected leaders also tend to overlook sins that seem to be frivolous. Before long, most sins become inconsequential causing the pastor to become flippant in personal consecration to God. Pastors must never forget that sin has consequences. The practice of confessing sin to God triggers His forgiveness and help.

Weariness

There is a slight misconception in pastoral ministry regarding weariness. It is possible for pastors to be tired or exhausted without being in a state of burnout. Effective pastoral ministry is demanding regardless of whether a person is equipped for it or not. However, the arduous duties of ministry should not compel a pastor to become anguished; they should encourage a deeper need for God’s help.

Jesus became weary in his ministry. However, instead of succumbing to the pressures, he found refreshment and encouragement in his intimacy with God. Interestingly, several biblical passages reveal him retreating from the crowds of people and ministry duties to spend time with God alone (Mt. 14:23; Mk. 1:35, 3:7; Lk. 5:15-16, 6:12-13).

¹⁴ Bumgarner, “How to Know If You’re a Disconnected Leader.”

Pastors need to realize that leadership and ministry duties can be overwhelming at times; however, it is important to manage pastoral weariness. First, realize that pastors are human. The flesh will become tired. God created rest as a remedy for weariness. Second, realize the source of strength is God. When weariness becomes evident, spend time with God alone and thank him for providing nourishment. Lastly, appreciate the times of rest and prepare to continue ministry with perseverance.

Skepticism

It is easy for anyone to become cynical when physical, mental, and spiritual exhaustion has occurred. It can happen to a pastor as well. Pastors are expected to be enthusiasts in church life; however, the steps leading to burnout could also produce a skeptical pastor.

Pastors see and hear things that most of the congregation does not (e.g., gossip, legalism, infighting). While staff members and volunteers can leisurely disengage from ministry activities, pastors are placed in the awkward position of endurance. Unfortunately, some pastors may become so skeptical of Christian authenticity that it forces them to leave ministry altogether. However, bona fide pastors learn to depend on God's help and encouragement. The overall good of the church and Kingdom work help pastors maintain fortitude and perseverance.

Feeling Unappreciated

Anyone can admit the satisfying desire to be appreciated for hard work. Many pastors work long hours, organize numerous events, celebrate life events (i.e., weddings, funerals, baby dedications, etc.), travel for visitations, and prepare sermons/lectures. A simple gesture of appreciation can be like a boost of energy. However, when hard work is unacknowledged it can lead to frustration and resentment.

Unfortunately, some pastors' efforts in the ministry decrease because their work goes unrecognized and is undervalued. Fortunately, the key to pastoral endurance is spiritual tenacity. The Apostle Paul noted, "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Cor 15:58). When a pastor is resolved in Christ, the work is less burdensome and more rewarding because it is all for the Kingdom.

Depression

Depression may not be connected to burnout in many circumstances; however, depression can be a leading cause. Depression in pastoral ministry may occur for various reasons because the struggles in ministry are real and relevant. The manner in which the pastor deals with the underlying issues will make a difference.

A pastor's lack of self-confidence or a feeling of inadequacy may trigger depressive thoughts. Loneliness in the ministry is a common thread among pastors feeling depressed. Spiritual attacks can lead to emotional stress. The overwhelming duties of pastoral duties can be the source of life-draining downheartedness. However, acting instead of reacting in opposition to dejection establishes the positive groundwork for recovery. Spiritual delight is infused into the life of a pastor who maintains "the joy of the Lord is [their] strength" (Neh 8:10).

Miscellaneous Factors

The interconnection for burnout is closely associated with the profession itself. "The job description of clergy is diverse and includes leadership roles that involve constant engagement with others."¹⁵ This continual commitment could be the discourse that describes the ultimate

¹⁵ Christopher Adams, *Clergy Burnout: A Comparison Study with Other Helping Professions*, Pastoral Psychology, April 2017, Volume 66, Issue 2, 147-175.

reasons for pastoral burnout. Subsequently, the similarities in the secular workplace and the church are alarming. Although the outcomes are sometimes atypical, the reasons are nonetheless recognizably apparent and suggest a major apprehension in the workplace.

“An inability to influence decisions that affect your job—such as your schedule, assignments or workload—could lead to job burnout.”¹⁶ In other words, constraints placed on a person’s contribution to the workplace may produce an atmosphere of inefficiency and ineffectiveness. The restrictions could be a combination of immoderate control mechanisms or boundaries of performance. For example, a person bombarded with unrealistic expectations and goals or a person unable to make decisions without several channels of supervisory approval. In Maya Angelou’s *Caged Bird*, she illustrates the limitations of a bird that cannot fly because it is confined, its “wings are trimmed, and its feet are tied.”¹⁷ The same could be said to describe the situation in a workplace where limitations are placed on a competent, exemplary employee or pastor. Unlike Maya Angelou’s hopeful ending describing a bird that continues to sing despite its entrapment, a restrained employee may unfortunately develop feelings of failure that eventually lead to burnout.

A real threat to maintaining high levels of excitement and resilience tends to happen when confusion develops where there is no clear perspective relative to decision-making. “If you’re unclear about the degree of authority you have or what your supervisor or others expect from you, you’re not likely to feel comfortable at work.”¹⁸ Of course, this point is similar to the last with respect to the workplace atmosphere. Unfortunately, many may feel uncomfortable

¹⁶ Mayo Clinic, “Know the Signs of Job Burnout.”

¹⁷ Maya Angelou, *Shaker, Why Don’t You Sing* (New York, NY: Random House, 1983), 16-17.

¹⁸ Mayo Clinic, “Know the Signs of Job Burnout.”

working in an environment where conflicts exist in the management hierarchy. For many leaders and pastors, the church environment is no different. When conflicts arise and when the degree authority a leader/pastor has is questioned, the result is a stressful work environment contributing to the cause of burnout.

Of course, a major contributing factor to burnout occurs when the dynamics of the workplace becomes hostile and intolerable. A dysfunctional environment develops when there is a struggle between employees and supervisors. As for leaders/pastors, the hierarchy of authority should be obviously established. In most evangelical churches, the pastor is the recognized leader of the church. Church councils/boards are elected/appointed to assist the pastor in developing a vision for growth and expansion including assisting with the daily operations and decision of the church. When a break down in job responsibilities or when confusion develops in job tasks occurs, the result could be inevitable chaos and tension. Many leaders/pastors may experience high levels of burnout simply because their line of authority has been compromised.

A prevalent factor leading to burnout in the workplace as well as the church environment is arduous workloads. The common denominator among job responsibilities should be teamwork. When the team is overwhelmed, they may experience stressful situations that could lead to burnout. A good example of workload burnout is when a person is inundated with tasks that go beyond the scope of their job description making them feel inadequate or encumbered with unfinished assignments. This is all too common in pastoral ministry. The pastor is sometimes viewed as a hired church-hand that is required to maintain all the positions in the church. In some cases, the pastor may become a one-man band fulfilling several job descriptions, trying to be everything to everyone. Unfortunately, a pastor in this situation may experience burnout sooner than expected.

When the workload is demanding and challenging the results may lead to potential physical and emotional distress. The Mayo Clinic identifies significant consequences of ignored or unaddressed job burnout: “excessive stress, fatigue, insomnia, sadness, anger or irritability, alcohol or substance misuse, heart disease, high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, and vulnerability to illnesses.”¹⁹ Similarly, when the workload is unexciting, the outcomes may lead to the same results. “Burnout usually takes several months or years to occur and depends completely on the intensity of stress and how quickly it is increased.”²⁰ However, the susceptibility of burnout may develop sooner than expected especially when the contributing factors are extreme. Unfortunately, the consequences of ignored or unaddressed job burnout among leaders/pastors are regrettably similar.

Sadly, when a person experiences physical and emotional stress, burnout can also produce individual isolationism. In the workplace, a person may become standoffish and separate themselves from social interaction. They awkwardly communicate with their coworkers to presume social; however, they may limit their conversations for fear of creating an environment where dialogue results in social interaction. Pastors who experience this type of situation may feel lonely as if on an island to themselves, until eventually they suffer social collapse and possibly mental or physical illness.

Another detriment that may lead to burnout is balancing work and home life. The demand for time-consuming workloads influences the amount of time a person has for family and perhaps one’s self. “Sometimes the social boundary between the congregation and the pastor’s

¹⁹ Mayo Clinic, “Know the Signs of Job Burnout.”

