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## THE FATHER'S BUSINESS: EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES OF SECOND-GENERATION MINISTRY LEADERS

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THE FATHER'S BUSINESS:  
EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES OF SECOND-GENERATION MINISTRY LEADERS

A PROJECT DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF DIVINITY  
IN THE BARNETT COLLEGE OF MINISTRY AND THEOLOGY  
AT SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY  
GARRETT BOOTH

FALL 2021

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE SIGNATURE PAGE

*This dissertation, written by*

Garrett Booth

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*Under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Committee, and approved by all members of the Committee, has been presented to and accepted by the faculty of the Barnett College of Ministry and Theology at Southeastern University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry.*

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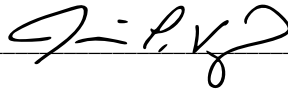
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## **Abstract**

Today's pastoral leader must balance more competing priorities than ever before. Pastors are responsible for strategic planning, providing excellent messages, developing a staff or ministry team, overseeing finances, and building ministries to meet the needs of their flocks and communities. Many times, the demands of pastoral leadership, especially in a growing church environment, can be so consuming that the family of the pastor pays the price. Pastors' children who grow up in such a leadership environment face their own additional pressures and extra challenges. This project explores the question "What are the challenges of growing up as a pastor's child in a growing church environment in a church in America today; and what are the best practices of pastoral parents in such a setting as seen by their second-generation ministry leadership children?" The research question is answered by a qualitative study involving a focus group of adult children of pastors who are now serving in significant leadership ministry roles. The focus group explores the challenges of growing up in a pastor's home, the importance of a personal calling in the life of pastor's children and best practices for pastoral parents.

## ***Dedication***

*To my wife, Andrea,  
my favorite pastor's kid who is now a successful ministry leader.  
Thanks for your unending prayers, support and encouragement.*

*To my kids Lauren and Austin,  
who have grown up in a pastor's home and still have a huge heart for God and for His house.  
I am proud of you both.*

*And to all the pastor's kids and future pastor's kids at Grace Church Houston,  
I want you to stand on our shoulders and  
have bigger dreams, bolder prayers and a greater impact for Jesus.*

## ***Acknowledgements***

*Special thanks to Dr. Tom Mullins for guiding me through the dissertation process and for your leadership insights and mentoring in my life. To Dr. Jim Vigil for spurring me on to go deeper in thought about this topic. To Dr. Jason Burns for your timely input and encouragement to keep going. And to my mom, Sandra Booth, retired 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher and librarian, for instilling in me the value of education.*

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# CHAPTER ONE

## THE PROJECT INTRODUCED

### *Introduction*

Pastoral leadership is a multi-faceted, challenging role. Taking spiritual responsibility for a flock of believers is no small task. It is also often misunderstood. John Maxwell writes, “Many think pastors have few problems and they mistakenly believe that people in full-time Christian service have special favor with God that protects them from the ordinary difficulties of life. But nothing could be further from the truth. Pastors experience all the same difficulties you do, plus they have the incredibly demanding job of leading a church.”<sup>1</sup> Today’s pastoral leader must balance more competing priorities than ever before. Pastors are responsible for strategic planning, providing excellent messages, developing a staff or ministry team, overseeing finances, and building ministries to meet the needs of their flocks and communities. Brian Croft comments on these challenges comparing them to other professions saying,

Yet the Pastor and his family tend to face pressures that span a number of professions. Like the baker, he’s up at the crack of dawn, kneading his own heart with prayer and God’s Word to prepare to serve the church. Like the military man and police officer, he often places his wellbeing on the line to serve and protect others, often not able to give details about the pain and suffering he witnesses on a regular basis. As with the doctor, his schedule is unpredictable, and those late-night emergency calls must be answered. As with the executive, meetings and church functions lead to long hours and fatigue. The pastor’s life, like that of those in many professions, is full and busy and tiring.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Maxwell, *Partners in Prayer* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 79.

<sup>2</sup> Brian Croft, *The Pastor’s Family: Shepherding Your Family through the Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 2.

Additionally, pastors are many times expected to be personal counselors, business advisors, and marriage and family therapists in addition to their other duties. Pastors are counted upon to lead as examples in the areas of spiritual disciplines like prayer, fasting, personal Bible study, and witnessing. Lance Witt describes the difficulty in balancing spiritual vitality and ministry work writing, “I was preoccupied with growing my church, impacting our community, managing budgets, preparing my sermon and developing as a leader.”<sup>3</sup> Pastors must possess a working knowledge of what God is doing around the world while still providing a focus on the hometown issues of their church family. Pastors are constantly balancing the competition of these global and local priorities. Not surprisingly, pastors report that their leadership role can have negative consequences. A 2016 study of today’s pastors finds:

- 54% of pastors still work over 55 hours a week
- 57% can’t pay their bills
- 54% are overworked and 43% are overstressed
- 53% feel seminary had not properly prepared them for the task.
- 35% battle depression
- 26% are overly fatigued
- 28% are spiritually undernourished and 9% are burnt-out
- 23% are still distant to their families
- 18% work more than 70 hours a week and face unreasonable challenges
- 12% are belittled.

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<sup>3</sup> Lance Witt, *High Impact Teams* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018), 43.

- 3% have had an affair<sup>4</sup>

Many times, the demands of pastoral leadership, especially in a growing church environment, can be so consuming that the family of the pastor pays the price. The demands of pastoral ministry can take a personal toll, which can sometimes lead to burnout, depression, and even suicide. A recent article highlights this fight:

Andrew Stoecklein, the 30-year-old lead pastor of Inland Hills Church in Chino, California, battled anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts. Hardly anyone knew of the panic attacks. After a four-month leave he came back, preaching through a series on mental illness in the church. Twelve days later, Andrew died by suicide. Many pastors silently battle what Andrew faced. Jarrid Wilson, another 30-year-old pastor at megachurch Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside, California, also died by suicide in 2019. More recently, Darrin Patrick, pastor of Seacoast Church, died by his own hand on May 7, 2020.<sup>5</sup>

Further complicating the situation, pastor parents also face the challenges of raising children within the environment of the aforementioned pressures. George Barna notes, “as parents, then, our job is to raise spiritual champions.”<sup>6</sup> Although true of all Christian parents, this pressure is particularly acute among those in ministry. Whether it is the husband, the wife, or both who serve in primary church leadership ministry, the entire family system of the pastor can be affected negatively by serving in ministry.

Pastors’ children who grow up in such a leadership environment face their own additional pressures and extra challenges. Sadly, as a result, many second-generation pastor’s children grow up to reject in whole or in part the faith their parent or parents hold so deeply, and, in some

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<sup>4</sup> Richard J. Krejcir, “Statistics on Pastors: 2016 Update, Research on the Happenings in Pastors’ Personal and Church Lives,” Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development, accessed October 1, 2020, <http://files.stablerack.com/webfiles/71795/pastorsstatWP2016.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Nicholas Davis, “Helping Protect Your Pastor from Death by Suicide” The Gospel Coalition, September 10, 2020, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/pastor-suicide/>.

<sup>6</sup> George Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting* (Carol Stream: BarnaBooks, 2007), 7.

cases, turn away from being part of a local body of believers altogether. Every pastor wants their children to grow up to love God and value church. However, the challenges of leading a church can work against that goal altogether. In short, pastoring in a growing church environment makes parenting more complicated.

Pastor's children are a special target of the Enemy. One of the most effective ways to render ineffective a successful pastor is to attack his or her children. When pastor's children rebel against God, pastors are distracted. When pastor's children fall or fail spiritually, pastors are detoured. When pastor's children abandon their heritage of faith, pastors can lose their way as well. The link between pastors and their children is powerful and that makes it prey for the enemy. By maximizing his attack on the children of a pastor, the enemy can stunt church growth, steal evangelistic fervor, and negatively impact an entire body of believers as a result. Pastor's children are high value targets for the enemy.

Even so, many pastors' children grow up to take a prominent place in vocational church ministry leadership. They navigate the challenges, embrace the opportunities, and surrender to their own call to give their lives in leadership ministry. What can we learn from them?

### *The Research Question*

This project explores the question “What are the challenges of growing up as a pastor's child in a growing church environment in a church in America today; and what are the best practices of pastoral parents in such a setting as seen by their second-generation ministry leadership children?”

### *Relationship of the Project to the Researcher's Ministry*

Studying the challenges and best parenting practices as they relate to second-generation ministry leadership (2GML) children is of interest to me as a pastor. I am the lead pastor in a growing mega-church environment. As such, I am intimately familiar with the leadership challenges and concerns of pastoring a 20,000-member church while raising a family. I know that instability in a leader's family can be extremely detrimental to his or her effectiveness in leading for the Kingdom of God. There is no way to fully separate our private lives from our leadership lives. When there is conflict and turmoil in one of those two hemispheres, it will affect the other.

Further, I realize that absence of conflict is not success. I am raising two 2GML children and I, along with my wife, want them to thrive, not just survive. I want to seek to understand the unique challenges that they face as a result of the leadership position of their parents. My goal is to take these learnings and first apply them to my own family unit. I want to hear and understand what other 2GML children have experienced and how they have navigated and integrated those experiences. It should be noted that this project has a more personal aspect in that my wife is a 2GML. She is a pastor's child who grew up to embrace her own calling from God and serves as a lead pastor along with me. As a result, we both have a special affinity for pastor's children and want them to thrive.

I lead a team of pastors who have children. In my circle of twelve direct reports, all of whom are pastors, there are to date twenty pastor's children represented. I feel a responsibility to set an example for these leaders. I also feel strongly that, as the lead pastor, I must help create an environment where these children grow up to love God and thrive in their futures. It is highly likely that some of these children will feel a call from God to vocational leadership ministry. Their years at our church should help nurture them and prepare them for success.

Finally, I see value in this project in my role as a friend and mentor to other pastors. Helping their children embrace and thrive in a vocational ministry calling is a top tier issue for pastoral leaders. They understand the link between their families and the leadership. In a recent conversation with Dino Rizzo, executive director of Association of Related Churches, he stated, “You are only as happy as your saddest child.” Pastors know that unwise choices now can bring devastating consequences later. Many pastors that I am in relationship with feel inadequate and most feel unequipped for the task. Learning from other pastors’ children who have been there will be incredibly valuable as this research seeks to help other leaders. A written resource related to this topic could be a tool for pastors who want to help the 2GML children thrive.

#### *Contextual Scope and Limitations*

This study focuses on pastor’s children that are second generation ministry leaders. It was conducted over the timespan of one year through a combination of a focus group, and personal interviews. As a result, there are several limitations in the project. Contextual limitations, cultural limitations, sample size limitations, and denominational limitations will be discussed.

The study has a number of contextual limits. The subjects being studied are in American Evangelical churches in today’s environment. I will not endeavor to sample all pastor’s children from around the world. Certainly, though these children may share some similarities in experience, they have very different perspectives. The project will focus on growing church environments. Not every church in American is growing. Many are stagnant or in decline. A study conducted by LifeWay Research in 2019 found that 6 in 10 Protestant churches are plateaued or declining in attendance.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, 54% of pastors say that fewer than 10 people

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<sup>7</sup> Aaron Earls, “How Many US Churches are Actually Growing?” LifeWay Research, March 6, 2019, <https://lifewayresearch.com/2019/03/06/how-many-us-churches-are-actually-growing/>.

indicated a new commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior in 2018.<sup>8</sup> The study categorized churches into five levels of church growth based on a variety of factors. It found among Protestant churches in the US that 35% are “Subtracting,” 35% are “Plateauing,” 30% are “Adding,” 7% are “Reproducing,” and 0% are “Multiplying”.<sup>9</sup>

The project is limited to growing church environments. The point is not to minimize the challenges in leading a church through stagnation and decline; the point is to limit the focus to growing environments. Not every church represented must be a mega-church or larger. Growing from 100 people to 200 people carries with it a number of challenges that relate to growing from 1000 to 2000 and beyond. In many ways, these challenges are the same; they just differ by size (i.e., more money problems, more team problems, more facility problems).

This project also has cultural limitations. It will look at a fixed point in time. Today’s cultural norms are different than previous generations even when it comes to participating in church. For example, church membership used to be a cultural norm in the U.S. According to a new study from Gallup, church membership fell below a majority for the first time in 2020.<sup>10</sup> This includes members of mosques and synagogues. The article states, “Americans' membership in houses of worship continued to decline last year, dropping below 50% for the first time in Gallup's eight-decade trend. In 2020, 47% of Americans said they belonged to a church, synagogue or mosque, down from 50% in 2018 and 70% in 1999.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Earls, “How Many US Churches are Actually Growing?”

<sup>9</sup> *Becoming Five Multiplication Study Research Report*, Sponsored by Exponential, LifeWay Research, February 2019, <http://lifewayresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2019ExponentialReport.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Jeffery M. Jones, “U.S. Church Membership Falls Below Majority for First Time,” Gallup, March 29, 2021, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/341963/church-membership-falls-below-majority-first-time.aspx>.

<sup>11</sup> Jones, “U.S. Church Membership Falls Below Majority for First Time.”

Certainly, pastor's children from one hundred years ago would have their own set of challenges that we would not understand today any more than they would understand the role of the internet in the modern culture for example. The modern cultural age had its own unique issues. Likewise, the postmodern culture provides its own challenges. Therefore, this project will focus on today's 2GMLs. Narrowing the timeframe is an effort to keep the material as relevant as possible.

Sample size limitations must be considered. Most churches in America are not growing. This factor limits the potential sample size of the study. These pastors' children will be a subset of all American pastors' children. Of the potential group of pastors' children that can be surveyed, not all of them have or are pursuing a vocational ministry calling. A pastors' child may have another calling to represent Christ in business, real estate, the medical field or public service – these vocations are all needed and just as worthy of pursuit as a vocational ministry calling. However, this study is about pastors' children who have surrendered to a vocational ministry calling. The subset is further reduced by the willingness of participants. Rather than synthesizing every pastors' children's experience, the project will draw out themes and principles that are more overarching.

Finally, the project has denominational limitations. Some denominations may not be represented in the study and likely not in the proportion to which they have churches in the United States. Some are not accessible. Others may not be willing to participate. Again, this study will not represent to speak for all pastors' children, but for a unique subset that are second-generation vocational ministry leaders.



## *Terms*

Growing Church: a church environment that is growing in attendance at a regular rate and facing the associated leadership problems with that growth.

Pastor's Child (PK): a child who grows up with one or both parents serving in vocational leadership ministry either part-time or full-time.

Second Generation Ministry Leader (2GML): Ministry Leaders' children who accept a calling from God to be vocational ministry leaders themselves and pursue that calling.

Best practices: most effective practices employed by parent/pastors to family life and leadership life.

## *Goals And Objectives*

This project aims to reveal the challenges of growing up as a pastors' child in today's environment. Further, it endeavors to discover best practices of pastors/parents as articulated by their children. The subjects for the study are a unique subset of pastors' children. This project is specifically interested in pastors' children that grow up to receive and live out a vocational ministry calling in their own lives. The research question for this project is "What are the challenges of growing up as a ministry leader's child in a growing church environment in a church in America today; and what are the best practices of pastoral parents in such a setting as seen by their second-generation ministry leadership children?"

The first goal of the project is to develop a theology and biblical context for 2GMLs. I will begin with researching the biblical models for second-generation leadership. How is leadership conveyed from one generation to the next? The Old Testament progenitor model will be discussed along with the exclusions and qualifications for vocational ministry work. The Old Testament progenitor model will be contrasted with the New Testament model of spiritual

filiation whereby leadership is conferred with little account to genetic heritage. The early church differed from the aforementioned models in that it prized apostolic succession as a legitimizing factor for leadership.

In addition, the leadership life and parenting life of David will be explored. David raised his children in a leadership environment and provided an example of a successful leader who had deep challenges in parenting. From these studies, the project will endeavor to extract theological principles as relates to leadership callings and leadership legitimacy in the lives of 2GMLs. These principles will provide a theological base for the study.

The second goal of the project is to understand the challenges contemporary pastors' children face in growing churches. These challenges will be articulated by the subjects of the study themselves. Special focus will be given to the interplay of these challenges with the pursuit of a vocational ministry calling. Several categories will comprise the basis of this component. Family relationships will be one topic. How does growing up as a pastors' children in a growing church affect your family? What can be learned from the subjects' experiences? Another topic will be church relationships. How do relationships at church help or hinder the processing of a ministry calling? Environmental factors such as schedule and pace will be targeted. How does "sharing" one's parent(s) with the church affect how one views church, ministry and calling issues? In addition, personal factors like dealing with a rebellious season, finding oneself, and determining and responding to a vocational ministry calling will also be probed.

The third goal of the project is to discover best practices of ministry parent(s) as seen by their children. Gathering ideas for how pastor/parents can better navigate raising their children in a thriving ministry setting will be the focus. How have other successful leaders bred spiritual vitality in their children? How have they contributed to and nurtured the ministry calling that

their children pursued? The objective will be to assemble best practices, synthesize themes and present them in a clear and usable manner.

The conclusion of the project lends itself to a published book dedicated to helping pastors/parents and their 2GML children. The purpose of the publication will be to provide encouragement and help to parents and children by letting the pastors' children present their perspective on these issues. An additional benefit will be to encourage pastors' children who may feel they have a ministry calling with the stories of others who have already walked that road.

### *Research Methodology*

The primary problem being addressed in this project is the study of the challenges and best practices of raising second generation ministry leaders. Uniquely, this project is exploring the issues from the vantage point of the second generation. This perspective is important. To gain accurate information for the study and multi-layered approach will be employed.

The first step in the methodology will be to create the instruments for the study. Two instruments will be considered: a focus group, and individual interviews. Each instrument will be crafted with a focus on the goals and objectives of the project. Furthermore, special care will be taken to make sure that each portion of the project adheres to the guidance of the Institutional Review Board of Southeastern University. The goal of the focus group is to provide more detail and specifics regarding the subject matter. The interviews are reserved to dive deeper into the responses of the focus group if and when necessary. The goal of this stage is to produce a draft of the instruments.

The second stage in the methodology will be to refine the drafted questions. The focus group questions, and interview material will be reviewed. After the review, the project will get

feedback as to wording and specifics. The goal of this stage is to refine the instruments for maximum effectiveness.

The third stage will be execution of the project. The focus group will be an invitation only event that will be recorded. The individual interviews will be selected from the focus group participants and will also be captured via recorded media.

The fourth stage of the project will be coding and summarizing results. The coding will be done with an eye toward the project goals and objectives. It is important to note that the results will be reported with the least amount of bias possible. The goal of the project is not to prove assumptions, but to discover perspective. Therefore, even if broad themes do not emerge, as long as the respondents are accurately represented, something will be learned.

### *Evaluation*

The data gathered from the research phase will be stored securely off-site in order to ensure that the information in the study is kept private and confidential. The responses will not include personal information that could connect the information to individual participants in the project. Although the expectation is that the information gathered will be harmless in nature, precautions will be taken to ensure the participants' identity and information is kept safely according to the CITI guidelines.

The first goal of the project is to develop a theology and biblical context for 2GMLs. Library research will provide the raw material for the development of this component. Multiple sources will be consulted including books, articles, and peer-reviewed journal articles. The second goal of the project is to understand the challenges contemporary pastors' children face in growing churches. This understanding will come from the synthesis of the contemporary literature review and the responses of the participants. Though many different and sometimes

diverging views are expected, the project will seek to evaluate the overarching themes regarding challenges. The third goal of the project is to discover best practices of ministry parent(s) as seen by their children. These concepts will be mined from the data collected in the research phase of the project. The data will be coded to identify important themes throughout the responses. Again, these themes will be presented with clarity in the conclusion section.

A successful project will clearly communicate the experiences of the 2GMLs surveyed and contribute as objectively as possible to improving best practices from parent/pastors who are raising their children to potentially pursue a vocational ministry calling. Conclusions will include revisiting and testing the assumptions in the project as well as presenting lessons learned in the process.

Finally, the participants will be asked to participate in a survey regarding their experience in the project. As part of the survey, they will give feedback on their view of the effectiveness of the questions asked in the overall context of the project objectives.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE PROJECT IN PERSPECTIVE**

#### *Introduction*

The theological and biblical dimensions of this project provide important context and foundational background for the study. Two questions will be asked and answered in this chapter.

The first question is, “How were next generation ministry leaders selected in the Bible and early Church history?” A key component of the study is the selection and recognition of spiritual leadership, which reveal how leadership is conveyed from one generation to the next. The biblical basis for how a second generation of leaders is chosen and empowered is noteworthy because the subjects of the study are second-generation vocational ministry leaders -- today’s next generation. The way such leaders have been chosen and empowered throughout biblical and early Church history has changed. Using the Old Testament model of handing off spiritual leadership as an important base for comparison shows that the New Testament model of spiritual leadership reveals a critical focus on character over genealogy. The Church Age model, however, still portrays a need to connect to previous generations as a legitimizer of spiritual authority. Each of these models will be explored as a basis for understanding how leadership was conveyed and transferred from a biblical and historical perspective.

The second question driving this section of research is, “What is a leadership calling from a biblical perspective and why does it matter?” The project asserts that a calling from God to lead is indispensable in the life of a second-generation ministry leader. The project will explore the theological base of a vocational ministry calling.

Finally, the project will look at two case studies. Eli, the Old Testament priest, and father of Hophni and Phineas, will be explored from the perspective of his leadership and his fatherhood. Eli was obviously a spiritual leader in his day. He wrestled with and failed to balance the demands of his leadership and the challenges of his parenting role. David, the second king of Israel and father of many children, will also be studied from the perspective of his leadership and fatherhood. His rise to leadership both civically and spiritually is unique. Though not a pastor, David was a spiritual leader. In addition, David's fatherhood is a component of study. How did he steward his children to lead in their generation and what can be learned from this portion of David's life?

The study will then turn to a review of contemporary literature specifically about the issues facing pastor's children. Admittedly the research is limited from a scholarly perspective. Additional sources in contemporary culture show parallels between the struggles of pastor's children and those of celebrity children. The available popular literature, blog posts and articles reveal what some pastor's children have to share on the subject. Understanding these issues will set the framework for the research project.

### *Selection And Recognition: The Levitical Model*

The Old Testament Levitical model of priesthood denotes the first systematic approach to ministry leadership. Through Moses, God communicated how spiritual leadership would operate in the community. At the advent of the tabernacle system, only descendants of Aaron and his sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, could serve as priests. These people were set apart spiritually and physically to serve the Lord in the community. Each group was "to wear special garments to set them apart in this ministry. Both Aaron's sons and the sons of Levi were chosen for prescribed priestly tasks," and "the different responsibilities determined which group did the ministry

tasks.”<sup>1</sup> While genealogy first qualified a person to serve as priest, the priest also needed to meet the requirements of priestly service. Harrison notes that “[the priest’s] way of life was hedged by restrictions which were designed to maintain his special state of holiness to the Lord.”<sup>2</sup>

Sanctification was a critical aspect of the priesthood in the Old Testament. Through the process of sanctification, a priest was set apart from sin to participate in the work of God. This separation was critical in the life of spiritual leaders. Entering God’s presence in an unholy state had grave and deadly consequences. Because of this prospect, “those set aside to be priests were placed in a special state of holiness that allowed them access to the ‘dwelling’ of God (cf. Exod. 29; Lev. 8–9).”<sup>3</sup>

The process of sanctification required the priest’s own participation. While Scripture shows that God sanctifies the minister, we also see that the minister has a part to play. Gordon Wenham addresses this tension, writing:

Sometimes the divine part in sanctification and the human side are mentioned together: “You must sanctify him. . . for I the Lord sanctify you” (Lev. 21:8). Another example is in the fourth commandment: “Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it . . . and the Lord sanctified it” (Exod. 20:8, 11).<sup>4</sup>

Priests had to remain ritually pure, because their position “of having a greater status of holiness than that of the layperson not only put them at greater risk of dying but also placed them in a position of being able to serve the community of faith effectively.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara M. Orlowski, *Spiritual Abuse Recovery: Dynamic Research on Finding a Place of Wholeness* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 91.

