



WHEN MINISTRY HURTS HEALING FOR THE WOUNDED LEADER

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Unmarried America: Ministry Opportunities for Today's Church

One of the largest demographics in today's society is single adults. The U.S. government census estimates that more than 42 percent of the population of the United States are single. Unfortunately, the church often overlooks this important segment of society. But single adults — those who have never married, are divorced, widowed, single parents — have much to contribute to the church.

Read practical articles on how to effectively minister to the young adults and single adults in your church and community by Margaret Feinberg, Dennis Franck, Linda Hardin, Rich Hurst, Don Partridge, Rick Stedman, and others.



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THE CULTURE CHRONICLES Woof n' Worship

hurch is going to the dogs, at least in North Weymouth, Massachusetts, where the Pilgrim Congregational Church recently began a weekly woof n'worship service. Pet owners and their dogs are invited to attend. Doggy clean-up stations are provided in case of accidents. "But I'm not worried," said Pastor Bickford. "Dog owners are very responsible folks." Bickford hopes the services will attract new attendees from the local community of dog lovers.

Pet-friendly worship services are indicators of the everincreasing affection owners have for their dogs. Many people view dogs as family members and include them in just about every activity. Popular dog magazines have renamed dogs *fur babies*, and a pet owner either a *dog mom* or a *dog dad*. In addition, Americans freely spend to outfit man's best friend. The pet industry rakes in \$43 billion annually.

Some owners pamper their pets with products such as GPS collars, hand-knit Alpaca sweaters, and collar-mounted

digital cameras. Dogs are also celebrated on TV shows and in books and movies. Josh Grogan's book Marley & Me: Life and Love With the World's Worst Dog stayed on bestseller lists in 2008. Jennifer Aniston and Owen Wilson starred in the film Marley & Me, released Christmas 2008. In today's difficult economic climate, it is clear that dogs bring comfort."Dogs listen, do not talk back, and give unconditional love," said Bickford. "I really see that as part of God's blessing here on earth." SUSY FLORY, Castro Valley, California

enrichment / Spring 2009



o rewrite the Mark Twain quote, reports of the death of Christian movies are greatly exaggerated. In September 2008, Fireproof, starring Kirk Cameron, lit up movie screens across the country in a surprising success story. "Some people are out there to win an Oscar," says Jim McBride, executive producer. "We are looking to win people's hearts." Fireproof was made for



\$500,000, relied mostly on word of mouth, and came out of nowhere with ticket sales that beat out a Brad Pitt movie, along with another film by acclaimed director Spike Lee.

Critics have predicted the demise of the Christian movie market after films like *Evan Almighty* and *The Christmas Story* posted disappointing ticket sales. Many fear that film studios would abandon faith-based film projects. It may be that Christian film-makers need to follow *Fireproof's* lead and use the marketing method that seemed to work: old-fashioned word of mouth.

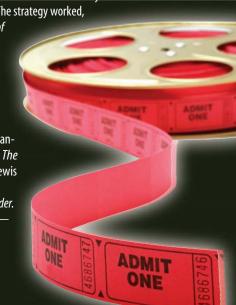
The moviemakers invited ministers,

Christian leaders, and marriage experts to the movie sets. They also held 200 free movie screenings around the country. The strategy worked,

and Hollywood is taking note. Fireproof director Alex Kendrick explains "many of us have a standard of morality and faith that is rarely reflected in films coming out of Hollywood."

Micheal Flaherty, president of Walden Media, calls this group "the faith audience" and has several Christianthemed movies in the works, including *The Screwtape Letters*, based on the C.S. Lewis book, as well as the third entry in the Narnia series, *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*.

SUSY FLORY, Castro Valley, California





FROM BOOMERS TO ZOOMERS

Wanted: Authentic Leaders

A fair amount of buzz is in church circles about what *authentic* means.

Leaders see authenticity through variant lenses. Some choose to keep it real, but end up flaunting their fallenness. Others choose an image of casual clothing and conversational preaching, but in fact only promote the new cool

prototypical ministry model. Still others believe being authentic requires them to return to sweat-filled and handkerchief-waving, passionate proclamations. None of these viewpoints, however, gets at the heart of what it means to be an authentic leader.

Perhaps Henri Nouwen best defines this issue in the closing pages of his book, *The Wounded Healer*. He appeals to ministers to practice authenticity through Christ-centered hospitality, noting, "This hospitality requires that the minister knows where he stands and whom he stands for, but it also requires that he allow others to enter his life, come close to him and ask him how their lives connect with his."

Nouwen reminds us that authenticity is not about a leadership style, but rather the essence of the intimate and communal relationships we develop. Nothing builds bridges between leaders and those whom they serve than this, regardless of ages.

RANDY WALLS, D.Min., director of continuing education, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri



HARD-TO-LEAD CHURCHES

Sychologists have identified a syndrome

in people that may help pastors understand the dynamics that occur between pastors and their congregations. Children abandoned early in life and who receive little attention emotionally develop attachment disorder. For example, as some adopted children from Eastern Europe grew, they exhibited hostility and distrust of people, particularly authority figures.

Like these children, churches can exhibit the same kind of dynamics as pastors become enmeshed in a spiral of despair that often wounds the church. In churches, the root of the problem occurs when

there is a history of pastors abandoning the congregation at a crucial juncture. The critical juncture that caused the separation need not be anyone's fault.

As a pastor of one of these churches, you may experience this syndrome through the following patterns:

- A time when the congregation splinters or scatters
- People resist your voice as pastor
- A lack of closeness or desire to know you as pastor
- The congregation's unwillingness to follow your leadership

Pastors experiencing the church version of attachment disorder need to research the church's history to discover

the hinge events that contribute to its present struggles. The congregation may view the current pastor with suspicion simply because he is an authority fixture and, in the church's history, pastors abandoned the congregation at important times in the church's history.

When pastors realize the resistance they sense in the congregation is more about the role they fill, as opposed to a personal grudge, they can lead the congregation in repentance and forgiveness. The hard work of the pastor staying until congregational healing can come empowers the future of the church in dynamic ways.

For a more complete explanation of attachment disorder in churches see: www.christianitytoday.com/le/2008/004/3.88.html.

BYRON D. KLAUS, D.Min., president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri



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MANAGING YOUR MINISTRY

Overcoming Procrastination

Most pastors have areas they do well, and other activities they dread and procrastinate. People procrastinate because of lack of interest or purpose in a task, fear of failure, disorganization, or a false sense of timing.

Postponing activities may be tied to your personality. If you are outgoing and love

to talk, you may find it easy to prepare and give talks or counsel people, but dislike working through budgets and plans. If you are task oriented, you may not enjoy public speaking or counseling, but you may be great at administration and planning programs. But the deeds you put off must still be done.

One key for overcoming

procrastination is to know what motivates you and use it as a tool. If you are task oriented, list the benefits of completing the task as a motivator. If you are people oriented, consider how the task will help others or how you can make it a team effort so you can do it in a social

setting. Or, reward yourself by doing something you enjoy once you complete a distasteful project.

In the case of fear of failure or feeling overwhelmed, lower your expectations for perfection. Find someone who is gifted in the activity and enlist his help. Another option is to seek training to build the skills you need for this task. If the task seems too big, break it into

segments and tackle one part at a time.

If you are disorganized, then organize by project. Gather the items needed for a task (or have someone else do this) and set up a place to keep them. If you normally underestimate how long tasks take, start doubling the time you allocate.

Most of all, commit to do the task and keep your word.

KAREN H. WHITING, author and speaker



I picked up the phone and set it down several times. My hands were sweaty, and my heart was threatening to leap out of my chest cavity.

I was about to ask a church member to lead a new outreach. I knew this ministry would stretch him and challenge his faith. But the Holy Spirit kept on me to ask this man to do this work.

If you are not a Type A leader, you have difficulty with conflict. You want everyone to get along. You do not want to stir the pot.

But a leader, especially a ministry leader, has to stir the pot. Otherwise your church becomes stagnant and lifeless.

I eventually made the call. Surprisingly, he was overjoyed and honored that I asked him to do something big.

A counselor recently told me that part of my job as pastor is to "stretch people." This means asking them to move outside of their comfort zone. To step out on faith.

Nehemiah called people to a radical commitment to rebuild their country. They engaged him and the walls were completed in record time.

Some leaders do not need encouragement in this area. Type A leaders have a tendency to run over people. Rehoboam put pressure on his people, increased their tax burden, and pushed them beyond their ability to perform. In so doing, he lost the support of the people and lost the kingdom.

If you have a tendency to wear people out, take heed — you could easily lose your ministry. But, if you are like me, hesitant to ask people to engage in God's work, take heed. You need to stretch your people and put them in a place where God can grow their faith.

DANIEL DARLING is author of *Teen People of the Bible, Celebrity Profiles of Real Faith and Tragic Failure.* Visit http://www.danieldarling.com.



was speaking at a regional youth convention to an enthusiastic new youth pastor. He shared his dreams. One goal was to move his students to a teen-friendly room rather than a current multipurpose room. "We plan to paint the walls and hang cool posters. We want to get a pool table and some fun couches." he said.

"Oh no, you don't! We just painted that room."The woman behind him wore a tag around her neck that read youth sponsor.

"But no one is using that room," he replied.

"The kids are just fine where they are. No one thought it was a problem — until they hired a youth pastor."

The look on the youth pastor's face was priceless and heartbreaking. For the next few moments I was an unwilling partner to a battle of new youth pastor vs. veteran volunteer.

A recent report states that

80 percent of pastors feel unqualified and discouraged in their role as pastors.
Here are a few tips to help if discouragement stems from individuals within your church.

- Share goals and dreams and make decisions with the pastor and appropriate church staff.
- Never engage in verbal warfare. If a church member has suggestions about the decision or process, invite him to discuss them with the pastor.
- Meet for lunch with a strong group of youth pastors in your community. Pray together. Talk about topics unrelated to ministry. Laugh.
- Connect with a trusted godly mentor not involved in your congregation who will keep confidences, encourage you when you are discouraged, and pray for you.

T.SUZANNE ELLER is an author and youth sponsor at First Assembly of God, Muskogee, Oklahoma. Contact her at http://realteenfaith.com.

NOTE

Christianity Today's blog for pastors (Conversations for Ministry Leaders): http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archives/2007/05/shiny_happy_pas.html

A Creation Celebration The Darwin days are coming! The Darwin days are coming!

This year's global celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Darwin's book, *On the Origins of Species*, and the 200th anniversary of his birth might seem like cause for alarm, but Reasons To Believe (RTB) scholars see the increasing focus on evolution as a tremendous opportunity for pastors. Congregations can be inspired to celebrate the Creator and to share the good news with others.

RTB is a science-faith think tank where top scientists and researchers show why science supplies much stronger support for biblical creation than for Darwin's theory. Former Caltech Astrophysicist Hugh Ross, Ph.D., founder and president of RTB; biochemist Fazale (Fuz) Rana, Ph.D., vice president, research and apologetics; and philosopher/theologian Kenneth Samples, senior research scholar; are among the world's leading authorities on science/faith issues. They have written extensively on the Bible being the only accurate description for the origin of the universe, the origin of life, and the reasons for existence that match with the fossil and astrophysical records.

Enrichment journal commissioned Patti Townley-Covert to interview these three individuals concerning the questions with which many Christians struggle. To read this extensive online interview, visit www.enrichmentjournal.aq.org.





LEADERS EDGE

Professional

JEALOUSY

ne thing I love about your church, Pastor, is that you are not like First Church. It is so refreshing."

A compliment like that is like a balm to a pastor's soul. But if we are not careful, we can easily allow comparisons between churches to cloud our judgment. It is not hard to develop something called professional jealousy.

Professional jealousy is

not something taught in seminary. But 5 minutes into a ministry reveals the tendencies among pastors toward competition.

This trait is as old as the Bible, and it is often manifested in the followers of a particular leader rather than the leader himself. Witness the followers of John. For a short time Jesus and John's ministries overlapped in the same region. Slowly, the crowds around

John waned and the crowds around Jesus increased. Seeing their movement dwindle and their power base shrink, John's followers approached him. They were subtle in their approach, trying to diminish Jesus' authority and criticize His doctrine.

John responded in a way that needs to be a model for pastors in addressing spiritual jealousy. John welcomed Jesus' growing ministry. John acknowledged that his mission on earth was drawing to a close. He reminded his followers that gifts, opportunities, and growth come from God.

Competition is unhealthy for the church. I grow uneasy when I see church marketing that says, "Church as you have never seen it." Or, "One of the only

churches that...."

It is shameful to undercut other churches in an effort to grow our own. If I am running a business, I would claim to be *better* and *only*, but a church is different. It is part of the universal body of Christ. It is okay to be different and more appealing, but let us keep that to ourselves.

DANIEL DARLING is author of *Teen People of the Bible, Celebrity Profiles* of *Real Faith and Tragic Failure*. Visit http://www.danieldarling.com.

WHAT IN THE WORLD

GOD Makes a Comeback

When writing the final stanza of *The Star-Spangled Banner* in 1814, Francis Scott Key included this phrase, "And this be our motto: 'In God is our trust.'" Fifty years later the U.S. Treasury minted a coin that recalled Key's declaration of dependency on Deity. In 1864, "In God We Trust" appeared on a two-cent coin. Since 1938 all U.S. coins have contained the phrase.

In 2007, the U.S. Treasury began minting \$1 coins bearing the likeness of all the past presidents. In a dramatic shift from the past, the coins were designed in such a way that "In God We Trust" did not prominently appear on the coin's head. Instead it was imprinted on the edge of the coin.

The relocation of our nation's official motto led people of faith to think it had been removed from the coin altogether and was an intentional action to remove God from our culture. They saw the renewed design as just another indicator that God is being edged out of His rightful place.

Thanks to Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV) and Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS) God is making a comeback. The two United States senators

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introduced legislation calling for a return of the official United States motto "In God We Trust" to a prominent place on the new \$1 president coins.

"Since the colonial beginnings of the United States, citizens of this nation have officially acknowledged their dependence on God," Brownback contends. "It is important that our national motto, 'In God We Trust,' is prominently displayed on all of our currency. We should not relegate our heritage to the side."

The two senators' bill became part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008 signed into law by President George W. Bush on December 26, 2007. The changes will be made to the dollar coin sometime in 2009.

GREG ASIMAKOUPOULOS, Mercer Island, Washington



THE HIM BEHIND THE HYMN

MORE THAN AN EASTER CHORUS

In summer 1969, Bill and Gloria Gaither made note of two history-defining events. In July, Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon. In August, a concert known as Woodstock drew some 500,000 people to a farm in upstate New York.

Several months later the popular Christian musicians faced a history-defining moment of their own. They were expecting their third child. The Gaithers had been married 7 years and had two young daughters. Going through a pregnancy while caring for the needs of an infant and a preschooler would be tough.

But the timing of the pregnancy was not the only challenge for the gifted musicians. Bill was recovering from mononucleosis and grieving the death of his sister's marriage. To make matters worse, a close friend had spread rumors that Bill and Gloria were only in the ministry to get wealthy. As word got back to Bill, he slipped into a deep depression.

Gloria dealt with discouragement of another kind. The world of moon landings and Woodstock was also defined by the Vietnam War, student protests, drug use, and sexual promiscuity. Educators were introducing students to the notion that God was dead. *How can I want to bring a baby into a scary world like this?* she wondered.

Close friends huddled around this wounded husband and wife, claiming the power of Christ's resurrection. By the following July when their son was born, the heaviness had lifted. In the days that followed, Bill and Gloria wrote a song attesting to the presence of the risen Christ in their daily lives.

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,

Because He lives, all fear is gone;

Because I know He holds the future,

And life is worth the living,

Just because He lives!

GREG ASIMAKOUPOULOS, Mercer Island, Washington



Swahili proverb advises, "He who sharpens the ax before beginning to cut wood does not waste time." Hone your parenting skills now so you can be the competent parent you want to be.

Whether you are just launching onto

this new experience or have been doing it for years, embrace childrearing as a significant ministry.

Take to heart the following essential skills for the sacred and enormous task of parenting. They will facilitate a better relationship with your child, plus you can rest in the knowledge you did your best to raise a happy, healthy contributor to society. To help you see the impact of each, imagine you hear your child saying:

- I feel secure when adults run the household. **Be the parent.**
- I feel loved when you care enough to set boundaries.
 Make and keep rules.
- I get confused when you are unpredictable. Stay dependable.
- I am being me. Accept my immaturity.
- I'm learning about myself.
 Teach me to understand my many feelings.
- I depend on you to teach me correct ways to act. Catch me being good and tell me.
- I can get embarrassed. Correct me in private.

- I learn when I experience the results of my behavior. Allow consequences to discipline me.
- I am full of questions. Tell me answers or I'll get them elsewhere.
- I need to feel included in the family. Assign household chores.
- I learn to trust from you. Keep your promises.
- I need to accept my mistakes.
 Admit you aren't perfect.
- I copy your ways of caring for myself. Live a healthy lifestyle.
- I learn forgiveness and to own my behavior from you.
 Apologize sometimes.
- I will become like you even when you think I am not looking. Be a good model.

BRENDA NIXON, Mt. Vernon, Ohio

When I was a kid, a well-meaning family friend tried to get me excited about coin collecting. He gave me coins and kits and books on the subject.

But I never really got into coin collecting. I just could not get juiced about old currency. Now, baseball cards or Dick Tracy comic books? I would be all over that.

I am not much of a collector of anything, unless you count books. Put me in a bookstore and I am lost in the pages for hours. I have boxes and bookshelves loaded with books.

I am told a young pastor cannot have too many books, so perhaps I am off to a good start. However, I have discovered that there is an even better collection a young pastor can build — a collection of mentors.

Young leaders often mistakenly dismiss the previous generation as out of touch with today's cutting-edge models. This is a serious mistake. Timothy had Paul. Paul had Barnabas. Joshua had Moses.

I have a primary mentor, a man who has pastored several churches and is now semi-retired. He is old enough to be my grandfather, but he has been a valuable asset to my development as a pastor, leader, husband, and father.

God has brought others into my world: A Christian counselor who has given me direction in my counseling ministry, a bestselling author who helped me develop my writing skills, and a trusted layperson who helps me flesh out new church ideas.

These people, along with my wife, form my Kitchen Cabinet. They do not even know each other, and I have never gathered them in a meeting. But their wisdom is shaping me in ways I could never repay.

My collection of mentors is part of my favorite collection.

DANIEL DARLING is author of Teen *People of the Bible, Celebrity Profiles of Real Faith and Tragic Failure.* Visit http://www.danieldarling.com.



Recently organizers invited our choir to sing in a Christian community concert. The participating churches, while not all evangelical,

held to traditional beliefs, leaving no doubt we would all be singing about the same God. After arriving at the rehearsal, the choir discovered organizers had added another religious group. This group's theology so alters the origins of Jesus and His Father, that only in name do they resemble the God of the Bible.

Our choir chose to quietly withdraw from the event. They were convinced that participating could lead some to erroneously conclude they believed this group's faith system also offers a genuine path to eternal life.

Consequently, in a letter to the editor of the local newspaper, our church was accused of religious extremism, comparable with those who practice terrorism. Apparently, we had violated the sacrosanct principle of tolerance, which, as applied today, bears little resemblance to the original definition.

Tolerance, rightly defined, does not imply agreement with, or acceptance of, an idea or action. It merely means we practice sufferance, recognizing the right of persons to hold a different idea or take an action of which we disapprove.

Our refusal to participate in a community event was not an act of intolerance, but an exercise of religious rights. Those who would deny the exercise of those rights are the intolerant ones.

Christians should not yield to the pressure to practice tolerance at the expense of defending the faith "which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3, NKJV).1

JACK AIKEN, senior pastor, King's Way Assembly of God, Eagle River, Alaska

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Living in a pastor's family can have delicate dimensions. As a pastor's family interacts with families in the congregation, it is important that they understand these families from within their frame of reference.

A typology of families that describes three styles of family life helps us understand family dynamics. Parents in a *closed* family usually pride themselves as running their family like a tight ship. Direction and order come from guidelines that affirm that the interests of each individual in the family are secondary to those of the family. The watchword is *stability through tradition*.

The *open* family prefers negotiation between family members. They nurture the dynamic of consensus from the time children are very young. This family type values *adaptation through consensus*. Because the core purpose is adaptation, the open family emphasizes relevance over certainty and authenticity of feeling over composure.

The random family believes the rights of each member of the family are more important than the group's. Their motto is: Make

your own choices. The core purpose of this family type is exploration through intuition. The watchwords of this family are creativity, discovery, and spontaneity.

A church's environment includes interaction between the minister's family, the congregational family, and the various families in the congregation. Pastors can apply the typology described above to all three interacting families. The key for the minister's family is to understand the ideals and

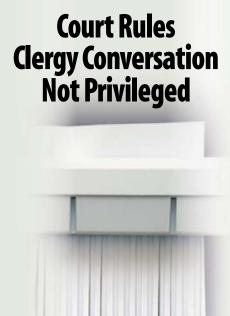
core purposes of each of the family types. We all bring our preferences to this communal experience.

The families in any church are so diverse there is ample opportunity for preferences to become biases. A dynamic understanding of family types is a far better foundation for church life than stereotypes.

For more information, see *Life in* a *Glass House* by Cameron Lee and Jack Balswick (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989).

BYRON D. KLAUS, D.Min., president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri

9 News&Trends Compiled by KENNEDY



CONFIDENTIA

he three-member New Jersey Court of Appeals has ruled unanimously that a pastor's conversation with a Middlesex County man accused of sexually molesting his two daughters is not privileged because the minister was not acting in a role as a spiritual adviser in a private consultation.

The Aug. 20 ruling, written by Judge Lorraine C. Parker, indicated that for a confession to warrant protection it must be made in confidence to a cleric in a professional context as a spiritual adviser.

The girls told their mother that their father, identified only as J.G. in court documents, had abused them for 4 years. The mother immediately reported the allegations to her pastor, Glenford Brown. Brown knew the defendant, but the father did not attend the church.

Believing he had a duty to protect the mother and daughters, Brown called the father at his workplace and arranged for a meeting outside the pastor's residence. Court papers indicate that the defendant "without directly saying [he] sexually molested" his daughters, nevertheless "acknowledged what he did."

In what the pastor believed was a ploy for the defendant to persuade his wife to allow him back in his house, J.G. asked Brown for counsel and to baptize him. But the pastor refused, saying the father "needed real psychological help which [Brown] was not qualified to give." Brown urged the defendant to turn himself in to police.

A trial court ruled that statements made by the father to the pastor were privileged. But the appeals court decided that "the cleric-penitent privilege" didn't apply because J.G.'s communication was not made "in confidence to Brown in his role as a spiritual adviser." The court agreed with prosecutors who argued that the meeting between the two men "had no religious purpose." The minister never informed the defendant that details of the conversation would be private, nor did the defendant request confidentiality, the panel noted.

Wake Up to Reality of Evil, Pastor Exhorts

A Baptist pastor is urging all ministers to wake up to the reality of spiritual warfare.

Kenny Luck, founder of Every Man Ministries and men's pastor at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif., says evangelical leaders must be able to discern evil on a daily basis. Luck, author of the new book *Fight: Are You Willing To Pick a Fight With Evil?*, says Christians need to understand patterns of Satan in the New Testament and Jesus' teachings to combat those strategies.

"The Bible says Satan is the ruler of this present world," says Luck, who calls himself a Bapticostal. "He has at his disposal an organization that works overtime making temptations and conducting persecution."

Luck says pastors especially must be equipped to do daily battle with Satan.

"All the books of the Gospel address the responsibility and accountability that leaders have in attacking evil in a biblical way," Luck told *Enrichment*. "We have the revelation about



evil and its origins, the objects of its energy — which is us — the playbook and the character of evil."

Luck says Christians must be cognizant that Satan is in charge of the world and that God permits the devil to tempt humans.

"Evil is around us everywhere; this life is

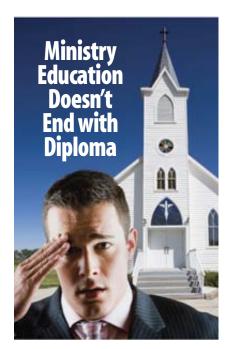
war,"Luck told Enrichment. "A Christian should wake up every day with a knowledge that evil is pointed at me and there is a deliberate campaign against me."

Too many Christians — including pastors — choose to ignore the spiritual warfare going on around them, Luck contends.

"If you've made a commitment to Christ,
Satan will be allowed to come against you in
an area of weakness until you realize that God
desires the dark corners in your character to
be eliminated,"Luck writes. He cites arrogance,
materialism, desire for status, secret sexual sin,
an unwillingness to be accountable, and an
emotional reliance on past success as leading
ways that Satan sidetracks followers of Christ.

"I know a lot of guys, pastors and full-time theologians who have been exposed to the wisdom God provides, but they are still getting slaughtered by the enemy," Luck writes.

Through personal stories and biblical advice, Luck's book offers practical steps to engage in the fight against a relentless enemy.



Young pastors typically lack the mentoring and support needed to help them handle common ministry challenges.

oo often new young ministers are left to fend for themselves upon

graduating from Bible college or seminary, concludes an Alban Institute project that studied 800 beginning pastors in 11 Protestant denominations.

Instead of being fully prepared for the pastorate upon completing their formal education, clergy often experience professional isolation, according to the 40-page "Becoming a Pastor: Reflections on the Transition Into Ministry" special report authored by James P. Wind and David J. Wood.

During the initial vocational phase, young pastors typically lack the mentoring and support needed to help them handle everything from conducting their first funeral service to dealing with obstinate lay leaders, the study suggests. Consequently, some talented young pastors become disillusioned and depressed; some drop out of the ministry.

Until about half a century ago, the step across the threshold of graduation into assuming the status and identity of a minister proved to be an easier transition, the report indicates. But nowadays a new pastor sometimes enters

ministry with nobody to welcome him to the congregation. They may find a church building in disrepair and office equipment that does not work.

"The experience of the transition from seminary to parish, from classroom to congregation, can be abrupt, untutored, and haphazard,"Wind and Wood write."As a result, beginning pastors tend to feel isolated and unprepared, lacking crucial support and guidance when they most need it."