²⁰ YeVetta Wilson-Worst, *Burnout: What Is Burnout? & How to Bounce Back!* (Chesapeake, VA: The Business Club, 2012), 16.

family needs to be more clearly defined.”²¹ The underlying motives may range from dedication to obligation; however, the result is a frenzied routine. Pastors immersed in prolonged church work soon realize the effect it has on their family as well as themselves.

Pastoral Burnout

As stated earlier, the symptoms of burnout are universally prevalent and comparable in the secular workplace as well as in the ministry sector.²² Subsequently, the effects and outcomes of burnout are similar as well. “Although studies have found high rates of [symptoms] in clergy, the degree, of work-related burnout in clergy compared to other occupations is unknown.”²³ However, the available information should aid in understanding the overall correlation.

“It appears that pastors may be ‘set up’ for burnout by the very traits that draw them to ministry and give them the moral substrate from which to minister.”²⁴ Although the calling to be a pastor is divinely inspired, one must never forget that the work of a pastor is subject to human conditions as well. “The symptoms of burnout may include fatigue, insomnia, impaired work performance, and an increased susceptibility to physical illness and substance abuse.”²⁵ Although these ailments are observed in the secular workplace, the existence of their occurrence in pastoral ministry is real as well. It is imperative to understand that pastoral ministry is a calling and the calling is ordained of God.

²¹ Kurt Frederickson and Lee Cameron, *That Their Work Will Be A Joy: Understanding and Coping with the Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012), 174.

²² For the purposes of this project, a distinguishing difference is made between the secular workplace and the ministry sector because the call to ministry should be viewed as a divine calling instead of a vocational calling.

²³ Adams, *Clergy Burnout*.

²⁴ Cynthia Franklin and Rowena Fong, *The Church Leader’s Counseling Resource Book: A Guide to Mental Health and Social Problems* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 421.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Common Burnout Identifiers²⁶

- You find little to no joy in the aspects of your work that used to bring fulfillment.
- Exhaustion and fatigue have become a way of life.
- You begin to resent minor request from your staff.
- Your spiritual life feels dry and barren.
- You feel ineffectual in the important things of life (i.e., family, ministry, relationships, etc.).
- You disengage from important relationships.
- You feel emotionally flat and possibly depressed.

From a 2012 study of 627 Protestant pastors, the following factors that lead to pastoral burnout are quite alarming:²⁷

- 33% felt that dealing with people while trying to help them become better Christians was a substantial challenge
- 25% said that working too hard is a contributing factor
- 25% cited staff issues, time-management problems, and money raising requirements, were also common factors
- 50% were not satisfied
- 41.7% said they were satisfied with their effectiveness
- 16.7% were satisfied but still driven to improve their pastoral performance
- 50% felt their workload was light

²⁶ Franklin and Fong, *The Church Leader's Counseling Resource Book*, 421.

²⁷ Ruben Exantus, *Pastoral Burnout and Leadership Styles: Factors Contributing to Stress and Ministerial Turnover* (Bloomington, IL: AuthorHouse, 2012), 83-84.

- 50% felt their workload was heavy.

Unfortunately, if this above-mentioned study was implemented today, the percentages leading to pastoral burnout could be much higher. It is also reasonable to believe that the contributing factors leading to pastoral burnout could also be greater in number.

Super Pastor Tendency

Unfortunately, a pastor may also develop an attitude that no one else can do the work except themselves. This mindset in pastoral ministry can be characterized as having a super pastor inhibition or an unhealthy feeling that it is the job of the pastor to save everyone and be everything to everybody. It is appropriate to have confidence in oneself; however, elevating confidence to the level of invincibility can be incongruous. The desire to think of oneself as invulnerable to failure can be detrimental.

In his book, *Rest in the Storm*, Kirk Jones characterizes several obstacles that prevent pastors from recognizing the effects of an overzealous pastor. The first is indispensability. Jones asserts, “In order to embrace the time we need and deserve to rest and refuel, we must believe the unbelievable, the preposterous, and the absurd—namely, that life will go along just fine during our temporary retreat.”²⁸ In other words, the work of a pastor is unique and personal; however, the ministry of the church will continue while the pastor takes time to rest and rejuvenate. Furthermore, the church’s mission is not about the pastor; it is about Christ. Another hindrance is invisibility. “It is not that we completely ignore the signs of fatigue and exhaustion, but we condition ourselves to rest only as we near the breaking point—and even then just long enough to feel the first pulsations of renewed energy.”²⁹ The results of fatigue and exhaustion can be

²⁸ Jones, *Rest in the Storm*, 27.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

disastrous especially when pastors ignore the enervation that occurs due to physical, mental, and spiritual stress.

Of course, the characteristics of the super pastor is not difficult to identify. First, an exhibition of an enormous amount of self-confidence tends to predominately take center stage. This composure supersedes knowing one's abilities; it relates to the mindset that everyone else is incapable of starting or completing a task. There may be a possible correlation between a desire to see tasks completed effectively and efficiently. However, many pastors with this fixation may applaud their abilities or boast about their past accomplishments while at the same time developing the ministry agenda around their successes. Of course, this immense plethora of self-confidence creates an atmosphere where others and their opinions are underappreciated or not recognized at all. Pastors with an overabundance of self-confidence could end up isolating themselves in leadership.

Another characteristic of the super pastor is the tendency to dismiss the quality of those involved in the ministry with them. Church staff and volunteers are equipped with God-given talents and abilities that are unique to them. They are valuable to the vitality and life of the church. Their gifts contribute in more than one way to the church's mission. The Apostle Paul described this structure to the church in Corinth by stating, "For the body does not consist of one member but of many" (1 Cor 12:14, ESV). He further explained, "God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Cor 12:24-27, ESV). Therefore, each person is essential in the

growth and health of the church. Pastors who disregard the abilities of those working with them in ministry fail to recognize the biblical call to honor and value them.

An important characteristic in recognizing a Super-Pastor Inhibition is the inclination to have a different set of rules for others than for themselves. Unfortunately, this could easily be interpreted as a prideful lifestyle. Pastors and church leaders are called to lead by example (1 Pet 5:3). Leading by example has many prerequisites that are essential for successful ministry.

In his book, *Learning to Lead Like Jesus*, Boyd Bailey lists several “character qualities” applicable in evaluating pastoral burnout. He contends that the character of Jesus Christ demonstrates the “kind of wisdom that allows leaders to make the best decisions under the worst circumstances.”³⁰ Recognizing the importance of Christian leadership, Bailey reminds us that the scriptures teach us that Christ personifies the perfect leadership model.

Character Traits of a Pastor

Humility

“Humility is the starting point”³¹ and the principal foundation for other leadership traits. In pastoral leadership, pretentiousness can ultimately destroy any effort for growth because the focus is usually on self-interests instead of the benefit for others. In teaching his disciples, Jesus emphasized, “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matt 20:28). The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Philippian Christians, noted that “[Christ] made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Phil 2:7). Thus, humility was at the heart of Christ’s earthly ministry and pastors should have the same fortitude.

³⁰ Boyd Bailey, *Learning to Lead Like Jesus: 11 Principles to Help You Serve, Inspire, and Equip Others* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2018), 19.

³¹ Ibid.

Love

“Love is arguably the greatest trait since it is the number one command from Christ”³² (1 Cor 13). Without a doubt, love is the recognizable expression of God’s presence in a pastor’s life. It is apparent from scripture that everything God does develops from his love for humanity. The ultimate sacrifice of his Son on the cross is the epitome of selfless love (John 3:16). “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9, ESV). Consequently, this selfless love must be a hallmark expression and attribute for pastors to fully embrace a concern for the church.

Accountability

“We do better when other people are engaged in our lives.”³³ It has been said that pastoral ministry is a very lonely occupation. Therefore, pastors must find some type of encouragement. Most denominations offer support-based programs that provide pastors with an environment in which they can express themselves. Moreover, attending retreats and seminars are good ways to connect with other pastors to build camaraderie. Jesus exemplified this philosophy by surrounding himself with others to communicate and impart ministry. However, he also shared intimate moments and encouragement with them for the journey. Using the same approach, pastors can find support from other pastors.

Relationships

Interaction with people is important; however, connecting with them to build relationships is essential. Those connections build a sense of community. “Community sets us up

³² Bailey, *Learning to Lead Like Jesus*, 19.

³³ *Ibid.*, 20.

to truly understand others and help them in the best way.”³⁴ Of the varied relationships that pastors encounter in their lifetime, the relationships built out of mutual respect and appreciation are long-lasting. The relationships that Jesus built with his disciples demonstrates the value he placed on them. When confronted with the fact that Christ was facing imminent death, the Apostle Peter as well as the others vowed that they would never renounce him (Mark 14:31). This illustrates the deep love they had for Christ as they built strong relationships among themselves. Pastors do well to build enduring relationships.