<sup>2</sup> R.K. Harrison, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1980), 200.

<sup>3</sup> R.K. Duke, “Priests, Priesthood,” in *Dictionary of the OT: Pentateuch*, eds. T. Desmond Alexander & David W. Baker (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003), 652.

<sup>4</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 22.

<sup>5</sup> Duke, “Priests, Priesthood,” 652.



### *Selection And Recognition: The Apostolic Model*

The New Testament introduces a new way of selecting spiritual leaders. The text shows that ministry leaders were no longer bound genealogically. Leaders were chosen with other qualities in mind.

The Pastoral Epistles emphasize many functions of pastoral leadership. Noting the importance of teaching and leading, Schreiner points out that “their primary calling is to pass on the tradition and truth of the gospel... not primarily bureaucratic.”<sup>6</sup> Paul viewed the pastor/leader as the official teacher of doctrine.<sup>7</sup> He therefore challenged Timothy to be properly prepared in the Word. Adams reminds pastors of this need in his work, stating, “While it is true that God loves to use weak vessels powerfully to show that the power is of Him, nevertheless He never discourages intellectual preparation so long as it is dedicated in submissive fervor to Him. The Bible is not an anti-intellectual Book.”<sup>8</sup> Peterson echoes this need for preparation, writing, “I need a drenching in Scripture; I require an immersion in biblical studies. I need reflective hours over the pages of Scripture as well as personal struggles with the meaning of Scripture. That takes far more time than it takes to prepare a sermon.”<sup>9</sup> The apostle Paul further shows that leadership authority does not come from personality or gifting, or even position. Instead, “Paul emphasizes the authoritative teaching, not the authoritative person.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 738.

<sup>7</sup> Wayne Grudem, “Prophecy-Yes, But Teaching No: Paul’s Consistent Advocacy of Women’s Participation without Governing Authority,” *JETS* 30 (1987): 11-23.

<sup>8</sup> Jay E. Adams, *Shepherding God’s Flock: A Handbook on Pastoral Ministry, Counseling, and Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 43.

<sup>9</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 20.

<sup>10</sup> Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ*, 738.

The New Testament model calls for leaders to be holy, lead holy families, and teach the Gospel faithfully. The qualifications of leadership are not about formal education and are not job descriptions with lists of duties. Rather, the qualifications for ministry in the New Testament are mainly about having “godly character traits, attributes of the holy life God requires of leaders in the church.”<sup>11</sup> Scott adds that, “The man of God *must be* blameless. His life *must be* free from legitimate scandal and positively conform to the qualifications set by God. Where leaders lead, people follow. Leaders therefore *must be* blameless because God desires blamelessness of all his people.”<sup>12</sup> Hughes and Chapell agree, noting, “Such should be his reputation that if the [pastor’s] name were posted for comment, no one would be able to bring a substantiated charge against him . . . High qualifications indeed!”<sup>13</sup> While not diminishing the standard, Eyres adds, “If he wrongs another in any way, he will not need to be prodded to make right the wrong he has done. In a word, he will always walk as one who is aware that men will judge Jesus Christ by him. And it will be his prayer that men will see Jesus through him.”<sup>14</sup>

The New Testament also expands on the concept of the priesthood of all believers as a reality. Under the New Covenant, each believer has a role in exercising spiritual authority and ministry. Martin Luther makes the appeal to every believer to step into this important role, “The priest is not made. He must be born a priest; must inherit his office. I refer to the new birth—the birth of water and the Spirit. Thus, all Christians must become priests, children of God and co-

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<sup>11</sup> Allan Moseley, *Exalting Jesus in Leviticus* (Nashville: B&H, 2015), 136.

<sup>12</sup> Bobby Scott, “What Does It Mean to Be “Qualified” for Ministry? June 29, 2020, <https://www.9marks.org/article/what-does-it-mean-to-be-qualified-for-ministry/>.

<sup>13</sup> Kent R. Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1-2 Timothy and Titus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 164.

<sup>14</sup> Lawrence R. Eyres, *The Elders of the Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1975), 28.

heirs with Christ the Most High Priest...Men universally consider the title of priest glorious and honorable; it is acceptable to everyone. But the duties and the sacrifice of the office are rarely accepted. ... The Christian priesthood costs life, property, honor, friends and all worldly things. It cost Christ the same on the holy cross.<sup>15</sup> For Calvin, the priesthood of all believers was not only a spiritual privilege but a moral obligation and a personal vocation. The Methodist scholar Cyril Eastwood rightly lamented the distortion of this evangelical imperative: “The common error that the phrase ‘priesthood of believers’ is synonymous with ‘private judgment’ is most unfortunate and is certainly a misrepresentation. ... Of course, the reformers emphasized ‘private judgment,’ but it was always ‘informed’ judgment, and it was always controlled, checked, and corroborated by the testimony of the congregation. Indeed, Calvin himself fully realized that uncontrolled private judgment means subjectivism, eccentricity, anarchy, and chaos.<sup>16</sup> The New Covenant’s broad distribution of leadership responsibilities is radical; “every member is included—no exceptions.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Martin Luther, “First Sunday after Epiphany” from *Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, vol. IV (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 9.

<sup>16</sup> Timothy George, “The Priesthood of All Believers,” accessed on October 18, <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2016/10/the-priesthood-of-all-believers>

<sup>17</sup> Stan Patterson, “A Synthesis of Leadership Principles Emerging from the New Testament,” *Andrew’s University Faculty Publications* 12 (2010). 3-4.

*Selection And Recognition: Comparing and Contrasting*

The connection between the expectation and execution of ministry leadership in both the Old and New Testaments is drawn out in the expectations that God has for those who lead. Thus, “Leviticus 21 and 22 communicate the truth that God calls spiritual leaders to a higher standard. God gave specific laws to govern the lives of priests, and those laws communicate NT truths.”<sup>18</sup>

While early Church leaders in the New Testament are not exactly like Levitical priests, “their responsibility to represent God and his character in every aspect of their lives is an awesome one . . . and is analogous in some ways to the sacred calling of Aaron and his sons.”<sup>19</sup> Additionally, “it is the Spirit who empowers for leadership and the authority that goes with it, just as he distributes all other spiritual gifts. The human role is to seek his will.”<sup>20</sup>

While the New Testament makes no demand regarding physical defects, it is possible that the demand for physical integrity in Leviticus 21 “was viewed as symbolic of moral integrity.”<sup>21</sup> Perhaps that was the larger point: “the OT expected its priests to behave uprightly and with dignity (cf. 1 Sam. 2:12ff.; Hos. 4:4–10; 5:1). Similarly, the religious leaders of the Church should be seen to be of good character (Acts 6:3; 1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1:5–11).”<sup>22</sup>

Notably, the New Testament model of spiritual leadership includes and values women. Many women fill these leadership roles. Some women functioned as overseers:

Women were also functioning as church overseers, the equivalents of today’s ‘head’ pastors. The Apostle John addresses his second letter to a woman overseer and the members of her house church. Phoebe, a minister at Cenchreae, was commended by the

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<sup>18</sup> Moseley, *Exalting Jesus in Leviticus*, 136.

<sup>19</sup> Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2011), 189.

<sup>20</sup> Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 189.

<sup>21</sup> Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, 297.

<sup>22</sup> Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, 297.

Apostle Paul to the church at Rome, as “woman set over others”, a “leader” over many and even over Paul (Rom. 16:1–2). The church at Philippi was subject to Paul’s colleagues (‘coworkers’) Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2–3) . . . and house churches at Rome and Ephesus were subject to the team ministers Priscilla and Aquila who risked their lives’ for Paul (Rom. 16:3–5, 1 Cor. 16:19).<sup>23</sup>

### *Selection And Recognition: The Church Age Model*

In the Church Age, spiritual authority was recognized by tracing one’s connection to the original apostles. Because of this consecration, “the original apostolic hands are laid on all the bishops,”<sup>24</sup> and through this universal consecration, “the episcopate arises *in solidum* (St. Cyprian), indivisible, one in its source, and having all its power in each of its members.”<sup>25</sup>

The laying on of hands is central to ordination in these traditions. This argument is based on several sources from the early Church. In the *Apostolic Tradition*, “attributed to Hippolytus (ca. 170-ca. 236), the laying on of hands was applied to bishops, presbyters (Elder), and deacons.” When a bishop is ordained:

... a prayer for the bestowal of the Holy Spirit accompanies the laying on of hands: “the traditions that believe in the apostolic succession of bishops regard the laying on of hands on a new bishop by those who had been similarly ordained as bishops to be an essential sign.” That is, “the laying on of hands often occurs in acts of blessing at installations of bishops and pastors, for the consecration of deaconesses, and for the commissioning of missionaries.”<sup>26</sup>

Alternate views of the importance of this succession exist. Bulgakov asserts instead of the laying on of hands being the beginning of apostolic succession, one should realize that the

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<sup>23</sup> Aída Besancon Spencer, “A Cloud of Female Witnesses: Women Leaders in the New Testament,” *Priscilla Papers* 23.4 (2009): 24.

<sup>24</sup> Sergei Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 278.

<sup>25</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, 278.

<sup>26</sup> Frank C. Senn, “Laying on of Hands,” in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, Vol 3, eds. Erwin Fahlbusch, Geoffrey William Bromiley, et al (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 235.

“hands of the apostles are outstretched to consecrate all of Christendom as a universal priesthood, although each member of the Church is touched differently by their spiritual touch.”<sup>27</sup>

### *Vocational Calling*

While some look at ministry as a career choice, the overwhelming support of the Scripture says that it involves a calling moment. Interpreting and understanding this phenomenon is part of the challenge for 2GML. They must sort through the process of determining their own specific vocational calling. Daniel Opoku-Boateng proposes four different aspects of calling to be considered:

1. *The general call: public invitation.* This is where all are called upon to take up the cross of Christ and embark upon a life of discipleship, hearing and doing the Word of God in repentance and faith, etc.
2. *The secret call: private conviction.* This is the inner persuasion or experience whereby a person feels himself or herself directly summoned or invited by God to take up the work of full-time ministry.
3. *The providential call: personal affirmation.* This is the assurance that comes through the divine guidance of his or her life by all circumstances and through the equipping of a person with the talents necessary for the exercise of the office.
4. *The ecclesiastical call: institutional confirmation.* This is the invitation extended to a man or woman by an institution of the church to engage in full-time ministry.<sup>28</sup>

Every believer is called to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, to hearing and doing the Word of God, to repentance and faith. Henry Blackaby reminds us that, “all through the Bible, and especially in the New Testament, salvation is primarily being called by God to be in a saving relationship with Him. This relationship is a call to be on mission with God in our world.”<sup>29</sup> The

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<sup>27</sup> Bulgakov, *Bride of the Lamb*, 283-84.

<sup>28</sup> Daniel Opoku-Boateng, “Towards a Theology of the Call to Pastoral Ministry,” *Ministry International Journal for Pastors*, July 2017, 23.

<sup>29</sup> Henry Blackaby and Joyce Mitchell, *What It Means to Be Called and Accountable* (Birmingham: WMU Press, 1990), 5.

calling to Christ is the most important calling by far. Wayne Grudem notes the calling to follow Jesus is the calling for every believer to walk in at least these ten aspects . . .

Out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet 2:9); He calls them into the fellowship of His Son (1 Cor 1:9; cf. Acts 2:39) and into His own kingdom and glory (1 Thess 2:12; cf. 1 Pet 5:10; 2 Pet 1:3). They are called to be saints (Rom 1:7, 1 Cor 1:2), and have come into a realm of peace (1 Cor 7:15, Col 3:15), freedom (Gal 5:13), hope (Eph 1:15; 4:4), holiness (1 Thess 4:7), patient endurance of suffering (1 Pet 2:20-21, 3:9), and eternal life (1 Tim 6:12).<sup>30</sup>

In light of these biblical descriptions of a call to follow Jesus, what sets the vocational call apart from the universal call to all believers? The biblical concept of vocational ministry ‘calling’ is multifaceted. Views regarding ministry calling vary from seeing it as a professional choice on one end to prioritizing the need for God’s audible voice on the other. David Fisher relates that the middle ground position is to view ministry calling as “a combination of conviction about God’s truth and concern for people.”<sup>31</sup>

Every believer is called to follow Christ and called to be part of the mission of God. Ministry itself is inclusive of both laity and clergy. Donald Messer clarifies the meaning of the word ministry, reminding us that the “definition of the word is simply service.”<sup>32</sup> All are called to be ministers, serving others and thinking of the needs of others before their own, but all are not called to be vocational ministers.

## Jesus and His disciples

Jesus called some of his listeners to abandon everything and follow him, such as at the calling of

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<sup>30</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 692.

<sup>31</sup> David Fisher, *The 21st Century Pastor: A Vision Based on the Ministry of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 93.

<sup>32</sup> Donald E. Messer, *Contemporary Issues of Christian Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 28.

the disciples.<sup>33</sup> Jesus commanded his disciples “to leave their present commitments and to follow him, to embrace his way of life and support the needs of his program and mission.”<sup>34</sup>

While Jesus had many followers, some were selected to be vocational ministry leaders. The distinction is clear in Matthew 4:18-22, where the disciples did not select themselves; the Lord selected them. God’s selection is also a feature of the callings in the OT, like Elisha, Jeremiah, and Amos.<sup>35</sup> Kevin Mahon explains the disciples were called, “into training and ministry as *full-time* apostles... to leave their employment, their livelihood... to instead make their living from Kingdom news – to make their living from the Gospel.”<sup>36</sup>

Paul and his coworkers

Paul considered his calling to relate to the callings of the Old Testament prophets, especially the ‘servant’ in Isaiah 49:1.<sup>37</sup> He also had similarities to Elijah in how he went to Arabia before returning to Damascus.<sup>38</sup> Schreiner agrees, adding, “Paul conceives of his call in prophetic terms, hearkening back to the language of the call of the prophets to delineate his own summons to proclaim the gospel. The separation from his mother’s womb (Gal 1:15) and his calling (Rom 1:1) echo the call to prophetic ministry given to Isaiah (Is 49:1) and Jeremiah (Jer 1:5), suggesting that Paul was invested with authority from God himself.”<sup>39</sup> Wright asserts a more

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<sup>33</sup> Mark 1:16-18; 2:14; Matt 4:18-20; 9:9; Lk 5:1-11, 27-28; John 1:35-51

<sup>34</sup> N.T. Wright, *Jesus & The Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996), 298.

<sup>35</sup> 1 Kings 19; Jeremiah 1:5; Amos 7:14-15.

<sup>36</sup> Kevin Mahon, *Pastoring with Elders* (Winnipeg, MB: Word Alive Press, 2012), 4.

<sup>37</sup> Galatians 1:15-17

<sup>38</sup> 1 Kgs 19:1-18; Rom 11:3

<sup>39</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2001), 44.



expansive view of calling in that for Paul, the ‘call’ becomes “almost a technical term, not just for ‘vocation’ in the sense of a divine summons to a particular task, but for, ‘the effect of *the gospel itself* on a person” (cf. Rom 8:29).<sup>40</sup>

Calling for Paul is about “the transformational work of gospel and spirit.”<sup>41</sup> It is more than ‘conversion’, in that calling has to do “with the purpose *for which* someone is ‘called’.”<sup>42</sup> Paul’s concept of calling focusses on Christ crucified. That is what Paul did: “For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (Phil. 2:2). This does not mean that this was a new departure for Paul, still less that Paul was devoted to blissful ignorance of anything and everything other than the cross. No, what he means is that all he does and teaches is tied to the cross. He cannot long talk about Christian joy, or Christian ethics, or Christian fellowship, or the Christian doctrine of God, or anything else, without finally tying it to the cross. Paul is gospel-centered; he is cross-centered.<sup>43</sup>

The words calling and called in Paul’s writing regularly denote effective initiative in summoning people to salvation (cf. e.g., Rom 8:28, 30; 9:12, 24; 1 Cor 1:9, 24, 26; Gal 1:6; 5:13; 2 Tim 1:9). Similarly, the word pleased (*eudokeseu*) signifies God’s sovereignty and delight in choosing Paul as an apostolic messenger.<sup>44</sup>

Wright summarizes that Paul viewed a ministry calling as “a fresh and transformative divine

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<sup>40</sup> N.T. Wright, *Paul & The Faithfulness of God* (London: SPCK, 2013), 1423.

<sup>41</sup> 1 Cor 1:9, 26; 7:15-24; Gal 1:6; 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 2:14

<sup>42</sup> Rom 9:12; Gal 5:13; Eph 4:1, 4; Col 3:15; 1 Thess 4:7; 2 Thess 1:11

<sup>43</sup> D.A. Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry: An Exposition of Passages from 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 37.

<sup>44</sup> Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology*, 41.

work in which the person concerned is not merely redirected but revolutionized.”<sup>45</sup>

### Confirmation and Affirmation

Paul had many coworkers in the gospel. Acts 16:1-2 reveals how important public recognition was to confirm others in their call to leadership and ministry. Timothy’s story stands out in this regard. Paul may have met Timothy during his first missionary journey and Paul calls Timothy “my true child in the faith.”<sup>46</sup> Paul went back to many of the same places on his second missionary journey, and he heard that Timothy was “well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.”<sup>47</sup> Because of the good report about Timothy, Paul wanted Timothy to come with him on his journey. Paul confirmed Timothy’s calling, as did the people who spoke well of him. They recognized his gifts and calling, and “Timothy’s public confirmation made him a desirable asset to Paul.”<sup>48</sup>

Paul’s First Letter to Timothy repeated this emphasis on confirmation by the community. Paul told Timothy to remember “his public confirmation by referring to ‘the laying on of hands by the presbytery.’”<sup>49</sup> Both Paul and the leadership in the local community had seen how God had blessed and used Timothy in local service, and this evidence led them to both recognize and send him out “to serve God in the ministry on a broad scale.”<sup>50</sup>

The influence of the community in confirming a call is found throughout the NT and as

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<sup>45</sup> Wright, *Paul & The Faithfulness of God*, 1423.

<sup>46</sup> Acts 14:6; 1 Tim 1:2

<sup>47</sup> Acts 16:2.

<sup>48</sup> John MacArthur, Jr., *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry* (Dallas: Word, 1995), 106.

<sup>49</sup> 1 Tim 4:14

<sup>50</sup> MacArthur, Jr., *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*, 106.

part of early Christian history. The selection of leadership has always involved the local body of believers. In Acts 2, “church elders appointed deacons to serve the Hellenists who felt neglected.” Then, in Acts 7, “bishops, elders, and deacons came together to discuss and solve the problem of what was expected of gentile converts.” Additionally, Webber asserts that “in the letters to the Corinthian church, many gifts and callings within the church are described; and in the Pastoral Epistles, Paul delineates three functions of ministry: oversight, teaching, and service.”<sup>51</sup>

### *Biblical Case Study: Eli*

Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are first mentioned 1 Sam 1:3. Their mention in the midst of the story of Hannah at first seems odd until the reader realizes the larger role that they play beginning in 2:12 after the song of Hannah. These two sons are described as wicked and serve as a foil to Samuel, who will become the next leader and spiritual authority in Israel. They also serve as representatives of the period of the judges, in which “Israel is shown to be a community in moral chaos, engaged in brutality and betrayed by undisciplined religion.”<sup>52</sup> Further, they are often held up as examples of ministry children gone wrong.

### Hophni and Phinehas – ministry children in crisis

Hophni and Phinehas are described more fully beginning in 1 Sam 2:12. The description begins by calling them “worthless men” (ESV). The NIV translates it “scoundrels.” The Hebrew literally reads: “sons of Belial.” The same phrase is used to describe the wicked men of Gibeah,

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<sup>51</sup> Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002), 147.

<sup>52</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 10.

who gang raped and abused a Levite's concubine all night, resulting in her death, in Judges 19:22-27.<sup>53</sup> The connection reinforces Eli's sons' connection to the moral depravity of the era of the judges.

The narrative goes on in v. 12 to say that Eli's sons "did not know the Lord" (ESV). As priests, Eli's sons obviously knew of the Lord, but the meaning of the phrase is closer akin to the NIV translation: "they had no regard for the Lord." They refused to recognize him as Lord or to acknowledge his moral authority.<sup>54</sup> This failure is the root of the sons' sins, which are described more specifically in vv. 13-17.

The sons of Eli are accused of two violations of sacrificial laws. The first regards the portions of the sacrifice that they took. According to Lev 7:29-34, the priest is entitled to the breast and right thigh of the sacrifice. Deut 18:3 states that the priest is entitled to the "the shoulder, the internal organs and the meat from the head."

1 Sam 2:13-14, however, states that it was the custom in Shiloh [where the tabernacle was located at this time] for a priest's servant to thrust a "three-pronged fork" into the pot of boiling meat and to take for himself whatever the fork pulled up. This custom was not in line with the Torah law regarding sacrifices, which reflects badly on both Eli and his sons.<sup>55</sup> Robert Alter points to the four synonyms for the word "pot" in v. 14 as a subtle piece of evidence of the

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<sup>53</sup> M. Jason Fullerton, "Intergenerational Transmission of Faith: The Biblical Role of the Godly Parent in the Spiritual Formation of the Child" (D.Min. diss., Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 2019), 40.

<sup>54</sup> Fullerton, "Intergenerational Transmission of Faith," 39.

<sup>55</sup> Ryan Cook, "Pious Eli? The Characterization of Eli in 1 Samuel 3:18," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 40 (2018): 177.

avarice of Eli's sons: "Eli's sons are represented in a kind of frenzy of gluttony poking their three-pronged forks into every imaginable sort of pot and pan."<sup>56</sup>

This greediness, however, pales in comparison to the next sacrificial violation described in vv. 15-16. According to Lev 3:16, the Lord alone was entitled to the fat of the sacrifice. By snatching the sacrifice before the fat had boiled off, Eli's sons were stealing that which belonged to the Lord.<sup>57</sup> Anyone who protested against what the Lord was entitled to was threatened with violence in 1 Sam 2:16.

The sons of Eli are examples of ministry children using their priestly office for personal gain. Meat was a delicacy in the ancient world, and Hophni and Phinehas were stealing a valuable item from those who came to sacrifice. Joseph Alao speculates that they might have even insisted that the meat be given to them raw so that "they could sell it in the marketplace before it spoiled."<sup>58</sup>

Hophni and Phineas also clearly displayed their disregard or contempt for the Lord by daring to steal the sacrificial portion entitled to the Lord. Their threats to any who protested show that their theft was a deliberate and defiant sin. In fact, it constituted blasphemy, for which the proper penalty was death.<sup>59</sup>

Their contempt for God was also evident in chap. 4 when Phinehas and Hophni bring the Ark of the Covenant into battle with the Philistines, thinking that they can force God to give

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<sup>56</sup> Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York and London: Norton, 2000), 65.

<sup>57</sup> Cook, "Pious Eli?," 177.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Oluwafemi Alao, "Parental Roles in Child Upbringing in Light of 1 Samuel 2:12-17," *American Journal of Biblical Theology* 1, no. 3 (2018): 151.

<sup>59</sup> Brett Smith, "The Sin of Eli and Its Consequences," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 170 (2013): 18.

them victory in such a way. Their disregard for the Lord spread to all the people of Israel, who agreed with their plan about the Ark. The people had seen what Eli's sons got away with in the Tabernacle, and, therefore, believed that they could also have their way with the holy things of the Lord.

Finally, Hophni and Phineas' moral descent lead them to sexual sin. Eli heard that they "lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting." As men who snatch more than their due of the sacrifices, they also felt that they can snatch the women who serve at the temple.<sup>60</sup> Overall, the picture of Eli's sons is one of complete corruption and wickedness.

Although Eli's sons are portrayed as unambiguously wicked, Eli himself is portrayed rather ambiguously. He appears to be a faithful man in some regards, who is judged, on account of his wicked sons.