New graduates who find themselves as solo pastors in struggling congregations, with limited professional assistance, may find themselves unable to fully function in their career, the researchers say.

The report advocates that new clergy be mentored by seasoned pastors as a way to help them form their pastoral identity. Beginning pastors will avoid feeling alone if they are surrounded by wiser colleagues and guided by mentors who build bonds of friendship, the study advises.

"Learning with and from peers in ministry is a significant experience in vocational formation," Wood and Wind write.

Too Few Pastors Interested in Sexual Healing?

Sy Rogers speaks in prominent churches and institutions around the world — including Assemblies of God congregations and schools — but he is still surprised when pastors and educators do not want to hear his message.

As a pastoral care specialist, Rogers addresses sexuality in a straightforward, biblical, and redemptive manner in sermons and seminars.

"Most churches have an annual sermon on sexuality," Rogers told *Enrichment*." Usually it's: *God made sex for marriage; don't do it if you're not married*. That's not adequate enough in light of the needs in church and culture."

Rogers says ample evidence in modern America shows that merely going to church and being a believer are not antidotes for laypeople struggling with their sexuality. Nor is having a vast amount of knowledge on biblical ethics and morality a panacea for spiritual leaders — as sexual misconduct by leadership underscores vulnerability in spite of anointing and calling.

"My biggest obstacle in over 20 years of

ministry has been a leadership attitude that is unwilling to step up and become more responsible for shepherding their flock," Rogers says. Pastors are reluctant for a variety of reasons, including the paucity of training on sexuality.

"How can they effectively and authentically help others if they have not learned how to deal with this in their own life?" he asks. "If a pastor has a past or present struggle with fantasy, masturbation, pornography, or other sexually related problems, it can be scary to even consider broaching the topic of sexuality from the pulpit."

Some pastors are reticent to preach about sexual issues because they fear they are not adequately prepared to handle the number of congregants who might rush forward for help, he believes.

"I can always tell when a pastor is well acquainted with his own humanity and vulnerability," Rogers says. "He can identify with the struggles of his people. He is aware of what it feels like to be demoralized or ashamed by some present struggle with

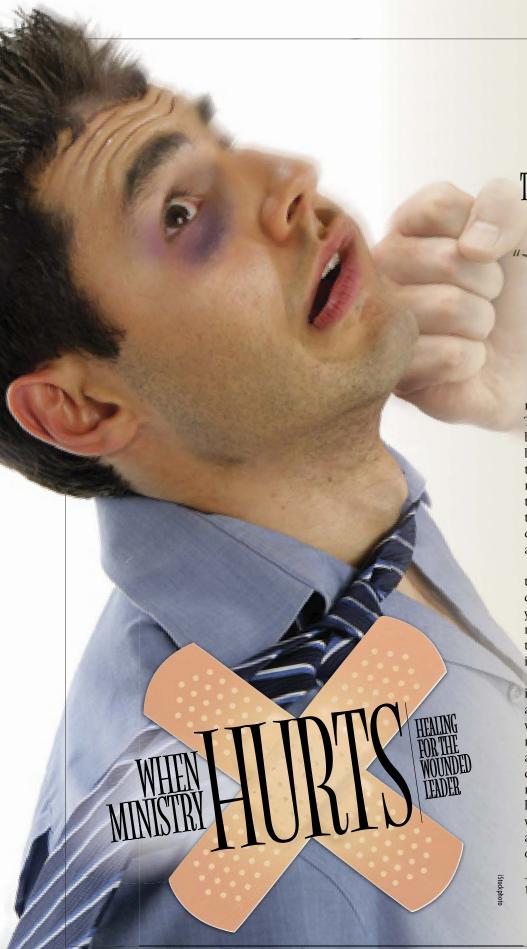
weakness or his history."

Rogers says he also encounters ministers who seem to have little empathy for those fighting sexual battles.

"They tend to be judgmental and less gracious," he says. "They often are more concerned with quick conformity to standards, rather than mentoring people back on path."

Still, Rogers is encouraged that more and more pastors are coming to grips with how to deal with the sexually saturated culture and its influence upon their congregations. Despite the reluctance of many Christian leaders to deal with these concerns, Rogers manages to stay busy equipping churchgoers and students.





introduction

THE WOUNDED MINISTER

BY GARY R. ALLEN

e need a preacher who can preach. He can teach pretty good, but he can't preach." These harsh words cut deep into the heart of the young pastor and his wife who sat near the front of the church at a specially called church meeting with the district leadership. The pastor and his wife had only been at that church a few months, but the excitement had soon faded as they realized they did not fit the community culture. They had also faced the unreal expectations of a congregation that were rooted in the misperceptions of past spiritual vitality they associated with fervent preaching.

Finally, after a very difficult meeting, the sectional and district leadership determined it was best to help the young couple find another place of ministry and allow the congregation to search for a pastor who shared its vision.

A young staff pastor sat in my office in tears as he described the emotional and verbal abuse from a senior pastor who appeared to embody all the negative elements that Gary McIntosh and Sam Rima characterize as the dark side of leadership. This young man had come to doubt himself, his calling, and began questioning where God was in his pain and anger. Fortunately God placed him on staff in another loving church with

^{1.} Gary L. McIntosh and Samuel D. Rima, Sr., Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997).

a pastor/mentor who helped him recover from this painful incident. Since then he has had 20 years of effective, fulfilling ministry. The stories vary and the details are different, but similar scenarios play out too often. Churches wound their pastors and families, and then these churches plunge into an immobilizing phase of transition.

While ministry can provide reward, joy, and fulfillment, it can also create deep wounds, pain, anger, and unforgiveness. These wounds may only involve a small portion of an overall fulfilling ministry, but the pain can paralyze effective ministry. Like a finger caught in the car door, the pain radiates throughout the body and takes preeminence over rational

thinking. In times of pain, anger, and self-evaluation, pastors often have distorted attitudes toward others and a distorted view concerning the validity of their ministry. During this time pastors and churches often make rash and unwise decisions.

Pearly every minister will have a painful, disheartening, and angering situation that will create doubt concerning the call of God on his life. These hurtful situations will

tempt us to lose faith in God, the church, and in the people we have loved and served. This issue of *Enrichment* journal looks at the reality of these painful experiences and then explores the processes of hope, rekindled passion, and restoration of effective ministry in the lives of wounded ministers.

-any K. Alle



GARY R. ALLEN, D.Min., is executive editor of *Enrichment* journal and director of the Ministerial Enrichment Office, Springfield, Missouri.

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THREE MINISTERS SPEAK CANDIDLY
ABOUT THEIR WOUNDS
AND WHAT IT TAKES TO SURVIVE, HEAL,
AND CONTINUE IN MINISTRY

THE JOURNEY FROM PROM TO SUFFICIENT GRACE

BY M. WAYNE BENSON WITH SCOTT HARRUP

Il pastors deal with challenges in the ministry. Peter, the great ministering apostle of the Early Church, reminded believers they should not be surprised at the painful trial they are suffering, as though some strange thing has happened to them (1 Peter 4:12). But we tend to associate much of the suffering Peter referenced with attacks from the enemy who hunts us like a lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). When the source of our wounds is someone we love and serve sacrificially, the injury becomes especially painful. Unfortunately, some ministers never recover from those wounds.

I am grateful for three ministers — whom I will call John, Tim, and William — who candidly spoke with me about their wounds and what it took to survive, heal, and continue in ministry. May these shared stories prove instructive and healing.

John served as a senior pastor in two states prior to extensive service as an associate pastor. He then traveled with his wife in evangelistic ministry until retirement. Tim served as an associate in two assignments before becoming involved in a church plant.

William served as a youth pastor, then as a solo pastor in two churches before becoming a senior pastor, and then serving at a Christian college. He now directs a citywide ministry and serves on the pastoral staff at a local church.

Tim: "I never dreamed that attitude still existed."

Tim was just out of Bible college when he accepted a youth pastorate. He believed his passion for reaching *all* the youth in his community would soon catch on among the families he served.

"I ran into some racial prejudice that was very shocking," he remembers. "I never dreamed that, in a Pentecostal church, that attitude still existed."

The church was in a community of shifting racial demographics. In response to perceived white flight, the remaining families treated the church like a refuge from their surroundings. Any attempt to reach out to those outside the white community would not be tolerated.

In the ensuing months as Tim tried to bring new young people into the church, he heard racial epithets from staff, pastors, and pastors' wives. Board members demanded he minister to white children only. When Tim brought his concerns to his pastor, he received no support. He eventually resigned.

"When I left," he says, "my disillusionment was so painful I could not shut my eyes to pray. The ideas and ideals I had were shattered so completely it was difficult to pray without feeling the overwhelming pain of the situation we just went through."

Growing up, Tim had been a part of a successful church. "I had sat under solid teaching," he says. "Right was right and wrong was wrong."

In contrast, Tim found himself as a young, idealistic minister facing an organized front of self-justification for blatantly unbiblical attitudes. "They supported their behavior by taking Scripture completely out of context and falling back on local tradition. It was so shocking. Again, I was idealistic. I was 23 or 24 — just out of college."

John: "I was under investigation for heresy."

John admits his own inexperience contributed to peripheral problems he experienced early in his ministry. "To be honest, I suffered from self-inflicted injuries," he says. "I graduated from college and seminary and was ready to grab the theological world by the tail. I came into my first pastorate majoring in issues and minoring in people. I was intent on implementing my vision rather than winning the people's trust. A lot of needless exaggerated conflicts took place as a result. As the saying goes, live and learn."

John was living and learning, and growing in effective ministry, thanks to the Holy Spirit's touch.

Yet he served in a denomination that did not embrace the full ministry of the Spirit.



"We were brought up in a fellowship that believed pastors were employees of the congregation," he says, "not divinely appointed shepherds to lead the flock in the vision God gave the shepherd. The elders and the deacons were kind of the hit men for the church. They were the mediators between the critics and the pastor."

In virtually every board meeting, John endured a listing of criticisms from elders and deacons on behalf of disgruntled members.

"I felt like a failure. Many times, they would not tell me who said these things, so I was always shadowboxing phantoms. I bounced off the ropes of that denominational structure for many years."

The crisis reached a head when John and his wife were baptized in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. They soon embraced all the gifts of the Spirit.

"We grew in the Lord as never before," he says. "We must have sounded differently, acted differently, and I guess I preached differently."

Their church grew rapidly and attracted the attention of regional leadership. The board vice president invited John's family over for Sunday dinner and afterward asked John and his wife whether they were Pentecostals and spoke in tongues.

"I shared with him that our congregation was not in that place where they could process such information," John recalls, "and I asked him to keep my answers to his questions confidential. He promised us he would not tell anyone. We then shared our renewal and the blessings of the Holy Spirit in our lives."

The following Saturday night the call came. The church board had taken John's pulpit from him. He was put on leave until such time as his theology would be investigated.

"The board made our family sit on the front pew the next Sunday morning in front of an overflowing church as that vice president announced to the entire congregation that my doctrine was under investigation for heresy," John says. "I felt in that moment something horrible happening within me."

Eventually, John had a complete breakdown and spent time in a mental institution in deep depression.

"I had nothing but darkness in me and around me," he says.

William: "People left without even saying goodbye."

William does not identify any specific crisis in his ministry as life changing. Rather, his general understanding of what it means to minister to a fallible flock and with fallible ministry partners grew to painful depths.

"I made the mistake of assuming that all high-profile leaders are fair," he says of the latter side of that equation. "When I raised a question on a denominational policy, I felt I was rejected from being used again. There was the pain from feeling punished, and to add to the pain, the issues were never discussed with me directly."

William's expectations of ministry life were so high, he admits he set himself up to a degree for disappointment.

"I entered into the ministry naively thinking people were much more spiritually and emotionally mature than they really were," he says. "I had hoped when disappointments and divisions would arise among us in the church or in denominational work that we were big enough people to practice the Matthew 18 principle and speak the truth in love."

William is concerned that many times congregations and pastors relate more institutionally and politically than they do spiritually or relationally.

"The unwillingness to resolve conflict or misunderstanding for whatever reason has given many permission to mimic the proverbial alcoholic's home," he says. "Everyone walks around the elephant in the room and acts like nothing has happened. The truth is something has been done or said that is never addressed." People William believed he was close to allowed unspoken hurts to take root and grow. Instead of communicating their issues with him directly, they simply left his church.

"People who were dear to me," he says, "people I had married, whose loved ones I had baptized and buried, left the church without saying goodbye or thank you. I had assumed my investment in their lives was greater than that."

Every shepherd is imperfect, he points out. Those imperfections show up in the daily ministry routine. He thought his congregants could look beyond his faults to his heart for ministry. Instead, people withdrew completely. And the pattern repeated itself with fellow ministers.

"Unfortunately," he says, "I have experienced a Paul and Barnabas separation with colleagues in ministry where there was an unwillingness or inability as mature brothers to confront the issue and be healed."

Responding to People

People are the heart of ministry. People
— with their myriad suspicions and
resentments and doubts and other sinful tendencies — are the reason the
minister pursues his calling. Thus,

the very reason for being in ministry also becomes the very source of ministry's pain. The minister who is going to continue serving as a shepherd must be able to get over the pain inflicted by sheep. "At the time, I felt deeply disappointed and incredibly surprised," William remembers. "It was a sickening

feeling. In some cases, it involved my wife, and the impact upon her intensified my own pain."

But he knew he had to process his pain and work to restore relationships.

"For the most part," he says, "I have been able to either resolve the situation with the individual or have been able to reason in my mind that most people are broken people. There is a lot of brokenness, and people often respond out of their

pain. I have tried to give the same benefit of the doubt to those who have hurt me that I would want people to give me."

That benefit of the doubt has had to be bolstered by proactive spiritual discipline.

"I have been able to really lay it at the altar and recognize that we are to live at peace with everyone as much as possible," he says. "There are levels of control we have and levels of control we do not have."

Looking over the array of broken relationships, William is grateful for every opportunity for restoration and realistic when those opportunities do not arise.

"I feel more positive toward those who were willing to have a spiritual conversation," he says. "For the others who have not been willing or were unable to address the issues that separate us the Lord has given me special grace. The Lord spoke

to me after I had experienced a deep hurt and pointed me to Paul's words in Romans 14:4: 'Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls.' Those who have hurt me are not my servants. There is a level of judgment I just have to lay at the Cross."

Tim's injuries early in ministry forced him to confront his own harsher emotions.

"The two words that came to my mind are *anger* and *betrayal*," he says. "As a staff member, I was dragged into a room by a board member and told in no uncertain terms what my job was. Literally, he took me by the arm, dragged me into a room, shut the door, and let loose with about a half hour of ranting and raving."

When Tim was finally able to break free and talk to his senior pastor, he received no support.

"Because of the political things going on within the church, he did not feel he wanted to deal with that," he says.

Tim's anger, sense of betrayal, and disillusionment were only compounded by the lack of support. And those emotions would follow him into later ministry and flare up under stress.

"In retrospect," he says, "the anger issue I dealt with in later ministries and had to seek counseling for probably had some of its roots in my first ministry assignment."

A period of calm followed Tim's first assignment. His ministry developed, and he and his wife felt confident they could accept a church-planting assignment. But he discovered the continued roots of his anger when the church plant began to unravel.

"Halfway through the assignment," he says, "things started to completely fall apart. Much of it was out of our control, and

the anger all of a sudden started manifesting against my wife and my children. I had a complete lack of patience."

The outbursts and sense of stifled rage reached the point where Tim sought professional help.

"To this day," he says, "my wife and I are reticent for future ministry, simply because we know the pressure that comes with ministry. You can say that you are healed and feel that you are healed, but it is understandable to avoid putting yourself back in the position where you are under that pressure 7 days a week, 24 hours a day."

But Tim also sees the long-term good God has brought out of his pain.

"I have a much greater understanding that God truly does work things out for your good," he says. "I have such a deeper understanding of grace and

mercy. I know it sounds trite and I know it sounds cliché, but God has been able to melt that hurt away through His grace and mercy. Now when I think about those people, I do not think about them in anger. I think about them as flawed just as I am."

John's eventual emotional breakdown was far more severe than the reactions William and Tim exhibited. But it had common roots.

"I would echo much of what has just been said," he admits. "I felt a sense of complete betrayal. At the time that I was receiving help, none of my fellow pastors, colleagues, friends, or the leadership of my previous fellowship called on me or sent a card or expressed in any way that they cared. I guess I felt like the Psalmist in Psalm 88:8: "Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; thou hast made me an abomination unto them: I am shut up, and I cannot come forth' " (KJV).

That sense of deep isolation permeated every level of his relationships.

"Not only could I not soar with the Holy Spirit," he remembers, "I could not even go for a walk with my wife. I felt completely alone. I am so glad to say that God is a healing God."



THE JOURNEY FROM Suffering TO SUFFICIENT GRACE

But before the healing came seasons of deep darkness.

"I lost my identity," John says of those days. "I thought what I had lost would never be restored. I could not see myself as a minister anymore. That caused a great deal of panic that lasted quite a while. This is not the upbeat side of the story. It was a very dark day. The light had gone out in my life."

...there was an

unwillingness or inability

as mature brothers

to confront the issue

and be healed."

—William

Partners in Pain, Sources of Healing

The family suffers when a minister comes under attack. The issues of betrayal and disillusionment impact spouses and children. But as damaging as these experiences can be, pain shared can help diffuse what would be unbearable alone.

"It impacted my wife," William says, "because she was part of our leadership team. It affected her not only emotionally, but it affected her job. In my case, there

was essentially a dismissal for really no explained reason. It affected our finances.

"When you are kicked to the curb with no place to go, it makes you feel like a man without a country. Definitely, it tapped into my predisposition toward depression. So it impacted me on emotional, financial, and relational levels. My wife and I took that stress and directed it at each other."

"The hardest part for me," Tim remembers, "was when up became down, and down became up. Everything I thought was right apparently was wrong. It became difficult to determine my worth when the people around me were saying the exact opposite of what I knew to be true, and yet enough people were saying it that I began to question myself. Maybe I am the one who is living upside down, and everybody else has not told me yet. And that sense of confusion absolutely fed over to our family. We were near the precipice."

John looks back on the radical shift in his family's life and the sudden transition from a sense of wholeness and steady growth in their church to spiritual and emotional disarray.

"I know it certainly impacted people in the church," he says. "There was such confusion. It was a growing church and people were coming to Christ, then suddenly and unexpectedly they were thrown into total disorientation and confusion.

"My children were ripped from their schools and their young people's church group. My wife, of course, though still so strong and faithful in the Lord, was deeply hurt and disoriented. The departure took its toll. After some time, one of my children turned against me. He counted me as the villain. I am thankful to God that is all healed, though it took some years. Those were dark, difficult days in my family."

Shared pain can also become shared recovery. For John, the people who stood with him in the darkest moments accelerated his own path to wholeness.

"When I was hospitalized in those dark days, I had a wonderful physician/psychiatrist," he says. "I became good friends with him. I will never forget the dramatic moment when I

was sharing with him the depth of my experience, and all of a sudden he began to weep. He said, 'John, I want you to know I feel everything you say, because I have been there. I want you to know what God did for me He will do for you.' We embraced. That was the beginning of my healing."

Then came the day John was allowed to leave the hospital for a ride in the car with his wife.

"I do not remember the day or the month or anything specific," he admits. "I just remember the

experience that on that day, after many months of darkness, I saw the sunshine for the first time. I remember the sun in the sky. The Lord broke through with the new light of His love, and I had hope again.

After John was released from the hospital, he says God sent three "angels." Three men from his original denomination called and offered him a job. He accepted a position at a computer brokerage.

"I did not know a computer from a washing machine," he admits, "but I learned it, and I was able to earn a wage and support my family. My wife got a job, too."

At first, the return to a church appeared impossible.

"I felt that all church people were my enemies and they were not to be trusted," John says. "So we did not go. But one of the employees where my wife worked invited us to a church that was growing and powerfully anointed of the Holy Spirit."

After months of staying away from any church, John and his wife finally went to a service one night.

"We sat at the back and I wept through the whole thing," he remembers. "Toward the end of the service, the pastor asked people to bow their heads. He had a word of knowledge from the Holy Spirit and said, 'There is a family in this church — a pastor and his family — who have been kicked out of their denomination. He is broken, and I want him to come forward for prayer and for us to put our love on him.'

"I was hoping it was someone else, but I saw it was not. So I took the gum out of my mouth and stuck it in my wife's hand and went down to the front. I wept my brains out. The



Photos.com

elders and the deacons gathered around me, laid hands on me in prayer, and my healing began in earnest. That pastor told me later that God also told him that very moment that I would be on his staff one day. I was wounded as a senior pastor, and I was healed as an associate."

John looks at his life and ministry today and is convinced he has gained much more than he lost.

"I can say that I love those hurtful people today with an overflowing love," he says. "I have grown in that wonderful godly agape that the Holy Spirit sheds abroad in our hearts. That is a godly agape that covers a multitude of sins. It has covered theirs and it has covered mine. The darkness never came back."

Tim's healing came in stages. His next months of ministry felt like two steps of progress only to be met by a step of regression. After he left his first assignment, the next church he attended went through a church split. His disillusionment was compounded.

"Then we went to another church," he says, "and began to experience a move of God. The people there were a source of healing, but what brought me the greatest healing was an incredible move of the Holy Spirit in my life. We were able to spend several months there before we went back into full-time ministry."

Tim points to that divine intervention as a key need in every injured minister's life. "The Holy Spirit did a work no person could have even begun," he says.

"The healing that happened during that period of time was so deep and so amazing I could feel the healing happen. Yes, there were people who were able to breathe objectivity into my life and that was beneficial. But for me, it was almost exclusively a move of God in my heart and in my life."

Healing can come in stages. And sometimes the final stage seems elusive.

"I would be less than honest," William says, "if I claimed I was completely healed. I am being healed. Time does have a way of helping me gain a better perspective on things and to feel better about things."

William says his wife remains one of the keys to that continued progress. They celebrated 35 years of marriage last August. William also encountered colleagues he did not have to perform for.

"They truly do accept me for who I am and not what I bring to the table," he says. "My greatest gifts that have been given to me in the ministry are relationships I have built with trusted friends. They have been a great part of my healing."

Life Lessons

In what ways can pain make a minister more effective? How can betrayal and the resulting disillusionment be turned into resources for greater influence in people's lives? Some lessons expose weaknesses of the past to be avoided.

"I would not have been so naïve," William says of his early years. "I do not mean this in an unkind or cynical way, but there is a level of toughness that has to come. Being hurt has a way of toughening you. Not that you become hardened, but you begin to recognize that not everyone who says, 'Lord, Lord,' is your friend. People have agendas. If I could do it differently, I would be a little slower to jump in and make assumptions about trust levels and would allow relationships perhaps to be tested a little more before I put much weight on them."

"I would love to be able to undo some of the things I did," John says. "I would love to have been wiser in dealing with people. But at the same time, you can 'what if' yourself to death. There is some benefit in thinking about what you would do differently, but by the same token you cannot deny what God did through it all. I thank God that He is taken my goofball personality and my shortcomings, my lack of wisdom, and turned it all into triumph. He delivered me from the 'what if, if only' hand-wringing stuff."

Tim points to the mysteries behind the reality of God's sovereignty, to the depth of the statement that "God works all things together for good." That Romans 8:28 philosophy has taught him that "nothing that happens in your life catches God by surprise. He is always faithful to not only work with

you in grace and mercy, but work with the people you feel have failed you or you have failed. He never takes somebody out of your life that is not important for your future destiny. The complete control that God has as you are walking through — if anything, that would be the greatest lesson. You can trust Him."

John, who describes the greatest season of emotional darkness of the three, also believes it is darkest just before dawn.

"When things seem bleakest," he says, "God is at His best. I can say this without it sounding like a cliché, because that indeed is the God whom I have discovered. I think that is the biggest lesson of my life — that I have discovered God to be all that He promises us to be. That He does heal the brokenhearted, does bind up all their wounds in His way, in His time. That is the biggest



THE JOURNEY FROM Sufficient GRACE

thing that has come to me — I can take God at His Word."

John contrasts his current level of ministry with his pre-pain years as primarily a difference in vital experience.

"I recall the first funeral I had in my rookie pastorate," he says. "This couple, senior citizens, were so madly in love they would come into church holding hands. They would sit in the pew holding hands. When I

visited them, they would hold hands. He was the first one to pass away in that pastorate. I went to comfort the widow. She looked at me and said, 'Yes, Pastor, but you do not understand. You have not walked in my shoes.' I had to say to her, 'That is correct, I have not.' But now, after living so much more of life, I can say I have walked in some very difficult shoes myself. I agree with my brother that God does work all things for good. We have got to sink our teeth into that. That is the greatest lesson of my Christian life."

William also expresses a greater grasp of God's sovereignty. "When I went through this," he says, "I had a statement I used: 'Man in his humanity, carnality, or stupidity can never trump God's sovereignty.' God is sovereignly at work, and He is working to perfect and refine us. What others may have meant for evil, He meant it for good."

Each man shared from his heart a desire to encourage others enduring a similar path of pain.

"First, the Lord did not make a mistake when He called you," William insists. "In the midst of that calling, you have to apply the wisdom of taking care of yourself with proper worship, proper rest, proper play or recreation, and a proper work ethic if you are to stay healthy in the ministry. And you must have a close circle of people with whom you can truly be who you are, and they love you in spite of that. Those three things: God has called you, take good care of yourself, and stay in touch with people who have sat where you sit and have not quit."

"You need to be able to put in place a set of checks and balances," Tim says. "Ministry almost cost me my family. I did not see it until it was almost too late. When you are hurting, and it is because of other people, sometimes it can become difficult to see your way through, to become objective about when to move on for your own sake and the sake of your family.

"You need to put into place some benchmarks — signposts that say you are heading in the wrong direction. If you are starting to see strife at home, you need to be able to be healthy enough and strong enough to say, "This is not about my call. It is about my particular assignment. Something about

"The elders and the deacons ... were the mediators between the critics and the pastor."
— John

my assignment is not working for me and my family.' You have to understand you are not forsaking the call by laying down a destructive assignment."