Teachability

For a pastor to teach, he should be teachable. “When we quit learning we die—maybe not on the outside, but on the inside our souls shrivel up.”³⁵ It is important to understand the scriptures and it is also vital that a pastor continues to become knowledgeable in scripture. Christ often took the disciples to places where he could teach them (Matt 5). Although the disciples had the omniscient Christ with them, Jesus wanted them to soak themselves in kingdom knowledge. The same is true for pastors. Kingdom knowledge is far more beneficial than human understanding.

Discipline

“We cannot become a disciple of Jesus Christ without some measure of discipline.”³⁶ The Apostle Paul instructed the Philippian Christians by stating, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these

³⁴ Bailey, *Learning to Lead Like Jesus*, 20.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

things” (Phil 4:8, ESV). With the same intention, he instructed young Timothy by stating, “Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come” (1 Tim. 4:7-8, ESV). Since the root form of discipline is disciple, the two are inseparable. Being disciplined in spirit, body, and soul is an asset in pastoral ministry.

Wisdom

The Apostle James declared, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him” (James 1:5, ESV). While the definition is debatable, the type of wisdom required for pastoral ministry is not. For pastors to succeed, Godly wisdom is required. Becoming knowledgeable of God and his expectations will assist the pastor in every area of ministry. Simply put, wisdom is a divine gift from God. Although human knowledge is valuable in understanding scripture, wisdom applies understanding to produce appropriate results. A pastor’s relationship with Jesus Christ facilitates wisdom principles. “And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30, ESV). Following the precepts of Christ enables a pastor to seek wisdom when making decisions.

Recognizing Pastoral Burnout in the Appalachian Conference

To properly evaluate the impact of internal and external pressures of ministry and to appropriately identify potential burnout issues among pastors, a questionnaire was developed for the pastors of the Appalachian Conference of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC). The Appalachian Conference of the IPHC comprises roughly one-hundred-fifty churches located geographically in Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee.

In an online study concerning burnout among Appalachian Conference, twenty-five career pastors were asked to participate in a questionnaire that addresses several key difficulties and concerns for pastors serving more than five years in pastoral ministry. As a result, several principal causes that may contribute to burnout were revealed. The participating pastors were provided an opportunity to anonymously respond to general statements regarding burnout through an online questionnaire. The questions or statements were formed with permission from Pastoral Care, Inc. The participants were given the choice between a range of “Never, Seldom, Occasionally, Sometimes, Often and Frequently” in response to general statements concerning burnout symptoms.

Ministry Workload

Since ministry duties seem to have an impact on the degree of burnout, the study revealed some disturbing elements. Eighty percent of participating pastors revealed they were constantly tired from work in the ministry and forty-one percent were constantly bored with their duties, co-workers, and church members. Additionally, fifty-three percent of those completing the study revealed they were easily irritated and have little patience with people. Forty-one percent of pastors disclosed they were cynical about the church, people, profession, and their denomination in general. Overall, the morale over time diminished as a result of ministry workload.

Ministry Environment

The overall environment could be a major contributing factor. Fifty-four percent of contributing pastors said they wanted to change their daily routine; however, they felt threatened to make any modification to their schedules. As a result of the intimidation to make significant changes to their everyday plans, the study revealed feeling depressed because they lacked control

over their circumstances. Seventy-three percent of those participating in the survey revealed limitations or restrictions in their decisions related to change.

“How we respond to setbacks, obstacles and failures have massive implications for our lives.”³⁷ The diminishing effect from the hectic workload also revealed a surprising effect. Sixty-percent of those participating in the study divulged that they have difficulty concentrating on specific tasks related to ministry. The same percentage felt withdrawn because trying to problem-solve seemed futile. The impact may be from a lack of insight or dispossession of priorities. To make up for the deficiencies, twenty-seven percent of pastors in the study were inclined to subjugate themselves to trivial activities to escape the more important decisions or responsibilities.

Unfortunately, as a result of the mundane and humdrum feeling of ministry, thirty-three percent of pastors in the study revealed losing interest in the care of others because they were too preoccupied with their health, sanity, and career. Sadly, sixty percent of pastors didn't want to be burdened with the problems of others because of their health and well-being. Sixty-one percent of participating pastors were deprived of sleep and relaxation was practically a nonexistent characteristic. Unfortunately, fifty-three percent of pastors in the study simply feel that they have nothing more to contribute to the ministry. These feelings of inadequacy may be the root cause of forty-six percent of pastors believing they have lost their sense of purpose or enthusiasm in ministry.

The intransigent viewpoint of a considerable number of participating pastors may reveal their burnout origin; however, the result reveals a deep sense of despair when burnout occurs. For instance, sixty-six percent of pastors doubt that they make a difference for the people in their

³⁷ J.R. Briggs and Eugene H. Peterson, *Fail: Finding Hope and Grace in the Midst of Ministry Failure* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), 121.

congregation. Unfortunately, the same feelings spill over in their relationships with co-workers, friends, and family. Also, thirty-nine percent of pastors surveyed indicated they were going through the motions by waiting for a change in jobs/occupation or simply longing for retirement.

Ministry Posture

The self-esteem of pastors participating in the study was also alarming. The use of phrases such as “I don’t care anymore” or “why bother, it won’t make a difference anyway” were common (i.e., 47%) among those surveyed. Thirty-three percent of those surveyed indicated that they are highly critical of others. Forty-seven percent of pastors indicated their sense of professional and personal confidence was despondent.

Interestingly, dedication to work and the workplace ranked low in the survey. Forty-one percent stated they frequently complain and despair over problems. Of those surveyed, social interaction on and off the job was affected by their morale.

The survey revealed that burnout was likely to happen over time. The Appalachian Conference of the IPHC does not have a contingency plan for pastors experiencing burnout or on the verge of burnout. Recently, discussion about burnout in the organization has become more prevalent; however, addressing the issues identified in this survey is presently nonexistent. A sabbatical program is available to be suitable for pastors; however, the program doesn’t address burnout issues and is poorly designed. Fortunately, the organization has acknowledged and noted this project and is considering significant changes to its sabbatical program.

With the prevalent stressors of pastoral ministry, it is imperative at this point to recognize the reality of burnout among the most qualified and well-trained pastors. In the remainder of this project, the focus will be on recovering from burnout. Since the causes of burnout have been

well-documented, any further futile attempt to expound upon those findings would be useless and impractical. Burned-out pastors need hope for recovery—that is this writer’s objective.

Chapter 3

PATH TO RECOVERY AND RENEWAL

When burnout occurs, is recovery possible? The answer to this question depends on the person. The decision to use the burnout experience as a stepping-stone to successful ministry or a millstone to ministry failure is a decision that every burnout pastor must contend with.

Ultimately, the path to recovery is a process; however, the process is worth the endeavor.

The most common definition of resilience is “the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties. It also means the ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape.”³⁸ A resilient pastor will ultimately rebound from burnout. The process requires a turn-around attitude. Usually, resilient pastors make the best pastors simply because they endured hardships and struggles in their ministry and became better because of them. They can offer more compassion to those struggling with similar trials.

The Decision to Recover

Finding the way back to better health and well-being, as well as a successful pastorate, is preferably a choice that most pastors desire. Yet, for any recovery from burnout to occur, the process of recovery must be a priority. The definition of insanity, according to Albert Einstein, is “doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.” Burnout pastors will never recover until they decide to change pace. A decision to start on the path of recovery is one that must ultimately be resolute.

First and foremost, it is important to address the issues that caused burnout to occur in the first place. When the problems are identified, getting the appropriate help is the next step. The damage caused by burnout can leave lasting effects physically, mentally, and spiritually. Dealing

³⁸ *Lexico by Oxford Dictionary*, s.v. “resilience,” accessed on June 3, 2020, <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/resilience>.

with the elements that initiated the path to burnout will aid in pursuing the path away from burnout. This doesn't mean that a pastor should leave ministry altogether; it means certain elements should change for pastoral ministry to be a blessing instead of a burden.