#### Eli as a spiritually blind parent

The text makes clear that Eli is afflicted with a degree of spiritual blindness. In 3:2, Eli is described as one "whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see." Again, in 4:15, Eli's "eyes were so set that he could not see." These references to Eli's eyesight not only refer to a physical ailment but also to a spiritual one. The connection between the physical and the spiritual is made especially clear in chap. 3 where Eli's blindness is preceded by the statement that "there was no frequent vision" of the Lord in those days. The Lord's silence serves as "an intimation here of some sort of breakdown in the professional performance of the

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<sup>60</sup> Alter, *The David Story*, 66.

house of Eli.”<sup>61</sup> As Robert Bergen puts it, “The narrator’s portrayal of Israel’s high priest as a man who required three tries to perceive Yahweh’s work in a child’s life probably is intended to confirm the correctness of God’s judgment on Eli’s house . . . The venerable patriarch was scarcely more spiritually enlightened than his spiritually benighted sons.”<sup>62</sup>

Eli’s sons were committing flagrant sins within the tabernacle, yet Eli implies in his rebuke of them in 2:23-24 that he has only heard of their sins from other people rather than seen them himself.<sup>63</sup> Eli is described as “very old” (2:22) when he finally delivers this rebuke, implying that the rebuke came too late.<sup>64</sup> Perhaps Eli’s spiritual blindness caused him to be unaware of the true character of his sons until it was too late to do anything about it.

Eli navigates the tension of professional priest and parent

Like David, Eli experiences a serious conflict between his professional role as priest and his personal role as father. The sins which Eli’s sons commit, especially the ones having to do with sacrifices, are cultic offenses that were of particular concern to the high priest. As such, “the man in the only position to rebuke them was their father and he had been warned twice to check them and did nothing...Eli loved them as a father (truly a parent’s love is boundless) and tried to *reason* with them. However, he should have *rebuked* them as a judge that had the duty and responsibility of enforcing God’s laws.”<sup>65</sup> Even in his rebuke, he seems somewhat passive.

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<sup>61</sup> Alter, *The David Story*, 71.

<sup>62</sup> Robert Bergen, *1,2 Samuel: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1996), 86.

<sup>63</sup> Cook, “Pious Eli?,” 177.

<sup>64</sup> Cook, “Pious Eli?,” 177.

<sup>65</sup> Treathyl Fox, “The Sons of Eli and Samuel: Children of Priest, Prophet and Judge,” Owlcation, February 18, 2019, accessed May 14, 2021, <https://owlcation.com/humanities/The-Sons-of-Eli-and-Samuel-Children-of-Priest-Prophet-and-Judge>.

Woodhouse notes, “While Eli’s words were true and right, there is something pathetic about them. There was not a direct rebuke and demand for repentance, but a pleading “Why?” He did not address them directly as the sons of worthlessness (v. 12) that they were, but appealed to them as “my sons” (v. 24). We sense a certain helplessness in Eli’s imploring speech.”<sup>66</sup>

As a priest faced with the sin of blasphemy, Eli was required by the Law to stone or exile his sons, but he did neither.<sup>67</sup> In fact, God tells Samuel in 3:13 that he is punishing Eli’s house, “because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them.” In doing so, Eli places his sons above God and holds God in contempt, just as his sons do. As such, Eli is revealed to be not a faithful father with unfortunately wayward sons but an enabling father who is complicit in his sons’ sins. Cole takes a softer approach to Eli, warning, “A good man? Yes, very good. But he did not have enough backbone to stand up to his sons and say, “We aren’t going to tolerate your sin around here.” It applies today: Passivity as a father toward the things of God will damage you and your family.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> John Woodhouse, *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 101-103.

<sup>67</sup> Brett Smith, “The Sin of Eli and Its Consequences,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 170 (2013): 18.

<sup>68</sup> Steven J. Cole, “Why Good Men Fail As Fathers,” accessed October 20, 2021, [https://bible.org/article/why-good-men-fail-fathers?\\_\\_cf\\_chl\\_jschl\\_tk\\_\\_=pmd\\_YxvdEMqouhi2GEpsGeHvp4IqVjgP3RWpkpDQDoMSjoA-1634866090-0-gqNtZGzNAjujcnBszQkl](https://bible.org/article/why-good-men-fail-fathers?__cf_chl_jschl_tk__=pmd_YxvdEMqouhi2GEpsGeHvp4IqVjgP3RWpkpDQDoMSjoA-1634866090-0-gqNtZGzNAjujcnBszQkl)



Eli's misplaced priorities

This complicity is explicit in the rebuke by the man of God in 1 Samuel 2:29: "Why then do you scorn my sacrifices and my offerings that I commanded for my dwelling, and honor your sons above me by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of my people Israel?" Baldwin adds, "Eli is accused of honouring his sons before God, because he permitted the abuses to continue."<sup>69</sup>

In this rebuke, God not only explicitly states that Eli honors his sons above God but also gives a reason. It seems that Eli may be benefitting from his sons' sins by partaking of the illicitly gained meat from the sacrifices.<sup>70</sup> Either Eli does not wish his sons to stop what they are doing, because he enjoys this meat, or, more likely, he is now too morally compromised to effectively restrain his sons.

Another reason why Eli might have chosen to honor his sons above God by failing to restrain his sons is a failure to trust God to fulfill his promises. In his rebuke of Eli, God states in 2:30: "I promised that your house and the house of your father should go in and out before me forever." Brett Smith argues that this promise of dynastic inheritance of office forms a pattern which is at play in all of the failed father-son relationships in Samuel. This pattern "may indicate that the author(s) intended to teach a lesson about the relationship between dynastic hopes, sons, and God. The lesson is clear: honoring one's sons above God in the interest of preserving one's dynasty actually tends to end the dynasty and to cause great trouble for the nation."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 112.

<sup>70</sup> Fullerton, "Intergenerational Transmission of Faith," 41.

<sup>71</sup> Smith, "The Sin of Eli and Its Consequences," 17.

Smith draws a parallel between Eli and Abraham in how they intervened to try to accomplish their understanding of God's will, "like Abraham before him, he thought he needed to help God fulfill the promise He had made regarding his dynasty."<sup>72</sup> As such, Eli fails to take proper action regarding his sons, because he can see no way that God's promise to his house can be fulfilled if he were to remove his sons from office.

If Eli did not restrain his sons under a mistaken assumption that God's promise could not be fulfilled if he did so, perhaps he misunderstood the promise of God to be an unconditional promise. The man of God's rebuke of Eli in ch. 2 opens up a difficult theological problem, "for it reports Yahweh's nullification of a promise made 'for ever.' It turns out that Yahweh's promise 'for ever' was stringently conditional."<sup>73</sup> Eli may have forgotten that "relationship to God is demanding and dangerous. Those who would serve God place themselves under both God's grace and God's judgment—not just under God's grace."<sup>74</sup> As such, Eli's service as a priest was tinged with hypocrisy—an outward show of piety rooted in an empty reality—which Eli's sons learned from their father.<sup>75</sup> This hypocrisy rendered the promise of God meaningless.

Eli, a passive parent

Eli, like David, is marked by a curious passivity in his parenting. Eli's rebuke of his sons was too little and too late in coming, but Ryan Cook points out that Eli's response to the Lord's rebuke through Samuel in 3:18 may be another instance of Eli's passivity. In 3:18, Eli responds: "It is

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<sup>72</sup> Smith, "The Sin of Eli and Its Consequences," 21.

<sup>73</sup> Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 23.

<sup>74</sup> Leander Keck, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary Volume II: Introduction to Narrative Literature, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings, 1&2 Chronicles.*, 321.

<sup>75</sup> Alao, "Parental Roles in Child Upbringing in Light of 1 Samuel 2:12-17," 151.

the Lord. Let him do what seems good to him.” Many scholars see a praiseworthy piety in this response. For example, Walter Brueggemann states that “Eli is a model of piety and acquiescence.”<sup>76</sup> Leander Keck also praises the way that Eli’s response “acknowledges the priority of divine will over his own.”<sup>77</sup> Other scholars see Eli’s response more neutrally. For example, Kyle McCarter believes it reveals Eli’s helplessness: “There is no wickedness in this pitiable old man, but neither is there strength to combat wickedness.”<sup>78</sup> Likewise, Robert Alter sees in it “pious resignation to the prophecy of doom.”<sup>79</sup>

However, Cook views Eli’s response negatively, as a sign of his passivity. Cook notes all of the other prophetic rebukes in the books of Samuel and Kings and shows that in these books there is a proper response to these rebukes: “The type of response that a judgment oracle would ideally illicit is one of repentance, including a confession of guilt, the marks of mourning (i.e. rending of garments and wearing of sackcloth and ashes), along with a corresponding change in behavior.”<sup>80</sup>

Cook notes that those who responded in such a way often had the judgment changed or repealed, while those who did nothing or responded negatively (usually by seeking to harm the prophet) always experienced the judgment in full.<sup>81</sup> Eli’s response is largely one of nothingness

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<sup>76</sup> Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 26.

<sup>77</sup> Keck, *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary Volume II: Introduction to Narrative Literature, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings, 1&2 Chronicles* . 322.

<sup>78</sup> Robert Alter, *Ancient Israel: the Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings: a Translation with Commentary*, 257.

<sup>79</sup> Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York and London: Norton, 2000), 73.

<sup>80</sup> Cook, “Pious Eli?,” 173.

<sup>81</sup> Cook, “Pious Eli?,” 171.

or at least deficiency: “He does not confess any wrongdoing, does not display any marks of mourning, or a resolve to change.”<sup>82</sup> As such, Cook concludes that “Eli seems to display an unhealthy acquiescence to divine sovereignty that has led him to passivity.”<sup>83</sup> This same passivity which is evident in his response to God is also evident in Eli’s response to his sons.

### *Biblical Case Study: David*

Before biblical criticism became popular during the Enlightenment, portraits of David were overwhelmingly positive. For example, Augustine writes of David’s plea that Absalom be spared:

But when King David suffered such an injury from his impious and monstrous son, he not only tolerated him in his ferocious hostility, but even bewailed him on hearing of his untimely death. He was not caught fast, you see, in the nets of carnal jealousy, and so it was not at all the wrong done to himself, but the sins of his son that troubled him. That is why he gave orders forbidding him to be killed if he was defeated, so that duly chastened he might have the chance to repent; and because this turned out to be impossible, it was not his own bereavement that he grieved over in the young man’s death, but he knew what pains awaited impiously adulterous and parricidal soul. Because previously for another son, who was innocent, he had afflicted himself while the child was sick, but rejoiced when he died.<sup>84</sup>

In this example, David is presented as a moral exemplar with a Christian understanding of justification, salvation and piety. The biblical text is read straightforwardly, following its “apologetic tone,”<sup>85</sup> drawing attention to David’s strengths and minimizing his faults.

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<sup>82</sup> Cook, “Pious Eli?,” 175.

<sup>83</sup> Cook, “Pious Eli?,” 175.

<sup>84</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3, 21, 30.

<sup>85</sup> David Bosworth, “Evaluating King David: Old Problems and Recent Scholarship,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (2006): 192.

A few modern scholars follow in this overwhelmingly positive portrayal of David. One such is David M. Howard, who describes David as “‘a shrewd military strategist, and motivator’ with ‘political skills’; he is a ‘poet, musician, and sponsor of music’ whose ‘fine religious sensitivity’ is manifested, among other ways, by ‘his ready repentance when confronted with sin.’”<sup>86</sup> D.F. Payne also paints a glowing picture of David: “‘The chief flaws one can discern in his character are his deceitfulness (which was, however, a common trait, and probably thought to be more of a virtue than a failing by his contemporaries), his indulgence toward his sons, and of course his actions where Bathsheba was concerned. While his adultery cannot be condoned, with this glaring exception he was in every way the ideal ruler.’”<sup>87</sup>

In contrast, some modern scholars tend to see David in a less positive light, and “‘a critical appraisal of David has become the standard in the field.’”<sup>88</sup> Most of these, though critical, take a more or less middle of the road approach to David. However, a few have been very critical of David. Perhaps the most negative and scholarly of these is *David’s Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* by Baruch Halpern. Halpern, as well as the following severe critics of David, understand the books of Samuel to be apologia or “‘propaganda in defense of David.’”<sup>89</sup> They advocate that the text be read with a “‘hermeneutic of suspicion.’”<sup>90</sup> Halpern suspects (and ultimately conclude) that the accusations from which the text defends David are actually true.

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<sup>86</sup> David M. Howard, “David,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 1st ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 48.

<sup>87</sup> D.F. Payne, “David,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 876.

<sup>88</sup> Bosworth, “Evaluating King David,” 192.

<sup>89</sup> Adele Berlin, “Review,” *AJS Review* 26, no. 1 (2002): 114.

<sup>90</sup> Bosworth, “Evaluating King David,” 191.

He, therefore, believes David to have been a “serial murderer”<sup>91</sup> who can be implicated in the murders of nine people, whom the text is at pains to distance David from.<sup>92</sup> Halpern also believes that David is innocent of the crimes that the text does accuse David of in 2 Sam 11 regarding Bathsheba and Uriah. They propose this story was fabricated by Bathsheba in order to “establish that David, not Uriah, is the father of Solomon.”<sup>93</sup> Holding true to his hermeneutic of suspicion, Halpern believes that Solomon is indeed the son of Uriah.<sup>94</sup>

Using a similar interpretive strategy, Steven McKenzie also comes to a negative portrait of David in his book.<sup>95</sup> He also finds David guilty of a number of the murders, from which the text tries to absolve him.<sup>96</sup> He, however, struggles to account for the text’s negative portrayal of David regarding Bathsheba and Uriah.<sup>97</sup>

Another book that largely portrays David negatively is *David: Biblical Portraits of Power* by Marti J. Steussy. She takes a different approach to both Halpern and McKenzie, because she does not seek to create a “historical David” but in a “literary exegesis of the text,”<sup>98</sup> which leads her to find a David who is “more worldly-wise, more fallible, and conspicuously less pious than our first overview led us to expect.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Baruch Halpern, *David’s Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 100.

<sup>92</sup> Bosworth, “Evaluating King David,” 194.

<sup>93</sup> Bosworth, “Evaluating King David,” 194.

<sup>94</sup> Berlin, “Review,” 116.

<sup>95</sup> Steven McKenzie, *King David: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>96</sup> Berlin, “Review,” 116.

<sup>97</sup> Berlin, “Review,” 116.

<sup>98</sup> Berlin, “Review,” 112.

<sup>99</sup> Marti Steussy, *David: Biblical Portraits of Power*, *Studies on Personalities of the Old Testament* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 70.

## David's character and ambiguity as a leader

There are a variety of opinions on the character of David. Some see him as an exemplary leader to be emulated, while “Some view David as *the* pious and Yahwist king while others deem him an opportunist.”<sup>100</sup> This variety in opinions can be attributed to the different perspectives found in the biblical text itself. David's story is told in 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Chronicles. He is also attributed as the author of many of the psalms. Chronicles and Psalms tend to give a more positive and less nuanced picture of David as a leader than does Samuel. As a result, most scholars who study David's leadership turn to the books of Samuel.

Even within the books of Samuel, David's leadership character is seen by some as ambiguous. His motives can be viewed as unclear, and a careful reading of the text reveals that often the author leaves more questions unanswered and much unsaid. Understanding the ambiguity in David's motivations is also complicated by the conflicting theologies of kingship within the book of Samuel. One theology “idealizes David as the model king for all future monarchs, as embodied in the ideology of the messiah, Yahweh's anointed and chosen king,” while the other “regards David's rise to the throne and the manner of his reign as typical of oriental despots and hardly a fitting model for a just society.”<sup>101</sup> Robert Alter calls him “the first full-length portrait of a Machiavellian prince in Western literature.”<sup>102</sup> As such, the ambiguity

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<sup>100</sup> Tamaz Czovek “Part Two: David,” *Transformation* 19, no. 3 (2002): 185, accessed March 10, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43052545>.

<sup>101</sup> Keith Bodner and Benjamin JM Johnson, “David: Kaleidoscope of a King,” in *Characters and Characterization in the Book of Samuel* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), 128.

<sup>102</sup> Alter, *The David Story*, 23.

and elusiveness that characterizes David proves to be both one of his greatest strengths and weaknesses.

David's leadership motives remain obscure and open to alternative readings. The first time David speaks in 1 Samuel 17 is an example. Alter has noted that "in biblical narrative, a character's first words are often 'a defining moment of characterization.'"<sup>103</sup> David's first words are: "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Sam. 17:26 ESV).

Marti Steussy argues that David's first words reveal that he "has one eye on God, but the other watches greedily for reward."<sup>104</sup> Alter is more cynical and sees ambition as David's primary motive: "The inquiry about personal profit is then immediately balanced (or covered up) by the patriotic pronouncement."<sup>105</sup> Other scholars, however, believe that, though David may have had more than one motive, "he nevertheless possesses an "innately spiritual orientation," which serves as his primary motivation.<sup>106</sup>

Whether David's first words reveal him to be a leader primarily motivated by piety or ambition, David proves himself to be a great tactician. In his encounter with Goliath, David is described as having a youthful appearance, which deceives the Philistine into thinking him an easy target. David perhaps further leans into his young and vulnerable appearance by refusing to use Saul's heavy armor: "He realises that in his agility he can outflank the Philistine, who,

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<sup>103</sup> Bodner and Johnson, "David: Kaleidoscope of a King," 125.

<sup>104</sup> Alter, *The David Story*, 125.

<sup>105</sup> Alter, *The David Story*, 125-126.

<sup>106</sup> Alter, *The David Story*, 126.



though heavily armoured, is vulnerable from a long distance.”<sup>107</sup> David’s military shrewdness can be seen in his other campaigns against the Philistines, including feigning madness (1 Sam 21) and in his measures to put down his son Absalom’s rebellion (2 Sam 15).

David’s independence and relationships as a leader

In his rise to power, David also shows one of his strengths as a leader to be decisiveness.

Leadership decisiveness can be seen especially when David’s early decisions are compared to the indecisive and wildly fluctuating Saul. Saul’s indecisiveness is a result of his life-long dependence on others, especially on the prophet Samuel: “Saul’s relationship with Samuel amounted to subordination. This is what the prophet requires with what the king complied.”<sup>108</sup>

David, on the other hand, establishes his independence early on. Although Samuel anoints him, he does not mentor or guide David in the same way that he does Saul. Additionally, Samuel dies before David officially gains the throne, and the prophet associated most closely with David, Nathan, never exerts the same amount of influence as Samuel does with his predecessor. In fact, with the exception of his message after David’s sin with Bathsheba, David is portrayed as summoning Nathan, indicating that Nathan is in some ways David’s subordinate.

This prophet/king relationship differs so much between Saul and David, because of how they communicate with God. While Saul must communicate with God through the prophet Samuel, David, having been “equipped with an oracular ephod and a priest to use it,” possesses “a direct line of communication with God in making his key decisions.”<sup>109</sup> This ability to get

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<sup>107</sup> Czovek, “Part Two: David”, 183.

<sup>108</sup> Czovek, “Part Two: David”, 185.

<sup>109</sup> Alter, *The David Story*, 25.

information directly and independently proves to be a crucial strength in the success of David's leadership, and, consequently, a crucial weakness in his later fall.

David is also independent in another way which, though it is presented as a strength in the biblical narrative, is rather Machiavellian and not particularly admired by modern day readers. David is presented as independent from those who love him. The biblical text presents David as an especially well-liked and beloved man, and this love is crucial to his success: "Love for David motivates people to help him and fosters his success. The aspect of David's personality which causes others to love him is the major motivating factor behind the choice of a broad range of people—upper and lower class, friends and foes of Saul, Israelites and foreigners—to help David in 1 Sam. 19-22."<sup>110</sup>

Despite being the recipient of this love, "the 'History of David's Rise' never reports David loving anyone else."<sup>111</sup> Even Jonathan and Michal, whom the text explicitly says love David, are never said to have been loved in return.<sup>112</sup> Instead, "David is portrayed as a cunning and calculating man, using his personal relationships for his own benefit to achieve his political objective."<sup>113</sup> In other words, the love that others have for David always benefits him "without rewarding those who love David."<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> John William Herbst, "Valuing Leadership and Love: David Exceeding Samson," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 43, no. 3 (2019): 503.

<sup>111</sup> Herbst, "Valuing Leadership and Love: David Exceeding Samson," 503.

<sup>112</sup> Czovek "Part Two: David," 183.

<sup>113</sup> Czovek "Part Two: David," 183.

<sup>114</sup> Herbst, "Valuing Leadership and Love: David Exceeding Samson," 504.

This troubling strength is beneficial in that it maintains David's independence and perhaps, early on, helps him to remain "devoted to Yahweh alone."<sup>115</sup> David's love for other humans later on in the narrative is directly related to his poorest choices and greatest weaknesses as a leader, perhaps indicating the author's belief that "It is not only love for other deities which leads to disaster; even love for other human beings is dangerous."<sup>116</sup>

David's crises and descent as a leader

Another of David's strengths is that he proves himself best in desperate situations or when he is striving for power. David is portrayed at his best as a leader early on his life when he is not yet king. Once he becomes king, his effectiveness as a leader is compromised and many of his greatest strengths disappear or turn into weaknesses. An exception is when he flees Jerusalem from his son Absalom's rebellion, wherein David picks back up many of his best traits. David is "shown most skilled at kingship when his leadership is overtly threatened."<sup>117</sup>

Whereas David's rise to power is characterized by effective and charismatic leadership, his time upon the throne strikes a different tone. Some characterize it as a time of poor decisions and leadership. The difference, they conclude is due to a "fundamental change in his personality and leadership style."<sup>118</sup> This shift is best described as a gradual move from active leadership as

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<sup>115</sup> Herbst, "Valuing Leadership and Love: David Exceeding Samson," 505.

<sup>116</sup> Herbst, "Valuing Leadership and Love: David Exceeding Samson," 504.

<sup>117</sup> Barbara Green, "Fruits of Suffering: David Experiences Compassion (2 Sam 15-20): Converting Three Tools," in *David's Capacity for Compassion: A Literary-Hermeneutical Study of 1-2 Samuel* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 224.

<sup>118</sup> Barbara Green, "Fruits of Arrogance: David's Poorest Choices (2 Sam 9-14): Converting Five Tools," in *David's Capacity for Compassion: A Literary-Hermeneutical Study of 1-2 Samuel* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 189.

a military leader to confinement in his palace surrounded by the symbols of monarchy (wealth, harems, attendants, etc.).

The wisdom of David's shift in tactics is politically understandable and even wise by some standards. Having gotten the power that he sought, he now tries to maintain it by centralizing it. As such, he makes Jerusalem his capital, builds himself a palace, moves the ark to his capital, and plans to build a temple. Additionally, David's decision to not accompany his men to war anymore could also be explained: "King Saul had been killed in battle, but David was wise enough to retire from fighting in person."<sup>119</sup>

However, rather than being a successful strategy, the biblical text presents this shift as being at the root of several key weaknesses that lead to David's downfall. One of the most important of these is that David now must allow others to do the most important functions of kingship for him. Primary among the functions is "the defense of his land and people," which David assigns to his nephew Joab, which gives Joab "a nearly unassailable position in the realm."<sup>120</sup> Changing the leadership structure will result in David's loss of independence, as David will be unable to control Joab and will eventually become his subordinate. This development is also brought about by David's unwise decision to place "crucial information in Joab's hand" when he asks Joab to make sure Uriah is killed.<sup>121</sup> This decision speaks to David's "determination and desperation since David is typically far more strategic and surely more reserved."<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> J. J. Collins, "Second Samuel," in *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018), 256.

<sup>120</sup> Czovek "Part Two: David," 183.

<sup>121</sup> Green, "Fruits of Arrogance," 198.

<sup>122</sup> Green, "Fruits of Arrogance," 198.