"To those who are in that darkness and cannot see anything hopeful," John says, "who cannot see light at the end of the tunnel — I say, 'I love you. I am praying for you. I, too, was in that place where I could not believe, I could not pray, I could not

read the Word. But others did pray, others did believe for me, and others did read the Word to me. What God has done for me, He will do for you. God has a greater good in store for you. He will bring it to pass. Leave it in His hands. God will do it in His time. Above all, Jesus is there with you, because He said, 'I will never leave you or forsake you.' "



M. WAYNE BENSON is president and chairman of the board of EMERGE Ministries, Akron, Ohio.



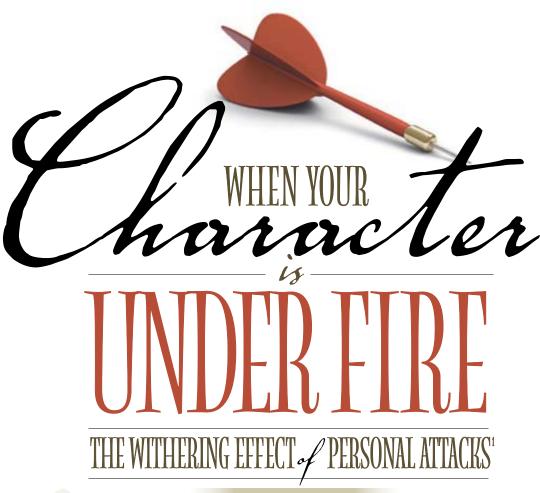
SCOTT HARRUP is senior associate editor, *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*, Springfield, Missouri.



"If you drop point three, put point two in its place, tweak point five and combine points six and seven, then perhaps point eight would actually support point one, and then you could proceed to the opening illustration by noon."







BY DAVID HORNER

hy does the church attract people who feel it is their responsibility to make the pastor's job as difficult as possible? In a strange way, it seems they think it is their right to keep their pastor under constant attack.

For pastors, troubles come in many forms. Pastors bring some troubles on themselves through their failures and mistakes. As difficult as it may be to learn from troubles that are our fault, finding the lessons God wants us to learn while in the middle of hostile fire seems even more difficult. When we see ourselves as victims of unjust and undeserved attacks, it is easier to get angry than to gain maturity.



The pastor often serves as a lightning rod for disgruntled people in the church. When we assume the title pastor, some believe that gives them license to unload their frustrations on us. I once heard Stuart Briscoe say, "He that dareth to raise his head above the crowd inviteth the tomato." How does a pastor learn to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ in that environment? How do pastors prepare themselves for attacks on their character?

Different Kinds of Attacks

Some of the most destructive attacks pastors face do not come from a pagan, unbelieving world. More often they come from within the church. Learning how to recognize and respond to these attacks that assault our character and ministry equips us to grow from them, instead of allowing them to cripple us. As I recall my own experiences and those of others whom I know, attacks on our character fall into two basic categories: *intentional attacks* and *unintentional challenges*.



Intentional attacks

Most attacks against a pastor are deliberate and have no redemptive purpose. The reasons behind such behavior are often not even clear to the one who has you in his sights and probably have little to do with you personally. This does not make them less painful when they score a direct hit on your heart. Simply saying "nothing personal" while they tear you apart seldom provides much relief. Our consolation comes from knowing that God promises to shape our character through these painful situations.

Personal attacks on your character. Personal attacks place pastors in the crucible where the fire becomes so intense they wonder if they have what it takes to survive with the character of Christ still intact. Integrity and honesty, competence and common sense, humility and openness — have come under attack during my ministry. People who neither knew me nor cared about me have accused me of all kinds of things. Yet, I have found myself defending my character in the face of such attacks.

Attacks on your preaching style. As a pastor, you invest time, prayer, and energy into sermon preparation and preaching. It is often difficult to remain objective about that part of your

ministry. When people criticize your preaching, it often generates tremendous emotional reaction. I still recall the sting I felt when a couple sat across from me and said, "I'm sorry, but I just don't see Christ in your preaching." After sticking that dagger in my heart, their follow-up comment was, "But don't take that personally." What do you say to that kind of helpful comment?

A pastor is an easy target. Beside direct assaults on your character, some attack you simply because you are the pastor. Your visibility and accessibility make you an easy target.

Disgruntled people seldom have joy and are determined to rob others of their joy. As a result, they launch attacks on the nearest and safest target, and pastors usually fit the bill. What they would not attempt at their workplaces or within their own families, they feel comfortable doing in attacking you. They come to church looking for someone to target, and you look nice enough not to bite back. There you are standing by the door as they leave the church, or you are only a phone call away. The convenience is too much for them to pass up.

A case of mistaken identity. Many attacks on pastors are misdirected. People have a hard time distinguishing between

the church as a whole and the pastor as an individual. If they have a different idea about what the church should be, it is easier to attack you than an entire institution. They direct their assault on the church at you.

At times, pastors identify themselves with the churches they serve. They find it hard to be objective when they think and talk about their churches. They see the church as an extension of themselves. By the grace of God that is not how He sees us. But as long as pastors struggle with that association, they will feel defensive when people criticize them or the church.

A case of faulty information. Another group within the church attacks the pastor because it received bad information and did not bother to verify the facts before assuming the worst. Many times I have encountered irate church members who wanted to set me straight about something only to discover that someone had misinformed them, either intentionally or not. Even Christians will occasionally spread *carefully managed presentations of the facts* to achieve their purpose.

A desire to gain control. People who like to control their world often try to control their pastor. Sometimes they use flattery, manipulation, or personal favors to put the pastor in their debt. If this does not work, they have learned that

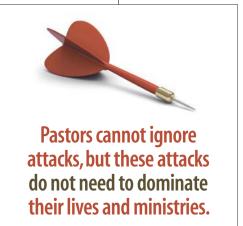
many pastors wilt at the first sign of an attack.

I have learned through personal experience how unscrupulous and unprincipled people can become when they want their own way. Manipulation, deception, and intimidation are only some of the means people have used to control me and seize control of the direction of the church. Attacks of that nature will challenge a pastor, press in on him, drain him, and seek to wear him out — all for the sake of people who are trying to gain control and have their own way.

A desire to elevate themselves.

Attacks arise from insecure people who continually tear others down to make themselves look better. Since they are not secure in themselves, they believe their only recourse is to force others into a defensive posture to elevate their own ego needs. When a pastor realizes that the church offers them the only safe place to act this way without immediate consequences, it helps him understand why they do what they do. Nevertheless, their barbed comments and sharp denunciations still cut deep.

Attacks from the adversary. One last source of intentional attacks against pastors should not surprise us — the concerted efforts of Satan to undo anything God is doing. Scripture



acknowledges Satan's ability to strike at one's weakest and most vulnerable points. Peter warns, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8, NASB).² Who better to devour than a pastor God has called to lead people into a growing relationship with Christ?

By the grace of God, maintain the diligence that Peter

advises. Do not become the next pastor the devil blindsides. Protect your ministry from the wicked schemes of the accuser of the brethren.

Unintentional Challenges

Other challenges pastors undergo come from people who do not intend for their words and actions to hurt anyone, but the



Life is richer because of what we learn through our troubles. There are many benefits to be gained after we fail when we open ourselves up to the things God wants to teach us when we are humble enough to listen and learn.

Failure destroys all our false notions of self-sufficiency, self-reliance, and selfrighteousness

Failure forces you into a wall, arrests your forward motion, and curtails your aggressive pursuits — neither of which may have been following a direction given by God. Once you have had to deal with the consequences of a major error, you realize that apart from Him you really can do nothing of eternal value. Therefore, our mistakes and failures actually serve us well by compelling us to rely on the Lord.

Failure alerts you to weaknesses that need to be strengthened, directions that should be avoided, and mistakes that must not be repeated

If you never realize you have failed, you will never realize how far you are from all that God wants you to be. In your failures are the seeds of instruction you need in order to grow up to bear the fruit of the Spirit and to live out the life of Christ.

Failure demonstrates your need for growth and for greater depth to

the roots of your faith

When the high winds of the storms of failure blow up around you, you realize how important it is to sink your roots deep into the ground so you are not toppled by the adversities that come with failure.

Failure builds endurance and the strength to stand firm

Once the roots have reached sufficient depth, our mistakes and failures force us to flex with the wind — but in stretching we also become stronger.

Failure promotes humility and persistence in prayer

There are few things that drive us to our knees more directly than the realization we did what we could and it was not enough. In those times we confront our humanity in a new light, the true light that reveals what God has said all along but which we could not appreciate.

Failure develops a genuine appreciation of grace in our lives

A humble assessment of our condition is all that is needed to open our eyes to the marvelous wonder of God's grace.

Failure reinforces the value of character over reputation

Who we are before God matters far more than what we want others to think of us.

When we have fallen from pedestals where people once held us in high regard and have lost our good name, all that really is important to us is to find favor with the Lord.

Failure opens our eyes and heart to empathize with others who have failed so we have compassion for them

Harshness and judgmentalism fight a losing battle in a heart broken by its own mistakes and crushed by its own failures. In their place, tenderness and understanding win out and give us the ability not only to understand what it feels like to fail, but also to appreciate what is necessary to be restored.

Failure communicates your humanness, lets people around you identify with you, and makes you real to those who look to you for leadership

Perfect people are hard to identify with. You become very real and approachable to those in your circle of influence when you slip a notch or two in their estimation, and they are allowed to see you are just a sinner saved by grace like them. This is not an appeal for you to do foolish things to gain favor with them.

- DAVID HORNER

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effect is the same. Often these people speak thoughtless and careless words with little regard for their impact.

Constant questioning. Soon after our church started, I found myself continually on the defensive with a couple of church leaders. Regardless of what subject came up, I could count on objections from both men. They raised question after question in an apparent attempt to challenge my leadership.

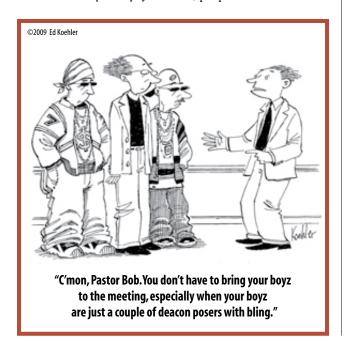
When they raised questions, I would defend my ideas. They seemed determined to press their opposition in direct proportion to the strength of my defensiveness. After a meeting with some particular ill will, I had had it. After I returned home I called them and asked if we could meet and work this out.

When we met, I told them that their continual undermining of my leadership had become a stumbling block in our relationship. They both looked completely shocked. They had no idea that their questions were perceived as negative. They intended no defiance or opposition. They honestly did not mean to put me on the defensive or challenge me. As we talked, I saw these men in a different light.

They realized they needed to learn how to ask questions without appearing through subtle insinuations that they were trying to uncover wrongdoing. By the way they phrased their questions, people sensed they were under attack. When we brought this to the surface, we realized we were allies, not enemies.

In spite of how they phrased their questions, I saw that each man was sincerely interested in the things of Christ. They even had a deep concern for me personally. Their unintentional manner and my over-sensitivity had created an adversarial relationship in which I felt attacked.

Differences of philosophy. At times, people have tried to be



helpful by offering me better ways to do my job. By insisting on a change of direction and a revision of my ministry calling, some have offered what they thought were legitimate alternatives to how the church functioned. As pastor, they saw it as my job to accept their approach so the church could be what they wanted.

Was I personally under attack? Even though it felt like it, I was not. Once I realized their concern was philosophical, and they had not meant to attack me personally, I was able to address that concern in its proper context. Unintentional attacks still carry a heaviness with them, but they are less threatening when you realize nothing personal is involved.

Legitimate evaluation. Another area of concern for pastors arises from legitimate evaluation and critique from those responsible for giving oversight and supervision to their ministry. Pastors need to be accountable to someone. In my ministry, the group responsible for overseeing the pastor is the elders. Each year we evaluate the ministry as part of our plan to grow and learn how best to serve Christ together. Regardless of how many kind and affirming words are in our evaluation, human nature causes us to zero in on what we believe are negative critiques. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses. Pastors need help in identifying both to excel in their strengths and shore up areas of weakness.

Unfortunately, even after I have prayed for a heart that is willing to learn and a spirit that is open to change and growth, I sometimes still find it hard to handle even legitimate suggestions for improvement. Listening with a godly, humble heart can protect you from missing this excellent resource for your personal growth. Leaders with discernment and wisdom who love you and embrace the same calling and vision for ministry are trustworthy. Their role is not to attack you or tear you down, but to challenge you and build you up. When we misread their intentions, we invite misery. When we believe their intentions are wholesome and healthy, we can endure their critique even though they may not express it as sensitively or as helpfully as we might have wished. In Psalm 141:5, David wrote, "Let a righteous man strike me — it is a kindness; let him rebuke me — it is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it" (NIV).

Unintentional challenges and attacks consist largely of comments and behaviors that are not malicious. Prepare for the inevitability of having to deal with them by learning to assume the best and give the benefit of the doubt as long as possible. This will help you keep things in perspective.

The way we handle attacks on our character and ministry demonstrates how much we are conforming to the image of Jesus Christ. At times you may respond badly when attacks seem unrelenting, merciless, and unjustified. But getting knocked off balance does not mean you will repeat the mistake every time you come under fire.

Unforeseen attacks can be so disheartening and discouraging that we sometimes question whether it is worthwhile to keep going. We might ask, *Who wants to tolerate this abuse anyway*? But that is not the issue. The bottom line is how we respond so Christ is glorified. People need to see it is possible to take direct hits — whether from the enemy or from friendly fire — and still maintain a positive testimony for Christ. The way we respond reflects the way we are growing in Christ.

Preparing a Wise Response

When attacks come your way, consider these ideas:

View attacks as a call to prayer

When the heat of attacks builds, the fire can sear you or serve as a call to take the concern to the Lord in prayer. Worrying and obsessing about the causes of our trouble never bring positive results. But when I remember that God invites me to cast all my anxiety on Him and to present my worries to Him in prayer, then I come to Him as one who is weary and burdened and find rest in His presence. Soon I find relief from the sting of the hard times, and I am made aware of the refinement God is producing in my heart.

Find any kernel of truth in what people say

Prideful as I am, it seldom occurs to me that the attack might get under my skin because I know what the person has said contains an element of truth. I need to ask the Lord to show me how to be honest with myself and with others. The normal defensive posture I assume when under attack can insulate me from confronting a truth about myself.

Before retreating or counterattacking, a more helpful approach may be for you to consider the possibility they may be right somewhere in their diatribes against you. While I am preparing a rebuttal, the Lord often slows me down long enough to point out some truth He does not want me to miss.

Refuse to consider anyone your enemy — meet with him personally if possible

Shepherds lead and feed *all* their sheep, not just the kind, supportive, and cooperative ones. The Lord leaves no room for us to accumulate enemies. Even if those who intentionally try to cause trouble regard us as their enemy, we must refuse to reciprocate.

Christ offered one way to deal with our enemies — love them. If possible, meet with your assailants. Bring one or two others who love Christ with you. Mediating a godly solution does more than just restore peace. Seeing enemies reconciled demonstrates the power of God's love and forgiveness to others who are not used to seeing love in the midst of conflict.

Resist taking the matter into the pulpit

On more than one occasion I have been tempted to inject a few choice words into my sermons regarding a troubling situation I was facing. Sometimes I gave in to the temptation and made some veiled comment — a subtle public statement to vindicate myself. Being neither entirely foolish nor completely clever, I never said enough for anyone to know what I was talking about, and people often left wondering what *that* was all about. Since the matter was appropriately confidential, no one should have known. Looking back, I realize that I was probably trying to rally people to my side of the issue in a manner that was abusing the power of the pulpit and dishonoring the privilege of preaching. Keep things private and as confidential as much as possible.

Maintain a balanced perspective on the size of the problem

Pastors cannot ignore attacks, but these attacks do not need to dominate their lives and ministries. Early in my ministry I believed an attacker when he said, "What I am saying is not just my opinion. A lot of others agree with me." That is usually not true. But if I believed it were true, I became paranoid about whom those *others* were, how widespread the concern was, and why no one else was saying anything.

There will be times when the problem is bigger than we think. Until you know that to be true, treat the criticisms and attacks as isolated incidents you need to address. Do not treat them as major crises that demand the suspension of everything else you are doing until you can resolve them.

Keep seeking Christ

By the grace of God a pastor can prevail in times of trouble through the power of Jesus Christ. Paul tells us to rejoice always. When hard times come, let nothing rob you of your joy as you devote yourself to "keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1, NASB). The hymn writer says it well, "The things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace."



DAVID HORNER senior pastor, Providence Baptist Church, Raleigh, North Carolina

NOTES

- Adapted from David Horner, A Practical Guide for Life and Ministry: Overcoming 7 Challenges Pastors Face (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 169–175. From chapter 11, "Seizing Teachable Moments: Failure Can Produce Growth." Used with permission.
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BY DON DETRICK

aybe abuse is too strong a term; then again, maybe not. Perhaps you have been force-fed the bitter pills of caustic comments and behaviors from those whom you trusted to protect you from them. Perhaps these encounters left you feeling debilitated, disheartened,

and disillusioned with ministry in general, and certain people in particular. You are not alone.

Emotional abuse happens too often in the church. Leaders abuse their position or power, sometimes unintentionally or even unknowingly. They make remarks that irritate and infect resentment in those God has called them to serve. Even more appalling are those who intentionally inflict sarcastic or critical poison on their victims — poison that eventually drains

enthusiasm and vision from a person who has potential. At other times laypersons seeking position and power attack leaders who stand in their way. Others try to bolster their own insecurities by destroying the self-image of others. If you have suffered such abuse, you know it does not

feel good.

"Why can't you do anything right? When I was your age, I never disappointed my parents. You won't ever amount to anything." Tears filled the young man's eyes, his face burned with shame, and his heart seethed with anger toward his critic. Why couldn't his father accept him as he was and see his good points? He tried hard — he really did — but he was only 12. His

most valiant efforts to please his dad were usually met with, "Is that the best you can do?"

Even though most sons his age would have ceased to expect anything other than criticism and harshness from this kind of father, deep inside Jason hoped that someday his father would accept him. He longed for his father to express praise or appreciation for his accomplishments. Even though Jason kept trying harder, the affirmation he hoped for remained an elusive dream. This led to further disappointment, resentment, and self-loathing — a vicious cycle.

But that was more than 30 years ago. Why did his mind keep

recalling that incident and many others like it? Should he not be able to accept the fact his father was the loser, not him? Should he not be over it by now? "Pastor, we are ready for you to come back

into the board meeting." Eileen served as the church bookkeeper and was the lone female member of that group. Her words inter-

rupted his melancholy reminiscence. He had been waiting in his office while the church board met in executive session. They had convened for their annual review of his salary and job performance.

Faith Community's track record of 10 pastors over the last 25 years did little to boost his sagging spirits. In the past the board had fired pastors when its members felt things went awry. Jason had convinced himself he would be the exception to the

> rule. The board had been specific about wanting to change their dysfunctional patterns and implement change to facilitate growth and reach their community. Bob, the senior deacon, had been influential in recruiting Jason. At the beginning of his ministry at Faith Community, Bob had made a special effort to encourage and compliment his leadership. Recently, however, Jason had noted Bob's compliments came less frequently. At times Bob even seemed irritated with him. Lately when Jason brought proposals for implementing significant change to the board, these were met with open resistance, and at times, downright scorn — even from Bob.

These factors converged on Jason's mind as he faced his annual review, feeding his heightened sense of anxiety and insecurity. Despite his best intentions, he felt anxious because his yearly evaluation reminded him of his adolescent interactions with his father. Although he had done well the past 2 years, Jason feared the board would cite the lack of congregational growth and other negative factors as reasons to forego a salary increase.

He could sense the tension as he took his seat among the church's elected leaders. The board had selected Bob to convey their deliberations. "Pastor, we love you. We have concluded, however, that you do not seem to have what it takes to move



Recovering from EMOTIONAL ABUSE





us forward. We cannot ignore what has been happening in our church. Some families have already left, and we have spoken with others who are threatening to leave unless there is a change in leadership. This is difficult to face. We have voted and believe it would be best for you to resign. To make the transition as easy as possible we will pay your salary until the end of the month."

any pastors have experienced similar scenarios and feelings. I have heard their stories, felt their pain, and prayed for their healing from emotional abuse. These anguished stories are not exclusive to one generation or gender. Although circumstances differ for each pastor, most have experienced some level of emotional abuse from colleagues, family members, or those to whom they minister. Often negative past experiences exacerbate the emotional upheaval of the present.

Senior pastors sometimes abuse associate pastors by being overly critical of their behaviors or ideas — or they marginalize and devalue them when they refuse to listen. Some ministers abuse their spouse or children by taking out their frustrations at home instead of resolving their frustrations by interacting with the people with whom they feel frustrated.

Like Jason, many ministers suffer abuse from those they serve. Other ministers feel abused because of thoughtless comments or practices related to their ethnicity or gender. Similar to a family, church dynamics create an environment for relationships that are either fulfilling or painful.

To address *recovery* from emotional abuse, I interviewed nearly 30 ministers concerning their recovery. I have also drawn on my 35 years of ministry as a staff member, counselor, senior pastor, and denominational official. I sum up my findings by quoting one minister who has experienced emotional abuse: "I think recovery from emotional abuse is multifaceted and probably different for each person. Rather than a series of six easy steps to recovery, it seems more appropriate to consider recovery as a matrix, with a diverse group of behaviors or action steps, all of which contribute to a healthy recovery."

What follows are *not* steps that guarantee recovery, but several suggestions that may contribute to emotional health and recovery from abuse. Some have a negative connotation; some, a positive one. I do not offer these as the only components of a healthy emotional recovery matrix. Instead, they can provide perspective and a good starting point for living an emotionally healthy life.

Do Not Be Paralyzed by Fear, Guilt, or Shame



Have you ever awakened in a cold sweat from a nightmare in which you were in a terrifying situation, but unable to move? An abusive confrontation can leave a pastor in a state of emotional shock. If he is unable to rationally process the event, the circumstances may paralyze him. He feels powerless to face the abuser or even acknowledge the abuse.

When a pastor tries to minimize his pain by telling himself he should not feel this way, it only multiplies his emotional suffering. He can compound the abuse with his own feelings of guilt, shame, or embarrassment. He may think, *If I were*

A pastor can begin to move toward a healthy recovery by acknowledging that his emotional feelings are valid and facing them head-on.

a good person, this would not be happening to me. It must partly be my fault. It is commendable and biblical to take ownership for your contribution in any conflict. A pastor, however, must remember that no one *deserves* abusive treatment. Avoid accepting more responsibility for the situation than rightfully belongs to you.

Take Steps To Move Forward

Remember Romans 12:18 while trying to find resolution with an abusive person, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." Paul extends grace to help Christians understand that it may not be possible to live peacefully with everyone. If an abuser is unwilling to acknowledge or change his behavior, the healthiest resolution might be to accept this and stay away from that person. This is particularly true when you have done your part to bring about a peaceful resolution.

A pastor can begin to move toward a healthy recovery by acknowledging that his emotional feelings are valid and facing them head-on. While a pastor needs a medical expert to make an official diagnosis, many ministers exhibit signs of post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of their church experiences. Ignored emotions do not disappear, but may lie beneath the surface. These emotions may reappear when a pastor least expects it, robbing him of emotional energy. The steps he needs to take to move ahead may be different for each person. These steps often begin, however, with determination to recover and discover solutions.

Get Help Dealing With Past and Present Issues

A minister may be able to separate himself from an abuser or an abusive situation, yet the memories and emotional effects





often linger long beyond the painful events. If he finds himself obsessively and unintentionally rehearsing traumatic memories, he needs to find a trusted confidant or counselor to help him process his distress. Ministers do experience emotional and psychological challenges, and they should not feel ashamed to admit this or seek professional help.

In the past some church leaders disdained or even vilified counseling as either *unspiritual* or exhibiting a lack of faith in God's delivering power. Such an either-or perspective, however, can cause emotional pain and suffering, and in extreme cases be abusive. In his book, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, Peter Scazzero lists several symptoms of *emotionally unhealthy spirituality*. These include:

- Ignoring the emotions of anger, sadness, or fear.
- Denying the past's impact on the present.
- Dividing our lives into secular and sacred compartments.
- Spiritualizing away conflict.
- Covering our brokenness, weakness, or failure.1

Proactively Shield Yourself and Your Family From Abusers

In his book, *Antagonists in the Church*, Kenneth C. Haugk identifies the characteristics of an *antagonist*. In many cases, an *antagonist* would be synonymous with an *abuser*. He states: "Antagonists are individuals who, on the basis of nonsubstantive evidence, go out of their way to make insatiable demands, usually attacking the person or performance of others ... tearing down rather than building up, and are frequently directed against those in a leadership capacity."²

In Psalm 41:9, David described his abuse at the hands of his associates. "Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me." People who are often quick to connect with a pastor or adopt a new idea eventually move from ally to aggressor. At times, they change overnight from advocate to opponent. Perhaps this is because the pastor did not exercise caution in making the person a confidant, or the former ally has an attachment disorder or pattern in his life. Whatever the reason, the pain of betrayal and abuse triggers strong emotional reactions.

David was perplexed, and often so are pastors. Why would those to whom we have ministered, sacrificed, prayed, counseled, and encouraged turn against us? This question has no plausible answers. We cannot expect to understand their bizarre or abusive behaviors, but we can forgive and move on. We can also take appropriate steps to protect ourselves from further damage from these people.

A pastor also needs to watch for abusive tendencies in his own life. Since hurting people tend to hurt other people, be particularly sensitive concerning how you react emotionally to challenging circumstances. This is especially true with your own family. Enlist their help by giving them permission to signal you if you begin to move beyond healthy emotional boundaries

MANAGING YOUR EMOTIONAL ENERGY

We regularly see emotional burnout or breakdown

on the news, on the highway in an incident of road rage, or when someone loses control. A reality crime show appropriately entitled, *Snapped*, looks into this reality. Most pastors do not want to schedule a guest appearance on this show, but many live on the edge of an emotional breakdown or burnout. While a

pastor may not be able to prevent abusive people from taking their toll, he can minimize the damage by learning how to better manage and balance his own emotional energy.