The process of shifting the components of ministry around and prioritizing them to create an atmosphere of enjoyment and well-being can be described as self-care. "Self-sacrifice is a hallmark of our faith, yet in most of the world's great religions, self-care is an essentially equal component of spiritual well-being."³⁹ Pastors should make it a dedicated practice to focus on their physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

Physical Health

"The fact that so many clergy are experiencing such elevated rates of chronic disease, obesity, and depression would suggest that they are not doing well in this area of physical self-care."⁴⁰ The physical symptoms of burnout vary; however, some are easily recognized. The list includes, but is not limited to fatigue, weight gain/loss, insomnia, anxiety, and hypertension. All of these could lead to more serious issues when left untreated.

"The idea of attending to self-care recognizes that pastors don't think about their self-care—but need to!"⁴¹ The solution to poor physical health brought on by burnout stressors is rest. Recognizing and attending to the general health of the body can be one of the most spiritual things a pastor does. Interestingly, God provided for the physical needs of the Prophet Elijah before addressing his spiritual needs. It wasn't that the physical was more important than the spiritual; it was a matter of prioritizing the physical to prepare it for the spiritual. The Prophet

³⁹ Jones, *Rest in the Storm*, 15-16.

⁴⁰ Richard Olson, *A Guide to Ministry Self-Care* (Lanham, MD: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2018), 106.

⁴¹ Burns, *Resilient Ministry*, 22.

Elijah complained, “I have had enough, Lord. Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors” (1 Kings 19:4b-5a). At the moment of almost a total melt-down, God sent an angel with food and water. Likewise, Christ was able to bring healing to the Apostle Peter after he provided food for nutrition (John 21). Undeniably, the body needs nourishment to survive and function properly. Without proper care, the body exhibits adverse reactions such as the inability to focus or concentrate and the motivation to perform physical duties. However, when the body is refreshed from rest, it can perform to its fullest potential.

“Taking care of your body is analogous to taking care of your car. The preventative measures for an automobile include regular oil changes, the maintenance of fluid levels, and tune-ups. The same goes for your body.”⁴² For instance, fatigue is a warning sign that the body is not obtaining the proper amount of rest resulting in low energy levels. A self-evaluation may reveal that not dedicating the appropriate time to sleep may be the problem. In the target study of Appalachian Conference IPHC pastors, eighty percent of those surveyed expressed that they are constantly tired while thirty-four percent expressed that they hate to get out of bed and dread going to work. The Mayo Clinic suggests that adults on average need at least “seven to nine hours”⁴³ of restful sleep. When loss of sleep occurs, other complications may develop such as insomnia. “Getting physical exercise is important because it improves sleep quality and leads to more restorative slow-wave sleep. Morning exposure to sunlight or bright light strengthens the body’s internal clock, making it easier to fall asleep and stay asleep.”⁴⁴

⁴² Neil Shulman, Jack Birge, and Joon Ahn, *Your Body’s Red Light Warning Signals: Medical Tips That May Save Your Life* (New York, NY: Bantam Dell—Random House Publishers, 2009), xvii.

⁴³ “How many hours of sleep are enough for good health?”, *Mayo Clinic*, accessed June 1, 2020, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/expert-answers/how-many-hours-of-sleep-are-enough/faq-20057898>.

⁴⁴ Olson, *Ministry Self-Care*, 117.

“Equally as important to a good night’s sleep for efficient body function is a healthy diet.”⁴⁵ Unfortunately, binge eating, as well as comfort eating, can result in excessive weight gain which in turn can lead to other serious medical conditions (e.g., hypertension and diabetes). On the other hand, a loss of appetite can lead to malnourishment or undernutrition. In addition to a healthy diet and maintaining a healthy weight level is important to get an adequate amount of exercise. Oswald asserts, “The body was not something to be used and eventually disposed of like a Kleenex while the mind and the soul remained immortal.”⁴⁶ Taking care of one’s body with a proper diet regimen becomes a powerful and healthy habit. If a pastor should have a dependency or a routine it should be one that includes a healthy body.

Mental Health

“The pastor’s case load runs the gamut from marital counseling to brief psychotherapy and from quick crisis intervention to long-term pastoral care.”⁴⁷ The unpredictable schedule of a pastor can produce mental stressors that lead to burnout. The pastor may develop a mindset to give up because the workload is too great. When burnout occurs because of these types of stressors, spiritual renewal of the mind is needed.

On the way to recovery in mental health, the first step is to keep Christ in focus even when everything else seems out of focus. The Apostle Paul contends, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Rom 12:2). An

⁴⁵ Michael T. Wilson and Brad Hoffman, *Preventing Ministry Failure: A ShepherdCare Guide for Pastors, Ministers and Other Caregivers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 131.

⁴⁶ Roy M. Oswald, *Clergy Self-Care: Finding Balance for Effective Ministry* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 16.

⁴⁷ Kenneth R. Mitchell, *Principles and Techniques of Mental Health Consultation*, ed. Stanley Plog (New York, NY: Plenum Publishing, 2013), 153.

intimate relationship with Christ is both exciting and joyous. “Because of the grace that goes before us, we are able to spiritually and intellectually become aware of God, understand our brokenness, and discern the Spirit’s voice speaking to our inner voice, beckoning us to a relationship with him.”⁴⁸ Walking closely with Christ aids in developing spiritual disciplines that aid in developing endurance. A spiritual wall of fortitude is established when Christ is the pastor’s constant companion. Christ becomes a personal physician for healing the mind.

Counseling in pastoral ministry requires an extraordinary level of confidentiality. While the problems with others are discussed behind the scenes, pastors sometimes forget they have struggles and problems also. The road to recovery necessitates that pastors talk about their weaknesses with others, preferably a professional counselor. While most pastors either feel ashamed or have too much pride to confer with colleagues, they may feel more comfortable talking with a licensed therapist. Pastors are human too and need an outlet to discuss distressing situations. The pastor’s health should be important to everyone in the church. “Worn-out, weary, depressed pastors are not able to help their churches live as light and salt in their communities.”⁴⁹

It is also important to keep the mind intellectually sound. When burnout occurs, many pastors devoid themselves of study and bible reading. The Apostle Paul maintained, “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (Col 3:2). A continual devotion to God’s Word every day keeps the mind occupied with heavenly things. A wondering mind concentrates on earthly things. Recovering pastors should recapture the beauty of studying God’s Word. The inspiration and authority of the Bible is invaluable.

⁴⁸ Fred Meadows, *Reforming the Broken Heart of Leadership: The You Beyond What You Do* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2013), 18.

⁴⁹ Jimmy Dodd and Larry Magnuson, *Pastors Are People Too* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook Publishers, 2016), 26.

Spiritual Health

The pastor's spiritual health is not only important for one's relationship with Christ, but it is also essential in the training and advancement of the local church. Maxwell contends, "Everything rises and falls on leadership. And leadership truly develops from the inside out. If you can become the leader you ought to be on the inside, you will be able to become the leader you want to be on the outside."⁵⁰ For pastors to recover from burnout, it is important to realize that allocating time for spiritual health is a prerequisite to further spiritual growth. The impact of a healthy, personal, spiritual life builds a foundation for a healthy person and a healthy church.

Unfortunately, many recovering pastors place a large focus on themselves rather than on the person that rescues them from burnout—God. In the quest for recovery, the pastor can become so inundated in self-piety that the presence of God is forgotten. It is God's holiness that sets the standard for Christian service and ministry. Generally speaking, no person can accomplish anything in the ministry without the help of God the Father. Therefore, a pastor's motives must transform from self-seeking contentment to a search into the divine character of God. The Apostle Paul asserts, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Rom 12:2). The Psalmist David insisted, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me" (Ps 51:10-12). A pure heart and an unwavering spirit derive from the divine

⁵⁰ John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader: Becoming the Person Others will want to Follow* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1999), XI.

nature of God. Recovery from burnout occurs by recognizing God’s holiness and humanity’s need for it.

In Paul’s instruction to Timothy, he emphasized the need to pay close attention to his spiritual life. He insisted that healthy spiritual life coupled with an authentic “doctrine,” “will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Tim 4:16). The Apostle Paul was advising Timothy, a young man commencing in the faith, to cultivate his spiritual life so that others would be motivated to live for Christ. To fully recover from burnout, a life well-lived in the Spirit is needed. Along with establishing an example of godliness, a pastor’s behavior also reflects from a genuine spiritual life. The Apostle Peter proclaims, “[God’s] divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness” (2 Pet 1:3).

The Process of Recovery

Commit to a Biblical Sabbath

The majority of pastors who have experienced burnout, including this writer, can attest to the fact that having “down time” would have prevented or at least helped from experiencing burnout. Therefore, recovering pastors need to establish a biblical sabbath in which the proper amount of relaxation occurs.