David's isolation and insulation as a leader

David's ruling strategy also results in a loss of independence regarding how he gets his information. Ensclosed in his palace, "the knowing David of the earlier part of the narrative has become the king isolated in his palace. He must even send intermediaries to discover the identity of the naked beauty bathing on the rooftop in view of his palace."<sup>123</sup>

As a result of this loss of direct information, David is often presented as ill-informed. For example, David's isolation is the only "explanation for how Absalom's conspiracy gained so much support unnoticed by the king."<sup>124</sup> Whereas in his earlier leadership, David was the one who influenced others, after he becomes king, and especially after his affair with Bathsheba, David is presented as being easily manipulated. Some examples of this manipulation occur in 2 Sam 13, where Amnon manipulates his father into sending Tamar to him, where she is raped. And later, Absalom convinces David to send Amnon to his home, where Absalom murders him.

The shift in David's leadership style is exemplified by the repetition of the verb "send" beginning in 2 Sam 9 where David "sends" for Mephibosheth, and is repeated 12 times in chapter 11 (the episode with Bathsheba and Uriah).<sup>125</sup> In "sending" for people, the king has a power "to create a causal chain distancing and, if necessary, dissociating himself from a direct act of violence."<sup>126</sup> David knowingly "sends" Uriah to his death, but he also unknowingly "sends" his son Amnon to his death by ordering him to go to Absalom's home and also "sends"

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<sup>123</sup> Alter, *The David Story*, 25.

<sup>124</sup> Czovek "Part Two: David," 190.

<sup>125</sup> Czovek "Part Two: David," 190.

<sup>126</sup> Moshe Halbertal and Stephen Holmes, "Dynasty and Rupture," in *The Beginning of Politics: Power in the Biblical Book of Samuel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 106.

his daughter to shame and a metaphorical death by ordering her to make food for Amnon. In the latter two cases, David is not directly responsible for what happens, but he is manipulated into playing a role in this violence.

David's "sending" also exhibits an arrogance that was not present before. He has the ability to order people's movements and actions, and his power particularly becomes a problem when he does so without consultation. For example, David undertakes what at first seems like two generous actions in 2 Samuel 9-10. He "sends" for Mephibosheth, and he "sends" his servants to comfort Hanun, king of the Ammonites, to console him for the death of his father. Although David presumably has good intentions in doing so [his intentions are, like always, a little fuzzy], he consults neither God nor anyone else before doing so and fails to "see the consequences soon to unfurl... Whatever David's plan and hope, both Mephibosheth (eventually) and Hanun (at once) suffer from these initiatives."<sup>127</sup>

Mephibosheth especially, whom David has vowed to Jonathan to protect, gets the ominous privilege of eating "at David's table, like one of the king's sons" (most of whom do not fare well in 2 Sam) and is later "caught in the snares of David's son" as a result of David's unilateral action in "sending" for him.<sup>128</sup>

David's arrogant "sending" also reveals a disregard and contempt for others, particularly a contempt for God. This contempt is foreshadowed in David's disastrous first attempt to bring the ark into Jerusalem (2 Sam 6) and David's decision to build a temple for God. Both decisions are an attempt by David to "subject Israelite religion" by "domicil[ing] and controll[ing]" God

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<sup>127</sup> Green, "Fruits of Arrogance," 215.

<sup>128</sup> Green, "Fruits of Arrogance," 189.

under David's supervision in Jerusalem.<sup>129</sup> God foils both decisions by displaying his wrath and insisting that David follow the proper rules for handling the ark in the first instance and by refusing to allow David to build the temple in the second.

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<sup>129</sup> Czovek "Part Two: David," 188-189.

David's compromise and weakness as a leader

His tendency to grasp "what arguably lay outside his competence and right"<sup>130</sup> will manifest itself once again in the Bathsheba affair. David's tendency to take what is not his is demonstrated in the prophet Nathan's story about the rich man who steals the poor man's sheep, in which David implicates himself. Nathan accuses David of having contempt and ingratitude for all that God has already given him: "The implicit accusation is disregard of the giver by the beneficiary, who seems to think he is the agent of his own destiny...God's point is about David's presuming to act on his own, brazenly and grossly. The parable exposes David's culminated arrogance, contempt and presumption."<sup>131</sup> In other words, David's offense is not primarily against Uriah but against God, whom he has refused to consult and to ask and instead just taken that which does not belong to him. After the Bathsheba affair, the rest of David's reign (with the exception of a brief period when Absalom revolts) is characterized by indecisiveness and impassiveness.

Besides protecting his people militarily, another crucial function of the king was to offer judgment, but David often refuses to do so. Absalom takes advantage of this fault when trying to gather supporters for his rebellion (2 Sam 15). After David briefly recovers his previous leadership strengths in putting down this rebellion, he reverts right back to his old attitude by refusing to judge Shimei (2 Sam 19) and to give careful attention to the case of Mephibosheth and Ziba (2 Sam 19), which results in ambiguous justice at best.<sup>132</sup> The same is true for his decision to keep his ten wives, who were raped by Absalom, in a life-long widowhood: "Like

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<sup>130</sup> Green, "Fruits of Suffering," 244.

<sup>131</sup> Green, "Fruits of Arrogance," 201-202.

<sup>132</sup> Green, "Fruits of Suffering," 239.



Mephibosheth, the women might have been treated less fairly, but their loyalty does not appear to be served as well as it might have been.”<sup>133</sup>

David’s indecisiveness and ineffectiveness as a leader is nowhere as evident as in his relationship with Joab. Having directly disobeyed David’s order not to kill his son Absalom, David tries to get rid of Joab by replacing him with Absalom’s general, Amasa (2 Sam 20). He then orders Amasa to put down a rebellion led by the Benjamite Sheba, a rebellion which has only been allowed to occur by David’s inaction in quelling strife among the tribes after Absalom’s revolt. Joab and his brother Abishai kill Amasa, and Joab takes control again: “Notable is David’s avoiding to confront Joab directly and his supposing that the delegation to Abishai can go well. David’s consistent discourse with or about Abishai has been to decry the violence of the brothers while continuing to rely on them.”<sup>134</sup> David’s passivity will continue to be one of his greatest weakness for the rest of his reign.

In his rise to power, one of David’s strengths was his unattachment to those who loved him. Now, however, David, far from returning the love of those who love him, is weakened by misplaced love of those who do not love him. Misplaced love can be seen with David’s love for his son Absalom. Although it may be a good thing for David as a parent to love his son, this love is portrayed negatively, at least as far as David’s political leadership goes.

This negative view of David’s love can be seen in Joab’s rebuke (2 Sam 20) where he accuses David of treating “friends like enemies and foes like allies.”<sup>135</sup> In particular, David’s grief shames those who actually love him—the soldiers who risked their lives to put him back on

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<sup>133</sup> Green, “Fruits of Suffering,” 242.

<sup>134</sup> Green, “Fruits of Suffering,” 239.

<sup>135</sup> Green, “Fruits of Arrogance,” 236.

the throne—and honors those who have betrayed him. David’s public grief for his son is in contrast to his earlier public grief for Saul and Abner, which was politically expedient. In contrast, David’s grief for Absalom threatens to have fatal consequences for him and his dynasty.<sup>136</sup>

In sum, David is a much more complex and layered character in the biblical narrative than is most often portrayed. He is a leader with flaws and failures. David has growing struggles to keep it all together in a world that seems to be pulling his leadership apart. It is in the context of these leadership ups and downs that David tries to also raise his children.

#### David as a parent

Because David was the king of Israel and his throne was passed from father to son, David’s private family life and his public political life are inextricably linked. The public/private link is because the expectation that the throne would be passed through David’s bloodline created a close connection between David’s public and private lives: “The settled expectation that supreme authority will be bequeathed to one of the king’s heirs leads to the next generation being entitled, competitive, and impatient. Furthermore, the entanglement of paternal love and political power means that the responsibility for preventing the self-evisceration of the royal family belong to a father who is congenitally incapable of wielding it effectively.”<sup>137</sup> In other words, some of David’s leadership problems can be attributed not just to his weaknesses as a leader but also to the means of dynastic succession.

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<sup>136</sup> Halbertal and Holmes, “Dynasty and Rupture,” 140.

<sup>137</sup> Green, “Fruits of Suffering,” 141.

This structure means that, in the biblical narrative, when the family prospers so does the political career. For example, 2 Sam 14:27 says that Absalom (David's son) had three sons, but in 18:18, Absalom says that he has no sons. This contradiction has puzzled scholars, and they have come up with various ways to reconcile it. However, the point is that the first description of Absalom in 14:27 occurs before his rebellion, and his sons along with the description of his physical beauty both point towards Absalom's great potential as a leader. Absalom's statement that he has no sons comes after the defeat of his rebellion by David and is another way of showing that his leadership potential is now null. For the author of Samuel, "political prowess and familial progeny are closely related."<sup>138</sup> Fathering many sons bodes well for the future of David's kingdom, while the death of his sons is a reflection not only of his failure as a father but of his failure as a king.

This close connection between David's private and public lives is also why problems within his household impact the entire kingdom. David's greatest political problems begin in the private sphere of his home and ripple outwards. Private fraternal enmity between Absalom and Amnon ultimately radiates out into "fraternal" enmity between the tribes of Israel (ch. 19). The same aloofness and lack of discipline that characterized his parenting (see 1 Kgs 1:6) also characterize his public leadership (see, for example, Absalom's claim that David is neglecting his duty to judge the people; 1 Sam 15:3).

In this culture, the success of one's family leadership is tied to the success of one's political leadership. David, at times, tries to separate these private and public spheres, but they continually defy separation. For example, David seeks to keep his affair with Bathsheba firmly in the private sphere, but it almost immediately has public consequences, such as the murder of one

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<sup>138</sup> Jeremy E. C. Chew, "Of Kings and Kin: Bayit and the Dynastic Family of David" (PhD diss, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, 2016), 139. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

of his best commanders and placing a powerful political pawn in the hands of the wily Joab with the knowledge of David's murder.

Additionally, David casts judgment on the rich man in Nathan's parable in his public role as king, but David's call for fourfold restitution ends up being the price that David's private household would pay with the death of four of his sons (the unnamed newborn, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah). Although David's authority as king and father cannot be separated, David's sin with Bathsheba in 2 Sam. 11 starts a chain reaction that will unleash enmity in David's family as well as inner enmity between his role as a father and his role as a king. In other words, from this point on, David will be forced to make decisions that will compromise either his political authority or his parental authority, and it is at these points that he is the most indecisive and ambiguous.

The trend is evident in 2 Sam 13 with Amnon's rape of Tamar. To begin with, Amnon's sin echoes David's sin with Bathsheba. Amnon sees a beautiful woman, whom he desires but he has absolutely no right to, just as David had with Bathsheba. Then, like his father, Amnon illegitimately takes what he desires. The similarity in the two men may provide an interesting commentary on the formative role that fathers, even fathers as aloof as David, have on their children. The author shows that David, in v. 21, is angry but he does nothing. Why? Some scholars believe that David has lost his moral authority.<sup>139</sup> After all, how could David rebuke a sin in his son that so closely mirrored his own?

Rebuking our own sins in others is difficult, but David also perceives a conflict here between his role as king and role as father. Amnon is the crown prince, and a proper punishment issued by David the king for such a grievous sin would most likely mean the removal of Amnon

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<sup>139</sup> Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 10.

from the line of succession, but David the father cannot do so. The Septuagint adds to this verse in explanation: “But he did not vex the spirit of Amnon his son, for he loved him, since he was his firstborn.”<sup>140</sup> Faced with the decision to act as a king or act as a father, David chooses to act as a father, but his decision turns out to harm both his family and his kingdom.

David’s son, Absalom, mirrors another of David’s sins. Under pretense, Absalom lures Amnon away and has him murdered for “his own personal and political interests.”<sup>141</sup> Absalom flees, and David eventually yearns for his son, but once again there is a conflict between paternal and kingly desires. The father wants him home, but the king cannot forgive the murderer of his heir. This conflict becomes especially evident in 2 Sam 14:33, when David and Absalom finally come face to face. Absalom approaches David “the king,” who kisses Absalom as a symbol of his forgiveness, but “the text is clear: It is the king who kisses Absalom, not the father. David’s kiss seems grudging and formal, and the author gives no indication that David’s heart, which may long for Absalom, is allowed to take precedence over royal policy.”<sup>142</sup>

This story is reminiscent of Jesus’ later parable of the prodigal son. In that case, the father runs to meet his son and offers him unconditional and full forgiveness. Leander Keck argues that David glimpsed the possibility of radical reconciliation and forgiveness when the wise woman of Tekoa urged him to imagine an alternative future that was not dominated by the concepts of vengeance that were so engrained in David’s culture and mind, but he failed to grasp it in actuality by offering Absalom full forgiveness.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Alter, *The David Story*, 410.

<sup>141</sup> Keck, *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary Volume II*, 54.

<sup>142</sup> Keck, *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary Volume II*, 54.

<sup>143</sup> Keck, *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary Volume II*, 55.

Some purport that David had a tendency to lack insight and imagination in his parenting. David had a number of opportunities to break the chain of destruction in his family. David perceived a conflict of interest between his family and kingdom in his dealings with Amnon, and chose to act as a father, but he failed to recognize that proper consequences for Amnon's sin would have been for the good of both family and kingdom. An heir who believes he can grasp anything that he wants will make no good king and an unresolved sin within the family bodes ill for unity.

David chooses the king in his dealings with Absalom, because he believes that full, unabashed forgiveness of his son will hurt his image as a king but fails to see how Absalom's resentment will later humiliate the king and lead to the grief of the father. Conversely, David failed to realize when his father's love would make no difference or was inappropriate, as it was in the case of his inaction toward Amnon's sin. David must discern when to act as the king and when to act as the father, and, up to this point, the right decision could have ended the chain of violence initiated by David's own actions. Unfortunately, David missed this opportunity.

The final major conflict between David the king and David the father occurs with Absalom's rebellion. David acts as the king in leading an effective assault against Absalom's coup, but the father is allowed to prevail in his last instructions to his troops to go easy on Absalom (18:5). David is in a difficult situation. One side of David—king or father—is bound to lose in this situation, but this time the decision is taken out of David's hands. Joab ignores David's orders and kills Absalom, which is the most politically expedient decision. But David, hearing the news, is all father: "Although the narrator continues to refer to David only as 'the king' in the shifting conflict between his public and private roles the latter here takes over

entirely: Absalom is the not the usurper who drove him from the throne but only ‘my son,’ and David is the anguished father who would rather have died, that his son might have lived.”<sup>144</sup>

Some argue David has a lack of imagination and insight regarding how he can break the chain of violence enacted within his own family by acting in contrast to the norms of the day, especially in regard to his forgiveness of Absalom. In addition, he also lacks imagination (or divine vision) in what it takes to be a good leader. A major theme in the book of Samuel is human vision versus divine vision. Saul, the first king, presents all the outward appearances of a good king. By the same token, David’s oldest brother also presents all the proper outward appearances of an effective leader. But “the Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam 16:7). David himself was chosen on the basis of this divine vision but was found so lacking in leadership potential according to human vision that his own father did not even have him line up as an option when Samuel came. After this experience, one would think that David the father would be more astute when it came to viewing his sons’ leadership potential, but David judges remarkably like his own father.

David’s son Absalom is described in a way that is reminiscent of both Saul and David’s oldest brother. He is extremely handsome, and he has all the features that mark a good leader in human vision. In 1 Kings 1, Adonijah is described similarly, and his aspirations to the throne are a reenactment of the antics of Absalom. David’s firstborn son, Amnon, is not described physically, but his status as the firstborn also makes him a good candidate, according to human standards, for leadership. As a result of these human standards, David, the father, seems to favor these three sons. This favoritism results in a lack of discipline and an unwillingness to vex these

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<sup>144</sup> Alter, *The David Story*, 467-468.

children. Favoritism even comes at the expense of David's other children, like Tamar, for example. However, none of these favored sons would go on to inherit the throne. Rather, it is the curiously silent and absent Solomon who will succeed David: "Much can be seen in David's love for his other sons (Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah), but we see nothing of his love for Solomon in the entire narrative. It turns out that the successor to David's throne, the one who is going to build a physical house for Yahweh is none of those sons whom David loved, but Solomon (or Jedidiah) whom David seems not to show any concern for, but whom the Lord loved."<sup>145</sup>

The emphasis of sons distancing themselves from their fathers follows in the theme of the books of First and Second Samuel. These are filled with failed relationships between fathers and sons: "The sons of Eli were worthless men. The sons of Samuel did not walk in his ways. Jonathan refused to conspire with his father, Saul, to kill David. David was an indulgent father to his sons Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah. Another similar motif is that of succession, or more correctly, failure of succession. All these sons mentioned here did not succeed their fathers in the leadership roles that their fathers represented."<sup>146</sup>

#### David's internal fight

Although some modern scholars, such as Pam and Jon Ruthven, acknowledge the potential usefulness of modern psychology in illuminating the motivations and character of major biblical figures like David,<sup>147</sup> little scholarship has been done on this topic. A lack of scholarship is most likely due to the inter-disciplinary nature required for the successful completion of such work.

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<sup>145</sup> Chew, "Of Kings and Kin," 73.

<sup>146</sup> Chew, "Of Kings and Kin," 157.

<sup>147</sup> Pam Ruthven and Jon Ruthven, "The Feckless Later Reign of King David: A Case of Major Depressive Disorder?," *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 55, no. 4 (2001): 425.



For example, Dorothy Zelig's book *Psychoanalysis and the Bible: A Study in Depth of Seven Leaders*<sup>148</sup> was ridiculed both by the Ruthvens and John Priest for its lack of grounding in a "sober, historical study of the Bible."<sup>149</sup> Instead, Zelig grounds her psychoanalysis of David almost exclusively in a Freudian analysis, believing him to be the victim of early oedipal traumas, which "generated his subconscious longing to take possession of (mother/women) Jerusalem, which was defended by the 'blind and lame,' a guilt-generated symbol of David's castration anxiety."<sup>150</sup> Although interesting, her picture of David is unlikely to be taken seriously by biblical scholars.

The Ruthvens<sup>151</sup> and Liubov Ben-Noun<sup>152</sup> have written articles that argued that David struggled with Major Depressive Disorder, especially in the later part of his reign. The Ruthvens base their conclusion on the text of 2 Samuel 9-1 Kings 2, while Ben-Noun uses the Psalms to reach his conclusion. Whereas the reader is given an almost exclusively external view of David before he becomes king (meaning that we are given little insight into his feelings or thoughts), the narrative shifts in 2 Samuel 9 to allow the reader a much more intimate perspective of David. The reader is privy to private conversations (as opposed to David's politically expedient statements that were noted in the last brief) and to several episodes of intense grief. These internal insights come when things start to go badly for David (making for perhaps a more

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<sup>148</sup> Dorothy Zeligs, *Psychoanalysis and the Bible: A Study in Depth of Seven Leaders* (New York: Human Service Press, 1988).

<sup>149</sup> John Priest, "Review: Psycholanalysis and the Bible: A Study in Depth of Seven Leaders by Dorth F. Zeligs: The Choicemaker by Elizabeth Boyden Howes and Sheila Moon," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95, no. 4 (1976): 662.

<sup>150</sup> Ruthven and Ruthven, "The Feckless Later Reign of King David," 425.

<sup>151</sup> Ruthven and Ruthven, "The Feckless Later Reign of King David," 425.

<sup>152</sup> Liubov Ben-Noun, "Mental Disorder That Afflicted King David the Great," *History of Psychiatry* 15, no. 4 (2004).

interesting psychological case study than when everything is going well). Unfortunately, neither of these texts allow us an in-depth glimpse of David's psychology as a child or his relationship with his parents. Both the Ruthvens and Ben-Noun use criteria from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder* (DSM)<sup>153</sup> to determine whether David suffers from Major Depressive Disorder (MDD).

## Conclusion

David is a worthwhile example to study of the intersection of leadership and parenting. Scholars' views differ on his effectiveness and motivation as a leader. Clearly the biblical narrative shows the good, bad, and ugly of David as a father. In looking at David's life through a brief biography, the author shows the story of his rise to power amidst his challenges. In critiquing David as a leader, there are differing views of his internal motivations and results. David as a parent shows the tensions many leaders can face as two priorities pull on their time and resources. Finally, David's internal struggle shows the genesis of some of the outward behavior that is revealed in David's life. The inter-relationship of leadership and parenting in David's life is a worthwhile study for would-be leader/parents.

## *Issues From Contemporary Literature*

Ministry children are not a homogenous group. They are not guaranteed to receive or to pursue a ministry calling. In fact, ministry children can end up on various ends of the spiritual and cultural spectrum:

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<sup>153</sup> American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder*, 4th ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

Katy Perry. Rick Warren. Anne Graham Lotz. Franklin Graham. The Jonas Brothers. Frank Schaeffer. Jessica Simpson. All of these names, disparate though they may seem, have something in common: They are all pastors kids.<sup>154</sup>

Ministry children are a unique subset. There is little in the way of resources for them or study of them in contemporary literature. That is not to say that there has been no effort given to the topic, but to acknowledge that there is much more to learn.

The success of the next generation of leaders matters. This topic is worthy of study because of its disproportionate impact on the future. Because leadership is influence, the success of leaders has an influence on all who follow. Leaders are not more important than others; however, their position of leadership carries a certain weight by way of its influence and impact. To this end, looking more deeply at raising a second generation of ministry children to lead is important. Ministry children in particular, because of their unique opportunities and challenges, are deserving of a closer look. Stevenson agrees, affirming “the need for increased study of parsonage children.”<sup>155</sup>

The challenges of growing up in the spotlight

In a 2013 research article entitled “Celebrity Capital: Redefining Celebrity Using Field Theory,” Olivier Driessens argues that celebrities and celebrity status may be thought of in terms of commodity or capital in which persons find their worth and value in an “accumulated media visibility that results from recurrent media representation.”<sup>156</sup> That is, celebrities are not typically viewed by culture or media as human beings, but as “brands” as images whose values are not

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<sup>154</sup> Barna Staff, “Prodigal Pastor Kids: Fact or Fiction?” *Barna Family & Kids*, November 11, 2013, <https://www.barna.com/research/prodigal-pastor-kids-fact-or-fiction>.

<sup>155</sup> Robert M. Stevenson, “Children of the Parsonage.” *Pastoral Psychology* 30, no. 3 (Summer 1982): 179-186.

<sup>156</sup> Olivier Driessens, “Celebrity Capital: Redefining Celebrity Using Field Theory,” *Theory and Society* 42, (September 2013): 552. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-013-9202-3>.

inherent per se as image-bearers of YHWH but are valued in as much as they sell products, tickets, or otherwise possess earning power.

This commodification of humanity is troubling not only to the celebrities themselves, who often become devastated when they begin losing their “star power” but also has detrimental effects on their children as well. Children often turn to behaviors to draw attention to themselves. In a sense, these behaviors come from a desire to “commodify” themselves in their parent(s)’ eyes since their celebrity parents are often distant and unengaged and hire others to raise their children.

Stories of addiction among children in famous families are, unfortunately, all-too-common narratives in contemporary society. Presidential children have a history of addiction and suicide. Especially in the 19th and 18th centuries, numerous First Children battled alcoholism. Both Andrew Johnson and Teddy Roosevelt lost sons to suicide. And George W. Bush admitted to having a drinking problem before he followed in his father’s footsteps to the White House.

Surprisingly, it is not the bubble or public scrutiny that have such an adverse effect on children experts say. Doug Wead thinks that it is the ever-present shadow of their presidential parent. Wead explains that the common pathology [among presidents’ kids] is that they have a difficult time establishing their own separate identity from the president.<sup>157</sup>

White House children get lost in their parents’ shadow. They often struggle to understand themselves and figure out their own lives—and Wead’s research suggests that can lead to problems later in life. These problems exist for all celebrity children, not just First Children.