God created us with a soul — the emotional component of our being. Because people are unique, everyone processes experiences and feelings differently. We generally experience an emotional response to a situation before we take a cognitive approach. How many people have experienced *buyer's remorse* because they made an emotional purchase without thinking through the consequences? The following suggestions may help pastors manage their emotional energy:

Pay Attention to Your Feelings

Happy, sad, angry, peaceful, helpless, or hopeless? People usually do not think much about their emotions; they just happen in real time. When a person forces himself to think about how he is feeling and why he is feeling that way, he places himself in a better position to manage his feelings.

Think Before You Speak or Act

In Les Parrot's book, 3 Seconds, he proposes waiting 3 seconds before reacting emotionally to a situation. That gives your brain time to prepare a better response than the reactionary one you may later regret.

Pray

Part of the Holy Spirit's role is to produce the fruit of self-control. Each fruit of the Spirit has an emotional component. Enlist His empowerment to help you overcome negative feelings from abusive circumstances.

— DON DETRICK

with them. Through open dialogue before a problem surfaces, you can prevent this possibility.

Develop a Healthy Perspective on Trials and Your Response to Them

Ministers sometimes view every difficulty through the lens of spiritual warfare. While a pastor should not ignore the reality of Job's experience or Ephesians 6:12, it is a mistake to read

Recovering from EMOTIONAL ABUSE



too much into our own circumstances. Pastors often suffer because they live in a fallen world among fallen people. To live a conflict-free life in a conflict-ridden world is impossible.

A pastor should never trivialize his or another's suffering. A pastor's subjective analysis often places a higher level of importance on the undeserved nature of his suffering while trying to provide objective analytical reasons for the suffering of others. He is often tempted to exhibit his battle scars and share his most excruciating tales of self-martyrdom. A pastor, however, must avoid a misery-loves-company pity party while recognizing that conversations with others who have experienced pain and are on the road to recovery can be healthy and therapeutic. By granting the grace of listening to others, a minister can experience healing.

Part of a healthy recovery lies in recognizing that one's future is in the future, not in his past. Past memories and experiences — both good and bad — influence everyone. But a pastor must realize that his past does not necessarily represent his future. He can have a more hopeful vision of the future by focusing on God's purposes and His intervention in his life. Jeremiah's prophetic words provide pastors a compelling vision: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11).

Intentionally Make Space for Joy in Your Life

When a pastor spends his emotional energy simply trying to exist, there is little room for joy. Emotional abuse can rob a minister of his sense of humor, optimism, and trust in others.

A pastor needs to learn to budget his emotional energy by limiting activities and interactions with people who rob him of strength and leave him feeling empty. He may find comfort in journaling his experiences, particularly when he looks back and views his emotional pain from the safe haven of recovery. He will then recognize the Lord's goodness in bringing him

through a horrific experience.

A pastor can replenish his depleted supply of joy by starting with the little things he can control, not the big issues he cannot control. He can cultivate appreciation for the small, good gifts he is able to enjoy, such as glimpsing a colorful bird or enjoying a favorite food. Once he is able to focus on small snapshots of joy, he will find it easier over time to regain enthusiasm for the big picture of life.

Ministers need to nurture healthy relationships, find a hobby, and find ways to have fun. The key word is *action*. Start an exercise program. God created a correlation between a person's emotional, mental, and physical health. Pastors can consider doing something that has brought them joy in the past, or that they have often dreamed of doing. As much as possible, pastors need to surround themselves with cheerful, optimistic people who share a hopeful vision of the future and can encourage their faith in the Lord.

Do not ignore the truth of Proverbs 17:22: "A cheerful heart is good medicine." Usually, people in ministry who have suffered emotional abuse are not bitter people. They have chosen to take the necessary steps to recover from their emotional abuse and cleanse the bitterness from their hearts. The sweetness of Jesus is the best antidote for recovering from emotional abuse, and it tastes much better than a bitter pill.



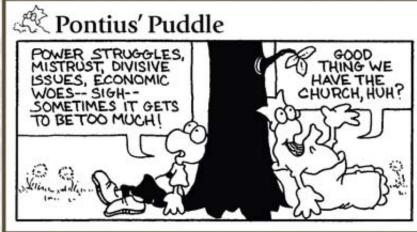
DON DETRICK, D.MIN.,

North Bend, Washington, is secretary/treasurer for the Northwest Ministry Network. He also serves as a general presbyter for the Assemblies of God.

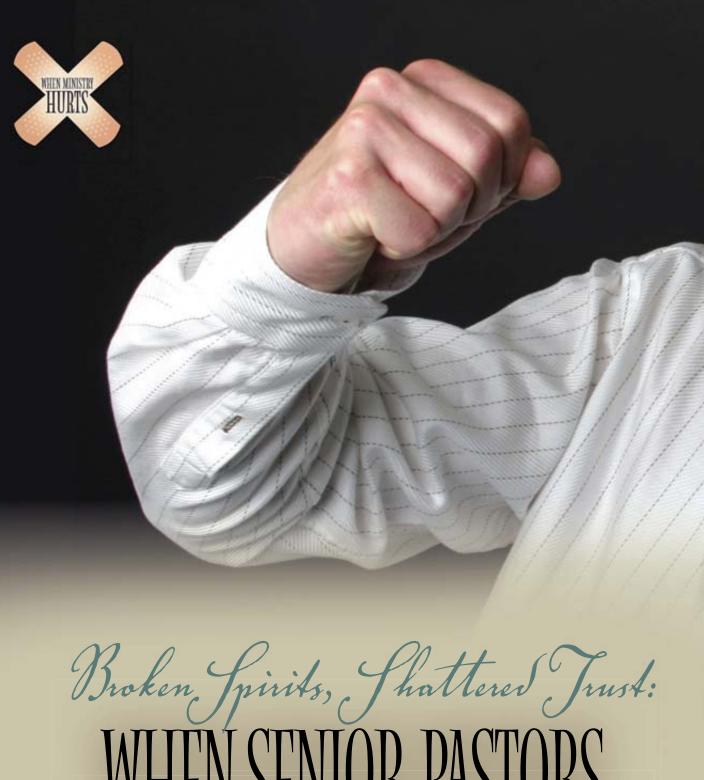
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NOTES

- 1. Peter Scazzero, Emotionally Healthy Spirituality (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 24.
- 2. Kenneth C. Haugk, Antagonists in the Church (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 59.







Broken Spirits, Shattered Trust: WHEN SENIOR PASTORS ABUSE CHURCH STAFF



y friend served a large church for many years as a lay leader. He decided to embrace ministry as a vocation. With the pastor's encouragement, he took Bible courses, quit his job, and joined the church staff as a full-time

assistant pastor.

Soon after he joined the staff, the senior pastor asked him to deliver the closing remarks following a guest speaker's sermon. My friend had never done this. He assumed the senior pastor would assist if needed. The pastor, however, did not assist and the closing was a disaster. The senior pastor rebuked him publically.

Mistreatment occurs when senior pastors knowingly or unknowingly abuse power, break boundaries, and shatter trust.



My friend slunk away to an empty room and sat alone in stunned silence. Soon another staff member found him. Apparently, the senior pastor had a history of setting up associates to fail so he could render forceful on-the-spot correction.

A leader my friend loved and respected traumatized him. This incident caused him to be watchful; he sustained what I

call a trust injury.

A trust injury occurs when a person of authority or relational significance harms a person under his care. The trust injury experienced by my friend was his mistreatment by his senior pastor. A trust injury is an encroachment, offense, or violation that causes an associate to experience a psychoemotional wound. A wounded associate feels damaged by the one

he trusted to represent and extend God's love.

A growing number of staff associates endure mistreatment at the hands of senior pastors. Senior pastor mistreatment does not occur when he corrects mistakes, enforces policy,

WHEN SENIOR PASTORS ABUSE CHURCH STAFF

or fires a staff employee due to cutbacks or incompetence. Senior pastor mistreatment occurs when senior pastors knowingly or unknowingly abuse power, break boundaries, and shatter trust.

Abused associates leave their places of ministry confused, despondent, and discouraged. They wonder how such abuse can happen in a place that is expected to model Christ's love and healing power. They need answers, and they need healing. Providing answers will help them recover.

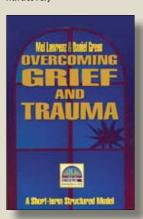
Wounding Agents

A senior pastor may not plan to be a wounding agent. A called, competent, and qualified senior pastor, however, can become a wounding agent — sometimes without realizing it. Senior pastors who wound others are not born; they are made.

Dysfunctional families often abuse and emotionally damage their children. A friend's father abused him as a young boy. On one occasion his father mistakenly thought he had

OVERCOMING GRIEF AND TRAUMA

MEL LAWRENZ and DANIEL GREEN (Baker Books, 211 pp., hardcover)



In Overcoming Grief and Trauma, pastoral counselors Mel Lawrenz and Daniel Green describe trauma as something shocking that happens to people and affects their ability to function normally. According to this description, staff associates who have sustained a trust injury due to mistreatment by their senior pastor have been traumatized. Many

experience intense feelings of anxiety, despair, and other symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Lawrenz and Green explain the grief process in dealing with trauma. The trauma sometimes overwhelms one's capacity to cope. But more than describe or explain, these authors offer hope and healing to those who have experienced trauma.

Overcoming Grief and Trauma would be a valuable read for those who have experienced trauma. It is also a valuable resource for pastors who are counseling those who have experienced trauma.

disrespected his mother. For his punishment, his father slapped him off his chair. My friend confessed that often his staff bore the brunt of his suppressed pain and anger stemming from that boyhood experience.

Others give into egotistical thinking and develop wounding habits. Andy pastored a small church in a rural area. He wanted his church to buy an empty school and turn it into a Bible college. His staff was skeptical because the cost seemed prohibitive. Andy publicly rebuked his staff for their lack of faith and mandated they follow him as he followed God. Ego-driven senior pastors believe they have the right to discipline associates who get in their way.

Because of leadership training, other senior pastors believe that appropriating a ministry vision is their first priority. They feel constrained to promote that vision above all else. Senior pastors become wounding agents when they place their goals and visions over the well-being of their associates.

Senior pastors sometimes act out in destructive ways when they are overburdened by stress, burnout, or a conflicted sense of self. A senior pastor's depression may also contribute to his tendency to mistreat others.

Wounding agents rarely see themselves as needing change; they believe others must change. If wounding agents do not get their way, they may act out in harmful ways and may be completely unaware of the trauma they are causing.

Toxic Churches

A toxic church often mistreats staff associates. A toxic church exists when *doing* becomes more important than *being*. People in a toxic church believe their service to God is keeping church systems functioning. They believe God's blessing results in bigger budgets for bigger buildings to accommodate more people. Looking successful replaces love as the key ingredient.

A healing church speaks of Christ residing in people, not in buildings or programs. This kind of church encourages participants to be genuine, not appearance-oriented or performance-driven. When churches emphasize loving, caring, and being, staff associates can enjoy being part of a healing organization.

Bill was in a church leadership program that promised mentoring by the senior pastor, Bible studies, and a closer walk with Jesus. Once on the job, however, the senior pastor expected him to facilitate the church's promotional agenda. He was working for a corporate-minded leader intent on developing a growth-oriented organization. He ended his internship and stopped attending church. He loved God, but no longer viewed church as a safe place.

Staff members looking to make things better can make problems worse. Senior pastors can brand associates who offer too many suggestions or seek to change the program as

rebellious and disloyal. Senior pastors routinely discipline or terminate them. If they report their mistreatment, district officials often do not act on these reports because they tend to support incumbent pastors.

Survival Skills

So, what do you do if the dynamics of a toxic church are wounding you or your senior pastor is mistreating you? The answer: Exit as soon as possible. In reality, leaving is not easy because most staff associates serve out of loyalty to God and the ministry. They will not easily walk away from an appointment. Also, victimized individuals tend to deny, minimize, and rationalize their mistreatment. They cannot believe that something bad is happening to them, or they convince themselves that the situation will not get worse. But it will get worse.

One associate contacted me saying, "I do not know how

Trust Injuries and Their Effects

The words *wounding* and *senior pastor* were never meant to be used together. To deal with the situation, associates often absorb mistreatment and accept blame rather than believe their senior pastor is unjust. This response can generate spiritual and psychological confusion. It distorts an individual's perception of God and lowers one's self-esteem. Wounded associates are often unable to integrate or make sense of the pain-filled reality causing them to feel guilty and at fault. They often feel unable to move forward.

A wounded associate writes, "I am having a hard time finding a way to put everything into perspective. I just keep getting this flood of emotions, and I do not know what to do or whom to turn to for help. Maybe I somehow equate this experience to past abuse; maybe not. I just know that it really hurts when it is a pastor you trusted and thought loved you as Christ loved the Church."



this could have happened. My husband and I were involved for over 6 years. Between the pastor, the committee, and their actions, I do not see how we can ever return. There is a gaping hole in my heart, and I feel devastated."

If you feel you must remain in an abusive environment, here are five survival skills that can help you cope.

- **1.Do not give place to abusive treatment.** Resist cruelty, coercion, threat, and inequity.
- **2. Recognize wounding senior pastors for who they are.** Senior pastors are often insecure and hurting and use acting-out strategies to get what they want.
- **3. Be alert to being set up.** Do not let senior pastors manipulate you into compliance.
- **4.Seek out a lateral support system.** If you are being mistreated, you are probably not alone. Share your experiences with others. Wounding senior pastors can sometimes be stopped if a unified group confronts them.
- **5. Watch your heart.** Do not give into self-pity, rage, or a judgmental attitude. Jesus calls us to pray and look to Him.

A woman confided, "We are both healing from an abusive ministry. Our senior pastor was very controlling and dictatorial. We are a year out of this ministry and still feeling the effects. My husband was the associate pastor, and the senior pastor treated him like a hireling. I am going through an identity crisis; it took me 6 months to identify that is what it was. The Lord also showed me that if I was struggling with issues, how much more would my husband be struggling with the same issues, but at deeper levels. I wept for him."

Another person writes, "In September we ended a relationship with an abusive church. We are still experiencing pain and emotions. My wife and I were both on staff and have been with this ministry for years. We have seen the hurt and pain that come when a man of God seeks to build his own kingdom instead of building God's."

Healing the Hurts

If you are a wounded associate, consider the following principles you can draw on to promote your healing:

WHEN SENIOR PASTORS ABUSE CHURCH STAFF

- **1. Know you are not going crazy.** With the emotional extremes you are feeling, it is important to know the pain is real and it is not your fault.
- **2.Talk and pray.** Find safe, trusted people with whom you can talk to and pray.
 - **3.Be honest.** Do not be afraid to honestly vent your feelings.
- **4. Use a support system.** Never meet with a wounding agent alone. Always take someone with you.
- **5. Look to Jesus as your Healer.** Jesus will use what you have experienced for good. Trust Him to provide process and encounter experiences to expedite your recovery.

Process experiences

A process experience is a Holy Spirit-directed word, meeting, or circumstance that helps wounded associates gain perspective. You may think process experiences are chance happenings, but they are planned and directed by God who seeks to grant perspective to those in need. A Scripture, internal voice,

or a casual conversation often provides perspective. Process experiences help associates sort out their pain and give them a clearer perspective of what happened.

Frank, a former associate, told how his senior pastor mistreated and wrongfully terminated him. His story is an example of a process experience. Weeks after his termination, Frank could not move beyond wondering why the pastor treated him so abusively. One evening Frank met a man who was a long-time friend of the senior pastor. The man told him that years earlier a trusted church member had hurt this pastor. As a result, from time to time, the pastor experienced periods of depression marked by fits of paranoia. This often motivated him to make regrettable decisions. Frank thanked God for being able to talk to this man because, in the process, he found perspective.

Encounter experiences

Encounter experiences are similar to process experiences, but

ALL OUR LOSSES, ALL OUR GRIEFS: RESOURCES FOR PASTORAL CARE

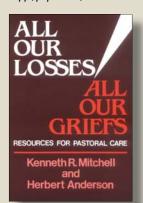
KENNETH R. MITCHELL and HERBERT ANDERSON (Westminster John Knox Press. 180 pp., paperback)

Staff associates who have been wrongfully terminated experience grievous losses. Each loss is a blow that causes pain and diminishes quality of life. In their book, All Our Losses, All Our Griefs, Mitchell and Anderson provide a lens through which we can view and study wrongful termination in the ministry.

All Our Losses, All Our Griefs is a book about loss: how serious personal losses take place, why people react to loss as they do, how many important forms of loss go unnoticed, how people can recover from the impact of loss, and how they can help others to recover from loss.

The findings in this book come from the author's collection of over 1,000 statements about loss and grief from their friends, parishioners, and students.

The authors believe that grief is a normal



response to significant loss and is something to live through rather than to cure. They believe it is a disservice to grieving persons to interpret their feelings and behavior as though there were a warp in their psychological makeup, or a deficiency in their spiritual formation.

Many people, including pastors, are unaware of

the many kinds of loss that are an ordinary part of life. People usually think of grief as a response to the death of a loved one. But as powerful as the death of a loved one is, it is not death that teaches us what loss and grief are. We learn about loss much earlier in life; it comes, in fact, before we know much about death at all.

The purpose of All Our Losses, All Our Griefs is to help caring persons become more sensitive to the instances in life when a grief

ministry is called for. The authors consider not only such losses as death and divorce, but also less easily noticeable experiences that involve significant loss.

As pastoral theologians, they have drawn on the resources of theology and human sciences to guide both private and public ministries with those who grieve. They answer three questions: (1) Why do people grieve, or what is the genesis of grief in human life? (2) What are the dynamics of grief and the characteristics of grieving? (3) How can we help those who grieve? That scope is part of the uniqueness of this book.

Although the authors have produced a source for teaching pastoral care in seminaries, they also believe this book is a resource for all persons who care about others suffering from loss and grief. Thus, they intended this book for any person who wants to understand loss and grief, whether to minister to others or to come to terms with one's own experience.

- Review adapted from foreword.

their purpose is to bring healing. Bill and Phyllis experienced such an encounter. They served as a youth pastor team in a large church. The couple's ministry was fruitful. They were expecting a child, and with the senior pastor's support they bought their first house. Without warning, he fired them. He blamed them for doing things they did not do and accused them of saying things they did not say. People began to circulate rumors that the pastor wanted to fill the position with someone else, but believed he had to discredit the couple to make the change seem like their fault. They left town heart-broken and confused.

Bill and Phyllis' encounter experience came when two church elders sought them out and offered an apology on behalf of the church. They told Bill and Phyllis that the senior pastor's actions were wrongly motivated. They pledged to restore the couple's good name and promised to give prospective employers a glowing recommendation. The four individuals wept, hugged, and prayed together. Afterward Bill and Phyllis expressed thanks to God for His healing touch.

The Issue of Forgiveness

When my senior leader wounded me, I was so hurt the last thing I wanted to do was forgive him. Well-meaning people told me I needed to forgive, but I was conflicted.

Theological issues aside, the problem for me was twofold. First, my anger made me feel guilty. Whether I had reason to feel this way was irrelevant. Second, I wanted to extend grace if for no other reason than to move beyond my pain. I asked God if there was anything good in my heart that I could in truth give away. At that moment, the only good I could extend was not slashing his tires or dumping trash on his lawn.

After I made this transaction before God, a surprising thing happened: I felt peace. The moment I extended the good I had in my heart, I began to breathe freely again. In not slashing his tires or throwing trash on his lawn, I was in fact extending a form of forgiveness.

A proper understanding of forgiveness has its root in Hebrews 12:14, a passage that encourages us to live in peace with all people. Living in peace in no way obligates wounded Christians to forget or have good feelings. But, it does involve truthfully extending whatever good is in one's heart. A person can only give what is in his possession. Individuals who extend forgiveness are free to be at peace in a situation knowing they truly tried to follow God.

Perspective, a Needed Ingredient

Resolving and recovering from situations of abuse within the church is always difficult. Senior pastors are often at fault for the pain and suffering they perpetrate on staff ministers. God is on the side of wounded associates as they cry out for help.

However, we cannot overstate the need for perspective.

We also need to understand that all have sinned and fall short of God's glory. At some point we all have acted unjustly and must accept the responsibility to repent. When we gain perspective, we also acknowledge that senior pastors, often unknowingly, wound because they themselves have been wounded. Powerful congregants and church boards can wound senior pastors through manipulation and intimidation. The potential for such wounding increases exponentially if finances or attendance begin to decrease.

Senior pastors and the associates they wound both need to feel and experience God's unconditional love. Love is the fertile ground from which faith and good works grow. It is in the arms of Jesus that wounding agents and wounded associates alike can find hope and healing.

Binding Up the Wounds

Jesus will soon return for the bride He loves. Until that time, embracing God's directive to love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength can heal the wounds of senior pastors and staff associates alike. Let us love and serve in such a way that He will be able to commend us for being good and faithful servants.



JOHN SETSER, Ph.D., Appleton, Wisconsin, is a church consultant and founder of Barnabas Group, a nonprofit organization committed to resolving conflict and promoting a healthy church workplace. Setser can be contacted at johnsetser@hotmail.com. Visit his Web site, www.shatteredtrust.com, for a listing of Barnabas Group services and ministry offerings.







HURTING Those We Serve:

WHEN A PASTOR'S WOUNDS INJURE THE ONES HE SEEKS TO HEAL

BY DALE O. WOLERY

eary was not a strong enough word to describe what he felt as he walked from the board meeting.

Pastor Don slumped into his well-worn office chair, overwhelmed. Though shipwreck was not a part of his résumé as it was Paul's, he knew what the apostle meant when he wrote, "besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:28, NKJV). Pastor Don loved his people, and it was squeezing the life right out of him. The other pressure came from his wife.

The church had experienced amazing numeric growth. Workers had almost completed the new building. He wished, however, the board had been more generous tonight. He felt they had failed him, but he would get over it. Despite his raise not even meeting increases in health care costs, he knew he and his wife could meet their needs somehow.

But he was concerned about his wife's reaction. He knew she would view the 3 percent raise as an insulting slap. But church finances were tight, the building cost more than anticipated, and the board's decision was not personal.

The board knew he worked tirelessly to preach the Word with power. They had reminded him even tonight he was a good leader. But they didn't know his wife resented his long hours in the study. They did not know she was depressed. They knew he seldom took days off, but they were not aware his children resented his always being gone or tired. They did not know he was exhausted and lonely. None suspected he only talked to the Lord on the run. They knew he was a quality leader, but were oblivious to the disappointment and dread he now felt having to tell his wife the raise was so small. He groaned under the ministry pressure and the looming spousal argument.

Don was always on duty — ready to serve with joy. Ministry after hours, interrupted and erratic days off, postponed family nights, and pushing beyond reasonable limits to get through one more ministry project were the norm. He believed sacrifice is necessary for success.

Don's head ached. He needed to deal with his wife's less than spiritual response. He hoped she would at least listen. Neither he nor the board was aware she had already taken life-altering action. She had begun a new path.

Pastor Don is like the pastor who recently e-mailed me to get help for his wife. He explained, "I'm a great pastor, but my wife considers me a terrible husband. I have run up a large credit card debt, and my wife is now cold and distant, acidic, and dismissive. She has always been unforgiving."

These pastors appear blind to the real source of their problem — themselves. It is easy for pastors to be blind to the ways they do relationships poorly and to the wounds that influence their relationship behavior.

When I Blame Others the Problem Is Usually Me

Pastor Don's deception of the board is dramatic. Their actions would have probably been different if they had known what Don knew. The church pressure Don feels exists because he is hiding truth. The spousal pressure came from the fact he is not living the truth at home. His blindness about his role in these issues is unintentional. His sincerity is intact, but his

Every pastor who has braved the pulpit or led volunteers has been wounded.

dysfunction is obvious. Despite believing his pressure comes from sources outside of himself, he has created the pressure. He hurts himself, his wife, and those he serves. Blaming others is a signal that the one doing the blaming — even if he is a pastor — needs to change.

Don withheld his honest feelings. If he had known this same set of facts about a staff person during an annual review, he would not have covered it. He deceived the board and is deceived about his home life. How could he have the audacity to blame his wife? No pastor can be a worthy leader and a lousy husband/father. Quality family men have a shot at being quality pastors; distant dads and disengaged husbands have no shot at being successful pastors. When a pastor reduces his home life to managing the conflict and competition between church and home, his diminished life damages the lives around him in perceptible and significant ways.

Hiding reality, blaming others, and believing he is not the problem provide reasonable support that Pastor Don's parents wounded him as a child. Over time people learn this behavior in relationships that did not work effectively. Children in dysfunctional families that wound their young learn this behavior. Could it be that Pastor Don is carrying unhealed wounds into his pastoral leadership role?



The Damage I Do to Those I Love and Serve Is Fueled by My Wounds

My years of ministry have shown me my unhealed wounds became the seeds for damaging those I love and serve. For example, my overly ambitious work style marginalized my relationship with my wife and daughters and damaged others by presenting a faulty model to follow. My childhood wounds generated my ambition and caused me to conclude my value as a person depended on my performance. These wounds have also fostered a dysfunctional and harmful idea in the body of Christ wherever I have served. The idea is relationships are not as important as accomplishment, religious activities, and achievement.

My father's death and my mother's preoccupation during my developmental years taught me I was invisible. I believed my hard work made me visible. As a consequence, I unintentionally worked harder and harder. Because of my faulty reasoning, I believed the more I attained visibility the more valuable I was. Because of ministry achievements, I considered my visibility more intoxicating and inviting than my marriage. Because I worked so hard serving God (I now know I was serving my wounds, not God), it was convenient for me to conclude the problems in my marriage belonged to my wife. I wanted my wife to adore me like church members did, only more. I had, however, wounded her by my neglect the same as my parents had wounded me by their neglect. Instead of godliness, our wounds took over. For years we covered our wounds to protect my ministry. This damaged my ministry and my marriage.