What is a biblical sabbath? While a theological debate could be infused at this point on what day of the week the sabbath occurs, this writer has chosen to look at the practical application. In his account of Jesus' healing on the sabbath day (Mark 2), Morris states, “The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath.”⁵¹ In the busyness of ministry, one can become so inundated in work that resting is the

⁵¹ Robert Morris, *Take the Day Off: Receiving God’s Gift of Rest* (New York, NY: Hachette Books, 2019), 66.

farthest thing from their mind. Moreover, some pastors may view Sunday as the only day to rest and unfortunately minister in multiple services. God instituted the first sabbath. “On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation” (Gen 2:2-3, NLT).⁵² Again, determining which day should be used as the seventh day is not as important as simply affirming a day of rest. “The Sabbath is a gift and our observance of it is a bold declaration of our trust in God’s goodness and ability to provide what we need—heart, mind, and body.”⁵³ Pastors should set aside one day per week as their biblical sabbath.

Commit to Intimacy with God

“When you’re born into the family of God, you enter into a spiritual atmosphere wherein God’s presence and grace exert pressure, or influence, on your life. Prayer is the normal response to that pressure. As believers, we all have entered the divine atmosphere to breathe the air of prayer.”⁵⁴ For recovering pastors, time spent in prayer and listening to God builds a stronger relationship with him. This time should be reserved for being alone with God every day.

Unfortunately, many recovering pastors, including this writer, devoted time in prayer before burnout; however, the timetable decreased as stressors occurred. As a result, passion for communication became ritualistic and ceremonial. Instead of talking with God attentively, the conversation became a formality and one-sided with limitations on pausing for God’s response. Burnout has a way of silencing the conversation. “Quiet is a means of God’s grace. Within it, God shows us our inner poverty and misguided ambitions. He has waited patiently with a quiet

⁵² New Living Translation Bible (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004).

⁵³ Morris, *Take the Day Off*, 81.

⁵⁴ John MacArthur Jr., *Alone with God: Rediscovering the Power and Passion of Prayer* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2011), 15.

heart while we've brewed our lives into storm and froth constantly interrupting him. Now that we are finally silent, he has healing to speak, mending to perform."⁵⁵

"The most miserable people in the world are Christian leaders whose intimacy with God has gone cold, And it's so easy to let that happen by becoming consumed with the 'rituals' of our duties."⁵⁶ In any relationship, intimacy cannot occur until two people spend adequate time together. The recovering pastor should set aside time to become familiar with the nature of God. Understanding the nature of God produces a better understanding of his works. An example of intimacy developed out of a sincere relationship can be found in Exodus 24. God was ready to deliver the law to his people; however, they would not be permitted to enter the mountain where God would descend. Only Moses was permitted to enter Mt. Sinai and receive the Law of God. Exodus 24:2 states, "Moses alone is to approach the Lord; the others must not come near. And the people may not come up with him." In Exodus 33, God revealed why only Moses could meet with him on Mt. Sinai: "the Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend" (Exod 33:11, NLT). Moses developed an intimate relationship with God that would help him become a great leader and eventually lead the people of God to the edge of the Promise Land. Recovering pastors should seek genuine intimacy with God to lead God's people well.

Commit to Reprioritizing

Recovering pastors, including this writer, know that priorities can be misplaced when there is an overabundance of work that needs to be done. Unfortunately, many vital aspects of

⁵⁵ Zack Eswine, *The Imperfect Pastor: Discovering the Joy in Our Limitations through a Daily Apprenticeship with Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 143.

⁵⁶ Wilson and Hoffman, *Preventing Ministry Failure*, 41.

ministry are overlooked and ignored when a pastor has “too many irons in the fire.” Setting the right priorities in ministry is essential to a successful one.

As noted earlier, spending time with God and cultivating a personal relationship is a crucial first step to a pastor’s ministry success. A pastor that doesn’t hear from God to start with on any matter is begging for failure. Cordeiro asserts, “Commitments to a preferred future do not come randomly. They are intentionally established at times when you are thinking clearly and are close to God.”⁵⁷ Having an intimate moment with God every day fosters a divine support system that has all of heaven stand at attention on the pastor’s behalf. The Psalmist David declared, “On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. I cling to you; your right hand upholds me” (Ps 63:6-8). Prioritizing a set time with God each day and engaging with him in conversation is important for personal growth.

The second priority, only to God, should be family. God designed the family as the establishment on which society is comprised. God established the first family in the Garden of Eden and the last family establishment will be the church in eternity. Recovering pastors, including this writer, know the effects of placing family and family time on the backburner when church work surfaced. Marriages have been destroyed and children have been neglected all in the name of pastoral ministry. God never intended pastors to neglect family time for church work. Vacations, sporting events, date nights, and meals together are a few important events that establish family cohesiveness. Pastors who take special care to prioritize intimate moments with a spouse and family members appreciate the love God intended for the church.

⁵⁷ Wayne Cordeiro, *Leading on Empty: Refilling Your Tank and Renewing Your Passion* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2009), 147.

The third priority should be the church. The term church is not a reference to a physical building; it is the universal church—God’s people. The Apostle Paul had a great love for the people of God. He declared, “I want you to know how glad I am that it’s me sitting here in this jail and not you. There’s a lot of suffering to be entered into in this world—the kind of suffering Christ takes on. I welcome the chance to take my share in the church’s part of that suffering. When I became a servant in this church, I experienced this suffering as a sheer gift, God’s way of helping me serve you, laying out the whole truth” (Col 1:24-25, MSG).⁵⁸ He was willing to be imprisoned for the sake of building up the church. It is hard for recovering pastors to love the church that once brought pain that led to burnout; however, God can reignite a deep love for the church once again. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, he gives the recovering pastor to see the church in a new light.

Lastly, prioritizing other areas of life such as friendships and personal well-being can be accomplished by emphasizing the things that don’t deplete us. Concentrating on things and people that bring energy in the journey are indispensable.

Commit to Recapturing the Vision

At some point, before burnout occurred, a pastor’s passion and vision were spiritually established and purposeful. The recovering pastor may have a distorted view of ministry because of burnout. It is imperative to recognize that the initial calling and vision were not the cause of the burnout; the overwhelming incidents (i.e., struggles, etc.) that inundated the pastor’s life was the reason. A recovering pastor should seek to reawaken the original calling and kindle the original vision God bestowed before the burnout.

⁵⁸ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002).

The Prophet Jeremiah attests, “Go stand at the crossroads and look around. Ask for directions to the old road, the tried-and-true road. Then take it. Discover the right route for your souls” (Jer 6:16). The moment a recovering pastor realizes that the original path God established was divinely ordered, is the instance that hope begins to rise once again. “Coming out of burnout, learn to run with hope.”⁵⁹ God can then declare, “I’ll show up and take care of you as I promised and bring you back home. I know what I’m doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for” (Jer. 29:11, MSG).

The crossroad, described by the Prophet Jeremiah, is a place where a choice is made—choosing one path that will in turn affect a person’s entire life. A recovering pastor can choose to continue down the road of burnout or discover a new perspective on the original ministry that God ordained. By deciding to continue in ministry, a newfound intimacy with God develops. He provides guidance and hope for the journey. At the moment when doubts may arise, he reassures “Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it’” (Is. 30:21).

Commit to Setting Boundaries

“In the physical world, boundaries are easy to see. Fences, signs, walls, moats with alligators, manicured lawns, or hedges are all physical boundaries. In their differing appearances, they give the same message: THIS IS WHERE MY PROPERTY BEGINS.”⁶⁰ Recovering pastors may find themselves in the same frenzy of trying to accomplish every task or trying to please every request in ministry only to become overwhelmed once again. It is important to identify the top “boundary busters” and learn how to say no to certain tasks and requests.

⁵⁹ Cordeiro, *Leading on Empty*, 149.

⁶⁰ Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 31.