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<sup>157</sup> Doug Wead, *All the President’s Children: Triumph and Tragedy in the Lives of America’s First Families* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 123.

Four case studies

1. *Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie*. The former Hollywood power couple nicknamed “Brangelina” have six children together: 4 adopted children and three biological children. When the biological children were born, the media flocked to the attention of the biological children causing a host of issues among the siblings. The media was commodifying their images with photos auctioning up into the tens of millions as the media wanted to see if the world’s “most beautiful couple” would also have the most beautiful children.

No such attention was given to their adopted children. With the news that Brad and Angelina were divorcing, the focus switched to a custody fight. Angelina cited irreconcilable differences as the reason for divorcing and sought joint legal custody of the children, but sole physical custody and agreed to visitation rights with Brad. Pitt and his eldest son, Maddox, 19, have been estranged for years, while Pax, 16, and Zahara, 15, have chosen not to see Pitt anymore.

2. *Miley Cyrus*. Given her famous father and her own child-acting career in “Hannah Montana,” Miley Cyrus laments her lost childhood and the overt sexualization she endured as a child. Miley writes:

I think now that I’m older now, I realize that’s a lot to put on a kid. To have them have to get their makeup done and also balance school. I think what was hard for me was balancing everything. I think it got harder when I started touring as both—I toured as Hannah Montana and as myself.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Meaghan Wray, “Miley Cyrus reflects on being a child star: ‘It’s a lot to put on a kid’”, Hello Magazine, October 30, 2017. accessed May 1, 2021, <https://ca.hellomagazine.com/celebrities/02017103039641/miley-cyrus-talks-pressure-hannah-montana>.

The pop star compared her gig as Hannah Montana to the TLC show “Toddlers & Tiaras”—a series that follows little girls performing in pageants—explaining that it “is a little weird” to dress up a young girl in wigs.<sup>159</sup>

3. *Toby Mac*<sup>160</sup>. Broken relationships and estrangement from family members can often occur in the lives of celebrity children as parents are often traveling and rarely home. Toby Mac’s life and musical career would come to a screeching halt after the accidental overdose and death of his eldest son, Truett.

Truett, a musician in his own right, would often perform with his dad and is credited on several of Toby’s albums. When Truett moved out of the family home, his relationship with his father began to change, causing Mac great distress. He discussed his feelings on his song “Scars,” which includes the lyrics:

Now you won’t take my phone calls/You won’t text me back at all/I just wanna see you/I can’t stand to see you gone/Yesterday I missed you/Yesterday I played your song/I’m oversimplifyin’, I’m oversimplifyin’.<sup>161</sup>

Mac was candid about the changes his son was experiencing in an interview with *The Tennessean*, elaborating, “Up to now, [our home has] been a safe harbor, a place of love. And now, you know, I have my first kid leave home. He’s going and facing this world...To watch and see him get cut and get bruised, it’s not easy.”<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Wray, “Miley Cyrus reflects on being a child star.”

<sup>160</sup> Matthew Trzcinski, “The Tragic Death of TobyMac’s Son”, October 25, 2019. accessed May 2, 2021, <https://www.cheatsheet.com/entertainment/the-tragic-death-of-tobymacs-son.html>.

<sup>161</sup> Trzcinski, “The Tragic Death of TobyMac’s Son.”

<sup>162</sup> Trzcinski, “The Tragic Death of TobyMac’s Son.”

4. *Billy Graham*. The Grahams had five children and, despite their squeaky-clean family image, none are perfect, and they would have been the first to laugh at such a notion. “We’re a family just like any other, with our own joys and heartbreaks,” the younger Ruth Graham said in a 1995 interview with the *Citizen Times*.<sup>163</sup> “We’re not immune because we’re Billy Graham’s kids.”<sup>164</sup> It is true that the five younger Grahams, who range in age from 59 to 72, have had their share of human difficulties. There have been divorces, a runaway grandchild, drug abuse, and some general misbehavior in the children’s younger years.

One of the toughest challenges of being a celebrity child is separating the image of the distant, unrelatable public figure presented in the media with the actual parent(s) at home. Anne explains this challenge well when she states, “When I think of him, I don’t think of Billy Graham, the public figure. I think of my Daddy. The one who was always a farmer at heart. Who loved his dogs and his cat. Who followed the weather patterns almost as closely as he did world events.”<sup>165</sup>

Perhaps, this warm, intimate relationship with their father is the reason why, despite their difficulties, each of the five children remain committed to the church and Christian ministry in at least some capacity.

#### *Ministry Homes Have Unique Issues*

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<sup>163</sup> Mark Barrett, “Overcoming struggles, Billy Graham’s children are rooted in ministry today.” Accessed April 15, 2021, <https://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2018/02/25/overcoming-struggles-billy-grahams-children-rooted-ministry-today/360965002>.

<sup>164</sup> Barrett, “Overcoming struggles, Billy Graham’s children are rooted in ministry today.”

<sup>165</sup> Barrett, “Overcoming struggles, Billy Graham’s children are rooted in ministry today.”

Pastors' homes are different than others. In some way, pastors must face many of the same challenges as others. They pay bills, negotiate household responsibilities, see to their children's education and more. At the same time, pastoral homes have a different set of challenges that are all their own. These unique aspects of pastoral life must be identified and understood. In many cases, not accounting for them can cause outright disaster in the life of 2GMLs. For many ministry children, their faith and family are inseparably intertwined.

The same is true of their parents. It is difficult not to intermingle ministry and family and faith. This challenge becomes particularly difficult when parents are walking with their children through a crisis. Ayers argues, "Parent-pastors face challenges when balancing vocational and familial responsibilities every day, and when faithless adolescent children are part of their family dynamic the hardship is magnified."<sup>166</sup>

While ministry children face many of the same challenges as their non-ministry child contemporaries, they also must overcome unique obstacles. Some argue that ministry children are just like other children – that no difference exists. Others argue that ministry children are wholly and entirely different. In a comparison study of behavioral issues, Moy found that, "the children [ministry children] were not significantly different . . . but a much higher percentage than expected scored in the clinical range."<sup>167</sup> In contrast, other authors of broad studies relate that both boy and girl children of pastors score within the acceptable norms for behavior and social competency.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Ryan Ayers, "The Pastor's Faithless Child: Strengthening Methods for Hurting Parent-Pastors" (Dmin diss., Liberty University, 2014), v, <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi>.

<sup>167</sup> S. Moy and H.N. Malony, "An Empirical Study of Ministers' Children and Families." *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 6, no. 1, (Spring 1987): 52-64.

<sup>168</sup> Darlene E. McCown and Chandra Sharma, "Children in the Public Eye: The Functioning of Pastors' Children." *Journal of Religion and Health* 31, no. 1 (1992): 31-40.



Stereotypes are another aspect of the ministry child experience. George Barna relates that, “Perhaps the dominant stereotype of the pastor’s kid is the prodigal—the wayward child, the rebel who has fallen away from the faith, the backslidden who’d rather strike out on their own than live in the shadow of the steeple.”<sup>169</sup> Although these stereotypes may be the most dominant feature of how people perceive children of ministers, it is not always accurate. After studying this group, Barna concludes that, while it is not a certainty, struggling with one’s faith in a ministry home is likely. He summarizes, “The children of pastors are not destined to become prodigals, but more than one out of 14 seem to have left their faith behind. And nearly two-fifths of these church-raised kids go through a period of significant doubt.”<sup>170</sup>

#### The fishbowl effect

Living one’s life on display for all the congregation to see is commonly referred to as the “Fishbowl.” Ministry children do not enjoy the same anonymity and privacy in their lives as do the children of the laity. This phenomenon is common regardless of denomination of church.

Sarah Farish highlights this issue writing:

There are millions of opinions out there on pastor’s kids, pastor’s wives and pastor’s families. The first thing that comes to mind when I think about a pastor’s (or any ministry leader’s) children and families is that their lives are often more in the public eye than those of other families. A pastor’s life is constantly under scrutiny.<sup>171</sup>

Farish is not the only voice to point this out. David Kinnaman of the Barna group shares that, “Pastors are feeling the pressure. Their children are living in a moral and spiritual fishbowl;

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<sup>169</sup> Barna Staff, “Prodigal Pastor Kids: Fact or Fiction?”.

<sup>170</sup> Barna Staff, “Prodigal Pastor Kids: Fact or Fiction?”.

<sup>171</sup> Sarah Farish, “Confessions of a Pastor’s Kid,” *Gospel Taboo*, May 1, 2014, <http://gospeltaboo.com/home/confessions-of-a-pastors-kid>.

their actions are evaluated by all sides in the church. This constant evaluation is only compounded with the rise of social media and always-on leadership.<sup>172</sup> Barnabas Piper dedicates a chapter of his book to the fishbowl. He writes in part, “On a pure lifestyle level, one of the greatest challenges PK’s face is scrutiny.”<sup>173</sup> The enhanced scrutiny of the congregation leads to a higher sense of expectation for the ministry child.

## Expectations

Ministry children generally live with a different set of expectations than others. Their parents have expectations. Church leaders have expectations. Church members have expectations. Friends and classmates of pastor’s children have expectations. As a result, ministry children live with a pressure that may or may not be accurate and is often unfair. Dewitt notes that, “when the minister is set aside for the ministry, the tendency is for his entire family to be set aside; therefore, more will be expected of his children than of other children in the church.”<sup>174</sup> A recent Barna study agrees, relating:

They share the name of the one in charge, and as such, they often live in the awareness that their words, attitudes and actions are a reflection of the family’s spiritual position. But while their parent may have been called to ministry, the social expectations placed upon them can leave some pastors’ kids thinking, ‘I didn’t sign up for this.’<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Barna Staff, “Prodigal Pastor Kids: Fact or Fiction?”.

<sup>173</sup> Barnabas Piper, *The Pastor’s Kid: What It’s Like and How to Help*. (Surrey, United Kingdom: The Good Book Company, 2020) 29.

<sup>174</sup> Wayne Dewitt, *Exploring the Need for a Specialized Ministry to Children of Ordained Ministers*. (D.Min. diss., Drew University, 1980.), 55, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

<sup>175</sup> Barna Staff, “Prodigal Pastor Kids: Fact or Fiction.”

In so many ways, this is true. Ministry children face challenges that they did not choose. While sometimes they shoulder the pressure of the expectations of the congregation, they can also carry the weight of defending their parents. Sarah Farish notes:

Sometimes I heard criticism of my father's decisions and it often sounded more like criticism of my father himself. That was unsettling to hear at a young age. We need to make sure that a critique of the church, which can be a healthy, helpful thing, is communicated in a non-personal and judgment free manner.<sup>176</sup>

In a study of challenges that ministry children faced, Anderson found, "The strongest was the PK's perception that more was expected of him or her."<sup>177</sup> This phenomenon can lead to the ministry child trying to live for the expectations they experience rather than for their genuine interests and passions. In some cases, ministry children can put on a false persona of spirituality or leadership as a result. Patterson finds, "If PKs feel expected or forced to be Christians, then they can rely more on surface acting for presenting faith instead of managing their faith."<sup>178</sup>

Commonly the stress from the expectations of others causes ministry children to feel pushed to an unattainable, even inhuman, place of perfection. They can feel like, if they are anything less than perfect, they are letting others down. Sarah Farish relates this truth writing:

I often felt frustrated and insecure about being the pastor's kid. In a church of about 350 people I felt a lot of pressure to perform at certain standards. I felt like I always had to look good, act good, and like I wasn't allowed to make mistakes or have struggles.<sup>179</sup>

She is not alone. This perfect child syndrome abounds in the lives of ministry children. Donny Betts, a pastor's child himself, said this about his situation: "It's not my dad who can be the

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<sup>176</sup> Farish, "Confessions of a Pastor's Kid."

<sup>177</sup>Carole Brousson Anderson, "The Experience of Growing Up in a Minister's Home and the Religious Commitment of the Adult Child of a Minister," *Pastoral Psychology* 46, no. 6, (1998): 393-411.

<sup>178</sup> Stephanie Patterson, *PKs: How Their Construction of Self is Affected by Their Parent's Occupation*. (master's thesis, California State University-Northridge, 2014), 61.

<sup>179</sup> Farish, "Confessions of a Pastor's Kid."

problem, it's other people who like to make me look like a 'perfect kid.' This notion that pastors' children need to be perfect and spotless is unhealthy and can have many negative effects on the kids as they grow up.”<sup>180</sup>

### Lack of relationships

It is lonely at the top. This adage accurately describes leaders, but in the case of ministry leaders, it often describes their children. Because of the fishbowl effect and the expectations of others, ministry children struggle with relationships. The nature of church work can be relationally one-sided. Many people know the pastor's children, but the pastor's children do not have a deep relationship with anyone. Barnabas Piper shares, “I think the worst part of being a pastor's kid is being known of by everybody in a church, but not necessarily being known well by the majority of them.”<sup>181</sup> Further, ministry children struggle to have deep friendships with peers. The children at their school have a hard time relating to the unique aspects of life in a ministry home – the fishbowl, the expectations, the pressures. This is further complicated by the fact that many people have ulterior motives in their relationships with ministry children. Whether it is to gain information about the church, to gain influence with their parents, or to gain status in the congregation, ministry children can often be left wondering, “do you want a relationship with me because of me or because of something else?”

### Struggling with their faith

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<sup>180</sup> Josiah Frisbie, “Life as a Pastor's Kid,” LUBlog, February 10, 2020, <https://www.liberty.edu/campusrec/student-activities/blog/life-as-a-pastors-kid>.

<sup>181</sup> Barnabas Piper, “The Best and Worst Parts About Being a Pastor's Kid,” *LifeWayVoices*, March 7, 2019, <https://lifewayvoices.com/church-ministry-leadership/the-best-and-worst-parts-about-being-a-pastors-kid>.

As noted earlier in the Barna study, it is common for ministry children to struggle in their faith. This kind of spiritual wrestling takes on another dimension in their lives because of the family to which they belong. It is not easy to struggle in any area as a ministry child, least of all to struggle with one's faith. It is important for ministry children to make their own conclusions and affirmations of their faith. Piper shares, "So, you're trying to live up to people's expectations while struggling to know who you are, who you are in Christ, what your own theology is versus what your parents' theology is."<sup>182</sup> It is critical that ministry children come to know God as their God and not just the God of their parents. Even if a ministry child avoids a season of prodigal living, he or she still has to wrestle with personalizing his or her faith. This can be particularly challenging in the context of the ministry in which their parents serve. Many times, ministry children walk through this issue after they leave their parents' home. DeLozier notes the role of ministry parents in the process, writing:

As they transition from their parents' home and church into college, they enter a crucial time of questioning their faith and establishing their identity, having been removed from the strong spiritual environment in which they grew up and the watching eyes of their home congregation. While this may not be a comfortable time for all, it is important that PKs progressively work through those questions while maintaining a strong relationship with their parents.<sup>183</sup>

### *Family Systems Theory*

Family Systems Theory is a contemporary construct that attempts to explain the complexity of family relationships. Its concepts can inform the journey that high profile children and pastor's children have in navigating their lives. Some of the concepts are discussed here as a viewpoint

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<sup>182</sup> Piper, "The Best and Worst Parts About Being a Pastor's Kid."

<sup>183</sup> Janette DeLozier, "When Pastor's Kid Becomes College Student: Identity Development of PKs During College" (master's thesis, Taylor University, 2013), 23.

on how and why pastor's families struggle. Though not a comprehensive discussion of Family Systems Theory and its implications to the aforementioned research, this serves to bring a contemporary voice to the conversation.

Family Systems Theory views the family as a connected unit rather than as individual members. Pastoral families then, are interdependent units and should be seen as such for the purpose of understanding the pressures and challenges pastor's children face. As Bowen states, "It means that symptoms in one person reflect emotional processes involving the entire unit."<sup>184</sup> While the family unit is composed of emotional, feeling and thinking systems, there is much focus on the emotional connection within the family and how it effects each individual member. This is because Bowen views the family as primarily an emotional system.

Bowen further describes this emotional system as a recurring triangular relationship pattern in families. The three-person relational unit, according to Bowen, is the smallest stable relationship that can occur.<sup>185</sup> Often when there is conflict between two people, they will look to another person for help. Bowen notes the intensity of these relational connections can vary,

The higher the anxiety, the more intense the automatic triangling in the system. The lower the differentiation of self in the involved people, the more intense the triangling. The higher the level of differentiation, the more people have control over the emotional process. In periods of low anxiety, the triangling may be so toned down it is not clinically present. In calm periods, the triangle consists of a two-person togetherness and an outsider."<sup>186</sup>

This third person will either be a stabilizer in the relationship or cause it further anxiety. In many ways, pastor's children have a relationship with the church that is the amalgamation of

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<sup>184</sup> "System Mentors," Emotional Systems, The Bowen Center, accessed October 21, 2021. <https://emotional.systems/bowen-freidman>.

<sup>185</sup> Michael Kerr and Murray Bowen, *Family Evaluation* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), 134.

<sup>186</sup> Murray Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice* (1985; repr., Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 307.

their relationship with the people in the church. It is possible that in the lives of pastor's children, the church is a third angle and either stabilizes or destabilizes their emotional environment. How many times does the language in pastor's homes reinforce this idea when referring to the church in personal terms? How much is the church described as if it were a person? Do pastors bring the church in as a relational player even in the use of biblical language, like the bride of Christ or refer to church as her or she?

Bowen goes on to describe a person's ability to separate one's emotional and "thinking" self as a critical skill, especially in stressful situations. Bowen writes that this self-differentiation involves two dimensions. Cox expands on Bowen's ideas, writing,

The first dimension involves being able to handle differences between thinking and feeling. Can people handle their emotions with their thinking prowess without getting caught up in the maelstrom of emotions that may be going on around them? The second dimension involves being able to balance intimacy and autonomy. Can people enjoy close contact with significant others in their lives without losing their independence?<sup>187</sup>

The successful person in the family unit will be the one who can stay connected to the family while simultaneously avoiding being led by their emotions. It is often one person's unruly emotions that lead the entire family unit to experience anxiety. Friedman calls this the "domino effect."<sup>188</sup> Bowen might posit that a pastor who cannot manage the anxiety of ministry work inevitably brings that emotional instability into the family dynamic and thereby affects the entire unit.

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<sup>187</sup> David Cox, "The Edwin Friedman Model of Family Systems Thinking," *Academic Leadership* 4 (Fall 2006). <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1115&context=alj>.

<sup>188</sup> Edwin Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: Guilford, 1985), 144, 221.

Bowen finds that when problems occur in a family, there are usually four different relationship patterns that are revealed: marital conflict, dysfunction in a spouse, impairment of one or more children, and emotional distance. One author writes,

Clinical problems or symptoms usually develop during periods of heightened and prolonged family tension. The tension level depends on the stress a family encounters, how a family adapts to stress, and on a family's connection with extended family and social networks. Tension increases the activity of one or more of four relationship patterns.<sup>189</sup>

In short, each member of the family unit will respond to troubling situations in particular ways and, as a result, always impact other members of the family. Therefore, the ongoing emotional toll of ministry if not managed well can be a significant factor in the emotional health of the pastor's children. If the pastor carries tension from conflicts, leadership struggles, and relational challenges, this can add emotional charge to the family system in which the children are already experiencing the normal stresses of development and growth.

Bowen shows that this impact can go beyond a family unit and affect future generations as well. His concept of projection describes the patterns through which parents influence their children. This concept focuses on how parents transmit their emotional problems to the next generation. The children are significantly impacted as a result. Children inherit their problems from their parent's emotional struggles. The projection process usually follows these steps:

1. The parent focuses on a child out of fear that something is wrong with the child.
2. The parent interprets the child's behavior as confirming the fear.
3. The parent treats the child as if something is really wrong with the child.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> "Nuclear Family Emotional Process," The Bowen Center, accessed October 21, 2021. <https://www.thebowncenter.org/nuclear-family-emotional-process>.

<sup>190</sup> "Family Projection Process," The Bowen Center, accessed October 21, 2021. <https://www.thebowncenter.org/family-projection-process>



As a result, the parents' fears shape who the child is and the child actually becomes their fears and perceptions.<sup>191</sup> Bowen further concludes that we do not live in a generational vacuum. We are shaped by the family that preceded us. The Bowen Center summarizes this concept, "The concept of multigenerational . . . transmission occurs on several interconnected levels, ranging from the conscious teaching and learning of information to the automatic and unconscious programming of emotional reactions and behaviors. Relationally and genetically transmitted information interact to shape an individual's 'self.'"<sup>192</sup> This is why pastors from unhealthy ministry families and contexts can find it challenging to break family cycles of unhealthy leadership. Scripture seems to confirm the impact of the actions of preceding generations upon future ones. Exodus 34:7 states, "...maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."

Emotional cutoff allows children to ease the tension they are experiencing in their family system. Though it may bring them temporary relief, it often leads to further problems in the long run if the problem is not resolved. Bowen states, "The principal manifestation of the emotion cut-off is denial of the intensity of the unresolved emotional attachment of parents, acting and pretending to be more independent than one is, and emotional distances achieved either through internal mechanisms or physical distance."<sup>193</sup>

Some degree of emotional cutoff can be healthy for the relationship. Bowen further states, "People cannot live in an intense emotional relationship without getting some distance

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<sup>191</sup> "Family Projection Process".

<sup>192</sup> "Multigenerational Transmission Process," The Bowen Center, accessed October 21, 2021. <https://www.thebowncenter.org/multigenerational-transmission-process>.

<sup>193</sup> Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice*, 382.

from it. And if they do not get some distance from it, it will result in some kind of dysfunction in ... either emotional, psychological, or physical.”<sup>194</sup> When used intentionally, the process of emotional detachment can be healthy. However, the challenge is knowing when it is needed and when one is allowing their emotions to lead them in this emotional cutoff. A period of distancing in the life of a pastor’s child could be easily seen as rebellion from the perspective of their parent.

While other scriptural parallels exist, the most striking theological parallel of Family Systems Theory is the Trinity. It is what stands out foremost as an example of what family relationships can and should look like. Each person of the Trinity is separate unto themselves but are also a “family” without any dysfunctional triangulation. This non-dysfunctional triangulation is also seen before the Fall between Adam, Eve and God.<sup>195</sup> The New Testament also exalts the Church as the eternal family that will one day be perfected when creation is renewed. Several authors have taken Bowen’s work and done further research and study. Friedman applies Family Systems Theory to leadership. His thesis is that a leader can be better equipped by knowing the components of Family Systems Theory not just in their own life and family, but also in their leadership. He writes,

[The well-differentiated leader] ... is someone who has clarity about his or her own life goals, and, therefore, someone who is less likely to become lost in the anxious emotional processes swirling about ... is someone who can separate while still remaining connected, and therefore can maintain a modifying, non-anxious, and sometimes challenging presence ... is someone who can manage his or her own reactivity to the automatic reactivity of others, and therefore be able to take stands at the risk of displeasing.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice*, 201.

<sup>195</sup> Gunar John Kravalis, “A Study of Biblical Families from the Perspective of Family Systems Therapy,” (dissertation, Wilfrid Laurier University, 1997).

<sup>196</sup> Edwin Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*, 10th ed. (New York: Church, 2017), 15.

David Cox goes further in summarizing Friedman’s three fundamental truths that every pastor/leader needs to know:

1. People change according to the functioning of those around them
2. If leaders can change their emotional functioning, while staying connected, the whole organization will improve its functioning in response to that change.
3. The Ultimate Paradox = Leaders best chance of changing another is by working on self.”<sup>197</sup>

### *Pursuing Their Own Calling*

This study focuses on those ministry children who choose to follow in the family business of vocational ministry leadership. One aspect of that decision is the ministry child finding his or her own sense of calling that is separate from his or her heritage or his or her parents’ expectations. A personal calling is a paramount issue to successful 2GMLs. They simply must have their own experiences with God to validate their particular gifts and God-given calling. In some cases, ministry children can pursue leadership without such an experience. By way of them being “around the church” and involved in ministry, ministry children can find leadership roles easier than perhaps others in their sphere. Dahlager warns that “PKs are on the fast track to leadership, but premature ministry may bring disillusionment or ethical failure.”<sup>198</sup>

The call to vocational ministry is first of all, a call to a relationship with Jesus Himself. This relationship comes first and then any ministry flows from it. Os Guinness, in his book, *The Call*, says that the “primary Call (capital C) [is a relationship with Jesus] and that everything else we do for God in the church and our community is a calling (small c).”<sup>199</sup> Guinness also says,

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<sup>197</sup> David Cox, “The Edwin Friedman Model of Family Systems Thinking,” *Academic Leadership* 4 (Fall 2006). <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1115&context=alj>.