Pastor Don's wife, Shirley, reached for help 3 years ago not because Don's raise was small, but because his wounds were dominating their relationship and wounding their children. The weariness Shirley felt trying to live life without a husband who contributed meaningfully at home exceeded the spiritual drain Don felt trying to balance the competition between home and church. Don's wounds and her own wounds prompted her to act before he returned from the fateful board meeting.

Unknown Wounds Are Not Healed Wounds

When we enter ministry, our hearts are filled with the potential of a promising future. We do not intentionally damage others. Most of us are not even aware of our wounds or of the manner in which these unhealed wounds are shaping our lives and ministries. We shroud this ignorance with our idealism, our errant theology, and our lack of basic self-observation. As we dive into ministry and life, our unmended



wounds increasingly mark us and those around us. Our ignorance about our wounds is not bliss but a blight eating away at our lives and relationships. God understands how destructive childhood wounds are. The New Testament urges parents to employ nurturing and training to promote emotional health in their children. Our Heavenly Father commands parents not to frustrate and exasperate their children. Jesus understood the destructive nature of childhood wounds, too. He declared adults who offend children should be cast into the sea with rocks tied to their necks

Were you hurt as a child by neglect, abuse (verbal, physical, religious, sexual, or emotional)? Did you suffer loss through death, divorce, or addiction? Did your parents expose you to rigid rule-keeping or require you to parent them? Did you live with substance abuse, harsh punishment, inconsistent guidance, emotional distance, and tension and hostility between your parents?

TRANSFORMING WOUNDED PEOPLE INTO WOUNDED HEALERS

- Ask God to heal you and change you, especially if you think you do not need to do so.
- **Face reality squarely.** Each of us needs the prescriptive intervention of the Great Physician regularly. Stop the secrecy about your wounds.
- **Evaluate honestly**. If you are not currently working on a wound, you are hurting yourself and others with your hurt.
- **Seek and receive help.** We never reach the point where we eradicate our blind spots. Without the evaluation of astute observers our unexamined lives wound others despite our good intentions.
- Find a mentor to guide your healing.
- **Engage a Christian counselor** to aid you in mending your wounds.
- **Seek honest assessment** from your spouse, friends, and board. Winston Churchill said, "Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen."
- Read:

Quick, Daryl. 1990. The Healing Journey for Adult Children of Alcoholics. Downers Grove, III. InterVarsity Press.

Berry, Carmen Rene. 2003. When Helping You Is Hurting Me, New York: Crossroad Publishing Company.

Be publically and privately about your wounds and healing journey.

— DALE O. WOLERY, MRE

My father's death wounded me as a child. For 41 years I avoided healing because I naively assumed my father's death had nothing to do with the recurring pain and damaging sin cycles in my life. When a counselor helped me see the way Dad's death impacted me, I began to grieve my father's death and heal the wound. Since then I have become increasingly free to embrace the love of the Father without fear. I know He will never die and go away like my dad did.

Your wounds may have wrapped you too tight or caused you to avoid responsibility. You may be unwittingly too eager to please, to help, to bring solace, to be thanked, to serve, to have others like you and not reject you, to keep peace at all costs, to be held, or to be recognized. Wounds you have not yet mended may create insecurity, perfectionism, and obsession with sex, eating, exercising, or religious behavior. One of the most severe early childhood wounds creates a kind of preoccupation with one's self and causes a person to promote himself, overestimate his abilities, and become obsessed with his own admiration and affirmation. This is the narcissistic wound, and when unhealed leads damaged pastors to harm their congregations by building the ministry around themselves and their consuming self-interest. These pastors unintentionally wound their flocks and hurt their staffs as they build empires that appear godly but are weighed down with damaged people serving a damaged ego.

Reflect on the list on page 52. If you see your name on any of these manifestations of childhood wounds, ask how, not if, you were wounded.

All Wounds Do Not Occur in Childhood

Wounds wound. Whether unknown or intentionally buried, our wounds impact us and those around us until we find ways to heal them. We do not need to look beyond James 1 and his description of the impact of traumatic trials on one's life to know adults as well as children carry the open sores of wounding. When we meet trials with tossing and turning, ceaseless but faithless praying, instability is the result. A life can spiral from having it all together to everything falling apart in the space of one poorly managed adult wound.

The churches we serve inflict wounds on us as adults. These wounds sometimes come with good intentions. You have felt the pain of an adult wound if you have ever been fired, shunned by the in crowd at church, overlooked for a promotion, refused a raise, or deemed incompetent by a ministry you served. You know trials happen to pastors if someone has sexually harassed you in ministry, if you have lost a child, watched your health disintegrate, felt the pain of financial reverse, known the sting of shame because of oft-repeated sin, or watched your church die before your eyes. Either you dealt effectively with the wounds or they are currently destabilizing your life. Our wounds move us toward maturity in Christ or take us apart one piece at a time.

Do Wounds Really Shape Who We Are and How We Minister?

The more we study life and Scripture the more easily we conclude our wounds dramatically shape us. The Bible tells us of Absalom, the spoiled (wounded by favoritism) son of David, who took away the kingdom from David. David had given him so much and adored him. Absalom assumed he could take what was David's, even if it hurt his father. Serving himself was his only concern. If your parents excessively favored you as a child, you have either carried the wound into ministry with you or dealt appropriately with it.

We can also observe the lives and relationships of alcoholics. Alcoholics wound their children, and this results in predictable behavioral characteristics as these children become adults. Whenever you meet someone who judges himself without mercy, has difficulty having fun, has difficulty with intimate relationships, overreacts to changes over which he has no control, seeks approval and affirmation, feels he is different from other people, is either super responsible or super irresponsible, and is loyal to a fault, you just met the child of an alcoholic.

You need this information if you are the child of an alcoholic. It will be difficult for you, for example, to be intimate with your spouse and to maintain close friendships. As you know, every pastor needs such intimacy and closeness. You will need to work harder and obtain whatever help necessary to connect deeply emotionally and share vulnerably with those who can support you the most, protect you the most, and give you the most meaning in your life and ministry. Without healing your wounds you will pass them on. Parents



them to their Redeemer and inspire them to heal, change, and grow. If his ministry thrives numerically, even more people learn the same lessons and are inspired in the same way.

who are religious addicts, workaholics, and struggle with eating, sex, rage, or other addictions predictably produce similar characteristics in their children.

The Paradox of Minister/Leader Wounds

Every pastor who has braved the pulpit or led volunteers has been wounded. Wounds are part of the Fall. Our egocentric culture, our latent arrogance, and church dysfunction put pastors on faulty pedestals and urge us to hide our wounds and ignore them. The result is damage to ourselves and those in our wake. The damage varies in its manifestation.

As we observe ministry today we see this in a paradox. Success, which isn't really success, is often the result of unhealed wounds in the pastor's life. Ego-driven men (wounded little boys) are adored by large numbers of wounded people. These men build massive ministries that appear to be successful but ultimately hurt more than they help when the egocentric pastor falls or retires. Can God use this kind of ministry? Of course. But would it not be better to have wounded healers build ministries that survive them because the foundation is not faulty?

The reverse paradox is also true. Failure, which isn't failure, is often the reward of mended wounds in a pastor's life. When an astute and humble leader discovers the wounds shaping him, initiates healing his wounds, and leads with honesty and grace, apparent failure becomes redemptive healing. If this wounded healer's ministry dwindles slowly into extinction, observers learn lessons and values that point

If You Know and Heal Your Wounds, They Will Become Your Friends and Inspire Your People

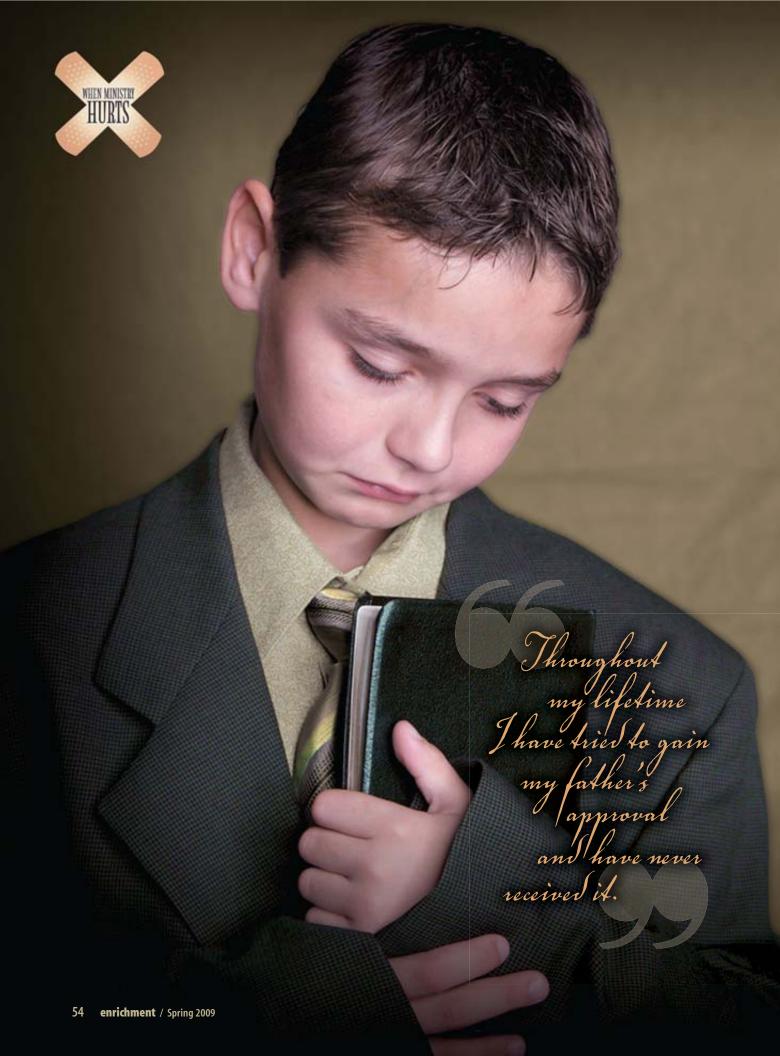
When you address your wounds you will become a better person, spouse, parent, Christian, and leader. This will stop cycles of wounding which unintentionally hurt those you serve and love. As you apply the transformative power of honesty and grace to your life in Christian community (counseling, mentoring, real friendships, recovery groups, and small groups) and share with others, your healing journey will be inspiring.

Instead of the unrewarding typical approach of ignoring and covering your wounds that promotes stagnation and multiplies pain, choose the biblical way. Choose to be courageous like Don's wife, Shirley, and refuse to live in quiet and ineffective desperation. Humbly reach for help. You can heal the wounds binding you and blunting your impact. You can become a transformed wounded healer.



DALE O.WOLERY, MRE., is founder and executive director of Clergy Recovery Network, a nondenominational resource for ministry professionals in crisis located in Joplin, Montana.





James Pauls • eyecrave photogra

The Minister and

The Minister

MINISTERS ARE CAPABLE AND GIFTED PROFESSIONALS
WITH A DIVINE CALLING
WHY DO SO MANY FEEL INSECURE?

BA TERTIE E' METK

onsider this all-too-common scenario. I will call it The Fable of the Insecure Leader. A senior pastor developed a reputation for being difficult to work for. People often used the word insecure to describe him. This was ironic because people also described him as gifted. He crafted and delivered excellent sermons. He had a rich singing voice and a healthy knowledge of music. These served him well in ministry. His administrative prowess placed him head and shoulders above many of his peers, a fact clearly evident in his service to his church and denomination.

Associate pastors, however, found it challenging to serve under him. The list of *former* staff members was long. The list of *former* church members was multiplied times longer. As a result, the church did not grow; it declined in attendance. Even though he possessed the experience, credentials, and

desire to pastor other churches, pulpit committees avoided his résumé once they checked his references. Among his remarkable talents and abilities, he also demonstrated a consistent pattern of insecure behaviors — control, low self-esteem, avoidance, and unhealthy addictions to the work of ministry. He was an insecure leader.

After many years of skirting the issue, circumstances finally brought about an intense conflict. At the end of his emotional rope, he looked to a trusted friend for an objective opinion. His friend honestly communicated the patterns of insecurity he had observed over the years.

The insecure minister began to weep. Through tears he said, "I know it's true. Ever since I can remember, I have wanted my father to tell me that I am doing a good job. To this day he has never acknowledged anything I have ever done. Throughout my lifetime I have tried to gain my father's approval and

The Minister and the Plague of Personal Insecurity

have never received it. This has caused me to become insecure about everything I do."

This man's sensitivity to his father had caused him to become so insecure he was dysfunctional. The effects had become severe for him as well as for those who worked and lived around him. This tale is real in too many settings.

followers, and the organizations they lead because their

bear when you are trying to lead others."1

leadership position amplifies their personal flaws. Whatever negative baggage you have in life only gets more difficult to

Research and writing on a critical subject such as security

psychology is limited in scope. Few books are dedicated to

the central theme of personal security; how to attain it; the

Insecure Leaders Are Dangerous.

Leadership expert John Maxwell made this blunt observation in his book, 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader: "Insecure leaders are dangerous to themselves, their

If insecurity is to some extent unavoidable,

at what point does it become dysfunctional?

published in 2001 by psychologist Joseph Nowinski, bills itself as "the first book to investigate insecurity."

Insecurity, as defined by Nowinski, effectively frames the issue. "Insecurity refers to a profound sense of self-doubt — a deep feeling of uncertainty about our basic worth and our place in the world. Insecurity is associated with chronic self-consciousness, along with a chronic lack of confidence in ourselves and anxiety about relationships. The insecure

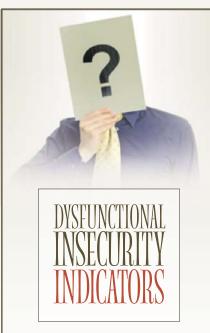
> man or woman lives in a constant fear of rejection and a deep uncertainty about whether his own feelings and desires are legitimate."2

> > Stanley Grenz and

Roy Bell, coauthors of Betrayal of Trust: Confronting and Preventing Clergy Sexual Misconduct, address security in terms of "low self-esteem and the need for approval." They point out how a minister's insecurities may lead to moral failure.3 John Eldredge, a Christian family counselor and author of Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul, theorizes that male security accompanies the discovery of true masculinity. In Eldredge's view, all men have a wound that he claims their fathers usually inflict. This wound causes men to relate out of their uncertainty or insecurity until they uncover and heal this wound.4



spiritual, psychological, and social benefits of it; or the negative implications of operating from personal insecurity. Tender Heart: Conquering Your Insecurity,



What are the indicators of dysfunctional insecurity? This checklist can help you in self-evaluation or as you assist others who struggle with insecurity. The more points you observe can help you gauge the depth of a person's battle with insecurity.

- Profound sense of self-doubt.
- Deep feelings of uncertainty about one's basic worth and place in the world.
- Chronic self-consciousness, feeling as though all eyes are on you.
 - · Chronic lack of self-confidence.
 - Anxiety about relationships.
- Fear of rejection, and misinterpreting the words and actions of others as such.
- · Uncertainty about the legitimacy of **one's feelings** and desires.
- Defensiveness and the inability to receive and process criticism.

- Cannot enjoy silence unable to be alone with oneself.
- · Excessive and inappropriate use of humor as a mask.
- **Self-promotion** from an unhealthy need to be needed.
- **Bullying in relationships** overly authoritative.
- Materialistic an effort to prove one's value to others.
- Irrational jealousy over the accomplishments and abilities of others.
- A tendency to be hypercritical of yourself and others.
- Abusive behaviors physical, verbal, emotional.
 - Unhealthy sexual expression.

— LESLIE E.WELK

Biblical Characters Were Not Immune to Bouts With Insecurity

The Psalmist analogized man's quest for security by comparing it to the drive experienced by a thirsty deer in search of water. "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God. ... When can I go and meet with God?" (Psalm 42:1,2). This Psalm reveals the musician's desperate search for security. He had an intense spiritual need to know God was listening to him. The Psalmist then rejoiced in the fact God was listening to him. As a result, the songwriter was more secure.

Because Moses believed he lacked oratory skills, he became so overcome by insecurity he tried to defer God's call to lead Israel to someone else: "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue. O Lord, please send someone else to do it" (Exodus 4:10,13).

God summoned Gideon to become a judge over Israel. But his family background, as well as his own position within his family, became a point of insecurity. "'But Lord,' Gideon asked, 'how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family'" (Judges 6:15).

Even the apostle Paul expressed feelings of inadequacy in handling the gospel by asking, "And who is equal to such a task?" (2 Corinthians 2:16).

Perhaps the most vivid biblical example of insecurity is King Saul (1 Samuel 8:1 through 31:13). Because of his insecurity, Saul became paranoid, abandoned his trusted relationship with David, threatened David's life, consulted a witch for guidance instead of God, and failed the people of Israel leading them into near destruction. Saul's failure to deal with his insecurity, among other spiritual and emotional issues, ultimately caused him to take his own life.

Insecurity is an intermittent, but common struggle for everyone. King Saul's insecurity, however, became dysfunctional.

If insecurity is to some extent unavoidable, the key question is: At what point does insecurity become dysfunctional? When insecurity becomes so intense and lasting that it seriously undermines our self-esteem and interferes with our ability to enjoy life, to build and to keep satisfying relationships, and to achieve our career potential, it is dysfunctional.⁵

Insecurity and Vulnerability of Leaders

When former President Richard Nixon faced the stresses of the Watergate Scandal during the early 1970s, a lifetime accumulation of personal insecurities manifested with a vengeance. Nixon not only began to exhibit bizarre personal behaviors stemming from distrust and paranoia, but in the process he also placed his cabinet and an entire nation at risk. People told stories of how he held late night conversations with oil paintings of past presidents that adorn White House walls.



Is it possible to move from personal insecurity to healthy security? Yes. In Judges 6, God turned to an unlikely, insecure person named Gideon that will enable us to provide leadership.

What can we learn from Gideon that will enable us to walk in the security God desires for those who serve Him?

- 1. Come to a place of poverty and vulnerability. "Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the Lord for help" (verse 6).
- 2. Discover what God thinks of you through trusted messengers. "The Lord is with you mighty warrior" (verses 7–12).
- 3. Lead in your strengths and in the strength of your calling. "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" (verses 13,14).
- 4. Face family issues that have left holes in your heart. "But Lord," Gideon asked, "how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family" (verse 15).
- 5. Recognize and acknowledge where God is at work and that His work is a process. "Gideon replied,' If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me'" (verses 17–32).

Ultimately, Gideon changed leadership platforms as indicated by his own command in Judges 7:17," 'Watch me,' he told them,' Follow my lead.' "The Holy Spirit enables us to accomplish what He is asking us to do in this difficult and challenging hour as we walk secure in His calling.

— LESLIE E.WELK

In 2000, Erwin Hargrove, a political science professor at Vanderbilt University and author of the book, *President as Leader*, appeared as a guest panelist at a University of Illinois conference on Personal Ethics and Political Leadership. He reflected on Nixon's politics and ethics: "While Nixon was a skilled politician, his personal insecurity eventually became clear to the public through his actions." Nixon's insecurities became the undoing of his presidency and shook America.

People often refer to the insecurities of others in day-to-day conversation. In a back office of the church people vent their frustrations concerning the behavior of a senior leader or fellow worker. Amazingly, during one short coffee break people form an ad hoc psychological evaluation team, identify the presenting issues, assess the root causes of the problem, and propose a plan to remedy it. The plan, however, rarely

The Minister and the Plague of Personal Insecurity

When insecurity

indicators surface,

healthy ministry teams

characterized by openness

and honesty

allow ministers to

pursue help and

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of repudiation.

progresses outside of the room and tends to remain in the realm of gossip.

Nevertheless, it is uncanny how often our common-sense

psychology leads people to attribute the undesirable behavior of others to personal battles with insecurity. People might say, "What a bully that guy is," or "Did you see the look on his face when that team member presented a different point of view?" What we are really saying is, "That person is insecure."

Patrick Lencioni, in his best-selling book, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable,* identifies the absence of trust, fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability, and inattention to results as the five nemeses to success within the most artfully constructed teams.⁷ Any or all of these impediments can conceivably be traced

to the dysfunctional insecurity of a leader or team member. Such behaviors may not only sabotage a team, but the entire church body.

Why Insecurity Seems Evident in Ministers

Everyone faces a battle with insecurity to some degree, but insecurity seems widespread among ministers. This is odd

AFTER THE WORSHIP
SERVICE, YOU MAY WANT
TO GO TO ANOTHER
CHURCH FOR THE
PREACHING,
(ANYPLACE ELSE
WOULD HAVE TO GE
BE TTER THAN HERE)
PASTOR SUREY

"I believe the pastor's feelings of insecurity are worse than ever!"

because ministers are some of the most capable and gifted professionals. They should be filled with confidence, especially since they believe they are fulfilling a divine calling and

> have vast spiritual resources at their disposal.

Most ministers could be described as caring, compassionate, multitalented, visionary, articulate, influential, passionate, well-trained, and sensitive. Yes, very sensitive. Ironically, this may be one common reason why pastor/leaders fall victim to insecurity.

According to Joseph Nowinski, interpersonal sensitivity is a seedbed for insecurity: "Sensitivity is part of our temperament. People are born with a degree of sensitivity that they carry with them throughout their lives. Insecurity is the result of subjecting an innately sensitive person to abuse, rejection, or trau-

matic loss. The age at which these things happen, as well as how severe they are and how long they go on, is what determines how insecure a sensitive person will become."⁸

People who answer the call to pastoral ministry usually do so out of a heart of love, compassion, and desire to help others. Words like *empathetic*, *transparent*, and *emotionally sensitive* become synonyms for *pastoral care*. Church members applaud these traits as those they love most about their pastor. This only encourages greater emphasis and expression of these traits in the minister's behavior. What other people think becomes the pastor's filter for decision making, and a minister often becomes someone he vowed he would never become — a man-pleaser instead of a God-pleaser. Danger can lurk behind strength, and interpersonal sensitivity is no exception. Left unchecked, hypersensitivity can lead to dysfunctional insecurity.

In his book, *Search for Significance*, Robert S. McGee looks at insecurity through God's eyes. He suggests that insecurity creates a *performance trap* that turns people into *approval addicts*. The teeth of the trap include symptoms such as perfectionism, avoidance of risks, anger, resentment, pride, depression, low motivation, sexual dysfunction, chemical dependency, success identity, and hopelessness. *Approval addiction* includes some of the same symptoms as *performance trap*, but added to the mix are manipulation, codependency, avoidance of people, control, repeating of negative messages, and hypersensitivity. Any of these symptoms is an impediment to successful relationships and effective ministry. In combination, they are crippling.

Insecure people are self-conscious and often see themselves with a critical eye. They are easily wounded. Once they are wounded, they have a hard time healing. Insecurity breeds a lack of confidence, and insecurity easily shakes any existing confidence. Insecure people create high expectations for themselves and others. These expectations are often unspoken. Insecure people have a hard time accepting normal human flaws and faults, both in themselves and in others.¹¹

Insecurity and Self-Assessment

As pastors consider the topic of insecurity, a normal question arises: How do I measure my own level of insecurity? We first confess our insecurity to Jesus and ask Him to help us bear it. He has experienced every temptation and emotion known to man, and He overcame them all. We can also consult with members of Christ's body, a trusted professional, or friend. Tools are available that can provide additional insight to our temperaments and relational styles as leaders. We, however, must be vulnerable enough to take these tests and subject ourselves to intense scrutiny. These instruments are most effective when someone who is trained in their use administers and interprets them, thereby providing insight into the results.

When insecurity indicators surface, healthy ministry teams characterized by openness and honesty allow ministers to pursue help and wise counsel, without fear of repudiation. As team leader of the Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God, I have attempted to model this attitude personally and corporately. We encourage our team to lead with intentional authenticity and transparency. Counseling resources are now more accessible because the Network invests thousands of dollars each year to provide counseling assistance for ministers.

Moving From Insecurity to Security

Preventative measures to curb dysfunctional sensitivity in ministers are preferable to remedial steps. However, people of all ages, many of whom have already developed deeply ingrained life patterns — including insecurities — receive ministerial credentials. For this reason, I pose another question: Is it possible to migrate from dysfunctional security to healthy security? The answer is yes.

John Maxwell gives three suggestions for improving security: (1) Get to know yourself better through proven test instruments or the input of trusted friends; (2) make sure to give credit to other team members for accomplishments; and (3) get help from a trained therapist for your own benefit and the benefit of those with whom you work.¹²

Joseph Nowinski identifies four basic steps that parallel Maxwell's three.¹³

• Work to change expectations for you and others. Assume

people are trustworthy until they prove otherwise, rather than assuming they are not and looking for evidence to support that bias

- **Learn to unlock emotions.** An honest effort to change expectations will lead an insecure person to experience emotions that are otherwise blocked.
- Change your approach to interpersonal conflicts and differences. Dysfunctional insecurity often causes a person to retreat from conflict and internalize it without resolving it. An insecure person must resist the fight or flight options, and deal with conflict more constructively.
- Listen, learn, and compromise. Listen to criticism or disappointment and keep it in perspective. Learn from the other party what they expect of you, such as an apology or changed behavior. Compromise or assume a posture that will not create winners and losers. Choose solutions that are healthy for both parties.