“Boundaries are essential for the sake of the initial vision that prompted our calls to ministry, that overwhelming Yes.”⁶¹ Unfortunately, this is a hard task for pastors. It was for this writer. Most pastors want to portray themselves in the light of humility and compassion and telling someone no, is a conversation or relationship destroyer. However, the art of saying no in certain circumstances should be part of the recovering pastor’s rehabilitation. “You have to love yourself and erect some boundaries of what is acceptable and not acceptable in working with you and having a relationship with you.” Cloud and Townsend contend, “Boundary setting is a large part of maturing. We can’t really love until we have boundaries—otherwise, we love out of compliance or guilt. And we can’t really be productive at work without boundaries; otherwise, we’re so busy following others’ agendas that we’re doubleminded and unstable (James 1:8).”⁶²

Equally, trying to please everyone is an effort in futility. “When approval is a driving force in your life, it messes with your motives.”⁶³ Following the will of God requires an intimate relationship with him so that his instructions are clear. Recovering pastors should accentuate spending more time with God rather than trying to seek the approval of men. The Apostle Peter discovered the formational truth: “We must obey God rather than human beings” (Acts 5:29). “Setting boundaries is mature, proactive, initiative-taking. It’s being in control of our lives.”⁶⁴ A pastor that masters the art of setting boundaries will live a full and rich life. Boundaries must be in the armor belt of every pastor.

⁶¹ David Olsen and Nancy Devon, *Saying No to Say Yes: Everyday Boundaries and Pastoral Excellence* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 80.

⁶² Cloud and Townsend, *Boundaries*, 287.

⁶³ Lance Witt, *Replenish: Leading from a Healthy Soul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 50.

⁶⁴ Cloud & Townsend, *Boundaries*, 291.

Commit to Renewal

There are various synonyms for the term renewal—rejuvenation, repair, and rebirth; however, the term rekindle seems to match the emphasis of this project. When the fire of ministry has reached the lowest point and the embers slowly lose their glowing effect, the only way to get the fire going again is to rekindle the flame. In the Apostle Paul’s assessment of Timothy, he declares, “That is why I would remind you to stir up (rekindle the embers of, fan the flame of, and keep burning) the [gracious] gift of God, [the inner fire] that is in you by means of the laying on of my hands [with those of the elders at your ordination]” (2 Tim. 1:6, AMPC).⁶⁵

How does one rekindle the flame? First, the embers of ministry cannot burn bright without spending quality time with God. The flame must be burning first in a relationship with God before it can burn in ministry. Spiritual gifts only operate when they are infused with the Holy Spirit.

Second, remove any obstacles that stand in the way of accomplishing the will of God. To restore authentic worship in the house of God, King Hezekiah took bold steps to eradicate the idols. “He removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones, and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it” (2 Kgs 18:4). Because of his obedience, true worship was restored in the temple and God admonished him by standing with him throughout his life. The impediments in ministry that create blockades for success should be eliminated to pursue ministry accomplishments.

Third, learn to trust God more. Solomon wrote, “Trust the Lord with all your heart” (Prov 3:5). The Psalmist David affirmed, “And those who know your name put their trust in you, for

⁶⁵ *The Amplified Bible*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1965).

you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you” (Ps 9:10). By placing complete trust in God, the path to renewal is leveled for an easier comeback. Finally, don’t let the failures or mistakes of the past determine the future. A recovering pastor must realize that identity in Christ is not labeled by past failures. “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph 2:10). By faith in Christ, the past is gone, and the future is bright.

Conclusion

This project taught the writer three valuable lessons. First, burnout can happen at any moment without warning. Second, there is a way back. Lastly, burnout is undesirable but extremely valuable. Statistics reveal that burnout is a dangerous peril in pastoral ministry. For this writer, burnout became a reality and the results could have been catastrophic without the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Christian witness of friends, family, and co-workers help as well. Burnout is not a pleasant place to be and the emotional state is less desirable. The physical, mental, and spiritual health of the pastor is essential in leading people.

In comparison to other professions that perform similar duties (e.g., psychologists), there is little or nominal research on “how clergy are able to maintain resiliency and personal ethics in the midst of such demanding work.”⁶⁶ A recent study of 398 Protestant pastors conducted by six psychologists, reveal a surprising outcome amid denominational involvement in the physical and spiritual health of pastors. The study focused on three “qualitative questions”⁶⁷:

1. What is the most important thing you do to prevent experiencing high levels of exhaustion and stress in your work as a pastor?
2. What is the most important thing the denomination could do to prevent its pastors from experiencing high levels of exhaustion and stress?
3. If you or a fellow pastor were adversely affected by high levels of exhaustion and stress, what would be the most important way your church or the denomination could help?

⁶⁶ Kathern Rhoads Meek et al., "Maintaining personal resiliency: lessons learned from evangelical protestant clergy," *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, vol. 31, no. 4 (2003): 339, accessed June 5, 2020, https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A112356006/ITOF?u=vic_liberty&sid=ITOF&xid=259d03fc.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Interestingly, the answers to these questions developed into “inquiry”⁶⁸ questions:

1. How did you make the decision to become a pastor?
2. To what do you attribute your spiritual and emotional health?
3. What have been some of the challenges and obstacles to remaining healthy as a pastor?
4. What relationships have been most significant in supporting and empowering your ministry?
5. What else do you think is important for us to know regarding your spiritual and emotional health as a minister?

The results of the study revealed that a pastor living an unbalanced life reaches burnout quicker than those who intentionally work at life-style stability. Meek asserts, “A major theme running through our research is that regardless of the expectations of the organization or parishioners, pastors find that they need to intentionally protect themselves, their marriages, and their families.”⁶⁹ Therefore, prioritizing the importance of God, family, and ministry is vital for the pastor’s spiritual health that ultimately affects a pastor's physical and emotional health. “Whether it be reconnecting in some way with their original mission, vision, and call into the ministry or engaging in spiritual activities such as prayer or studying Scripture, [pastors] seem to find great strength in the notion that despite their failings and apprehensions, God is propelling them forward and will honor His promise to sustain them.”⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Kathern Rhoads Meek et al., "Maintaining personal resiliency," 339.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

At this point it is important to point out as a pastor, a majority of these statistics are familiar. As a result, burnout can be unavoidable. Although pastors may not experience the same symptoms; nevertheless, they are debilitating. Within this project, several areas of burnout were identified, and they are worth reiterating.

Physical Exhaustion

The body's way of saying it is tired and fatigued. In pastoral ministry, physical exhaustion limits the pastor's ability to perform the necessary duties (i.e., visitations, counseling, etc.). When this occurs, the body is susceptible to disease (e.g., hypertension, diabetes, etc.).

Mental Exhaustion

The inability to function with mental clarity is a devastating encumbrance for pastors. When pastors are not able to analytically think and make decisions, the church suffers from effective leadership. Eventually, pastors tend to alienate themselves and make matters worse for the functionality of the church. Mentally exhausted pastors easily become disconnected, weary, and depressed making their leadership abilities inept. The church also recognizes the deficiency and the tension may create an atmosphere that yields disunity and contention. The pastor cannot simply function in this state. The pastor's family may suffer as well because clear decisions cannot be made.

Spiritual Exhaustion

It is devastating enough to be physically and mentally exhausted. When a pastor is spiritually exhausted, they tend to ignore their spiritual well-being while caring for the needs of others. Pastors need spiritual care as well. It would be beneficial to everyone in the church to put a helping hand out to anyone, including pastors, in distress.

This project focused on the church conference this pastor services in the Appalachian Conference of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church. So, experiencing burnout, this writer surveyed vocational pastors to reveal if others may be experiencing symptoms of burnout. Unfortunately, the Appalachian Conference did not report any instances where burnout was conveyed by pastors leaving churches. After a futile attempt to collect information on pastors leaving the ministry altogether, this writer focused on vocational pastors that may be on the verge of burnout because of ministry stressors.

Without any surprise, upon examining the results of an anonymous clergy burnout survey, the statistics revealed many pastors were experiencing symptoms of burnout. Among the reported findings, physical exhaustion, disconnection, weariness, skepticism, feeling unappreciated, and depression was discovered. Other symptoms were uncovered; however, they were mostly interrelated to the main discoveries.

One theme that remained a prevalent thought throughout the project was the issue of spiritual warfare. The Apostle Paul declared, “Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph 6:11-12). This student can attest that spiritual burnout is closely tied to an attack from the enemy, Satan. Interestingly, the Apostle Paul mentioned four distinct areas in which the enemy is involved: rulers, authorities, dark world, and evil in heavenly realms. Therefore, one can easily confirm that Satan is real. He is working continuously against God’s people. Pastors are on the front line for attack. As a result, burnout occurs because of spiritual warfare externally and internally.

The war within comprising of constant attacks on the mind and spiritual well-being. The Apostle Paul declares, “For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor 10:3-5, ESV). The Apostle Paul was very aware of his limitations in the flesh. While living in the flesh, the struggles and everyday battles continued. In Ephesians 6:12, he understood that his constant trouble wasn’t primarily his flesh or “flesh and blood”; his struggle was with the unseen evil lurking around.