<sup>198</sup> Dahlager, *Pastors’ Kids in Latin America*, 58.

<sup>199</sup> Os Guinness. *The Call*, 3rd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2018), 61-62.

“We are called to *Someone*, not to *something*.”<sup>200</sup> Edmund Clowney underscores the primacy of the call to Jesus first, writing:

There is no call to ministry that is not first a call to Christ. You dare not lift your hands to place God’s name in blessing on his people until you have first clasped them in penitent petition for his saving grace. Until you have done that the issue you face is not really your call to the ministry. It is your call to Christ.<sup>201</sup>

Understanding that one’s personal relationship with God is connected to their ministry calling, better defines a calling to vocational ministry. There are plenty of descriptions of what a vocational calling looks like and what it means. The following are some descriptions from a variety of contemporary sources:

- “Ministry is not a calling for those who don’t know what else to do, it is for those who can’t do anything else.”<sup>202</sup>
- “The specific call of God acknowledges your place on the team and asserts your role in God’s redemptive plan.”<sup>203</sup>
- Regarding the use of the word “summons” to illustrate a “call,” Dave Harvey says, “[vocational ministry] is a call away from one thing and into another.”<sup>204</sup>
- “It is a call to selected men [and women] to serve as leaders in the church.”<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Guinness. *The Call*, 61.

<sup>201</sup> Edmund Clowney, *Called to the Ministry* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1976), chap. 1, kindle edition.

<sup>202</sup> John MacArthur, Jr., “Thinking Well about the Call to Ministry”, The Master’s Seminary, accessed October 15, 2020. <https://info.tms.edu/call-to-ministry>.

<sup>203</sup> Kristopher Barnett, *Called: Understanding the Call to Ministry* (Anderson, SC: AU Ministry Press, 2016), 22.

<sup>204</sup> Dave Harvey, *Am I Called?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 18.

<sup>205</sup> James M. George, “The Call to Pastoral Ministry,” in *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 81.

- “[The call to vocational ministry] is a mysterious, yet clearly undeniable pull in the very core of your being that is impossible to escape.”<sup>206</sup>
- “When the Creator of the universe calls, we can’t ignore it, delay our response by sending it to spiritual voicemail, or dismiss it as a wrong number as though God mistakenly called us.”<sup>207</sup>

In short, a call to vocational ministry can be described as a supernatural summons from God to be set apart in order to serve God and others in a capacity of full-time ministry leadership. Some note that there are fewer people “answering” the summons to vocational ministry today. Gordon MacDonald laments that the tone concerning vocational ministry calling seems to have changed in recent years:

In my earliest years, it seemed like most call-stories began when someone was aged 13 or 14. Christian camps, vacation Bible schools, missionary rallies were key places where young people were challenged to hear God’s call and commit their lives to Christian service. Perhaps it’s just me, but I hear fewer call stories today. I hear less about calls and more about careers, less about God’s will for your life and more about recognizing an opportunity. On seminary campuses, I meet fewer students who say, “I’m here because God has called me into ministry,” and more who say, “I’m just testing the waters by taking a few courses.”<sup>208</sup>

All Christians are called to ministry. Dana Mathewson gives two categories, “equipping ministry” and “marketplace ministry.”<sup>209</sup> Marketplace ministry is when believers use their careers, such as teachers, lawyers, accountants to minister to/for God and to others. Equipping ministry refers to the ministry that we typically think of when referring to vocational ministry.

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<sup>206</sup> Dana Mathewson, *Call 2 Ministry* (Self-published, Xulon, 2003), 28.

<sup>207</sup> Scott Pace, *Answering God’s Call* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2020), chap. 1, sec. 2. Kindle.

<sup>208</sup> Gordon MacDonald, “God’s Calling Plan,” *Christianity Today*, Christianity Today International, October 1, 2003. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2003/fall/3.35.html>.

<sup>209</sup> Mathewson, *Call 2 Ministry*, 24-25.

Oswald Chambers notes that this equipping ministry calling or vocational ministry calling can come in various ways, writing,

The realization of a call in a person's life may come like a clap of thunder or it may dawn gradually. But however quickly or slowly this awareness comes, it is always accompanied with an undercurrent of the supernatural.<sup>210</sup>

God calls different people in different ways. In determining this call, all sorts of authors provide their own diagnostics. Some of them are as follows:

Jason Allen provides several questions that one can ask to discern if God is calling them to vocational ministry.

1. Do you desire the ministry?
2. Does your character meet God's expectations?
3. Is your household in order?
4. Has God gifted you to preach and teach His Word?
5. Does your church affirm your calling?
6. Do you love the people of God?
7. Are you passionate about the gospel and the Great Commission?
8. Are you engaged in fruitful ministry?
9. Are you ready to defend the faith?
10. Are you willing to surrender?<sup>211</sup>

In borrowing from Bill Hybels, Carey Nieuwhof writes that there are 3 factors that should help determine if someone is truly called of God to pursue vocational ministry.

- *Character* — “Your character, not your competency, determines your capacity as a leader.”
- *Competency* — “Your competency is a direction expression of your gifting ... Does God equip the called? For sure. But maybe he also calls the equipped.”

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<sup>210</sup> Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest in The Complete Works of Oswald Chambers* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 2013), 828.

<sup>211</sup> Jason Allen, *Discerning Your Call to Ministry: How to Know for Sure and What to Do about It* (Chicago: Moody, 2016), 9.

- *Conviction* — “... conviction that the church is worth the full investment of a leaders’ best time, best energy and even entire life.”<sup>212</sup>

Gordon MacDonald states that the call to vocational ministry includes the following:

- God speaks to you.
- Confirmation – “the genuineness of call is *usually* (not always but *usually*) confirmed by others who discern the unique work of the Holy Spirit in a particular person.”
- Giftedness – “With a call comes giftedness — that mysterious empowerment of capacity and spirit that God visits upon the ‘call-ee.’ When such people are in alignment with their call, something powerful happens, and we, the observers, are all left in amazement.”
- The result – “Are people impacted by the person supposedly called? Are they drawn to Jesus? Do they grow in Christlikeness? Are they motivated to greater commitment and vision? These are some of the questions likely to be relevant when a call is assessed.”<sup>213</sup>

Discovering whether or not one is called has often been broken down into two parts: the inward and external calls.<sup>214</sup> The inward call to vocational ministry occurs when the Holy Spirit speaks directly to those God has selected to be full-time vocational workers in a local church, international missions, church-planting, or similar work. The external call is revealed through other godly people, particularly the local church who recognize and encourage the calling.

The significance of the call to vocational responsibility is also expressed through the responsibility given to the one who answers the call. In Luke 12:48, Jesus says, “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required.” God both equips the called and calls the equipped. Therefore, there are many who have gifts and talents that provide them with great opportunities. However, with these opportunities comes great responsibility and accountability. James 3:1 even warns some who are called into vocational ministry that “Not many of you

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<sup>212</sup> Carey Nieuwhof, “Why It’s Time to Rethink What It Means to Be Called to Ministry,” Carey Nieuwhof.com, accessed October 15, 2020. <https://careynieuwhof.com/why-its-time-to-rethink-what-it-means-to-be-called-to-ministry/>.

<sup>213</sup> MacDonald, “God’s Calling Plan”.

<sup>214</sup> Albert Mohler, “Are You Called?,” Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, accessed October 15, 2020. <https://www.sbts.edu/are-you-called/>.

should become teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.” Those who are called are answerable to the Caller.

In understanding the significant nature and responsibility of this task, it is no wonder that one should be careful concerning his/her motives for entering vocational ministry. Thom Rainer provides several reasons that can undermine our understanding of this significant responsibility:

1. **To escape from a secular job.** The perception may be that vocational ministry is easier or less serious.
2. **To fulfill family expectations.** “About one-third of my peers who dropped out of ministry came from families in vocational ministry. Don’t hear me wrongly. It is admirable to see multiple generations in ministry for the right reasons. But too many in ministry feel compelled to enter that world because of family pressure. One peer of mine told me, ‘Dad called me into ministry, not God.’”<sup>215</sup>
3. **When your spouse is not supportive.** “Vocational ministry is demanding and can be exhausting. If ministers do not have the support of their spouses, their lives will be miserable from the point of entering vocational ministry.”<sup>216</sup>
4. **Not theologically prepared.** There is no excuse not to prepare oneself. To not prepare implies that the responsibility is not taken seriously.
5. **Skewed views of the demands of ministry.** “I was in a conversation with a 30-something pastor who came into ministry from the secular world. His conversation went something like this: ‘I had this idea that I would have all this free time and short work weeks. Ministry seemed like a piece of cake compared to the world I was coming from. I couldn’t have been more wrong. It is unbelievably demanding. I am on call 24-hours a day whether I admit it or not.’”<sup>217</sup>

All of these reasons imply that one does not understand the significance of the call to vocational ministry and the accompanying responsibility.

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<sup>215</sup> Thom Rainer, “Five Terrible Reasons to Enter Vocational Ministry,” Church Answers, June 26, 2017. <https://churchanswers.com/blog/five-terrible-reasons-enter-vocational-ministry/>.

<sup>216</sup> Rainer, “Five Terrible Reasons to Enter Vocational Ministry.”

<sup>217</sup> Rainer, “Five Terrible Reasons to Enter Vocational Ministry.”



It is one thing to know one is called, but another to have the confidence to nurture and continue in that call. There are many people who initially answer God's call to vocational ministry but few who stick with it. Following are some possible reasons why people experience challenges in responding to God's call.

### Identity struggles

One of the first questions one often asks of others when first meeting them is "What do you do?" One often judges and is judged based upon occupation. But there is not much that compares to vocational ministry. People may call doctors, "Dr. So-and-so" or teachers, "Professor" but few other people are addressed by their job titles. We do not call the painter, "Painter Joe," the accountant, "Accountant Bob," or the coffee shop clerk, "Barista Barbara." But, for some reason, people call their pastor, "Pastor." Because of this and other reasons, this identity is forced upon pastors. Along with the nature and strenuousness of the role, it is very easy for the one called to vocational ministry to find their identity in their calling.

Those called must remember that the Caller is their identity, not their calling. Their calling is their purpose which flows out of their identity in Christ.<sup>218</sup> In viewing through this lens, Dave Harvey writes,

Being chosen for ministry is great. Being chosen for sonship is infinitely greater. Who am I? I'm one with Christ, no matter what happens with any specific sense of calling I may have. My union with him is the most important and meaningful thing about me. Keeping this as our source of identity is essential.<sup>219</sup>

It is very easy to allow a calling to become an identity. When it does, one can easily separate what we do from the Caller. This is more challenging the longer one is in vocational ministry as

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<sup>218</sup> Guinness. *The Call*, 61-62.

<sup>219</sup> Harvey, *Am I Called?*, 40.

success can breed an overconfidence in one's work while forgetting that the Caller is responsible for all fruit that is produced.

The call to vocational ministry is unlike other "careers" in that the rest of the family cannot help but be involved on a significant level. Therefore, the decision to answer the call to vocational ministry is a family decision. And not every family member is always happy to acquiesce to this call, especially the spouse. According to one study, 80% of pastors' spouses wish their husbands would do something else and 80% of pastors believe that pastoral ministry negatively affects their family.<sup>220</sup> One ministry spouse writes,

Without the support of our spouse and family cheering us on, surviving the hardships ... would be nearly impossible, and the loneliness suffocating. The prayers, encouragements, and championing of our families are lifelines in ministry.<sup>221</sup>

In short, if one's family is not 100% on board during the initial call to vocational ministry, they most likely will not be as one continues in that call.

Calling matters because ministry is challenging. Many have described pastoral ministry as a particularly challenging profession. Some have asserted (perhaps somewhat tongue in cheek) that no sane person would want to do the job. With the challenges that accompany the work, it is clear that, "the work of the ministry is too demanding and difficult for a man (or woman) to enter without a sense of divine calling... nothing less than a definite call from God could ever give a man success in the ministry."<sup>222</sup> The call of God, for many, is the only reason people go into ministry as a vocation and stay in it. Of the factors in maintaining endurance in

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<sup>220</sup> "CBL & Vocational Ministers of the Gospel," Center for Biblical Living, accessed October 16, 2020. <https://cbl.org/services/ministry/>.

<sup>221</sup> Stacy Joy, "6 Questions to Consider If You're Called to Full-Time Ministry," Why Am I?, November 26, 2018. <https://ymi.today/2018/11/6-questions-to-consider-if-youre-called-to-full-time-ministry/>.

<sup>222</sup> Howard F. Sugden and Warren W. Wiersbe, *When Pastors Wonder How* (Chicago: Moody, 1973), 9.

vocational ministry, one's surety in their calling was found to be very important.<sup>223</sup> The vast majority of responders said that a "sense of calling into ministry" was extremely important in "their quest to maintain health, resiliency, and endurance in ministry." Researchers at Seattle Pacific University reported that a large majority of pastors define success in their ministry as being faithful to their calling.<sup>224</sup>

Calling matters because ministry is a God-assignment. Ministry happens when God engages humans in the task of leadership. Appointment by God implies calling, stewardship, and accountability. A pastor must have "a capacity to care for God's flock with self-sacrificing diligence and compassion."<sup>225</sup> Pastors must have a heart that reflects the heart of God. Laniak supports this concept writing, "a good shepherd is one who sees what the Owner sees and does what the Owner does. He is a follower *before* he is a leader. He is a leader *because* he is a follower."<sup>226</sup> Such a person must also want to lead. Prime and Begg remind that the call to ministry is the "unmistakable conviction an individual possesses that God wants him (or her) to do a specific task."<sup>227</sup>

Calling matters because ministry has eternal implications in the lives of people. God has always called people to build His church through vocational ministry. However, this does not make pastors better than anyone else or more important, but it does magnify their responsibility.

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<sup>223</sup> Andrew Hancock, "Do Ministers View Call to Ministry as Important?," Equip Resources for Spiritual Growth, February 6, 2017. <https://equipthepeople.com/2017/02/06/do-ministers-view-call-to-ministry-as-important/>.

<sup>224</sup> Robert B. McKenna and Katrina Eckard, "Evaluating Pastoral Effectiveness: To Measure or Not to Measure," *Pastoral Psychology* 58 (2009): 303-313.

<sup>225</sup> Jer 3:15

<sup>226</sup> Timothy Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 22.

<sup>227</sup> Derek Prime & Alistair Begg, *On Being a Pastor: Understanding Our Calling and Work* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2004), 18.

Calling is critical to this endeavor. Oswald Sanders clarifies that those who “are not called should not be in the ministry; but people who are called to the ministry will have a difficult time finding fulfillment in doing anything else.”<sup>228</sup>

Calling matters because it leads to the enabling of God for the pastor-leader. If a person is called, they should respond, because the church always needs pastors. Pastors are called and enabled by God to do at least these four things according to Richard Hovey, “To educate, exalt, encourage, and evangelize. It is in understanding the fact that one is loved by God (*education*) – even though they did nothing to warrant such love – and responding to such love by loving God (*exaltation*) and loving one another (*encouragement*) that they become witnesses (*evangelism*) to the transformative love of God in Christ.”<sup>229</sup>

### *Summary*

Raising successful second-generation leaders is a daunting challenge. The biblical profile study of next generation ministry leaders shows that more often than not the results are not good, and much of the time the results are a disaster. Children that have great opportunity and advantage too easily fall to temptation and compromise. The failures of Ishmael, Nadab, Abihu, and Abimelech are examples of ministry children who failed. Rehoboam and Manasseh stand out as examples in a long list of next-generation leaders who seemed to strive to become more and more evil and depraved with each leadership handoff. This terrible multi-generational leadership

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<sup>228</sup> J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Responding to God's Call* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1994), 5.

<sup>229</sup> Richard Hovey, “Shema, Shabbat, Shalom, and a Savior: Implications for Pastoral Ministry,” (DMin Diss., George Fox University, 2018), 138.

ultimately led to the destruction and exile of God’s people. This is not to say that there are not some biblical successes to emulate, but they are too few.

Ministry calling is an important aspect of setting up the next generation for success. It is the opinion of the researcher that an individual ministry calling in the life of a second-generation leader is not optional, it is essential. God chooses His leaders, and confirms His choice with a calling. This is a key aspect to preparing second-generation ministry leaders to overcome the unique challenges of growing up in a leader’s home and pursuing God for themselves.

How can ministry leaders raise children who love God and do not hate church? This cuts to the heart of the matter. Within the contemporary literature there are a few takeaways.

Among the greatest regrets of ministry parents is the lack of time spent with their children. Barna finds, “While 21% of pastors believe they were good parents in terms of supporting and spending time with their children, twice that amount have regrets in this area—42% say they wish they had spent more time with their kids.”<sup>230</sup> For every ministry parent that feels they spent enough time with their children, there are twice as many who, looking back, would change their priorities to spend more time with their children. In the rush to build ministry success, ministry leaders would do well to heed the advice of Tony Evans: “The activity that takes you away from your children may be a good thing in and of itself, but that is not the question. Your children are your primary responsibility and they deserve your time.”<sup>231</sup>

Growing up with the weight of the expectations of a ministry child can be a serious challenge. Sarah Farish offers some advice to churches that want to help ministry children navigate their lives and build their faith, “Here are some ways to love them well: Extend grace to

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<sup>230</sup> Barna Staff, “Prodigal Pastor Kids: Fact or Fiction?”.

<sup>231</sup> Tony Evans, *Raising Kingdom Kids*. (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2014) 104.

them like you would any other kid in the youth group. It's hard growing up in ministry and feeling like your family life is on display sometimes."<sup>232</sup> Ministry children are children first before they are connected to ministry. They will face all the pressures and pitfalls of growing up in our fallen world. In addition, they carry the extra weight of ministry connection. Grace is the greatest gift a church can give these future kingdom builders.

More than any other factor in the life of ministry children, the quality of their home life has a direct impact on how they view themselves and how they view ministry. Therefore, ministry leaders must dedicate themselves to providing a healthy home environment for their children. Anderson relates that, "positive parental relationship with positive spiritual role models, quality family time, freedom to be themselves rather than feeling forced to fit into some presupposed behavioral mode of 'perfection,' and clear-cut boundaries between life at church and at home."<sup>233</sup> In his book on parenting, George Barna agrees saying, "to facilitate that outcome, the family is to provide a home that serves as a sanctuary in the midst of the turmoil that accompanies childhood and young adulthood."<sup>234</sup>

It is the opinion of the researcher that much more study could be done on the challenges of growing up as a second-generation ministry leader. In particular, a study of successes is needed. Successful leadership transitions to a second generation in today's growing environment could reveal much needed lessons that will inform and instruct this generation of leaders as they raise their children. Pitfalls may be better identified and avoided. Best practices may be shared and exploited. The result could be a better result in the coming generation.

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<sup>232</sup> Farish, "Confessions of a Pastor's Kid."

<sup>233</sup> Anderson, "The Experience of Growing Up in a Minister's Home."

<sup>234</sup> George Barna. *Revolutionary Parenting*. (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007), 137.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE PROJECT NARRATIVE AND FIELD WORK**

#### *Introduction*

Pastoral families can struggle in unique ways to meet the demands of a growing church environment and maintain a healthy family dynamic. It seems that in previous generations pastors were forced to choose between a growing ministry and a healthy family. Often the children of pastors paid the price for their parents' ministry success. The desire of the author is to help pastoral parents raise children who love God and do not hate church. Pastor-parents need strategies to help their children grow up and embrace effective ministry leadership.

In chapter two, the research focused on the biblical framework of second-generation ministry leaders – how leadership is selected, how a calling from God is processed, and two case studies in leadership and parenting. In addition, contemporary literature gave a picture of the specific challenges that pastors' children face through studies, analysis, and firsthand experiences. This chapter will focus on an evaluation and assessment of a group of current pastor's children who have grown up to be successful ministry leaders in their own right.

In this chapter, goals and objectives will be clarified for the study. In addition, structure and methodology will be discussed. A clear view of the details of the study will be gained by the reader.

#### *Goals and Objectives*

The question that the researcher is pursuing is “what are the challenges of growing up as a pastor's child in a growing church environment in today's American Church; and what are the



best practices of pastoral parents in such a setting as seen by their second-generation ministry leadership children?”

The first goal is to explore the challenges of growing up as a second-generation ministry leader. The objective is to assemble a list of the unique challenges faced by today’s second-generation ministry leaders. This list will then be coded and analyzed for thematic connections. These connections were addressed within a biblical and theological framework in chapter two.

The second goal is to probe how these second-generation ministry leaders experienced and processed their own calling with God. The objective of this goal is to shape the conversation of the importance of calling in the lives of second-generation ministry leaders. Commonalities in the experience of these leaders can show the importance of calling and also help others to process their own callings from God.

The third goal is to discover best practices of ministry parent(s) as seen by their children. Gathering ideas for how pastor-parents can better navigate raising their children in a thriving ministry setting will be the focus. How have other successful leaders bred spiritual vitality in their children? How have they contributed to and nurtured the ministry calling that their children pursued? The objective will be to assemble best practices, synthesize themes, and present them in a clear and usable manner.

### *Research Methodology*

The primary problem being addressed in this project is study of the challenges and best practices of raising second-generation ministry leaders. Uniquely, this project explores the issues from the vantage point of the second generation. This perspective is important because so little study has been done in how pastoral children experience ministry. To gain accurate information for the study, a multi-layered approach will be employed.

The study uses the qualitative research method. A focus group of second-generation pastor's children provides an opportunity to gain in-depth insights from personal experience. The focus group allows for a semi-structured conversation to develop in which new themes and ideas can be explored. It gives enough time to hear from all the participants in a way in which their feedback can enhance the overall results. The focus group questions lead to the goals and objectives of the project. The goal of the focus group is to provide more detail and specifics regarding the subject matter.

### *Research Design*

The research survey was designed in conjunction with a research consultant. The research focus group allows for more in-depth conversation in a smaller setting with follow-up questions and inter-connecting conversation. Both the survey participants and focus group participants were provided with a consent form consistent with the practices of the Institutional Review Board of Southeastern University.

### *Research Site*

The focus group was held at the church offices of Grace Church Houston in the pastor's conference room. Participants sat around a long conference table. A whiteboard and pin board were made available to capture the discussion. The focus group was also video and audio recorded. The focus group consisted of three sessions, each addressing one area of the project.

### *Research Participants*

The research participants were second-generation ministry leaders whose parents led growing churches during their childhood and adolescence. These second-generation leaders all accepted a ministry calling of their own and are currently living out that calling. Their names and

identifying information were kept anonymous for the purpose of allowing more candid answers to the focus group questions.

### *Data Collection*

The focus group was captured by video. Participants used index cards in brainstorming responses. The index cards used by the participants to capture ideas in the discussion were also provided to the research consultant for data analysis and coding. The recordings were transcribed and then coded using the software Nvivo 12. A narrative approach was used to analyze and code the data, since methodologically, the participants' stories had a distinct beginning, middle, and end.<sup>1</sup>

### *Implementation*

The focus group occurred on Thursday, October 15, 2020, from 8:30 AM to 2:00 PM. The topics for the group conversation were approved by the Institutional Review Board of Southeastern University. The results were sent to the research consultant by Monday, October 19, 2020.