The Final Analysis

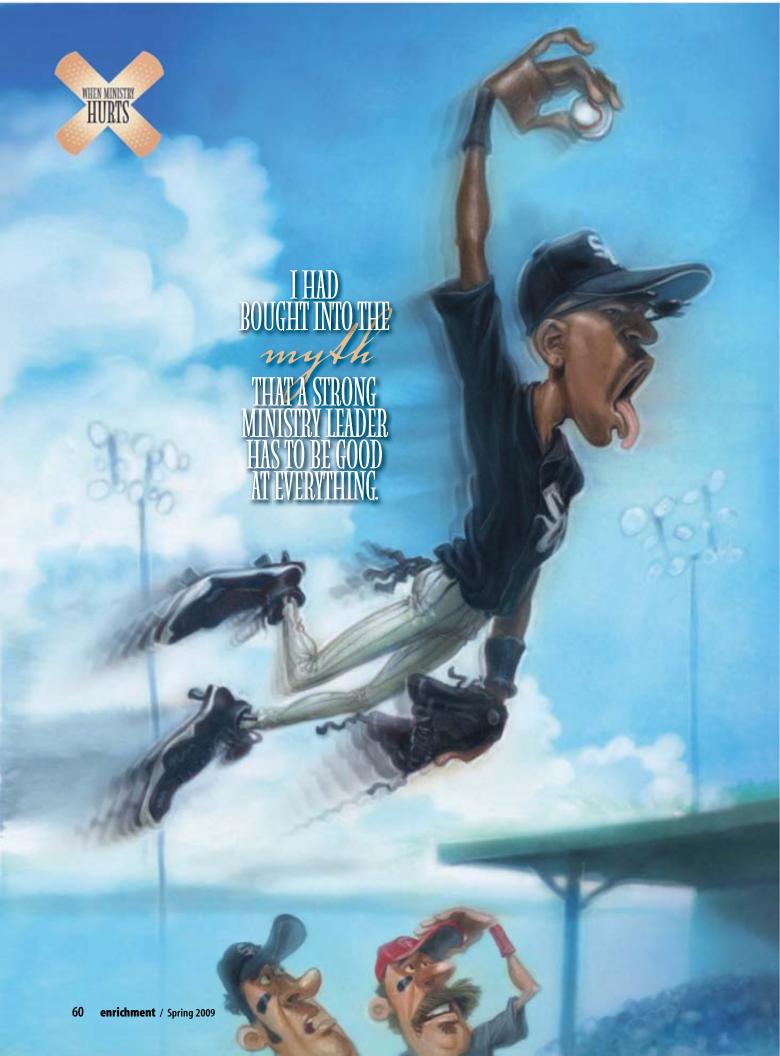
As followers of Christ we know He is our greatest source of strength and confidence. We echo the words of the apostle Paul, who in his own insecurity made a bold declaration: "And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day" (2 Timothy 1:11,12).



LESLIE E. WELK, superintendent, Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God, Mountlake Terrace, Washington

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- 12. Maxwell, 123,124.
- 13. Nowinski, The Tender Heart, 171–188.



MISSING SWEET SPOT

onfession time; admit it. You have made a mistake. It might be a small one; it might be a whopper. All ministry leaders have made their share of mistakes.

Recently, I celebrated my 20th year in ministry. Reaching this milestone has provided introspection about ministry leadership. I have served under great leaders and not so good ones. Also, I have served in significant leadership roles.

I have learned what it takes to be a servant leader. Honestly, I learned the most significant lessons through trial and error. My journey has included a few misfires. As a result I have known some painful days and have struggled through times where I felt certain I belonged in a different career.

I an

Thank God for encouraging people who helped me work through mishaps. I have tried to learn as much as I can from ministry mentors through training opportunities, academic environments, and reading about ministry leadership from those who are more experienced than I am.

Recently I sat down at Starbucks in Seattle with a group of Northwest University students and area pastors. We talked about common mistakes ministry leaders make. Being aware of the issues can help avoid the misfires and possible wounds that have trapped others.

So what are some common mistakes ministry leaders make and should avoid?



Failing To Operate in Your Sweet Spot

I have always been a huge Michael Jordan fan. Did you ever watch MJ play baseball? His first homerun made headlines because it took half the season to hit one. Michael belonged on the basketball court. He took basketball to an unprecedented level. We watched with amazement as he operated in his sweet spot, gliding through the air.

When I started in ministry, I allowed things outside my core design — my giftings, skills, and passions — to eat up my weekly schedule. I devoted an inordinate amount of energy to things I was not good at. I invested little energy in developing my strengths.

I had bought into the myth that a strong ministry leader has to be good at everything. I spent

more time working on my weaknesses rather than strengths.

I am grateful for a mentor who helped me discover real value comes within the context of my giftedness, not the number of hours I work. It is more important for me to discover what I am good at, rather than simply what I am willing to do.

Focusing on what you do best is your sweet spot. Your sweet spot is that unique combination of abilities and strengths God has given you. It is the zone out of which He intends you to operate. That is where you will excel, and you will enjoy what you do.

Identify the areas in which God has uniquely designed you — your gifts, passions, experiences, and skills. Also, identify the areas in which you could add the most to the missional cause of your ministry organization.

Delegating Tasks Instead of Empowering Responsibility

Sometimes it is easier and less time-consuming to do things yourself than to train someone else. I know the way I want it



done, and I think I am the only one who can do it.



Failing to empower others with responsibilities guarantees you will limit the potential for effective ministry. This may be one reason most churches don't grow beyond several hundred people. Real leadership development doesn't happen until you build a team and give away responsibility.

You can signal your empowering investment by ensuring your ministry team their continuing development. Train them in core skills, provide learning opportunities, help team players identify and develop their strengths, provide people with adequate resources to do their jobs, allow them to risk, give them new assignments, and debrief their experiences and job performances. The people who follow you are exactly where you have led them.

Providing Feedback Only When There Is a Problem

Early in my ministry I worked for a leader who expected the seemingly impossible and never encouraged me. The only time he spoke was when I did not meet his expectations. I determined I would be a leader who affirms and encourages consistently.

Organizational researchers tell us that affirmation motivates people much more than even financial incentives. Affirmation releases people

to their destiny.

When someone does a good job, thank that person. Point out the positive, and you will experience a greater level of excellence from him. "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing" (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Unwilling To Confront People Issues

Many ministry leaders have a hard time confronting people issues. We talk about Daniel, David, and Goliath — Bible heroes who dared to confront. We draw these parallels, yet we fail to confront people.

Unmanaged conflict can wear down your patience and create relational isolation

that produces anxiety. Unresolved issues build and often undermine pastoral authority.

I was working with a ministry team on a conflict issue. I discovered that at the beginning one of the leaders spoke some harsh words. Although the leader and the person involved wished it had never happened, neither took steps to deal with the issue. This issue simmered in the heart of the group member, and he began reacting to the leader and became critical of him to other group members. The group then developed a negative mindset toward not only the leader, but also toward others who they saw to be his supporters.

When confronting conflict, give people permission to disagree. Listen to the concerns of each person to empower them. Provide a safe place for individuals so they are not irreparably hurt and do not irreparably hurt others.

Pretending To Know More Than You Really Do

In ministry leadership we are tempted to pretend we know more than we really do. We fear people will not follow us unless we portray the image we are all-knowing.

Several things happen when we pretend. First, we close ourselves off from the input of others. Second, we expose our insecurity to the people we have asked to follow us. Pretending erodes respect much quicker than an admission of uncertainty.

When you are honest and express your lack of certainty, you give people around you permission to do the same. A culture

that encourages this kind of transparency will foster the free exchange of ideas. On the other hand, in a workplace where leaders expect everybody to know, nobody will ask. When we quit asking, we quit learning.

Here is an example of expressing confidence in the face of uncertainty: "I don't know, but I am confident we can figure it out." Another good statement: "I don't know. I have never done this before, but I think we are up for the challenge."

Omniscience is not a prerequisite. Confidence is important. Express your uncertainty with confidence. When you do, you will instill confidence in those you serve.



When ministry leaders make a mistake, resident critics often pounce on them. So how does one react when criticism comes?

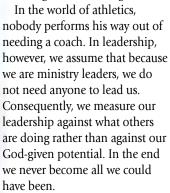
- **Talk to God.** Your first response to criticism is to take it to the Lord in prayer. Never tackle the criticism alone. Allow Him to take the brunt of the attack.
- **Learn from it.** There may be an element of truth in the criticism. Shake out the kernels of truth and use them to help you grow.
- Use it to motivate you to greater ministry action. Allow criticism to spur you on to greater accomplishment. Reflect on how this situation can make you a better, stronger, and more empowering ministry leader.
- **Ignore it.** Sometimes you must consider the source. If the critic is someone who is critical of everyone and everything, then you may need to dismiss it. Someone said that people do not honor critics; they only honor those who withstand the criticism to accomplish their God-given dreams.

— KENT J. INGLE

Not Realizing the Need for a Leadership Coach

You will never maximize your potential in any area without coaching. You may even be better than everyone else, but without outside input you will never be as good as you could be. Like a fitness trainer, a sports coach, an academic tutor,

we do better when somebody is watching and evaluating.



I am grateful for key mentors

whom I could trust and who had my interest at heart. They loved me enough to tell me the truth and were secure enough to let me see them in their disappointments, setbacks, and vulnerabilities.

As you look for a leadership coach, become a coach for another leader. As a leader, you are not responsible for knowing everything about leadership, but you are responsible for sharing what you do know with the leaders around you.

Never Developing a Strategy To Replace Yourself

One day someone will replace you. Even if you do not have an exit strategy, you will exit. On that day, you will place everything you have done, dreamed, and built into someone else's hands.

You are probably planning on leaving a legacy. You have one of two choices: You can desperately hold on to your job until someone inevitably replaces you, or you can prepare someone to replace you.

When you hold on, you build your organization around a personality. When you replace yourself, you lead your organization by vision. Learning how to effectively hand off your leadership to new leadership is vital to the longevity of any organization, especially the church. Organizations live and die on the basis of their flow of new leadership talent. Would it not be better to leave a legacy of leadership development than for people to remember you for the color of carpet you put in the sanctuary?

I keep a list of up-and-coming leaders who may someday pick up where I leave off. I am in my forties; they are in their twenties and early thirties. I try to encourage their advancement through growing levels of responsibility and leadership. I listen to what others say about them, and I take careful note



Church ministry teams are not exempt from dealing with difficult people, whether coworkers or disgruntled congregational members. Use these strategies when dealing with a difficult encounter before it reaches the boiling point.

Let people vent. Give people time to say what they need to without interruption. Allow time to listen and strategize a solution.

Express empathy. Even if you don't agree with a person, communicate that you have heard him and understand his feelings.

Avoid a standoff. Don't let personality obstacles deter you from the issue. Stay focused.

Suggest solutions. Offer a variety of solutions and the steps you will take to move toward a resolution.

Follow through. Do what both parties have agreed on. You will avoid further conflict and gain respect for being a person of your word.

Commit every person and issue to God. Remember that everything has God's fingerprints on it.

— KENT J. INGLE

of two traits of successful leadership: how well they get along with people, and how effective they are at using their Godgiven design for ministry.

If you want this practice to become a habit in your church, recognize and reward those who do it. Leaders at every level need to start celebrating whenever they see leaders making other leaders successful.

Not Having the Discipline To Say No

Do not allow good opportunities to divert your attention from the one opportunity with the greatest potential. Learn to say no. Lack of focus eventually translates into loss of vision. People can't follow when the vision is fuzzy.



Often we will not say no because we fear disappointing people. We fear missing out on a good opportunity. Every ministry leader must come to grips with the fact there will always be more opportunities than time to pursue them. Choose opportunities carefully, or you will dilute your efforts in every endeavor. Refusing to say no eventually robs a leader of the opportunity to play to his strengths.



Set limits. Define and create a list of those limits. We have a capacity for the amount of work we can reasonably accomplish and the number of relationships we can effectively maintain. Know your limits and do not allow others to place unreasonable expectations on you. Many opportunities are worth missing. Just say no.

Thinking at Times It Is All About You

We often get caught up in the culture's definition of leadership success — success based on the reaction of people. An example is in our communication. A laugh means we are funny. A standing ovation means we are accepted. A nod means we are connecting.

This definition of success does not make my ministry leadership more others focused. It becomes all about me. What do they think of me? How am I doing? Will I be admired, praised, thanked, remembered — and ultimately get what I want?

When this idea of success becomes the guiding force, we reduce the people we serve to objects for us to move and mold in ways that help us achieve our ambitions. Our ministry leadership becomes little more than manipulation.

History does not record the exact dialogue of Jesus in Matthew 20:24-28, but it isn't hard to guess. Several disciples were jousting over which of them had made the biggest strides and deserved the right to lead.

Jesus reminded them that people in

the world believe it is all about position, status, power, and titles. That is not how it is supposed to be with believers. Success is serving, waiting tables, and meeting others' needs. He said, "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matthew 20:28).

Do not measure success in terms of image, agenda, or selfindulgence. Those who define ministry leadership success as Jesus did will gain success. They will discover the added benefits of impact, connection, and influence.

Reflect specifically on the standards you use to measure your progress and achievement. In all your ministry decisions and choices, pursue the path of Jesus. Know that you only find real life in serving.

Refusing To Learn From Mistakes

Ministry leaders need to learn to deal with the inevitable. Some mistakes and failures seek you out; others are self-manufactured.

When a leader makes mistakes, certain practices compound the failure — blaming, hiding, recriminating, excusing, diverting. Our survival instinct wants to off-load the mistake to someone or something else. But that does not work.

Life is not neat or compartmentalized. Successes can come with downsides. Mistakes and failures may, and often do, carry in them the seeds of success. View leadership triumphs and tragedies along a continuum. While certain events fall closer to one pole than the other, the leadership saga goes on.

God is gracious to allow us opportunity to live and learn

what it is to be a ministry leader. He has a way of helping us learn from our mistakes and apply the lessons. Mistakes can lead to great accomplishment. Much of it depends on whether or not we have, at the critical times, the fortitude, wisdom, and desire to embrace, with God's help, the issues surrounding our mistakes. My journey is not complete. Yours is not either. Consider where God is growing you in your ministry leadership role. He loves you too much to leave you where you are today. Your influence is too important

HANDLING MISTAKES Community We are in this together (John 15:12,13; Philippians 2:3,4). Confession State in clarity and completeness the mistake. Ask for forgiveness I know a medical professional who (1 John 1:9,10). gathers with his fellow physicians Compassion once a year to discuss mistakes they Show grace and mercy and forgive the made in their medical practices. This is a perpetrator (Galatians 6:1–5).

healthy idea that pastors can incorporate into the leadership team of their church. The Bible gives us a redemptive vocabulary for dealing with sin. While mistakes may not be sin, the biblical steps for dealing with both issues are guite similar.

Rely on:

Confidence

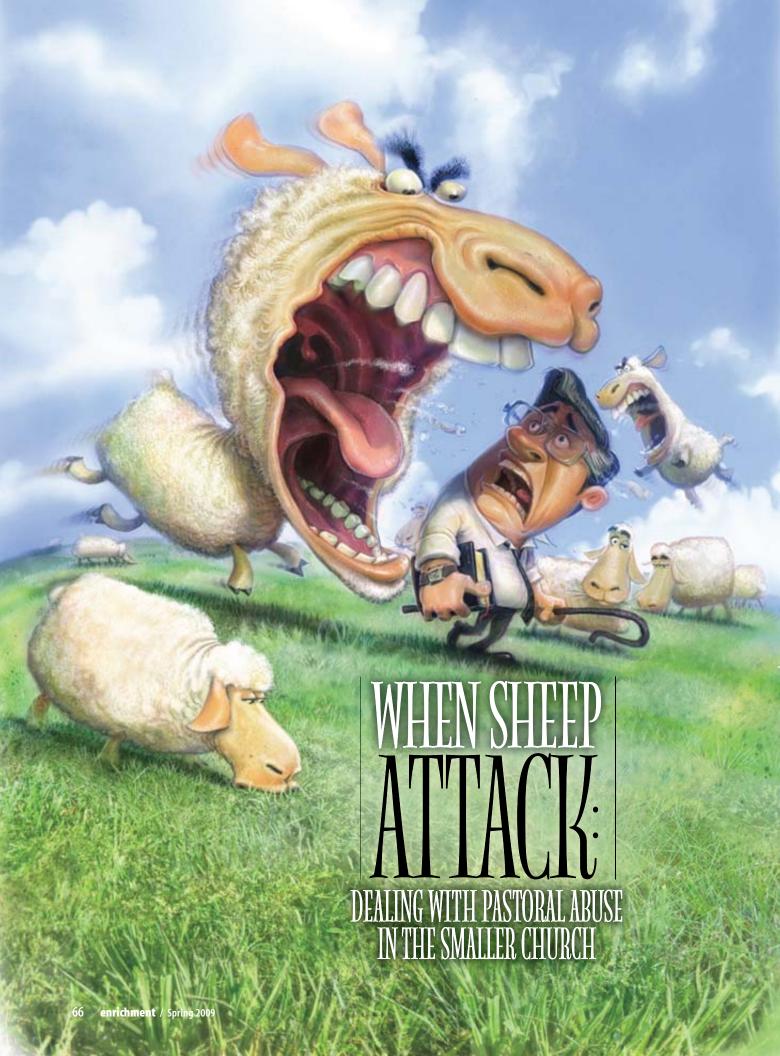
We as a group and as individuals will learn and grow from this mistake (Philippians 3:13,14; Romans 8:28).

MIKE THOMPSON, Kirkland, Washington

to the lives He has placed under your care. God is in a continual process of redeeming us for His glory and His purposes for the Kingdom. "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Psalm 73:26).



KENT J. INGLE, D.MIN., is dean of the School of Ministry at Northwest University, Kirkland, Washington.





BY GLENN DAMAN

astors often enter ministry with a mental picture of lush, gentle hills surrounded by placid sheep grazing on pastures as a caring shepherd watches over them. Pastors also picture the smaller church as a tranquil place where people gather while a well-equipped and loving shepherd feeds them spiritually. In truth, this is often the case. Many smaller churches love their pastor and appreciate his ministry. At times, however, docile sheep can turn into malicious beasts, viciously snapping with sharpened fangs at the heels of a fleeing shepherd. As a result, pastors leave the ministry feeling hurt, abandoned, and abused. They may question their call to ministry, the meaning of Christian fellowship, and even doubt the love and compassion of God.

Identifying the Attack Sheep

While a church can abuse and damage the emotional and spiritual well-being of a pastor in numerous ways, specific issues are common in the smaller church.

The smaller church can abuse pastors through financial neglect

Many people have this attitude: *The pastor should not be paid more than I am. After all, if I can live on this income, so can he.* When the board proposes the annual budget and suggests raising the pastor's salary, people who earn less object. This is especially true in the smaller church because people have a strong sense of owner-

ship. Consequently, they feel free to express their opinions regarding the pastor's salary. A factor that further compounds this problem is the

While a pastor cannot stop all the abuse in the church, he can control his response to it.

fact many small churches have limited financial resources. The result is two-fold. First, pastors in smaller churches often are financially stressed. Second, this results in short-term pastors in the smaller church. The pastor soon leaves to find a church that will pay him enough to provide for his family.

The smaller church can abuse pastors through petty criticism

The adage, *familiarity breeds contempt*, can be true in the smaller church because people develop a personal relationship with their pastor. This has both positive and negative effects. Close relationships are positive because they create a basis for effective ministry. When the pastor knows his people, this knowledge opens the door for specialized ministry. The pastor can minister specifically and individually to each person in the congregation.

The negative effect of familiarity is that people, because they know their pastor's weaknesses and shortcomings, can become critical of him. For example, in one smaller church during a congregational meeting, two women criticized the pastor's wife because they thought she was using too much electricity in the parsonage. Such petty criticism undermines the morale of the pastor and his family and may eventually drive them from ministry.

The smaller church can abuse the pastor through the manipulative use of power

Powerbrokers in smaller churches often exert influence over the church. In most cases, these are godly people who have a passion for Christ and for the church, and they are assets to the ministry. In some cases, however, they become controlling and manipulative. Powerbrokers, rather than supporting

and encouraging the pastor, often see him as a threat to their control. Thus they criticize and thwart any decision they do not support. As a result, they cause

division as they undermine the ministry of the pastor and others. When they do, they undermine his influence in the church and in the community.

One pastor described it this way, "After they had stifled growth in the church for 9 years, I took steps to confront



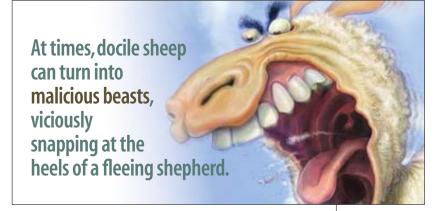
this couple's bitterness and division. After they left, they spread rumors throughout the community." Not only do they attack the pastor when he tries to circumvent their control, but they also drive away others in the church who threaten their dominance.

The smaller church can abuse the pastor through unrealistic expectations

In smaller churches people can develop a mindset that the pastor is supposed to do everything. A pastor in a small community described his first experience in the church: "On arriving

the outside because they are from another community and background. People do not fully accept them. They love him as a pastor, but not as a person. They treat the family with respect and appreciation, but do not care for them as people who have pressures and struggles. As a result, the church sees them as objects for their use, rather than people to care for.

For example, in one church, the board expected the pastor to use his vacation when he attended a conference or took the teens on a day or overnight activity. Instead of caring for the pastor's emotional and spiritual needs by making sure he was taking vacation, they hastened him toward burnout.



I was invited to my first board meeting, even before we got the truck unloaded. During that first meeting, I was tossed a set of keys, and basically told, 'Here it is; it's all yours.' This set the tone for everything that has followed over the past 4 years. I have filled the roles of preacher, youth pastor, worship leader, evangelist, janitor, and construction worker."

Tragically, this often occurs in smaller churches. People expect the pastor to do everything. This is not only unrealistic, but it also leads to discouragement and burnout.

Smaller churches can also have unrealistic expectations of the pastor's family. Such expectations result in unfair criticism that hurts many families. People expect the family to be perfect. When the pastor's child misbehaves, people criticize him saying, "You shouldn't do that; you're the pastor's kid." They expect the pastor's children to be spiritual leaders and positive role models for all the children. The result is the church damages the emotional well-being of the family.

The smaller church can abuse the pastor through isolation and rejection

Especially in rural areas, the smaller church can treat the



pastor and his family as *outsiders*. While the people love the pastor and his family and even appreciate their ministry, the pastor and his family remain on

The smaller church can abuse the pastor through the lack of support he receives from leaders of the denomination

Pastors in small churches often feel overlooked by denominational leaders. Denominational leaders often have risen within the organization because they pastored larger urban churches that were more visible. As a result, they may have little experience with the smaller church and the issues and struggles the small-church pastor faces. The programs the denomination designs and promotes may focus on issues relevant only to urban

churches. Therefore, the pastor feels a sense of isolation and rejection by his own denominational leadership. This is especially true when the church criticizes and attacks the pastor while the denomination sides with the church because leaders fear they will lose the church.

Dealing With Attack Sheep

It is easy for a pastor to identify abuse, but it is far more difficult to protect himself from it. It is one thing to feel abuse, but it is difficult to continue to minister in spite of it. As a result, pastors are leaving the ministry in droves because they are hurt, burned out, and bitter toward the church, the denomination, and even God.

Rather than develop a victim's mindset and blame others for these problems, pastors need to take responsibility for their own spiritual and emotional well-being. One person said, "You must learn to take care of yourself because no one in the church will."

Dealing with attack sheep begins with a right perspective of God

Pastors must remember who is in control. David felt the pain when people attacked him. In the Psalms of Lament, we continually find David crying out to God in despair because of the opposition that stood against him. Psalm 13 is one such Psalm. Yet even as he cried out, what renewed his perspective was his

overwhelming confidence in the nature of God (verses 5,6).

When a pastor is wounded and abused, he must remember the grace, compassion, providence, and sovereignty of God. A pastor must remember that no one, no matter how abusive he may be, can thwart the purpose and will of God. God is in control of one's life and ministry.

Dealing with attack sheep involves a firm grip on our calling

The apostle Paul suffered not only at the hands of those outside the church, but also from those within the church. He experienced criticism from a disgruntled faction in the

church at Corinth. In 1 Corinthians 9, his response contains three critical principles. First, he reaffirmed his call to ministry (verses 1,2). Paul's awareness and conviction that God called him to be an apostle kept him from becoming discouraged. Second, he set aside his personal *rights* for the sake of the gospel (verses 3–14). Even though he had the right to receive their support and respect, he did not demand it. He was more concerned with ministering to the needs of others than with their treatment of him. Third, he remained focused on the proclamation of the gospel (verses 15–27). Paul was more concerned with the proclamation of the gospel than he



Regardless of how much we may try to alleviate abuse, it will still occur. In a sinful world people respond sinfully, even in the church. The church board and denominational leadership, however, can do much to help heal the wounded shepherd as well as help prevent abuse.

The Board Is Responsible To Protect the Pastor From Petty Criticisms

Too often the board is silent while people take potshots at the pastor. Paul, however, makes it clear that we are to protect leadership from unjust criticism (1 Timothy 5:19). When people are critical of the pastor, the board needs to lovingly confront them so people realize the pastor is worthy of respect. The tragedy was not just that two women would criticize the pastor's wife for using too much electricity. These women were also the wives of board members, and they did nothing to protect the pastor.

The Board Is Responsible To Address Issues Within the Church

God never intended for the ministry to be a one-man show. Instead, God intended a team of leaders to oversee the ministry of the church. In the Book of Acts, when

HEALING THE WOUNDED SHEPHERD

in the Smaller Church

issues arose that created controversy in the church, leaders dealt with the issue (see Acts 15:6–21). The board and pastor must see themselves as a team working together to deal with issues that arise. When leaders work as a team, the pastor receives less criticism because the leaders, rather than one individual, make decisions.

The Board Is Responsible To Care for the Well-being of the Pastor and His Family

Church leadership needs to take responsibility for making sure the church nurtures and cares for the pastor and his family. This involves protecting them from unrealistic expectations and from being overworked. It means making sure the pastor and his family have emotional and spiritual refreshing through taking vacations and days off. In some cases, this may involve intervention. The pastor or members of his family may need counseling and care because of abuses within the church, or problems and struggles they might have in their personal lives.

The Denomination Is Responsible To Support the Pastor

As one who has served on a denominational executive team, it is easy for those in leadership to focus on promoting programs and lose sight of the importance of supporting

the pastor. The most important role for these leaders is not to set the agenda for developing denominational programs, but to support, encourage, and strengthen those who serve on the front lines of ministry. The national organization exists to serve the church — the smaller rural church as well as the larger urban congregation.