Although the Apostle Paul had to deal with enemies of Christ, he knew his real struggle was the unseen forces manipulating humans to carry out evil deeds. He proclaimed, “But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one” (2 Thess 3:3, ESV). He also asserted, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” (Eph 6:10-11, ESV). The warfare with unseen forces was real; however, he was confident in the power of God to deliver him from the evil one. He was also confident that the holiness of God would prevail against the forces of evil.

Since every pastor is subject to these attacks, it is necessary to be suited with the full armor of God. Interestingly, all the parts of the armor are used for defense except for one piece, the sword of the Spirit. The sword of the Spirit is acknowledged as the Word of God. The writer of Hebrews asserts, “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12, ESV). The Word of God is the primary weapon in fighting the unseen forces of darkness.

For this writer, the section on character traits of a pastor was humbling while in burnout mode and continues to have the same effect today. Burnout was somewhat a blessing in disguise. It is remarkable how much one can learn from the struggles, valleys, and dark places in life. Prayer becomes a concentrated effort and intimacy with God becomes more real. MacArthur describes the power of prayer by saying, “The essence of prayer is simply talking to God as you would to a beloved friend—without pretense or flippancy. Yet it is in that very attitude toward prayer so many believers have trouble. That is because communion with God is so vital and prayer so effective in the fulfillment of God’s plan, the enemy attempts constantly to introduce errors into our understanding of and commitment to prayer.”⁷¹

Pastoral burnout can also be a detriment. While this project did call attention to pastors currently experiencing burnout, the reality is that a good number of pastors enter into burnout mode every day. The enemy is continually trying to discourage even the most successful pastor. That was the case with a close pastor friend that is no longer in the ministry. He and his wife were reluctant to discuss their exit from ministry; however, their expressed emotions told a story of bitterness and heartbreak. Another pastor recalled his past ministry days and referred to them as the worst days of his life. The Apostle Peter asserts, “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings” (1Pet 5:8-9, ESV). The good news is “God has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col 1:13-14, ESV). Trusting God to become better instead of bitter will propel the weary pastor forward.

⁷¹ MacArthur, *Alone with God*, 8.

Without any hint of a problem, burnout can occur and change a pastor's world within minutes. The following statistics were not mentioned in the progression of this project; however, this writer reserved this moment to include them for reflection.

Ministry Burnout Statistics⁷²

- 1,500 pastors leave the ministry each month due to moral failure, spiritual burnout, or contention in their churches.
- 80% of pastors and 84% of their spouses feel unqualified and discouraged in their role as pastors.
- 50% are so discouraged that they would leave the ministry if they could but have no other way of making a living.
- 70% said the only time they spend studying the Word is when they are preparing their sermons.
- Almost 40% polled said they have had an extra-marital affair since beginning their ministry.
- 80% of seminary and Bible school graduates who enter the ministry will leave the ministry within the first five years.
- 90% of pastors said their seminary or Bible school training did only a fair to poor job preparing them for ministry.
- Pastors are 35% more likely to be terminated if they work less than 50 hours weekly.
- 80% of pastors believe their ministry negatively affects their families.
- 80% of pastors say they do not have sufficient time to spend with their spouse.

⁷² Kevin Halloran, "Christian Ministry Burnout: Prevention, Signs, Statistics, and Recovery," Leadership Resources Blog, October 22, 2013, accessed on June 4, 2020, <https://www.leadershipresources.org/blog/christian-ministry-burnout-prevention-signs-statistics-recovery/>.

- 55% of pastors receive support and accountability from a small group.
- 45.5% of pastors have experienced burnout/depression and had to take a break from ministry.
- 57% of pastors do not have a regularly scheduled and implemented exercise routine.

Since this project began, this student began to collaborate with the International Pentecostal Holiness Church and its leaders to review and develop a program that identifies and works to assist pastors in burnout distress. Part of the proposed program was to establish a mandated vacation or personal time off (PTO) for pastors. The mandate would foster support from local congregations by adhering to a denominational policy. The following recommendations were adopted in the last General Conference:

<u>YEARS OF MINISTRY SERVICE</u>	<u>VACATION TIME/PTO</u>
1-3 years	2 weeks
4-8 years	3 weeks
9-11 years	4 weeks
12-15 years	5 weeks
16 years and up	6 weeks

In addition to vacation/PTO, additional guidelines were adopted relative to a clergy sabbatical program. The following guidelines represent, in part, this writer's recommendations and the recommendation by the resolutions committee of the Appalachian Conference IPHC:

- **Prerequisite:** After six years of continuous pastoral service in the IPHC, a pastor must inform the Conference Executive Council of the need for a sabbatical for rest, relaxation, and renewal. He/she may request earlier in case of a medical or family emergency. Leviticus 5:1-7, 8 Ezekiel 20:12, Matthew 14:23, 9

- **Purpose:** The purpose of the sabbatical would be to give the pastor a physical, mental, or emotional break in the continuous pastorate of a church. One condition of sabbatical must be that the pastor intends to return to the present pastorate unless providentially hindered. The sabbatical would not be used to bridge the interval between pastorates. The pastor could rest, continue his education, meet medical needs, family needs, deal with emergencies, or any other situation deemed worthy by the Conference Executive Council and the Local Church Administrative Council.
- **Approval:** The sabbatical must be approved by the Local Church Administrative Council and the Conference Executive Council. During the application process, the Conference superintendent will familiarize himself with the church ministry to facilitate the appointment of an interim pastor compatible with the needs of the church.
- **Disciplinary Sabbatical:** Under certain disciplinary circumstances, a pastor could be asked by the Conference Executive Council to take a sabbatical, with or without compensation, at the Council's discretion for mentorship, supervised by the Conference Superintendent or appointee, rehabilitation and/or restoration, if it is determined that he/she could legitimately return to the same pastorate at the end of the sabbatical.
- **Length of Sabbatical:** The period of the sabbatical would be jointly determined by the church and the Conference Executive Council after conferring with the pastor. There would be no strict limitations, but a sabbatical will last from one month to one year.

- **Interim Pastor:** An interim pastor would be supplied by the conference with the approval of the local church pastor and Local Church Administrative Council. The conference will develop a pool of potential interim pastors from itinerating, retired or otherwise inactive ministers. Preference will be given to individuals with proven pastoral track records.
- All parties—the pastor, the church board, the conference board, and the interim pastor – must clearly understand that the position is temporary. Under no circumstances will the interim pastor be retained as a full-time pastor, even if the pastor vacates the position during or at the end of the sabbatical due to continual failing health or other prohibitive conditions. If the pastor does vacate the position during the sabbatical, the church will follow normal procedures for retaining a pastor.
- **Interim Pastor Briefing:** Before the pastor leaves for the sabbatical, he should brief the interim pastor regarding the vision of the church, the leadership structure of the church, the worship practices of the church, and the ministry philosophy of the pastor. The interim pastor should adopt and support the policies and practices of the current pastor.
- **Guidelines for the Interim Pastor:** There will be no change in personnel or programs of the local church during the pastor’s sabbatical, except in the case of a death or an emergency, and then only with the approval of the Conference Executive Council. The Conference Superintendent shall confer with the pastor on sabbatical. The interim pastor will assume no policymaking authority. It will be the attitude and intent of the interim pastor to support and invest in the pastor’s

vision and the pastor's leadership of the church. Any behavior which detracts or devalues the permanent pastor's leadership and influence in the church would be considered unethical on the part of the interim pastor. This ethical malfeasance would constitute and demand the immediate replacement of the interim pastor which would be initiated immediately by the Conference Executive Council.

- **Financial Structure:** The local church would continue the pastor's compensation during the sabbatical. The local conference would assume responsibility for the modest compensation of the interim pastor. The compensation would be negotiated by the Conference Superintendent. The funding for this support would be derived from revenue accumulated by appropriating monies from the conference general budget and maintained on a separate line item account by the conference treasurer.
- **Pastor's Return from Sabbatical:** The pastor will return to the local church on the date agreed by the pastor and the Local Church Administrative Council. The interim pastor and the Local Church Administrative Council will plan a special day to welcome the pastor.

The above-mentioned program is meant to be an encouragement to other denominations or individuals in search of a systematic sabbatical option. This writer can attest, as a contributor and author of parts of the program, that at least some type of sabbatical program is extremely beneficial. Although the program is currently under revisions, the modifications will add to the success of the program.