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<sup>1</sup> S. B. Merriam and E. J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th Edition (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 34.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE PROJECT EVALUATED

#### *Introduction*

This summary contains the results of the data analysis for the focus group conducted on October 15, 2020, at Grace Church Houston. The focus group transcriptions and video recordings were analyzed and coded for thematic elements. The thematic elements were coded and separated into individual Word documents for easy access.

#### *Methodological Approach and Technique*

Qualitative data for this project were gathered from a focus group of seven PKs whose parents planted and/or pastored large charismatic churches. Three sessions of approximately one hour each in a single day were moderated by the researcher. The researcher moderated the sessions with guiding questions and probing. Session one was concerned with the challenges of being born and raised a pastor's child, and session two was focused on how the PKs developed their own sense of calling from youth. Session three centered on advice for pastor-parents.

#### *Data Analysis*

Video and audio recordings were used to analyze the conversations, and transcriptions of the audio were provided by a third party. A narrative approach was used to analyze and code the data, since methodologically, the participants' stories had a distinct beginning, middle, and end.<sup>1</sup> The coding is not based on the moderator's exact questions, instead it looks for thematic elements in the participants' responses. The researcher observed the kinds of stories the

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<sup>1</sup> S. B. Merriam and E. J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation, 4th Edition* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 34.

participants conveyed—that is, how events and circumstances made them think, act, and feel.

The software used to code the data was Nvivo 12. The nodes (themes) were coded mostly *in vivo* (based on participants' words). Similar responses were then grouped together into the nodes, or themes.

### *Session One: Challenges Related to Being a Pastor's Child*

Seven themes surfaced in the first session of the focus group. The challenge areas were as follows:

1. Parishioners (expectations from them / PK life in a fishbowl) (10)\*
2. Trusting Staff and Elders/Board (10)
3. Personal Growth and Development (8)
4. Relational Crises or Disappointment (8)
5. Rewards (7)
6. Parents (4)
7. An Identity Crisis or Faith Crisis (3)

A word frequency analysis reveals that “dad,” “parents,” “family,” and childhood (i.e., “kids”) are central to the discussion in Session 1—appearing far more than friends or any specifics about God. One might infer that the challenges with being a PK are less about peers or what God is up to and more about family dynamics surrounding ministry life and church politics. In other words, the crucial component in these stories is the centrality of the pastoral family, particularly how mom and dad serve as exemplar(s) of God and a good Christian life. One participant shared,

I would say the thing that I saw with my parents was they were Christian first. They never changed who they were. They were Christ followers and I think I saw them in their calling and what they did as a pastor, I feel even for a pastor it's a lot easier to pastor people well, they're called to do that. So just be a Christ follower. They never changed who they were. It wasn't like, “Oh, we're in pastor-mode now.” It was, “We are like this all the time.” And so, I never saw a difference. I knew that they were always strong Christians.

The nuclear pastoral family also represents safety and protection from external threats. This strong family bond also helped them navigate the difficulties inherent in their upbringing as pastor's children. One participant related,

You're the model. I think because my mom was also a pastor's kid, she was keenly aware of that. And so, I think they did a good job of letting me know when that would happen, they said, "No, you're not an example for every other kid. You're just a kid and you're fine. That person's weird." And so, that was a conversation we've had multiple times. And so, I think that was helpful. I think because she had had to live that life before.

Central to this session are the stages of faith development expressed in the lives of each focus group participant. The participants' narratives often addressed how they went from their "fishbowl faith crisis" to sacrificial servants in the church. One participant described the fishbowl this way,

I think even if parents don't put a pressure on their kids or unrealistic expectations . . . the church will. I think it's just natural human nature for people. Even if it's unspoken, I think pastor's kids feel that pressure or feel the fishbowl. I felt it from others. My daughter's a pastor's kid. She just turned 18. Just told us the other day, she said... Because we've tried to never go there with them with this pressure of performance or unrealistic expectations, but she feels it. Even though nobody's ever communicated that or pressured her to be something.

Most of the pressure to perform or behave came mostly from parishioners, but occasionally from staff. Each participant had concerns about their privacy, their leadership ability (or lack thereof), their tendency to feel entitled, their personal faith and belief, and issues of trust toward parishioners and staff. Sometimes they struggled in relationships because of the duality of their role as a church member in their own right and member of the leader's family. One participant recounted,

Well, and then, if someone did get hurt with the church, it always, or at least for me as a kid, it felt like a personal attack towards my family. They would come against us. It didn't go against the church, they would go against my family, personally. That was what made

it so hard is because you're like, "You were one day someone I looked up to and now you're coming against us, and I don't know how to handle this."

They described their journeys as learning experiences or a sort of development from irreverent to reverent, from child-in-a-fishbowl to adult ministry leader—who in spite of their last name—deserved (or had earned the right) to lead on their own merits.

As part of their unique upbringing as PKs, the participants experienced a different-than-average faith journey as compared to other parishioners or staff members. In their early years, some described a lack of sacredness associated with the church building and sacraments. One participant related,

I think going back to what [name redacted] said, that it was a sacred place for many but for a lot of us PKs, it was a second home. The baptismal was a pool to us, so during the week we swam in it when my dad was working. And so, when people got saved and they got baptized, they had this aha moment with the baptismal and I was like, "I don't know. I swim for quarters in that." I didn't have any relationship with it. And I think that was the thing. You fall asleep on the chairs, you do all these things, because you are there all the time. And so, you lose some of the sacredness. Even becoming an adult, you had to re-find sacredness in the House of God because it just wasn't that for you as a kid, versus for everyone else, they're having these life-changing moments. You're like, "I don't know. I got spanked there yesterday."

Some rebelled in their teen years. But all of them volunteered (or were forced to serve) in various capacities until they were old enough to decide for themselves. Yet, because of their strong family ties, even those who rebelled ended up serving in ministry on their own terms. In addition, since the PKs spent their childhood cleaning the church, setting up and dismantling equipment each Sunday, sacrificing time with parents (dad especially), and dealing with church politics, they felt they had earned the right to speak on behalf of their parents.

## *Session Two: Finding a Personal Calling as a Pastor's Child*

The themes of the second focus group session were as follows:

1. Navigating authority and calling in staff relationships (16)
2. Trust Issues – Family as Inner Circle (3)
3. Finding vocational identity through ministry occupation (12)
4. Finding vocational identity through faith conversion (5)
5. Finding Outside Pastoral Support (1)

In this session, participants responded to several questions regarding the development of their vocational identity, or “calling” in relation to their parents’ churches. The theme of identity formation is central in the second session. In the first session, participants discussed challenges associated with being a PK, such as faith crises (e.g., what is sacred to everyone else is normal for a PK) or relational crises (e.g., some people only befriend the PK to get close to the pastor). But in this second session, the participants reveal how they developed their personal commitment to faith and ministry, and then how they navigated issues with “chain of command” as staff members at churches where their parent served as senior pastor. In other words, the PK participants found their vocational identity, to a large extent, by trial and error, navigating difficult situations with staff and learning how to lead. Sometimes their identity as pastor’s children became a hurdle to overcome. One participant related,

The struggles of discovering your own voice, your own style, getting comfortable in your own skin. I do think it’s unique, though, when your dad is the Senior Pastor, especially if he has a strong personality, a unique style of leadership. My Dad’s very bold and his personality’s way different than mine. And, so, for me, in the early years of cutting my teeth in ministry and trying to figure out how am I going to communicate? How am I going to lead? How am I going to preach? Who am I? Because I think there’s benefits of being able to glean and learn and take parts from your dad, but it was awkward for me . . . I felt like David in Saul’s armor. Like, “This just doesn’t feel right.”

The narratives are oriented toward personal conversion events, handling stressful relationships with staff and parishioners, navigating the paradox of the pastor being one’s parent,



and whether ministry is something the participants could own for themselves. Each related a personal reckoning with this issue. One participant shared,

In seventh grade, I could take you to the spot where I know that I heard the voice of the Lord. And, then, from there, it was like, this is the plan. This is the way forward. And, so, I think that I don't really have a great story other than that and, so... But, I know that I heard the Lord, and, then, the youth group provided... Some of the challenges of the big church and that sort of stuff . . . I was just a 14-year-old that didn't care, and, so . . . for me, that was that, and that just kind of set the trajectory.

Clearly, the participants wanted to honor their parents' goals for the health and future growth of the church, and it was natural for them to show loyalty—especially in the face of numerous threats from other church staff. The narratives focus on finding a vocational identity and a respected voice to meaningfully contribute to the ongoing ministries led by their parents.

Each participant expressed the importance of family as the locus of trust and safety: *no one else could really be trusted*. One participant shared about the struggle of trusting others outside the family:

And the trust thing is huge... so, so, so, so, so huge... because, really, it's just your family. You know? There's this unspoken thing of you bury bodies but you do not say anything. What happens inside this home stays inside this home. And that is sacred. Absolutely sacred. Who you let in is very sacred because trust is something that's... Especially, I feel like the bigger you get, you begin to hide from the outside.

Since the family name carried so much authority, expectation, and responsibility, some participants would occasionally avoid its use (as an escape) or leverage it (to accomplish objectives). Since finding outside pastoral support was difficult for most of the participants, they found significant support from family. Some participants mentioned support from the youth pastor or pastor from another church who was in relationship with their family. Despite these challenges, the participants have established their own ministries with which to be proud, identities unique to themselves, and wisdom from decades of exposure to ministry life.

### *Session Three: Best Practices for Pastoral Families*

Multiple themes emerged in this session and spoke to the practical choices pastor parents can make to help their children grow up to love God and embrace a ministry calling. The themes are as follows:

1. Advice for Pastor-Parents of PKs
  - a. Prioritize family and time management (11)
  - b. Prioritize child's spiritual growth (7)
  - c. Focus on character and moral formation (5)
  - d. Don't apologize for ministry life (4)
  - e. Authenticity (4)
  - f. Involve kids in ministry experience (3)
  - g. Don't shelter kids (3)
  - h. Develop fun children and youth ministries (2)
  - i. Encourage humility and servanthood (2)
  - j. Caution sharing about PK on social media or from pulpit (1)
  - k. Don't vent (1)
  - l. Give kids a global view of God's work (1)
  - m. Apologize well to kids (1)
  - n. Wife and husband equally on board with ministry (1)
2. Advice for PKs
  - a. Be encouraged (4)
  - b. Grow in faith (2)
  - c. Be genuine (1)
  - d. Be honest with parents (1)
  - e. Find your voice (1)
  - f. Honor parents (1)
  - g. Serve in a different small church (1)

Session three centers on the best practices for pastor-parents and advice for PKs. The overall sentiment in this session is positive and affirming of ministry life. Indeed, one of the top five categories under "advice for pastor-parents" is to avoid apologizing for the stresses and busyness of ministry life. All the participants are in part-time or full-time pastoral ministry. Ministry life is hard work, but the participants see hard work as a positive life-skill and virtue to develop. Participants warned against pastor-parents being too protective of their kids' exposure

to the letdowns and stresses of ministry. Some participants believe their parents could have been more forthright about troubling occurrences in ministry because these PKs felt “mature enough” to handle it and “invested enough” that it really mattered to them. One participant shared,

Let them into your pain because I think we feel what our parents feel. My kids know when someone leaves the church and my sons asked many times, “Hey, dad, are you okay? You’re quiet.” Now what he's really saying is, “What's going on, on the inside?” But oftentimes I know for our parents, they just wanted to protect us from the hurts that they were experiencing, so they just go, “Life just happens, son. I don't know what happened with them. They stopped coming to church. Life happens.” And then you get older, and you hear the stories and you're like, “I wish you would've just told that as a kid because I probably would have understood that better and I've been thinking about that for 15 years, why they left us. Now I appreciate you telling me. They got divorced and it had nothing to do with us.”

On the other hand, the hard work of ministry ought to be balanced with consistent family time, which was the most significant theme of all. Family relations were improved by carving out time for Sabbath and family vacations, as well as attending children’s sporting events and consistently taking their phone calls. Simple acts of connection stood out in the experiences of the participants, one shared,

My dad always answered my calls, always stepped out of a meeting. It didn’t matter who he was with, it was like, “What do you need, bud? I am in a meeting; can I call you back?” But it was similar to like we would have a rule with our spouses that you're just going to answer it and so that communicated into mundane, every day, “Okay, I still know I'm more important than that.”

The participants advised pastor-parents to let the PKs know they are loved more than the church. The other top categories are for pastor-parents to prioritize the PKs’ spiritual growth, to focus on the PK’s character development/moral formation, and to be “authentic.” One participant underscored the need for prioritizing spiritual growth by relating,

I remember I was probably in high school and it some sort of youth group event, all-nighter, and my dad’s taking me over to the church at 11:15 and I’m apologizing in the car, “Hey, sorry that you have to drop me off.” He’s all, “No, this is the most important

thing that I will do.” And so that set the priority of I’m a priority, your spiritual life is a priority over anything else.

The participants appreciated that their parents were authentic, normal Christians off-stage.

Surprisingly or not, most of the pastor-parents did not lead formal devotionals with their kids at home. However, their commitment to Jesus and the Gospel was seen in their everyday application of biblical principles or through conversions in the car while taxiing family to-and-fro. Primary advice to other PKs is to know that people are “rooting for them” and that they are loved. Being one’s true self and having a unique voice is more important than being perfect. Participants also encouraged PKs to fall in love with Jesus before being concerned about vocational ministry. Being honest with parents and honoring parents were also advised.

### *Conclusion*

This study’s findings articulate the unique challenges that pastors’ children face regarding growing up in a ministry environment, processing their own individual calling, and recalling the most effective ways their parents influenced and built their faith in their own journey to leadership ministry. The participants described managing numerous tensions and difficulties often at a young age, as they grew up helping build the church with their parents. They also shared how their own lives were marked by the experience – for good and bad. The focus group shared not just the hurdles which they had to overcome, but also the unique benefits of access and relationship afforded to them because of their parentage. Each second-generation leader emphasized that serving God for them was never a job, rather it was always a calling.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION OF THE PROJECT

#### *Introduction*

The purpose of this project was to better understand the struggles and experiences of second-generation ministry leaders. This project explores the question “What are the challenges of growing up as a pastor’s child in a growing church environment in a church in America today; and what are the best practices of pastoral parents in such a setting as seen by their second-generation ministry leadership children?”

Beginning this project, the researcher suspected that little had been done in the way of scholarly research in this area. It was surprising to find how little. Though pastors’ children are a very important factor in the life and ministry of pastoral parents, they are underrepresented in research. The absence of literature proved exciting to the researcher. It seemed a good opportunity to contribute some understanding to this important area of study.

The project focused on three areas of research. The first area of focus was a biblical and theological framework for exploring second generation pastor’s children. This area asked the question, “How were next generation ministry leaders selected in the Bible and early Church history?”

The biblical and theological research in chapter two of the project was challenging. Narrowing the focus of the biblical and theological topic was more difficult than expected. Finding angles to approach the issue, and at the same time offering a thorough treatment of the topic was problematic. The amount of biblical literature about pastor’s children is very limited. This presented more challenges. Few biographies of pastors in scripture detail their relationship with their children. As a result of this limitation, a decision was made to broaden the research to

include leaders in a more expansive perspective. The two case studies of Eli and David offered a good understanding of how the challenges of raising children in a leadership environment are not new. Both leading and parenting are high-demand tasks that take focus and effort. It is possible to have success in one area and not the other. Though in the end, a failure in family relationships seems to be a devastating blow to leaders. Relational strain in a family context is a limiting force in the life and ministry of any leader.

The survey of contemporary literature informed the project about the issues facing pastor's children today. Case studies of famous children show parallels between the struggles of pastor's children and those of celebrity children. The available popular literature, blog posts and articles bring contemporary pastor's children into the conversation. Contemporary authors' explanation of ministry calling in the life of a second-generation leader defined and described the aspects of pursuing a calling in today's pastoral leadership environment.

### *Focus Group Results About Struggles of Pastor's Children*

Today's pastors' children grow up in a complicated environment because of their parents' profession. As children of the pastor/leader, they face unique challenges within the community of a church. The focus group participants echoed the challenges presented by the contemporary authors surveyed in chapter two and added their own perspective to the struggles of being a pastor's child. While in some ways pastors' children are like everyone else in the church, they are unlike anyone else in the church in other ways. This both/and connection produces tensions in the lives of pastors' children that is unique to their experience. Defining these tensions was a major takeaway of the project. The research findings lead to the inference that these tensions are issues to manage rather than issues to solve or resolve. They cannot be eliminated, but they can

be understood and managed. Through the research and the focus group studies the following five tensions of pastors' children emerged.

**Tension #1: Like everyone else, my parent is the pastor of my church, but like no one else they are also my mother or father.**

Other church members outside of the pastor's family experience the pastor in a sole function as their spiritual leader. Pastors' children have the added experience of their pastor also being their parent. This overlap is challenging not just for the pastor but also for the children. This tension can be felt in a variety of ways. Particularly of note is when the best decision from a pastoral perspective is different than the best decision from a parental perspective. When the pastor must make leadership-based decisions that affect the child in a negative way, these decisions can be very challenging and confusing. For example, the pastor cancels a children's ministry program because it is the best leadership decision to do so, but the same ministry is loved by the child. How does the child process the loss of something they loved at the choice of their parent? Other examples can include when the pastor must make decisions regarding people in the church whose children are friends of the pastor's child. The pastor sees the issues from a leadership perspective and the child sees the issues from a child's perspective. This tension exists for every pastor's child but becomes even more complex when the pastor's children serve on the church staff. Rightly, a pastor's child can wonder, "Who am I speaking with right now? The pastor or my parent?" The answer is both. One participant shared,

Well, and then the other side of that is just you had to learn, especially on the day off, like a Sabbath is Friday. And man, early on, especially when I was on staff, I'd be like, "Oh, dad. Did you hear that Joe left the church?" And it would ruin his day [as a pastor] . . . I just thought I was talking to my dad.

The findings of the research suggest that pastors must teach their children about this tension and have open communication about it from a young age. One possible way to manage this tension is to introduce language into the relationship that defines a conversation by which hat the parent is wearing at the time. For example, “I am talking to you as your pastor right now” or “As your parent, I see it like this.” Anytime complexity can be mitigated by clarity, communication can be more effective. Although this kind of language cannot eliminate the tension, it can bring understanding to the overlapping challenge of being a pastor and a parent at the same time.

**Tension #2: Like everyone else, I am a kid growing up, but like no one else I am also the legitimizer of my parents’ ministry.**

Parents do well to mitigate the pressure to be perfect for their children regardless of their profession. Pastors’ children can experience this pressure in a much more acute way than their non-pastor-children contemporaries. Unfortunately, in the church environments studied in this project, pastors’ children related that they felt pressure to be perfect, because behavior problems and conflicts could be seen by the congregation as a negative mark on the pastor’s ministry. An otherwise normal struggle in the life of the child can be interpreted as a ministry failure on the part of the pastor. Expectations of the church family play a big part in this tension. Pressure can come from many sources, but often is exacerbated by well-meaning church members who make comments like, “We expect more from you because you are the pastor’s kid” or “You are the example to everyone else because of who your parents are.” Dealing with the ongoing pressure to be perfect is a real condition of the pastors’ child experience. Pastoral parents can offer help to their children as they experience this pressure. If one of the child’s parents was also a pastor’s



child, as is sometimes the case, they are better prepared to navigate this issue together. One participant shared,

I think because my mom was also a pastor's kid, she was keenly aware of that. And so, I think they did a good job of letting me know when that would happen, they said, "No, you're not an example for every other kid. You're just a kid and you're fine. That person's weird." And so, that was a conversation we've had multiple times. And so, I think that was helpful. I think because she had had to live that life before.

In the absence of this resource or in addition to it, the research suggests pastoral parents connect their children with mature people who have navigated the relational complexities of this tension. Finding a pastor's child who is older and can provide a safe place to process this tension is tantamount.

**Tension #3: Like everyone else, the church is where I meet with my spiritual family, but like no one else it is also my parent's workplace.**

On a regular basis, the church facility serves as a place for the church family to gather in worship. It is the place where most often church members experience the corporate presence of God. As a result, for many church members, the church facility is a sacred space in their lives. Consider this reality with the feelings most children have when they accompany their parents to work. For many children, visiting their parents' workplace is a fun and casual event, not sacred at all. Pastors' children deal with this tension —what feels sacred to the church family can lose its sacredness for the pastors' family because it is their parents' workplace. In addition, it is helpful to acknowledge that one need not be a pastors' child to experience the loss of sacred space. This reality happens in the lives of pastors as well. Many pastors can easily begin to view the church as a "work" place instead of a "God" place. One participant described the need to rediscover the sanctity of the church,

And so, I think that was the other thing. It was like you couldn't really have those moments in the house (church). It didn't feel the same because it just felt like you were home. It felt like another home to you. And then, when you do struggle, you either struggle in private or you struggle but then everybody knows you're that person. And so, I think that was some of the struggle with it all was just re-finding that sacred place in it because it wasn't sacred as a kid.

With the amount of time that pastors' children spend at a church facility, this tension is no surprise. In addition to attending church "every time the doors were open," focus group participants reported special trips to the church on a regular basis and many full days spent entertaining themselves at the church while their parents worked. The research leads to the possibility that pastors would do well to seek out events and spaces outside of their "home church" environment as special places for their children to experience the presence of God. Examples of these spaces could be events at other churches, conferences held at other venues, and international travel and missions work.

**Tension #4: Like everyone else, the church staff are spiritual leaders in my life, but like no one else they are also my parent's employees.**

Relationships with church staff members are complicated for pastors and even more complicated for their children. Pastors' children are encouraged to build relationships with and to trust church staff people to be spiritual leaders in their lives. In many cases, these additional leaders are a value-add in the lives of pastors' children. However, the child can be caught in a double bind when relationships between their spiritual leaders and their parents are in conflict. Whose side should one take when their spiritual example and their parent are in conflict? This tension is heightened when staff members use their relationship with the pastors' children to try to gain influence with the pastor. Every focus group participant reported feeling "used" by church staff members at different times in their lives. One example of this tension is church staff

getting the pastor's child to support an initiative or program that the staff person feels may meet resistance from the pastor. Another example is trying to get the pastor's child to mention key issues or initiatives to the pastor in a casual setting as a way to gain favor for the initiative or project. In the worst case, focus group participants experienced staff members "punishing" the pastor's child or singling them out in a negative way to retaliate against the pastor with whom they have a conflict. Examples like these affects how pastors' children view and interact with staff members. One participant relayed the challenges of this tension, saying

It was a horrible thing to get stuck in because what happens is I didn't develop any good relationships with the staff. I didn't develop any real friendships with the staff because I never would really open up to them, because in my mind they would use it against me or hold it against me and I was trying to prove that I needed to be here.

**Tension #5: Like everyone else, church attenders are members of my spiritual family, but like no one else they are also critics of my parents' leadership.**

Dealing with criticism comes with the territory of leadership. Pastors understand this fact, although they may not like it. Handling critical church members is not easy as a pastor, but it is incredibly challenging for a pastor's child. In so many ways, church members become de facto family members for pastors' children. Many times, pastors' children attend family events, dinners, and social events with church members. Pastors' children share in many family moments with other people because of their position as children of the pastor, i.e., weddings, funerals, and family celebrations. Most pastors' children have friends whose parents are part of the church. Therefore, in a unique way, pastors' children experience the families in the church as a part of their extended family. When church members leave the church, they also disconnect from the pastor and their family. When church members criticize their pastor, they are criticizing the pastors' child's parent. These criticisms led some of the participants to share about how they

navigated this challenge of “belonging in some way to all the families in the church.” One focus group participant shared,

So, just feeling like everybody was constantly watching you. And some of that, like at the younger ages, the pregame talk on the way to church, “Hey, you represent [our family]. You represent Jesus. I want you guys to be on your best behavior,” all that. But just kind of feeling like all of your life is for the enjoyment of others to watch.