When a pastor leaves the ministry because of abuse and burnout, denominational leadership must shoulder some of the responsibility and examine how they can prevent this from happening in the future. This begins, first, by supporting the pastor when the church mistreats him. If a congregation has demonstrated an abusive spirit, they must confront the congregation to change its behavior.

Second, denominational leaders need to provide opportunities for damaged pastors to receive emotional care. Abuse can destroy the emotional health of pastors and their families. It is critical that denominational leadership provide counseling and restoration for those who have suffered abuse. Then pastors will remain in ministry, and congregations will grow into a community that reflects the image of Christ in its character and in its treatment of people, including their pastor.

— GLENN DAMAN



was with his own personal comfort.

Ultimately, what keeps pastors in ministry is not the treatment they receive from people, but the firm conviction that God has called them to preach the gospel and "woe to [them] if [they] do not preach" (verse 16). Because a pastor focuses on his call rather than his treatment from others, he does not allow detractors to distract him. At times, pastors must graciously smile when people criticize them over petty issues, nod their heads to show they are listening to these complainers, and then walk away and ignore them.

True shepherds are willing to sacrifice their own lives for the sake of the sheep, even when the sheep mistreat the shepherds.



When God called Isaiah to preach His word to the people, He made it clear that the ministry would not be easy (Isaiah 6). When He commissioned Ezekiel to become a prophet, he forewarned that the very people he sought to save would reject him (Ezekiel 2,3). When Jeremiah complained to God that the people were not responsive to his ministry, God answered by challenging Jeremiah, "If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan?" (Jeremiah 12:5).

Pastors must remember that God did not call them to lives of ease and comfort. Ministry is costly. The mark of true shepherds is that they are willing to sacrifice their own lives for the sake of the sheep, even when the sheep mistreat the shepherds (John 10:11–13).

Dealing with attack sheep involves grace and forgiveness

Moses knew the pain of personal attacks from the people God called him to lead. Not only did these people grumble and complain against Moses, but his own brother and sister also challenged his leadership. When God became angry with these people and with Moses' family, Moses prayed for God's forgiveness and mercy on them (Numbers 12).

People who remain in ministry do not respond in bitterness and anger when others wrong them. Instead, they recognize the grace of God in their own lives and, as a result, are

gracious and forgiving toward others (Matthew 18:21-35).

Dealing with attack sheep involves recognizing that the power to influence people is in the proclamation of Scripture rather than in organizational structures

A pastor can easily become entangled in power struggles that affect his church. He may feel threatened and even cheated when people do not follow his recommendations for the direction he feels the church should go.

When a pastor is serving the church, he must continually remember that the greatest influence in the church does not come from his decisions for the church's organizational structure or programs. It comes through preaching the Word of God. A pastor will impact people when he faithfully proclaims the gospel.

Dealing with attack sheep involves training leaders

One reason the board often neglects to deal with issues that result in abuse is they have never received training in their role and responsibility as leaders. Traditionally, smaller church boards have dealt only with the organizational aspects of the church (budget, facilities, and programs). When issues arise that require spiritual leadership, they are unsure how to handle them. Consequently, they often do nothing. Pastors and district leaders need to train church boards concerning their spiritual and biblical responsibilities. They need to know that they are accountable to God for how they lead.

Conclusion

While a pastor cannot stop all the abuse that happens in the church, he can control his response to it. Rather than allowing abuse to drive him away from ministry, he must allow it to drive him to God for strength and encouragement. Ultimately, a pastor's relationship with God rather than his relationship with the church, the board, or even the denomination, will sustain him and bring healing when he has suffered from the attacks of vicious sheep.

After Paul wrote of his struggles in ministry, he concluded with this statement, "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18). This perspective, with a life riveted on the ministry and plan of Christ, will keep a pastor going even in the most difficult circumstances. @



GLENN DAMAN, D.MIN., is director of the Center for Leadership Development, Stevenson, Washington. He is author of *Shepherding the Small Church, Leading the Small Church*, and *Leadership Development in the Small Church:* A Guide for Building an Effective Board.

WHEN MINISTRY HURTS

THE DASTOR ANTAGONIST

THIS SUNDAY

HOW DOES A PASTOR RESPOND WHEN PEOPLE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CHURCH ATTACK HIM AND HIS FAMILY?

BY WAYDE I. GOODALL

t the end of my session on Stress in the Ministry, a pastor came to the speakers table and informed me his district superintendent insisted he travel a long distance to hear me. The minister's superintendent told him if he refused to do this, he would lose his credentials.

I asked, "What happened that he would require you to do this?" "Well," he said, "last week our deacons meeting was really tense, and after the meeting I beat the tar out of one of my deacons."

Surprised, I said, "Those kinds of things might cross your mind, but you can't act on them."

He replied, "Last year I did the same thing to a different deacon."

What was this pastor's problem? What causes pastors to come to the point of such frustration? Perhaps you have had the same impulse. But as pastors we are cut from a different cloth. We must respond differently to criticism, pressure, hostility, slander, false accusations, and even misinformation

that might cause personal harm. We choose to behave in a way that is unique in our world.

I frequently speak in churches, talk to leaders and pastors, and listen to the challenges, pressures, and issues many are facing. There is no question that conflict and church squabbles are alive and well today.

The Pulpit and Pew multi-year research project at Duke University Divinity School examined the Assemblies of God and four other denominations concerning the main reasons pastors leave church ministry. Thirty-seven percent of Assemblies

of God ministers interviewed expressed they had major conflict within the last 2 years that persuaded them to leave. ¹

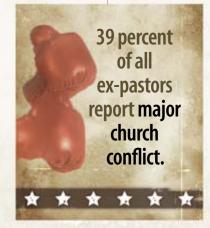
Overall, pastors who left the pastorate because of conflict in the congregation:

- Comprised 27 percent of the total.
- Felt high levels of stress and pressure.
- Were less satisfied with their church experience.
- Were more likely to have staff conflicts if they were associate pastors.
- Experienced more conflict than current pastors, but in the same areas: pastoral leadership style, finances, changes in worship style, staff conflicts, and building or renovation issues.
- Were not unique in experiencing conflict, since 39
 percent of all ex-pastors report major church conflict.²

The Pulpit and Pew think tank discovered that during church conflict people often spread misinformation, have misunderstandings, and wound leaders. Pastors and church members sometimes exchange heated, opinionated, and

> exaggerated words. The pastor may feel he has no other recourse but to resign. Along with his resignation, he may frequently feel guilty for not fighting it through or questioning why he did not handle it differently.

Andrew, a former Assemblies of God pastor, said, "It seemed like we were fighting the city, we were struggling with the district, and we had enough of our own struggles with different people in the church and different families having problems. It came to the point where a decision had to be made, and it was to leave."





WHEN THE SWING BACK

We must remind ourselves that *carnality* is often part of church conflict, accusations, and internal fighting. People say unkind, untrue, unwise, and even cruel words that bring inner pain. The pastor's family is often the silent wounded. But how does a pastor respond when people inside and outside the church attack him and his family?

Commit Your Abuse to God

The call to ministry is not a call to a life of ease. We count the cost of being a spiritual leader and realize that persecution comes with the territory.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus suffered at the hands of others. Those He ministered to often ridiculed and rejected Him. Jesus is our example of how we, as leaders, are to react to personal abuse and unfair attacks.

Peter tells us, "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:21–23, NASB).

Like Jesus, we need to entrust ourselves to "Him who judges righteously." Jesus also instructed us to forgive our enemies (Luke 23:34), and to pray for our enemy's salvation (Matthew 5:44).

Warren Wiersbe in his book, Pause for Power, said, "As



Christians, we can live on one of three levels. We can return evil for good, which is the satanic level. We can return good for good and evil for evil, which



"He said he would consider the pastorate if he got a 100 percent vote. We voted, and he got a 100 percent vote — 'no'."

is the human level. Or, we can return good for evil, which is the divine level. Jesus was the perfect example of the latter approach."⁵

When others hurt us, we can become angry. But in our anger we must not sin, and we cannot let gossip, slander, or difficult people continue to eat at us.

Anger is a natural response when we see injustice. Jesus expressed anger toward the Pharisees when they were against the healing of a person on the Sabbath or when the Pharisees put the widows out on the streets because they could not pay their rent. He was angry when the religious leaders demonstrated injustice toward the less fortunate, and at the disciples when they kept the children away from Him. He was angry at the evil nature of the devil when He thought about the destruction Satan causes, and through the heartache sin brings to people. He was angry with the moneychangers because of their shameless greed in the temple — the house of prayer.

But when others wronged *Him*, He reacted differently. He could have swung back and defended himself (see Matthew 26:53). When people falsely accused Him, sentenced Him without evidence, abused, humiliated, and murdered Him, what was His response? "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34).

Pray for Vindication

God instructs us how to deal with church conflict (Matthew 18). But there are times when a pastor cannot or should not respond to the accusations leveled against him. What is he to do during these times? How does he pray when he is going through a nightmare of untruths, exaggerations, confusion, hidden agendas, and threats — when he is wounded?

Pastors need to realize they are not alone. Scripture provides pastors with numerous examples on how to deal with emotional or physical battles. Nehemiah, David, and Jeremiah committed their abuse to God and trusted Him to bring deliverance, vengeance, judgment — or forgiveness, when (and if) the perpetrators repented.

Scholars call Psalms 35, 109, and 137 imprecatory psalms. These record David's transparent feelings and thoughts when people were slandering, accusing, lying, and treating him wrongly. These psalms also give us an example of how we are to pray when being unjustly attacked.

David prayed, "Let those be ashamed and dishonored who seek my life; Let those be turned back and humiliated who devise evil against me. Let them be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the Lord driving them on. Let their way be dark and slippery, with the angel of the Lord pursuing them" (Psalm 35:4,5, NASB).

When facing opposition, Nehemiah prayed, "Remember, O my God, Tobiah and Sanballat according to these works of theirs, and also Noadiah the prophetess and the rest of the



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prophets who were *trying to frighten me*" (Nehemiah 6:14, emphasis mine).

Jeremiah prayed, "You who know, O Lord, remember me, take notice of me, and take vengeance for me on my persecutors. Do not, in view of Your patience, take me away; Know that for Your sake I endure reproach" (Jeremiah 15:15, NASB).

Paul said, "I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves" (Galatians 5:12, NASB).

Even the martyrs of the faith, "who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony they had maintained,... cried out with a

loud voice saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' " (Revelation 6:9,10, NASB).

King David said, "But you, O God, the Lord deal kindly with me for Your name's sake; because Your loving kindness is good, deliver me" (Psalm 109:21, NASB).

What is the principle behind our imprecatory prayer? As we pray, we are trusting God to bring appropriate judgment on our enemies, to fight the battle for us, and to overthrow the wicked.

People are not our enemies. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12, NASB). As leaders, we must come to a point in our spiritual development where we can give to God those who offend us and let Him deal with them in His timing and in His way. If we do not learn this lesson, bitterness, resentment, and spiritual paralysis can come to us.

We can pray three ways. First, we can pray that God will deliver us from injustice, harm, slander, oppression, and from those who want to destroy our reputation. Second, we can also pray for God's protection from people who are deceptive, evil in intent, and are propagating wrong perceptions or opinions about us. We ask God to protect us. Isaiah reminds us, "'No weapon that is formed against you will prosper; And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their vindication is from Me,' declares the Lord" (Isaiah 54:17, NASB).

Third, we can ask God to bring justice and judgment

(penalties) on those who are harming us unjustly. "Requite them according to their work and according to the evil of their practices; Requite them according to the deeds of their hands; Repay them their recompense" (Psalm 28:4, NASB).

F.B. Meyer said, "We make a mistake in trying always to clear ourselves. We should be wiser to go straight on, humbly doing the next thing, and leaving God to vindicate us. 'He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon day.' There may come hours in our lives when we shall be misunderstood,

slandered, falsely accused. At such times it is very difficult not to act on the policy of the men around us in the world. They at once appeal to law and force and public opinion. But the believer takes his case into a higher court and lays it before his God."⁶

As Christian leaders, we understand that only God or human government has responsibility for retribution. If God does not punish those who break the rules, give out misinformation, and harm the righteous, then chaos will result. He says, "Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, in due time their foot will slip; for the day of their calamity is near, and the impending things are hastening upon them" (Deuteronomy 32:35, NASB).

Peter instructs us to submit "for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right" (1 Peter 2:13,14, NASB, emphasis added).

We do not take vengeance into our hands; we pray for the situation, person, event, and then give it to God. The author of Proverbs writes, "Do not say, 'I will repay evil'; wait for the Lord, and He will save you" (Proverbs 20:22, NASB).

We must also understand that God is fair, compassionate, and merciful beyond what we can comprehend, and righteous (always does the right thing). He knows each person's heart, even the hearts of those who have offended us and have grieved Him because of their behavior. Though they may not ask for your forgiveness, God is merciful, even to those who do not show mercy.

We must pray according to the will of the Holy Spirit and not our human will. The Holy Spirit knows everything, judges rightly, and will vindicate.

WHEN 'S SWING BACK

We want to exalt godliness and pave a righteous path. We always want God's kingdom (not Satan's) to be advanced.

Pray for Salvation

While we may want vindication and God's judgment on those who have harmed us, there is another aspect to our

prayers. We sincerely want everyone to come to Jesus Christ, even those who hurt us (2 Peter 3:9). For those who know Christ, yet have brought hurt to our lives, we should pray that God reveals their wrongful ways to them and that they repent and ask forgiveness.

Conclusion

So what do you do when vindication does not come immediately?

People often describe Jonathan Edwards as America's greatest pastor. Pastors quote from his sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." What they do not often mention is the fact his church voted him out when he was only 47.

His church began to decline in attendance. Many believed the reason the church was not growing was the fact he addressed disciplinary matter (morals) in the church. He insisted that those

who wanted to join the Northhampton church confess they were Christians. The pastor before him only required people to know the doctrine of salvation before joining.

The church's prominent families wanted Edwards out and they began to misrepresent him to the church and to the city. The members voted, and he was dismissed.

An eyewitness later reported (about Edwards), "That faithful pastor received the shock, unshaken. ... He appeared like a man of God, whose happiness was out of reach of his enemies and whose treasure was not only a future but a present good, overbalancing all imaginable ills of life, even to the astonishment of many who could not be at rest without his dismissal."

In Edwards' farewell sermon he said, "It was three and twenty years, the 15th day of last February, since I have labored in the work of the ministry in the relation of a pastor to this church. You are my witnesses that what strength I have had, I have not neglected in idleness, nor laid out in prosecuting worldly schemes, and managing temporal affairs for the advancement of my outward estate and aggrandizing myself and family; but have given myself to the work of the ministry, laboring in it night and day, rising early, and applying myself to this great business to which Christ has appointed me. ... May God bless you with a faithful pastor, one that is well acquainted

with his mind and will, thoroughly warning sinners, wisely and skillfully searching professors and conducting you in the way of eternal life."⁷

One of the champions of the division later went to Edwards and apologized for his actions. Edwards replied in a gracious manner and expressed the fact he was not willing to discuss

the matter because to him the issue was closed

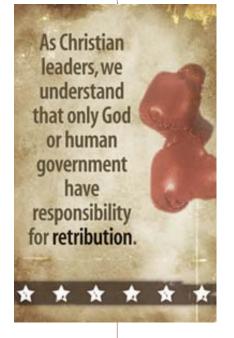
We are not the only generation of spiritual leaders who have been misunderstood, threatened, or unjustly attacked. The response of spiritual leaders of previous generations gives us precedence to build on in choosing to both understand what is going on and to come out stronger.

Instead of fighting back, the New Testament instructs us to pray for the vindication of the righteous: "Will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?" (Luke 18:7, NASB).

While suffering is painful, we also understand that righteousness, goodness, and God's eternal kingdom will not be established according to God's purpose until evil is conquered and Satan and his followers are forever

eliminated (Revelation 19-21).

Yes ... you could swing back. It might feel good for a few moments. But our Savior knows more, understands deeper, and is always fair, just, and merciful. He is also prepared to protect you at the right moment, and He will vindicate and restore you. Or ... trust you to take a higher road and see your vindication in eternity. You have a cloud of witnesses watching.

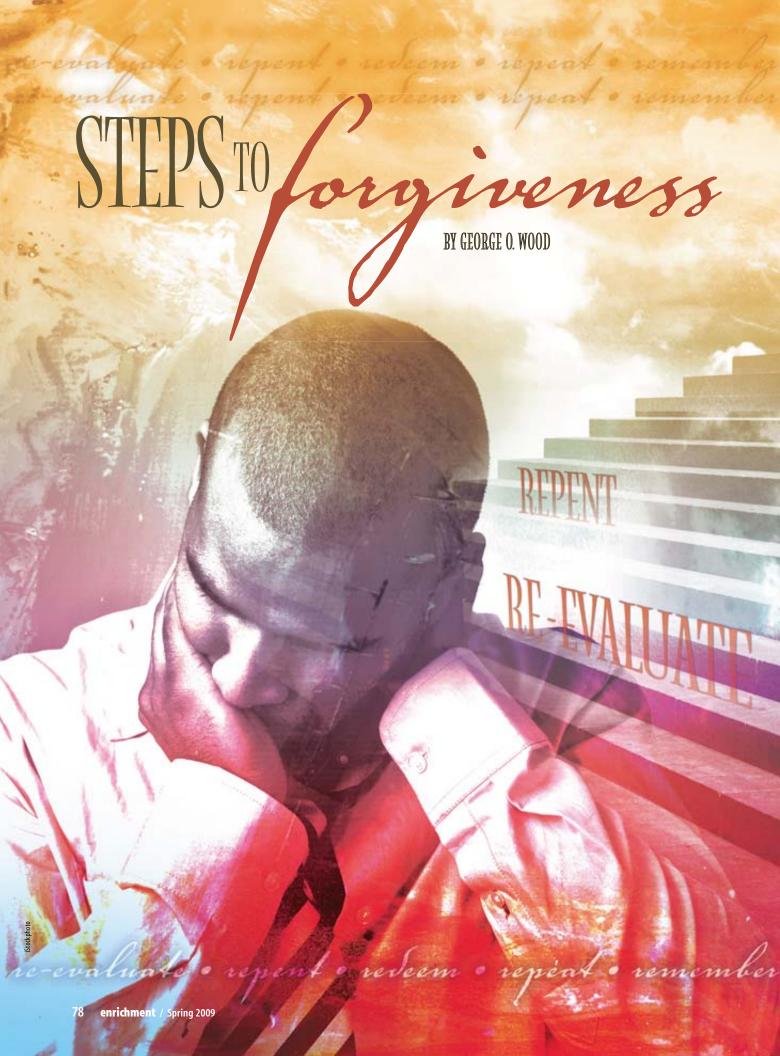




WAYDE I. GOODALL, D.Min., Colorado Springs, Colorado, is a missionary serving under the office of the executive director of Assemblies of God World Missions.

NOTES

- 1. Dean R. Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wenger, Pastors in Transition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 79.
- 2. Ibid.97.
- 3. Ibid. 115.
- Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission (http://www.Lockman.org).
- 5. Warren W. Wiersbe, Pause for Power (Colorado Springs, Colo., Chariot Victor Publishing, 1998), 376.
- 6. Found in vadbyad.messengers-of-messiah.org/condemning/condemn.htm.
- 7. Found in Jonathan Edwards, by Conrad Mbewe, research paper done at Kabwata Baptist Church.







nd when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins" (Mark 11:25).

Life is full of hurts, but Jesus is full of healing.

Ministers, their spouses, and families are not exempt from being hurt. How does hurt come?

Identifying the Sources of Our Hurts

Who hurt you? Was it a parent, family member, spouse, children, friend, fellow minister, board member, or congregants? The closer the relationship, the deeper the hurt.

The wife of Leo Tolstoi, the great Russian writer, said concerning her husband: "His biographers will tell of how he helped the laborers carry buckets of water, but no one will ever know that he never gave his wife a rest and never — in all these 32 years — gave his child a drink of water or spent 5 minutes by his bedside to give me a chance to rest a little from all my labors."

Ministers are not immune to hurts caused by others. And some spouses, even of Assemblies of God ministers, might identify with the remarks of Mrs. Tolstoi. Pastors can also hurt themselves.

Many years ago I stood at the rim of the Grand Canyon. About two or three feet from the ledge a rock island rose from the canyon floor. Its flat surface was level with the ground I stood on. Over time, people had tossed coins onto this island. Suddenly, a 6-year-old child ran from the crowd, jumped over to this rock island, and started scooping up the coins. Along with others, I watched paralyzed with fear for this child's safety. His mother screamed, "Johnny, get back here." With his pockets full of coins, and without hesitation, he immediately leapt back to our side.

I thought later, What if he had missed on the return jump? Would his mother ever be able to forgive herself for her instinctive reaction and for not waiting for expert help to arrive to extract her son from that place of danger?

Forgiving others may be easier than forgiving ourselves.

We may also feel God has caused or permitted some of our hurts.

Early in David Wilkerson's ministry a pastor friend was backing his car out of the driveway and ran over his toddler. David Wilkerson wrestled with how God could have permitted this to happen to his friend, and his despair almost drove him from the ministry and effective service to Christ.

The Price of Unforgiveness

Seldom do we discuss the high price for unforgiveness, but consider the consequences for harboring grievances:

STEPS TO forgiveness

- The fruit of the Spirit ebbs away.
- Indifference or hatred displaces love.
- Bitterness or depression displaces joy.
- Anxiety displaces peace.
- Short-temperedness displaces patience.
- Hard-heartedness or indifference displaces kindness.
- Meanness or a get-even attitude displaces goodness.
- A demanding nature displaces gentleness.
- Resignation from responsibility displaces self-control.

When we do not forgive, we can easily blame someone else for our condition. When we do, we forsake our responsibility to control our own responses.

Basilea Schlink, founder of the charismatic Lutheran community of the Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary in Darmstadt, Germany, tells the story of Plumb Orchard in her book, *Realities*.

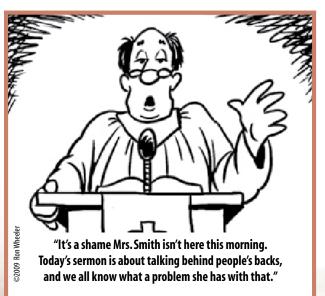
The Sisterhood needed the property next to their community to expand their ministry, but the owner refused to sell. The sister who tried to negotiate never made it past this woman's front door.

One day, the woman's great-nephew met the sister at the door and let her in. In his great-aunt's room she understood why they were having problems purchasing the property. The room was crowded with inherited furniture — enough to fill a house — and most of it was dilapidated. One room had 13 mattresses stacked one on top of another — a stepladder was required to reach the top.

As the sisters began to pray, the Lord began to deal with them about inviting Him to judge their own lives in relation-



ship to what they saw in another's. They had no estate to manage, but they did have secret attachments — a pretty picture postcard, a certain personal



necessity, a little wooden cross. "Oh, I hope the day will never come when God will ask this of me," each said.

But the Spirit impressed them to have a *surrender week*. Each one was to let loose of her secret attachment. After that week they visited the woman. She had changed her heart.

Basilea Schlink said that experience taught them the power of empathetic forgiveness, and that people cannot make progress when they blame someone else. People must deal with their own attitudes first.

Since the Garden of Eden, blame is the means people use to avoid facing up to their responsibility. Blame finds the fault; forgiveness finds the cure. Blame makes you a victim; forgiveness makes you a victor.

Lacking forgiveness may cause other problems from illness (James 5:16) to retention of our own sins (Mark 11:25).

In her autobiography, *Something More*, the late Catherine Marshall tells the story of her stepdaughter, Linda. Catherine married Linda's widowed father when Linda was 12.

In Linda's early adolescence, her behavior and grades seesawed wildly. After leaving high school, Linda joined the 1960s generation of rebellion. Catherine did not succeed in her attempts to establish a warm relationship.

One day Catherine read Jesus' words from the King James Version about having *aughts* against another. She learned if you did not forgive those *aughts*, God would not forgive your own *aughts* (Mark 11:25). She filled her journal with three pages of specific *aughts* she had against Linda and forgave each one.

In a matter of weeks, Linda's attitude toward her stepmother began to dramatically change. Catherine had learned a powerful lesson from Jesus: We must not retain wrongs.

On the cross Jesus did not clench His nail-pierced hands into a fist and yell, "I'll get even with you for this." Instead, He opened His hands and cried, "Father, forgive."

A concentration camp survivor said, "My heart is so bitter that if you were to open me and lick my heart you would die of poison." What does your heart look like?

Someone said getting even with another person for the wrong he has done is like throwing a cactus. When the cactus hits him, he will hurt; but you will hurt your own hands in the process.

How to Forgive

Unforgiveness has a high cost, but how does one proceed in forgiveness? Allow me to suggest six steps.

First, re-evaluate

Several years ago I watched a motivational film that recorded a scientific experiment done on a northern pike, a cold-water fish found in the north central United States.

The scientist placed the fish in a glass tank filled with water

and denied it food. Next, he placed a glass cylinder containing minnows — the pike's favorite food — in the center of the tank. The pike could not detect the glass that stood between him and dinner. He backed up and charged for the kill. Smash! Smash! Smash!

After several unsuccessful attempts, he finally stopped. The scientist then removed the glass cylinder. Minnows swam throughout the tank, even up to the pike's nose. He never stirred. He remained quiet and beaten, and he died. He died because he did not re-evaluate the changing situation.

The same thing can happen to pastors. They get hurt and find it hard to trust again. Understandable.

Re-evaluation, however, must be ongoing in the journey of life. If the apostle Paul had not re-evaluated John Mark, we would not have the second Gospel.

Second, repent

The great preacher Clarence Macartney told this story about Leonardo da Vinci. The story itself may not be true, but it well illustrates a point.

Just before da Vinci began work on his famous fresco, *The Last Supper*, he quarreled violently with a fellow painter. Da Vinci was so enraged and bitter he determined that when he painted Judas, he would model Judas' face after the face of his enemy. He would get revenge as future generations looked on Judas' face with scorn and infamy. The face of Judas was

one of the first he finished, and everyone easily recognized it as the face of the painter with whom he had quarreled.