With evidence that prolonged burnout is harmful to pastors, this project aimed at defining burnout and at giving hope for recovery. Since the Word of God offers the best hope

during struggles and human frailty, it is appropriate to conclude this project with scriptures of encouragement for those who may be in the burnout phase or on the verge of burnout.

Encouragement from God's Word

Deuteronomy 31:8 “The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

Psalms 31:24 “Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord.”

Psalms 46:1-3 “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.”

Psalms 121:1-2 “I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

Isaiah 40:31 “But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint.”

Matthew 11:28-30 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

John 16:33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

1 Corinthians 15:58 “Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

1 Corinthians 16:13 “Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong.”

Appendix A

Resource for Burnout Reassessment

The following resource has been beneficial for this writer in reassessing burnout symptoms and can be found on the following website at www.qwaters.org/resources/burned-out-survey. Survey removed from this work to comply with copyright.

Appendix B

Clergy Burnout Survey—Consent Form

Website accessible at: [REDACTED]

CONSENT FORM

CLERGY BURNOUT SURVEY

Jim Tunnell

Liberty University

School of Divinity

You are invited to be in a research study on clergy burnout with the Appalachian Conference of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC). You were selected as a possible participant because you are a licensed minister in the IPHC. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

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

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to determine the number of potential ministers (by percentage) that are possibly experiencing ministry burnout. The information will be used for statistical purposes only.

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

1. Complete an anonymous survey (2-3 minutes).
2. Enter only one response for each statement in the survey by clicking on the bubble beside the appropriate response.
3. Complete the survey and transmit your responses by clicking the “SEND” button at the end of the survey. Successful submissions will produce the following message: “Thank you. Your response has been sent.” Unsuccessful submissions will produce the following message: “Please check the information you have given in the marked fields.” The required fields must have a response in order to submit a successful survey.

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

Benefits: Participation in this survey will not produce any direct benefit to the person taking the survey; however, the statistical data may provide useful information in discovering the number of clergy suffering from the perils of ministry burnout.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Your participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected. Data will be stored on a password locked computer.

Conflicts of Interest Disclosure: The researcher serves as Executive Council Member in the Appalachian Conference IPHC. To limit potential conflicts the study will be anonymous, so the researcher will not know who participated. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

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

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Jim Tunnell. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him by email at [REDACTED] or by phone at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Donald Hicks by email at [REDACTED]

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

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

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

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Appendix C

Pastoral Care, Inc. Permission Request

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: Burnout Survey
Date: October 10, 2018 at 10:40 AM
To: [REDACTED]

JT

I am a doctoral student at Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA. I am completing my thesis on the topic of clergy burnout and would like to use, with your permission, the following survey [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] This information will be used on a secured webpage and will be limited to the clergy in my denomination.
Thank you in advance for your reply.

Thank you,

Jim Tunnell
[REDACTED]

NOTICE: This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. If you have received this email in error please disregard and delete it. This message contains confidential information and is intended only for the individual named. If you are not the named addressee you should not disseminate, distribute or copy this e-mail. Please notify the sender immediately by e-mail if you have received this e-mail by mistake and delete this e-mail from your system. If you are not the intended recipient you are notified that disclosing, copying, distributing or taking any action in reliance on the contents of this information is strictly prohibited.

Appendix D

Pastoral Care, Inc. Permission Email

Saturday, October 27, 2018 at 10:35:26 AM Eastern Daylight Time

Subject: Re: Burnout Survey
Date: Wednesday, October 10, 2018 at 1:51:20 PM Eastern Daylight Time
From: J Fuller
To: Tunnell, Jim
Attachments: ATT00001.png

Thank you for contacting Pastoral Care, Inc. You have permission to use this survey. We always like to know where and how our resources and forms are used. Again, thank you for contacting Pastoral Care, Inc.

On October 10, 2018 at 10:40 AM "Tunnell, Jim" [REDACTED] wrote:

I am a doctoral student at Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA. I am completing my thesis on the topic of clergy burnout and would like to use, with your permission, the following survey ([REDACTED]). This information will be used on a secured webpage and will be limited to the clergy in my denomination. Thank you in advance for your reply.

Thank you,

Jim Tunnell
[REDACTED]

NOTICE: This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. If you have received this email in error please disregard and delete it. This message contains confidential information and is intended only for the individual named. If you are not the named addressee you should not disseminate, distribute or copy this e-mail. Please notify the sender immediately by e-mail if you have received this e-mail by mistake and delete this e-mail from your system. If you are not the intended recipient you are notified that disclosing, copying, distributing or taking any action in reliance on the contents of this information is strictly prohibited.

Jim L. Fuller, Executive Director
[REDACTED]



Appendix E

Clergy Burnout Sample Recruitment Letter

DATE

PASTOR
ADDRESS
CITY/STATE/ZIPCODE

Dear Pastor:

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate degree. The purpose of this study is to determine the number of potential ministers (by percentage) that are possibly experiencing ministry burnout. The information will be used for statistical purposes only. I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are a licensed minister in the IPHC, and you are willing to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey. The survey is available on the website [REDACTED]. It should take approximately 2-3 minutes for you to complete the survey. Your participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate in the survey simply go to the above-mentioned website in any internet browser. After you have selected the appropriate response for each statement, click on the "SEND" button to transmit your responses.

A consent section is provided as the home page after you enter the website. The consent contains additional information about my research, but you do not need to sign and return it. By clicking on the "I CONSENT TO ENTER THE SURVEY" button, you agree to the terms of the consent.

Sincerely,

Jim Tunnell
Senior Pastor
Liberty University Student

Appendix F
Clergy Burnout Conference Approval Request

August 1, 2018

Rev. Preston Mathena, Bishop
Appalachian Conference of IPHC



Dear Bishop Mathena:

This letter will serve as a follow-up concerning my request to contact the licensed clergy of our district/conference to aid in my research at Liberty University. Thank you for granting permission to contact them by mail or by phone for the purpose of asking participants to complete a “Clergy Burnout Survey.”

The information obtained from this survey will provide statistical data relevant to the content of my final thesis at Liberty University. The information will be kept confidential and each participant will remain anonymous in the data collection and storage. The information will be collected through an online method.

Once again, thank you for your assistance in this important research.

Sincerely,



Jim Tunnell
Pastor

Appendix G

Clergy Burnout Survey Conference Approval Letter



Appalachian Conference IPHC Ministry Center

"...Planting and Growing Churches."

December 11, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is granting James Tunnell permission to randomly contact the Appalachian Conference, IPHC credentialed ministers to ask them to voluntarily take part in an online survey created for his graduate school project.

Each participant is to be informed this survey is strictly voluntary and the Appalachian Conference, IPHC is not requesting this information.

Please let me know if you need further information.

Sincerely,

Bishop Preston Mathena
Superintendent

Appendix H

IRB APPROVAL

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 29, 2019

James L. Tunnell

IRB Exemption 3532.012919: Clergy Burnout: Practical and Biblical Insights for Prevention and Rehabilitation Within the International Pentecostal Holiness Church

Dear James L. Tunnell,

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


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

- (2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
 - (i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

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

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

Sincerely,



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

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CONSENT FORM
CLERGY BURNOUT SURVEY
Jim Tunnell
Liberty University
School of Divinity

You are invited to be in a research study on clergy burnout with the Appalachian Conference of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC). You were selected as a possible participant because you are a licensed minister in the IPHC. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

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

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to determine the number of potential ministers (by percentage) that are possibly experiencing ministry burnout. The information will be used for statistical purposes only.

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

1. Complete an anonymous survey (2-3 minutes).
2. Enter only one response for each statement in the survey by clicking on the bubble beside the appropriate response.
3. Complete the survey and transmit your responses by clicking the "SEND" button at the end of the survey. Successful submissions will produce the following message: "Thank you. Your response has been sent." Unsuccessful submissions will produce the following message: "Please check the information you have given in the marked fields." The required fields must have a response in order to submit a successful survey.

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

Benefits: Participation in this survey will not produce any direct benefit to the person taking the survey; however, the statistical data may provide useful information in discovering the number of clergy suffering from the perils of ministry burnout.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Your participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected. Data will be stored on a password locked computer.

Conflicts of Interest Disclosure: The researcher serves as Executive Council Member in the Appalachian Conference IPHC. To limit potential conflicts the study will be anonymous, so the researcher will not know who participated. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
1/29/2019 to --
Protocol # 3532.012919

relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

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

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Jim Tunnell. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him by email at [REDACTED] or by phone at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Donald Hicks by email at [REDACTED].

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

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

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

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