These five tensions are not intended to communicate all the specific challenges that pastors’ children face. The tensions are a summary of the overlap in the way that pastors’ children can experience their world. These tensions serve as points of understanding for those who have not walked through the experience of growing up the child of a pastor.

#### *Focus Group Results About Ministry Calling*

For a pastors’ child to grow up in this complicated world of overlapping responsibilities and challenges and choose to follow their parents in leadership ministry is an important inflection point in their lives. In some professions, children might follow in the footsteps of their parents out of expectation or obligation. There was no evidence in this research project that that phenomenon occurs regularly in ministry work. However, the research did not exhaustively survey every pastor’s child in every environment. With that allowance made, for a pastor’s child to follow their parent or parents in leadership ministry requires a personal calling experience.

Focus group participants described very different experiences that for them amounted to a personal ministry calling. Some of these personal callings came at church events and others were in personal, private moments spent with God. Still others experienced their calling as they used their gifts in ministry settings. It seems that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to the call of God. A personal calling is exactly that: personal. It is also indispensable. Focus group

participants suggest a personal calling is not an option, but a requirement for success in second generation leadership ministry. The biblical research in chapter two bears out the importance of a calling from God in the life of a ministry leader. A calling from God to lead in ministry is vital to the success and sustainability of a pastor. Each of the focus group participants related their own story about how they experienced their calling to leadership ministry.

### *Focus Group Input About Best Practices for Pastoral Parents*

The focus group session on best practices for pastoral parents was very important to the research. The goal of this part of the project was to understand more about how pastoral parents can help their children deal with the additional challenges requisite in being reared in a pastor's home. In the research, the goal was to provide preventative wisdom to parents, believing that with the right information pastoral parents can adjust before problems emerge. In addition, this project "gave a voice" to this generation of pastor's children. With so little available on this topic, the input of the focus group was very valuable. The highlights of their comments advise pastors to do the following:

1. Prioritize family time apart from ministry.
2. Be authentic – the same on and off the platform.
3. Invest in strong kids and youth ministries – if you don't have them, find them elsewhere.
4. Share some of the burdens of ministry, don't hide them all.
5. Maximize opportunities for your kids' spiritual growth.
6. Involve your kids in ministry from an early age.
7. Give your kids a global view of the kingdom of God.
8. Encourage humility and servanthood – fight entitlement.

9. Evaluate if the stories you share in message and social media are a win/win.
10. Develop godly character at every opportunity.

### *Focus Group Impact on Participants*

One unexpected result of the focus group time was the healing and connection it brought the focus group participants. In the same way that many pastors feel alone and isolated, the experience of being a pastor's child can be equally lonely. Telling their stories in the presence of others who have lived it was a very impacting component of the time spent. One participant shared at the end of the day, "This is better than any therapy I've ever had." While it was said with a smile, it was not a joke. The camaraderie of being with a room full of people who have walked the same journey cannot be overstated. The participants experienced a healing community while contributing to a learning community.

### *Opportunities for the Church At Large*

After completing this study, four opportunities in particular stand out as issues that the church at large should consider addressing. The body of Christ cannot afford to neglect this important group of young men and women.

Study to understand this important group

After completing this project, much more study can be done on topics related to pastor's children. After seeing the impact that ministry settings have on pastors' children and the influence that pastors' children have on pastor/parent/leaders, the importance of understanding the struggles and challenges of this group has a disproportionately high value. If pastor/parents

can avoid some common pitfalls and thereby have more balanced and healthy families, then all the better for pastors, for churches and for the people they serve.

Denominations and church fellowships would do well to target the specific challenges pastors' children face within their church families. It is likely that Methodist pastors' children, for example, have some unique experiences that are not shared by those who are not in their church family. The same could be true for Pentecostal pastors' children. In addition, geographic difference could be investigated. Though all pastors' children share some likenesses, it is reasonable to assume that children of international missionaries have unique experiences that are all their own. To this end, the research advocates for much further study from various angles and in various church traditions. Potential questions for this initiative could be,

“What do we know about the pastor's children in our fellowship/group?”

“What are their specific struggles and challenges?”

“What can we do to better support pastor/parents?”

“What has changed since the last generation of pastor's children? Are we current?”

Develop ministries to equip and connect pastor's children

Every expression of a family of churches should consider how they can invest in pastor's children. As mentioned earlier, connecting pastor's children with each other could be a major element of providing relational support. Church organizations could consider planning events for pastor's children concurrently with the events they provide for pastors. In addition, they could plan separate events for pastors' children that help foster relational connections. As church groups learn more about the particular struggles faced by pastors' children within their own fellowships, they could attempt to equip their pastor's children before they face these challenges.

Some practical ideas could include:

1. Host an event for pastors' children in your area or church fellowship.
2. Create a social media connection for pastor's children in your sphere of influence.
3. Help pastor/parents understand the unique challenges their children can face.
4. Include events for pastors' children at annual leadership conferences.

Invest resources to develop and train pastor's children

Church fellowships and church leadership teams should consider committing resources to the development and training of pastor's children. These resources could be a budget item as churches realize the potential gains of such investments. In cases where a pastor's child feels their own calling to ministry, church teams should recognize the high potential of investing in them for the kingdom of God. Some possibilities are

1. Offer a scholarship for pastor's children who want to pursue a ministry calling.
2. Have a retreat for pastor's children, led by second generation leaders who understand their world.
3. Consider how existing training mechanisms and events can include pastor's children where appropriate.
4. If a university or Bible school is part of the fellowship, develop an event or program just for pastor's children to build connection to higher learning.

Help congregations to support and encourage pastor's children

Very little is done to help church members know the best ways to support and help the children of their pastor. The research affirms that most congregation members would be encouraging if they knew how to be. In other words, sometimes pastor's children suffer in a church because of



the ignorance of the church members. They simply are unaware of the pressures and struggles that pastor's children face. Churches could consider addressing this issue in leadership meetings or staff meetings. Creating a culture where pastor's children can thrive is not easy, but it can be done through diligence, teaching, and communication. Some practical steps could be

1. Acknowledge the birthdays of pastors' children with a gift from the church.
2. Include a thank you to the pastor's children as a part of pastor appreciation month.
3. Reinforce that it is OK for pastor's children to make mistakes, handle them with grace.
4. Include the pastor's children with their parent(s) in moments of public honor and acknowledgement.

### *The Fingerprint of God in the Process and Project*

#### Stretching

The researcher was stretched and challenged by the classes in the program and the dissertation project. The biggest lesson learned in the production of the project was that academic writing calls for a different voice than popular writing. The researcher found himself reverting to thinking like a pastor instead of thinking like a researcher throughout the project. A pastoral predisposition was difficult to combat. As a pastor, the researcher attempts to take complex ideas and make them simple. As an academic, this propensity to simplify was a consistent obstacle. This required a consistent reliance on God's help to wordcraft the material in a way that met the academic standards of the program.

### Community and cohort

God was evident in the interaction and community experienced within the cohort of the researcher. Sharing this experience with a group of like-minded leaders, guided by a seasoned and sagacious mentor was a highlight for the researcher. The process of flexing the researching and writing skills necessary for this project was sharpened by the team that shared the journey with the researcher. Their prayers, input and encouragement were critical in the completion of the project.

### Practical emphasis

The subject matter of the project brought a renewed appreciation of pastor's children to the researcher. Though the initial thought for the project came from an interest in and heart for pastor's children, walking through the research of this project only reinforced the value of pastor's children. Hearing the focus group discuss the challenges of growing up as a pastor's child in a leadership intense environment was enlightening. It gave the researcher a higher level of compassion and empathy for the children of the pastor's that serve on his staff team. It also led to a renewed commitment to minister to pastors' children as a high-value group within the body of Christ at large and within the church family in particular. Moving forward, caring for, developing, and equipping second generation leaders will be a priority for the researcher's leadership team.

### *Considerations for Future Research*

This project was limited in several ways. The study had several contextual limits. The project is limited to growing church environments. This project also had cultural limitations. Sample size limitations must be considered. Finally, the project had denominational limitations. Add to these

the limited amount of scholarly research that has been produced on the topic of pastor's children and the potential for future research is sizeable.

Probing each of the aforementioned areas of limitation would be useful. What do pastor's children in different nations and settings say about their struggles? How do denominational affiliations help or hurt the experience of pastor's children? Which denominations are doing better than other and why? Are there pacesetter churches that have a healthier environment in which pastor's children tend to flourish? If so, what are the best practices of such places?

In addition, the researcher advocates for potential crossover studies that could be of benefit. For example, research could be conducted on how the transfer of a family-owned business from the founder to the second-generation leader mirrors the same transfer of leadership in a church from the founding pastor to his or her second-generation children. Some interesting parallels could exist in the areas of time spent learning the trade (ministry), time spent working the family business (ministry) as a child, steps of preparation for the transition, and role of the founder after the transition.

Another worthwhile study would be to survey disenchanted pastors' children and attempt to ascertain causes and influences. Why does a child of a pastor grow up and walk away from a relationship with God? What could cause a pastor's child to turn away from the church for which pastors sacrifice so much? An honest appraisal from the viewpoint of this group could prove worthwhile.

The most glaring area that needs further research and study as seen in this project is the impact of family systems theory on the development and deployment of pastor's children. This project only began to draw parallels about how these concepts could benefit pastors and their

families. Some suggested future studies based on the eight components of family systems theory are:

1. Triangles – How do relational triangles grow or deteriorate within the context of the specific pressures of a ministry family?
2. Differentiation of self – How can ministry families provide a place where differentiation can happen without rebellion and a prodigal season? What are healthy alternatives?
3. Nuclear family emotional process – What tools do pastoral families need beyond spiritual disciplines with which to process emotional pain in their own system and process the emotional pain of others in their congregations in a healthy way?
4. Family projection process – How can pastoral parents become more aware of the pitfalls of projection and avoid saddling their children with inappropriate expectations or damaging emotional wounds?
5. Multi-generational transmission process – What tools could be created to help pastoral parents deal with “generational curses” and repeating family dynamics that they do not wish to pass on to the next generation?

6. Emotional cutoff – How can pastoral parents lead their children to experience healthy emotional cutoff as they develop? How could this impact managing the relationships of pastor’s children with congregation members and other stakeholders?
7. Sibling position – What understanding is needed to best communicate to and develop children withing the birth order framework? What unique challenges can each position pose to pastor’s children?
8. Societal emotional process – How can these concepts inform and affect church life in general? How can they help pastor’s children in specific to avoid the losing their faith while they process potential disenchantment with their church home and with social systems at large?

### *Conclusions About This Project*

#### Strengths

In evaluating this project, several strengths emerge. This project gave a voice to pastor’s children in an academic setting. Research provided the biblical basis and contemporary viewpoint of the issues that pastor’s children face. The focus group allowed for a subset of pastor’s children to speak about their firsthand struggles and experiences. It also gave a safe place for pastor’s children to process their life journeys together in an affirming environment. The practical nature of the discussion and findings is also strength of the project.

## Weaknesses

The weak points of this project are also important to acknowledge. The project would have benefitted from a better research plan – particularly in the area of biblical and theological research. More consultation and preparation could have helped this section contribute more fully and substantively to the project. Other weaknesses include the limitations acknowledged above and the lack of existing scholarly research on this topic. While the reality of limited research makes the project exciting, it makes it difficult to fulfill all the academic requirements. Lastly, the background of the research was a weakness. The researcher's personal focus as a leadership practitioner led the project to fight to arise to the level of academic writing.

## Opportunities

The greatest future opportunities in this area are research opportunities. As mentioned, the potential to further investigate any particular subset of pastor's children, church type, or geography and then cross reference those studies would be exciting. Further, longitudinal studies would give a unique perspective as well. Perhaps denominations and pastoral organizations would even fund this kind of research to help the pastors in their organizations to raise their children in healthy environments and avoid pitfalls of previous generations.

## Threats

One threat to future research being pursued is the latency of discovering problems in the life of pastor's children. The seeds of the problems in the lives of pastor's children can be sown early in life, but not reaped until later years. This is the area that family systems theory could be most helpful in its connection with research about pastor's children. Understanding how to build a healthy family system from the onset could be incredibly impacting on pastor's families. A

further threat to expanding the research is the narrow audience to which it speaks. There likely would not be a large retail market for books about raising pastor's children. However, the impact of such research could be expansively impacting.

This project lends itself to a published book dedicated to helping pastors/parents and their 2GML children. Hopefully, such a resource will encourage pastors' children, who may feel they have a ministry calling, with the stories of others who have already walked that road. In addition, it may provide encouragement and help to pastor/parents by presenting the unique perspective that pastor's children themselves have on the challenges they face. It could highlight the importance of a personal calling in the lives of pastor's children. Finally, such a resource could serve as practical help for today's pastors as they raise their children to be leaders of the next generation.

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APPENDIX A

**Old Testament Ministry Children (Chronological)**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Scripture(s)</b>	<b>Qualification</b>
<b>Jemimah, Keziah, Keren-Happuch</b>	<i>Job 42:12–15</i>	Daughters of Job, who was described as a blameless and upright man who feared God and shunned evil (Job 1:1) and known as the greatest man in the East (1:3) The Lord described Job as his servant (1:8; 2:3)
<b>Shem, Ham, and Japheth</b>	<i>Genesis 5:32, 6:10, 7:7, 13, 9:1, 18-27, 10:1-32, 11:10-32, 1 Chron. 1:4, 5, 8, 17, 24, Psalm 78:51</i>	The three sons of Noah, who went with him into the ark (Gen. 5:32, 6:10, 7:7, 9:18)
<b>Daughters of Lot (unnamed)</b>	<i>Genesis 19:8, 30–38</i>	Their father Lot was the notable nephew of Abraham. Second Peter 2:7–8 describes Lot as a righteous man, tormented by the evilness in his city.
<b>Ishmael</b>	<i>Genesis 16:11-12, 15-16; 17:18, 20-26; 21:9-21; 25:9-17; 28:9; 1 Chronicles 1:28-29; Galatians 4:22-30</i>	Abraham’s first-born son by way of Hagar, Sarah’s Egyptian maidservant.
<b>Isaac</b>	<i>Genesis 17-27</i>	Isaac’s father, Abraham, functioned as a priest.
<b>Jacob</b>	<i>Genesis 25-35</i>	Jacob is the third generation of a ministry family, and so his “ministry child” status has become something of a legacy at this point in the Genesis story.
<b>Perez and Zerah</b>	<i>Genesis 38:27–30; Genesis 46:12; Ruth 4:12; Matthew 1:3</i>	Sons of Judah, who was the fourth son of the patriarch Jacob and received the spiritual blessing of carrying on the ancestral line of Christ.
<b>Joseph</b>	<i>Genesis 37-50</i>	Son of Jacob/ grandson of Isaac/ great grandson of Abraham
<b>Gershom</b>	<i>Exodus 4:24-26; Exodus 18:3; Judges 7</i>	the firstborn son of Moses and Zipporah.



<b>Nadab and Abihu</b>	<i>Exodus 6:23; 24:1, 9; 28:1; Leviticus 10:1; Numbers 3:2, 4; 26:60; 1 Chronicles 6:3; 24:1</i>	2 oldest sons of Aaron, the priest, thus making them priests and also qualifying them as ministry children.
<b>Mishael and Elzaphan (sons of Aaron's Uncle Uzziel)</b>	<i>Exodus 6:22, Leviticus 10:4, Numbers 3:29-31</i>	Sons of Uzziel (Exodus 6:22) of the tribe of Levi; cousins of Aaron and Moses
<b>Abimelech (son of Gideon)</b>	<i>Judges 9</i>	Abimelech was one of Gideon's 70 sons and was born through Gideon's concubine who lived in Shechem. Gideon functioned as both king and judge over Israel.
<b>Obed (son of Boaz)</b>	<i>Ruth 4:13-22</i>	Son of Boaz, who was noted as a "man of standing" from the tribe of Elimelek (Ruth 2:1). Boaz greeted his field workers with blessings (2:4) and pronounced blessings on Ruth several times (2:12; 3:10-13) Boaz conversed with the elders at the town gate and served as a kinsman-redeemer (Ruth 4)
<b>Hophni and Phinehas</b>	<i>1 Samuel 2-4</i>	Because Eli was a priest, Hophni and Phinehas can be labeled as ministry children.
<b>Joel and Abijah</b>	<i>1 Samuel 8:1-5</i>	Sons of Samuel, the prophet and last judge in Israel, who led God's people before and while Saul was king.
<b>Jonathan</b>	<i>1 Samuel 13:1-3, 14; 18:1-5, 19:1-7; 20; 23:16-18; 2 Samuel 1; 4:4; 9:1-7</i>	Son of King Saul, who was a "man of standing" from the tribe of Benjamin (cf. 1 Samuel 9:1) who served as the first King of Israel.
<b>Absalom</b>	<i>2 Samuel 13:20-39; 14:23-33; 15:1-12; 16:15-23; 17; 18:9-18</i>	Son of King David and potential heir to his kingdom.
<b>Amnon</b>	<i>2 Samuel 13</i>	Son of King David, chosen by God and anointed by the prophet Samuel.

<b>Zadok (descendant of Aaron during time of David)</b>	<i>2 Samuel 8:17, 1 Chronicles 15:11, 24-36, 1 Chronicles 24:3, 1 Kings 4:4,</i>	He was born into a family of priests, particularly as the son of Ahitub. He can trace his priestly lineage all the way back to Eleazar.
<b>Solomon</b>	<i>2 Samuel 12:24-25; 1 Kings 2-11; Matthew 6:29, 12:42</i>	Son of King David and Bathsheba.
<b>Rehoboam</b>	<i>1 Kings 12-14</i>	Rehoboam's father was King Solomon and his mother was Naamah, an Ammonitess (1 Kings 11:43; 14:21). Solomon's role as king, judge and priest, and being King David's grandson.
<b>Manasseh</b>	<i>2 Kings 21:1, 16-18; 2 Chronicles 33:11-16; Matthew 1:10</i>	Manasseh was the son of King Hezekiah and was king of Judah around 687-642 B.C. and ruled for 55 years (2 Kings 21:1)
<b>Shear-jashub</b>	<i>Isaiah 7:3</i>	Because his father, Isaiah, was a prophet, Shear-Jashub can be considered a "ministry child."
<b>Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah, Lo-Ammi</b>	<i>Hosea 1:4-5, 6-7, 9; 1:10-2:1</i>	Sons and daughter of Hosea (OT prophet) Jezreel is eldest son; Lo-Ruhamah is a daughter; Lo-Ammi is a son

APPENDIX B

**New Testament Ministry Children (chronological)**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Scripture(s)</b>	<b>Qualification</b>
<b>Alexander</b>	<i>Acts 4:6</i>	Alexander was a relative of Annas, the high priest.
<b>Anna</b>	<i>Luke 2:22–38</i>	Daughter of Phanuel (or Penuel in the NIV) from the tribe of Asher.
<b>Caiaphas</b>	<i>Matthew 26:3, 26:57, Luke 3:2; John 11:49, 18:13–14, 24, 25, 28; Acts 4:6</i>	Caiaphas was the son-in-law of Annas, the previous high priest,
<b>John the Baptist</b>	<i>Matthew 3:11-12, Mark 1:7-8, Luke 3:4-9, John 1:19-34; Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22, John 1:29-34; Matthew 14:1-12, Mark 6:14-29</i>	John the Baptist’s father was a priest, and belonged to the tribe of the Levites, an entire tribe that served as priests in the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. Therefore, John the Baptist was not just from a ministry family, but an entire ministry tribe.
<b>Jonathan</b>	<i>Acts 4:6</i>	Jonathan’s father, Annas, was the High Priest during the ministry of John the Baptist (Luke 3:2; John 18:13; Acts 4:6).
<b>Joseph of Arimathea</b>	<i>Matthew 27:57–60; Mark 15:42–47; Luke 23:50–56; John 19:38–42</i>	Israelite descent and rabbinic learning
<b>Nicodemus</b>	<i>John 3:1–10, 7:50–53, 19:39</i>	Influential Pharisee and member of the governing council, the Sanhedrin. He was completely immersed in a culture of strict Judaism, so much so that he had to hide the fact that he followed Jesus
<b>Paul</b>	<i>Acts 7:58; 8:1-3; 9:1-19; 22:3; Galatians 1:13-14; Philippians 3:5</i>	Jew strictly trained in Judaism and Pharisaical practices.
<b>Timothy</b>	<i>Acts 16:2, Philippians 2:20, 2 Timothy 1:5</i>	While not a biological “ministry child”, Timothy was viewed by Paul as his spiritual son (2 Timothy 1:5). Thus, in this sense, Timothy was a “ministry child.”

## APPENDIX C: DAVID'S CHILDREN

David's children are listed in 1 Chron 3:1-9; 2 Sam 3:1-5; and 2 Sam 5:13. David's first 6 sons were born in Hebron. The remainder were born in Jerusalem. The order of the sons born in Jerusalem is uncertain.

1. Amnon: his mother was Ahinoam from the town of Jezreel. David's firstborn and the supposed successor to the crown before he died. He burned with love for his half-sister Tamar and raped her. He was later murdered by Tamar's full brother, Absalom, while feasting with the rest of his brothers.
2. Kileab (2 Sam 3:3) or Daniel (1 Chr 3:1): from David's wife Abigail from Carmel in Judah. David's second son. Nothing else is known about this son of David. Most likely, he died young, because of his absence in the narrative about Absalom's rebellion.
3. Absalom: his mother was Maacah, daughter of Talmi, the king of Geshur. Absalom was David's third son and the presumed heir to the throne after the death of Amnon. Absalom loves his sister Tamar and is outraged after she is raped by Amnon. He houses her and plots revenge upon Amnon, which he fulfills when he murders him. Absalom then flees to Geshur, where his mother's relatives are and stays until David recalls him to Jerusalem. However, David then refuses to see him, so he starts one of Joab's fields on fire in order to convince him to intercede with David on his behalf. Absalom is accepted back into David's household, but he soon begins to plot to overthrow David. Absalom is described as extremely handsome with long hair, of which he is very proud. Absalom rebels against David but is overthrown by David's forces. Absalom gets caught by his hair in a tree and is killed by Joab.
4. Adonijah: his mother was Haggith. Adonijah attempts to usurp the throne from Solomon after David's death. Solomon executes him.
5. Shephatiah: his mother was Abital. Nothing else is known about this son.
6. Ithream: from David's wife Eglah. Nothing else is known about this son.
7. Unnamed child of Bathsheba. This child was born as a result of David's adulterous affair with Bathsheba and died as punishment for David's sin.
8. Shimea (1 Chron 3:5) or Shammua (2 Sam 5:13): Bathsheba's first living son. Nothing else is known about this child.
9. Shobab: son of Bathsheba. Nothing else is known about this child.
10. Nathan: son of Bathsheba. Named as an ancestor of Jesus in Luke 3:31

11. Solomon: son of Bathsheba. The most famous of David's sons and David's successor to the throne. Solomon was known for his great wisdom. He was very rich, entertained the Queen of Sheba, built the Temple, and eventually began to worship other gods due to the influence of his many wives. Solomon is the last monarch to rule over a united kingdom, as Israel will split into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms under his son's rule. Solomon is named as an ancestor of Jesus in Matthew's genealogy.

12. Ibhar: Nothing is known about this son or the following sons.

13. Elishua

14. Eliphelet

15. Nogah

16. Nepheg

17. Japhia

18. Elishama

19. Eliphelet

20. Jerimoth: mentioned only in 2 Chron. 11:18. This could be another name for one of the son's named above or perhaps a son of a slave woman.

21. Tamar: the only named daughter of David. She was the daughter of Maacah, daughter of Talmi, the king of Geshur. Her full-brother was Absalom. Tamar is described as being very beautiful and is raped by her half-brother Amnon. Afterward, she lives in her brother Absalom's home as a desolate woman.

1 Chronicles 3:9 states that David also had other sons by his slave women. He also probably had many more daughters, who are not named.