The last face da Vinci needed to paint was that of Christ; however, he made no progress. Something baffled him, held him back, and frustrated his best efforts.

He concluded that the one thir that hindered him was the fact he had used his enemy's face when painting Judas. He took his brush

and gave Judas a new face. With ease, he then finished the face of Christ.

A pastor cannot paint the features of Christ into his own life while painting the face of another with colors of enmity and hatred.

Repentance means to change your mind. Some call repentance the first word of the gospel because it was the message of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:2), Jesus (Matthew 4:17), the Twelve (Mark 6:12), Jesus after His resurrection (Luke 24:47), Peter (Acts 2:38), and Paul (Acts 26:20).

Repentance is unilateral. It does not, therefore, wait for another person to first repent.

Furthermore, repentance has nothing to do with one's feelings. It involves a mindset change that brings different behavior. Jesus describes in the Sermon on the Mount how we are to treat our enemy: We are to bless him, go the extra mile, turn the other cheek, pray for him, and forgive him. None of these actions require our enemy to do a single thing. All address our behavior.

If a pastor waits until he has the right feelings, he may never forgive. The Lord calls us to repent if we have any attitude unlike His.

Third, redeem

Goldie Bristol wrote a book entitled, *These Tears Are for Diane*. A man raped and murdered her 21-year-old daughter. Police found the perpetrator, and a jury sentenced him to a double-life term.

Five years later Goldie and her husband Bob concluded, "We can see no other purpose for his coming into our lives if there is no possibility that he will be saved."

They wrote him a letter — not condoning the crime — but expressing their concern and God's for him. After two more letters, they received a reply. The man said he had not realized there were people in the world anywhere who could place their concern for him above their own hurt.

"What good does it do to hate?" Goldie asked. Hate could not bring her daughter back; it would only spread the poison

> of anger and unforgiveness in her wwn life, and it would not have my effect on her daughter's killer.

Goldie wrote: "The dictionary ssociates malice with malignancy – it eats and consumes and finally lestroys. If I allow it to take hold n my life, I am anything but a ree person. The very tool I would see to get even is the one that vould chain me. Only God is able o handle this kind of treachery in our lives and release us from

the entrapment. So the decision is mine. I either carry anger, unforgiveness, and resentment around with me, and break under the load, or hand it over to my Heavenly Father who can bear the weight."

Goldie's insight is not new. Stephen knew the power of redemptive forgiveness when "he fell on his knees and cried out, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them' " (Acts 7:60). Ultimately, Stephen's prayer resulted in Saul's conversion.

Fourth, repeat

Jesus told us to forgive 70 times seven (Matthew 18:22, KJV). My mother taught me this when I was a boy. She told me when

A pastor cannot paint the features of Christ into his own life while painting the face of another with colors of enmity and hatred.



other children picked on me, I was to turn the other cheek.

One little bully became my nemesis. He continually hit and insulted me, and tried to pick a fight. One day, my mother noticed that I was putting marks on a piece of paper. Responding to her inquiry, I said that every time Billy bothered me I was adding a mark. When I reached 491, Jesus had given me permission to hit him back.

My mother must have begun praying harder because a few days later Billy announced that his parents were moving. My count by then was around 250.

I had a childish view of Jesus' words. I did not realize that 70 times seven was Jesus' way of describing unlimited forgiveness.

If the Lord told us to forgive one another 70 times seven, we know He does the same and far more.

Jesus said Christians might need to repeatedly forgive someone. This does not mean we become a doormat and allow someone to abuse us. Forgiveness does not grant someone permission to keep hurting us. Spatial distance may be required, but our hearts can remain tender. When we forgive, we may not forget the past. To continually dredge it up, however, is not beneficial.

Fifth, remember — grace pays the bill

If I visit your home and break something valuable of yours and you forgive me, you release me from the obligation to pay the replacement cost. (Nevertheless, if I am a decent person, I will offer to pay.)

When a pastor forgives, he picks up the tab. This is what Jesus did for us on the Cross. He paid our debt — a debt He did not owe.

A forgiving person is stronger than the one who did the wrong because it takes more strength to forgive than it does to injure.

Hard-liners often criticized Billy Graham because he associated with Christians who did not adhere to every element of doctrine important to his critics. He recited this poem as a response.

He drew a circle that shut me out,

Rebel, heretic, a thing to flout.

But love and I had the wit to win,

We drew a circle that took him in.

To join in Christ's work of reconciliation, we must be persons of grace.

Sixth, reach up to God for help

To forgive is not easy.

Consider the story of David and Absalom in 2 Samuel 13 through 18. Absalom's brother, Amnon, raped Absalom's sister, Tamar. Absalom then killed Amnon and fled. After 3 years, David brought his son back to Jerusalem but refused to see him for 2 years.

David made the mistake of incomplete forgiveness.

Contrast David with the father of the prodigal (Luke 15:11–32). That father ran to his son, embraced him, kissed him, clothed him, killed the fatted calf, enjoyed him, and defended him.

Which example will you follow with the person who wronged you?

At times, a pastor may find it impossible from a human point of view to forgive. Regardless of how much he knows it is right and biblical to forgive, he cannot do it. The hurt is too deep; the wound still festers.

This example may help. Corrie ten Boom closes *The Hiding Place* with the story of speaking at a church in Munich after World War II. A German SS man who had guarded the shower room door in the processing center at Ravensbruck Concentration Camp was in the service. When ten Boom saw him, she suddenly remembered the roomful of mocking men, the heaps of clothing, and her sister Betsie's pain-blanched face. He came to ten Boom as the church was emptying, beaming and bowing. "Fraulein," he said, "to think that, as you say, He has washed my sins away."

He thrust out his hand to shake hers; but ten Boom, who had spoken to others concerning the need to forgive, kept her

hand at her side. As she fought with her anger, she prayed, *Lord, forgive me and help me to forgive him.* She tried to smile and struggled to raise her hand, but could not. Again, she prayed, *Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me Your forgiveness.* She writes, "As I took his hand the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang

a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.

"And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on His. When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the power."

For Thought

It takes more

strength to forgive

than it does

to injure.

Think again of the person or persons who hurt you. Who are they? Will you be unforgiving or forgiving?

Give heart to the counsel of the apostle Paul, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).



GEORGE O. WOOD, D.TH.P., general superintendent of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri



HOW TO KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME TO AND Best Prepare for Is

BY T. RAY RACHELS

ax DePree, chairman emeritus of Herman Miller, Inc., a member of Fortune Magazine's National Business Hall of Fame, author of Leadership Is an Art, and a Christian, says "the fundamental task of leadership is to define reality, and to say thank you again, again, and again." These ingredients are profound for people in pastoral leadership.

A pastor's ability to determine whether he should continue at his present place of ministry or leave will most often give wisdom its severest test.

Good times in ministry do not have the same Richter quotient, as do tough times. Good times take place when church attendance, offerings, congregational good will, and spiritual life are high. This is pastoral nirvana. And unless an unusual situation arises, or God's voice for



you to leave your pastorate is unmistakable, then it is probably best for you to continue to build God's work where you are.

But what if those positive elements are not present where you are now serving? Is it time to leave? How do you know when it's time? And how do you leave a ministry gracefully when relationships have failed and your spirit is wounded? Defining that kind of negative reality and then taking positive steps (if you can find them) may require the spiritual artistry of a Barnabas.

For many years Roy Oswald directed Training and Field Studies at Washington's Alban Institute. These studies provide resources for clergy and congregations. Oswald says that recognizing the history and background of a congregation is an important factor in determining whether a pastor, when under attack, should resign or stay. For instance, if a church has perpetually solved its problems by getting rid of leadership, pushing yet another pastor out will not serve its welfare. That simply repeats the negative cycle. Sometimes pastors need to hang in there with the support of their denomination.

Suppose, however, you miss the warning



HOW TO KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME TO MOVE ON and Best Prepare for It

signals and are asked to leave. What happens at that point? And how do you recover?

When You Are Asked To Leave

Oswald believes that fired pastors are deeply wounded. This often begins a downward spiral, sometimes ending even in a divorce. These pastors may have neglected their own growth and their family's well-being. Despite the emotional shock, a pastor must seek an objective answer to this question: *Do I still have a valid ministry?* Consider the following scenario:

Circumstances change: and even after a pastor's long tenure at a church, the congregation wants a change in leadership. Sometimes the pastor did nothing wrong. It may have more to do with restlessness within the church, and the notion that new leadership will bring fresh ideas.

I watched a pastor face such a situation after over 20 years at a fine church. He had done nothing immoral. He had not pilfered the cash drawer. The first sign of a seismic tremor came without warning. The board told him they had lost confidence in his leadership.

This pastor responded by telling the board that he had spent years trying to build the church and would not spend a single day tearing it down. He would go quietly and take the high road during his last few Sundays. He reminded the board that any negative consequences would be their responsibility.

As the board attempted to also take the high road and put the best face on the pastor's departure, it became increasingly difficult for them to answer the questions the congregants were asking. Rather than listing their grievances, the board became silent. They did not wish to air the issues leading up to the pastor's termination, but found themselves in an guidelines to pastors on how to leave with grace. He suggests these acts will empower your legacy and will probably be the most important sermon you give to the church.

Do not attack the board or any group in the church regardless of how unfair you feel you are being treated.

Do not misrepresent the truth by telling the church you feel it is God's will to leave at this time if you do not believe that. That compromises everything you have said and taught.

Do not whine or act as if you are the victim of some plot. Even if you feel abused in the process, follow the example of turning the other cheek and giving up your coat.

Tell the congregation you love them and want the very best for them and the church.

Be a peacemaker. Tell the congregation you want to leave an example of what peacemaking looks like. Let them know the youth of the church are watching. This is the most important teaching opportunity you may have had in all the years of your ministry. Make it count for good.

Share your dilemma with the board and congregation. Tell them you are committed to being a peacemaker. It is better not to discuss some issues and not answer some questions. Remind them that even Jesus told His disciples there were things He would like to share with them but they were not able to bear them.

Contact your district leadership and share the facts openly with them. If you need someone to vent with, vent with them. If you need someone to feel sorry for you, let them be the ones to feel sorry for you. If you want to be sure people know you did nothing wrong, tell them.

Advise the board to request assistance from the district leadership. This is a very critical moment in the church. District

leadership can be a tremendous blessing to both you and the congregation.

Never use the pulpit to set the record straight. Exalt Christ and preach about how much He loves the Church and His desire to

see it built. Recall some of God's promises to never leave or forsake us. Remember the lost in the community who need a strong and vibrant church. Do not forget that people in the congregation have their own problems and should not come to church to hear about all of its problems or your personal issues.

Ask the board to become involved in transitional prayer groups. It is difficult to throw stones very far from your knees. While you are still at the church, provide prayer lists for the groups to use each week. Make the lists positive and focused on the future. Never use them to leak information about the unjust treatment you have received.

Leaving with grace will empower your legacy and will probably be your most important sermon to the church.

uncomfortable situation trying to placate the restlessness within the congregation. Even the plans for a farewell celebration were filled with tension. Some demanded answers; and when they did not get them, they left the church. Offerings diminished. Other staff members lost their focus on the mission of the church. A heaviness settled over the services, and speculation took root as rumors blossomed in the absence of explanations.

Guidelines for Leaving

Wayne Kraiss, former Vanguard University president, and now an interim pastor to churches in difficult transitions, offers Assist the board by suggesting they choose a vice-chairman to lead them in your absence if they do not already have one. Look carefully at the bylaws to see the process for pastoral transitions and help them get organized for that.

Discuss the appropriateness of a timely departure. Generally, sooner is better. Do not labor the process or unnecessarily drag it out. Give the church an appropriate opportunity to plan a farewell and organize for a transition, but then get out of the way. Also consider your children's school schedules.

Do not assume it is your responsibility to provide the next pastor with a list of people you trust and do not trust. The next pastor may seek your assessment, but do not offer it. It is best not to attempt church discipline at this time. Leave that to the district and/or board once you have agreed to depart. Anything you attempt in this area will usually cause injury. There are often at least two sides to most stories.

Suggest the church appoint an interim pastor. Depending on the size of the church, this may be a great help to the board and congregation. It may provide time for healing. Sudden change is hard on a congregation and often hard on the incoming pastor.

Pray for grace. Ask the Lord to remove any bitterness, anger, or hatred from your lips or attitude. Ask for a pure heart.

Minister to your spouse and family. This is a dangerous time for you and your spouse. Do not inflame the situation by dumping all your anger and bitterness on your family. They need encouragement and confidence in God's grace and guidance. Be aware of your words and actions if you have children in the parsonage. Do not let others turn them

into cynics and rebels. Shield them as a shepherd shields his flocks. Lead them beside still waters and into green pastures.

Relocate. As difficult as it may be for your family, trust the grace of God and leave the area. This will greatly enhance healing for you and your family. You will create far more good will by leaving the area than staying where people constantly drop in and where people frequently ask where you are now worshiping.

Remind the board and congregation that everyone will vote on the next pastor. A minority of most congregations will use ballots. The rest of the congregation will use their wallet and feet.

Closing Well

Someone asked Roy Oswald to give an example of a pastor who closed well. He answered: A friend of mine in a church near Washington, D.C., accepted a call from Michigan. Before he left, we sat down with a tape recorder and I asked him what was good about this ministry, what had been painful, and what things he had to let go. He expressed feelings in that exit interview that surprised even him.

We distributed the transcript of that interview to the church

board. His candid comments encouraged them to be candid, too. He set a healthy atmosphere by visiting key people.

Just before his departure, the congregation held a roast in his honor. With humor, drama, and songs, they recalled his *faux pas* — he was a terrible administrator, never on time, often scatterbrained. All this came out, but the tone was affirming: "It was worth it because you are a loving person, and we are going to miss you."

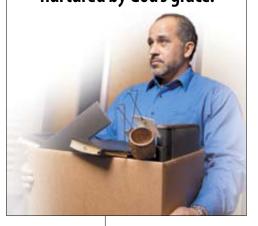
Closure is important even with the people who may have signed a petition against you. You can learn a lot by asking these people, "Where did this relationship get off track?" and "I'd like you to hear my point of view before I go."

No matter what the situation, every pastor has supporters. These people will be upset over what the congregation did, and the pastor needs to get closure with these friends, too.

Spiritual depth makes the difference through all pastoral battles. The only way a pastor can negotiate through these hard times is to have a deep sense that God cares for him and that he is nurtured by God's grace. The pastor must be convinced that the Church belongs to Jesus, and he is Christ's servant.

William H. Willimon is dean of the chapel and professor of Christian Ministry at Duke University. In his book, *Calling and Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life*, he says: "Paul spent much of his pastoral time attempting to referee in congregational squabbles. In 1 Corinthians he pleads for love and unity among the baptized. He tells them that they are all members of one body. He urges them to agree in the Lord.

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HOW TO KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME TO MOVE ON and Best Drepare for It

"But it is clear that one thing Paul values even more than unity, peace, and love is the *gospel*. Community can be demonic. Not all unified, internally loving communities are fruitful communities. Even better than community is *gospel*. *Gospel*, for Paul, means cross and resurrection, and perhaps predominately, the cross. For the sake of the crucifixion gospel, Paul was willing to provoke division, call names, condemn, accuse, and judge. Paul reminds me as a pastor that I must be tethered to something more significant than peace and harmony if I am to be faithful to my vocation."

Staff Pastor Terminations

What about the staff pastor who is being forced out or feels — because of disappointments or a sour relationship with the senior pastor — that he needs to leave?

Warning signs for staff pastors are usually unmistakable. They may include:

- Lost respect; becoming more critical than supportive of his senior pastor
- Regular conversations becoming more awkward; your thoughts and/or suggestions about church life are relegated to "later," "not now," "no"
- Being accused of not doing your job; of being incompetent
- Congregational members who want to see you gone
- Feelings of being not appreciated; overloaded with work; underpaid
- You have lost your passion

When Should a Pastor Leave?

I have been inspired by the writings of Gordon MacDonald, whose pastoral experience bridged five churches in 38 years. He pastored Grace Chapel in Lexington, Massachusetts, on two separate occasions. He talks about *leave-decisions*:

- Leaving a (not "the") ministry
- Leaving it *happily* (satisfied about your work)
- Leaving it *honorably* (in a way that's appreciated)
- Leaving it *appropriately* (no burning of bridges)

What signals might be present, either with the congregation or in your own life that suggests the best timing for a leave-decision? MacDonald offers seven hints.

1.Incompatibility. Good church, good pastor, but a bad fit. The congregation needs a form of pastoral leadership that the sitting pastor does not possess.

Take, for example, the pastor who wants to use the church's resources for reaching people outside the church, while the people who are already inside the church want to concentrate on holding steady with where we have always been, and what we have always had. Suspicion, then confrontation, is inevitable.

2. Immobility. A stymied, ossified congregational system that is trapped in an ecclesiastical whirlpool — lots of programmatic motion but little sense of direction. This system shrewdly neutralizes fresh leadership. In this situation the congregation is a closed community that plays church as a way of meeting the social needs of its constituents.

3. Organizational transition. Healthy organizations inevitably

reach growth points where a new kind of leadership becomes necessary. Not every pastor can effectively adapt to new and needed changes, says MacDonald. A wise and humble pastor learns where he is best suited.

4.Stagnancy. Growing pastors develop in their giftedness and leadership effectiveness. When a congregation stands in the way, or somehow prevents its pastor's personal growth, the result will be boredom and mediocrity for everyone. But when the congregation shows its appetite for following a Christ-honoring vision with

5. Fatigue. A pastor's life has a 24/7 job description. He needs to set boundaries, but he often does not. However, his batteries run down. He becomes exhausted; he cannot please everybody; and who protects the pastor?

solid, biblical preaching, then renewal happens.

6. Family morale. Unrealistic expectations are real. Ignoring your spouse and children will yield an unhealthy harvest of bitterness, strain, and loss. A pastor has gained nothing if he is successful in the church and a failure at home.

7.The age factor. Sometimes a pastor is tempted to hold on

The right thing to do when your relationship with your senior pastor is sinking is to have well-thought-out and respectful conversation with him.

When these signs become visible problems, it is time to adjust. You simply cannot lose respect for your pastor and remain effective. If your concerns are valid, it might be time to leave, but make sure your judgments are based on something substantial and not simply differences of approach. The right thing to do when your relationship with your senior pastor is sinking is to have well-thought-out and respectful conversation with him. Tolerating extended frustration and emotional anguish toward your leader creates cynicism and bitterness. The clean heart for ministry becomes toxic; your words and attitude betray the shadows in your soul; and your prayers and dreams for serving God and people will suffer loss.

In the meantime, and while the Lord is helping you formulate a Christ-honoring response to your pain, express your concerns in prayer and patience.

too long. This casts a large shadow over the reasonableness and good sense of letting go at the right time. It's not easy for a pastor to see clearly, even when more damage than good may be happening when he overstays.

A pastor is probably wise, says MacDonald, to wrestle with the *leave-decision* annually. He should spend a few days in self-examination, and seek the insight of reliable, godly counselors for their candid evaluation based on his previously set goals and intentions. If he pursues this discipline, it is likely that when the time to leave does come, he will do it in confidence that God has spoken, that he has completed a good work, and that he has new opportunities ahead.

William Willimon talked about a pastor he knew who called it quits by standing up without warning in a Sunday meeting and announcing he was leaving the ministry. After the initial shock, an older member of the church asked, "Don't you think you owe us an explanation?"

He replied that he had entered the ministry to preach the

gospel and to support the people of Christ in their discipleship. Yet over the years his ministry had become little more than a boring matter of housekeeping and dull routine. He could not take it anymore, so he was leaving.

"Did it ever occur to you that many of us are bored too?" the church member persisted. "None of us have asked you to preach dull sermons. You do the things you do in ministry because that is what you do, not because we have demanded it. If you have some higher, more interesting, or bold idea of what church ought to be, tell us. Some of us feel the same way you do about what this congregation has become."

Too many pastors passively acquiesce into dull, theologically indefensible forms of ministry that trivialize their vocation, cause them to neglect their marriages and families, and ultimately lead to despair. One pastoral task is to form congregations whose vision of the church gives dignity and validation to the sacrifices we make in being pastors.

Gordon MacDonald recalls Wheaton College President V.

BEST PRACTICES For CONCLUDING NINISTRY IN ONE SETTING

1. Maintain good successor relations

- Prepare the way for the successor with the congregation
- Prepare the way for the congregation with the successor
- Spend quality time with your successor with an agreed-on agenda
- Talk about your successor only in positive terms
- Do not make comparison between yourself and your successor

2. Share ownership and responsibility for the move

- Affirm (or at least acknowledge itinerancy) and your ownership of the process
- Do not blame others for the move
- Do not use closure to get back at others
- Be gracious to everyone

3. Provide good records and administrative wrap-up

- Prepare essential lists for your successor and make sure important files are up to date
- Make sure church bills are paid through the month you leave
- Make sure apportionments are paid through the month you leave
- Never leave any unpaid personal bills
- Do not take church records with you

4. Allow for adequate goodbyes, grief, and closure rituals

- Provide adequate rituals for going and coming
- Find appropriate ways to say goodbye and grieve with congregation and family
- Grant and ask for forgiveness
- Tell the people you love them
- Have personal visits and write personal notes where appropriate

5. Clarify your new relationship with the church

- Clarify in spoken and written communication your new relationship with the people
- Do not promise to come back
- Take time to teach the congregation about closure and boundaries



Affirm love and friendship while releasing persons from pastoral relationships

6. Leave the parsonage and office clean and in order

7. Keep working

- Continue vital ministry and avoid emotional withdrawal
- Settle as many hanging difficulties as possible
- Do not initiate major new programs in the closing months
- Handle hanging staffing difficulties rather than pass them on

St. Paul School of Theology, Wesley Theological Seminary. "The Right Start: Beginning Ministry in a New Setting." http://www.churchleadership.com/pdfs/bestpracticespastoraltransitions.pdf (accessed 8/4/2008). Used with permission.

HOW TO KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME TO MOVE ON and Best Drepare for It

Raymond Edman, 40 years ago speaking in chapel. Edman had just finished telling about the time he had carefully rehearsed for his audience with the then-emperor of Ethiopia.

His application for the students, whom he felt had slipped into a spirit of irreverence in their worship, was simple: You must always be prepared to respectfully conduct yourself in the presence of the King of Kings.

Having made his point, Edman suddenly slumped to the floor and died. Having spoken of entering the presence of the King, he did it himself.

He left at the moment of God's choosing, who, we trust, watches over our *leave-decisions*, too.

My friend, Bill Dogterom, left his Glendora Foothill Christian Center congregation of 27 years to become university



pastor, associate professor of Pastoral Ministries and Spiritual Formation, and chair of Leadership Studies (School of Religion) at Vanguard University. His final letter to his church is a model of grace and sensitivity.

"As I step aside from my role as your pastor, my heart is filled with nothing but gratitude — to you, and to the Lord. You have truly been His hand extended to me in so many ways over these past 27 years. I can't properly thank each of you — so let me try a more universal approach.

"Thank you, perhaps most of all, for your prayers — both for and about me. I have benefited from a team of men and women who have met regularly on Thursday mornings, and more recently on Sunday mornings, to pray. There is no more important ministry, and I thank you for your faithfulness.

"Thank you for creating a safe place for my family. While the pastors' kids can never fully escape their identity, this has been our sons' church — and family — and it has been a haven for them. Thank you for loving them as they are, without demand — but with encouragement. Your care for our sons ministered more to us than we can possibly say.

"Thank you to all of you who served on the board over the years. I am grateful for your willingness to risk the kind of open communication and community that are part of what it means to be in the kingdom of God as it is expressed here. Your steady, faithful commitment to pray and make sometimes difficult choices with grace and charity is a model of how it ought to be.

"Thank you to the scores of you who have served in ministries in and as the church — ushers, greeters, teachers, sound, sight, music, outreach, sponsors, commanders, and on the list goes. You are truly the body of Christ — Foothill is what it is, and what it will be, because of you.

"Thank you for your faithful and generous giving over the years. The ratio of those giving what seems to be at least a tithe is more than double the national average. Our missions giving is, likewise, in the top tier of churches our size. That kind of trust is exemplary.

"Thank you, finally, for teaching me how to pastor. Your patience, prayers, and love have made it possible for me to grow and learn, to make mistakes, and to succeed. Words are insufficient for what is in my heart. Thank you for calling me, and allowing me to be your pastor. Judy and I are very grateful for Foothill Christian Center. For you."

That's a great way for a pastor to say goodbye. @



T.RAY RACHELS, superintendent, Southern California District of the Assemblies of God, Irvine, California



For 25 years Pastor Bill Dogterom wrote a weekly column on the back of Glendora Foothill Christian Center's bulletin. After 27 of service to the church, his final column is a reflection of what he learned while at Foothill Christian Center and what he is still learning.

- Not to take myself so seriously, but to take God *very* seriously.
- Not to take anything praise or criticism personally.
- If something has to be done right now, there is a good chance it does not need to be done at all.
- The harder I must push, the less likely God is in the outcome.

- I can do less in 1 year, but more in 5 years, than I think.
- Wounded people tend to wound people.

 Most often, unacknowledged wounds
 make for judgmentalism.
- There is almost no limit to my ability to stare at myself in the mirror and not see myself staring back.
- I can fail; and it's okay.
- I can succeed; and it's okay.
- I do not know what failure or success is.
- I learn the most from people who think I am wrong.
- Not everyone who supports you supports you. And not everyone who is against you is against you.
- I can do a whole lot of things well that I

- am not supposed to be doing at all.
- I can fool most of the people most of the time.
- I can fool myself at least some of the time.
- I cannot fool God. Ever.
- God will use me, even when I am trying to fool Him.
- God will let me succeed at failing.
- The love of God is greater far, than tongue or pen can ever tell.
- The only work that matters is people work. Nothing else remains, but people live forever.
- There is a wideness to God's mercy.
- It is polite to thank one's teachers.

 So, thank you very much for everything.

 Really.

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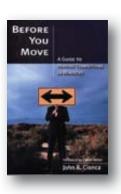
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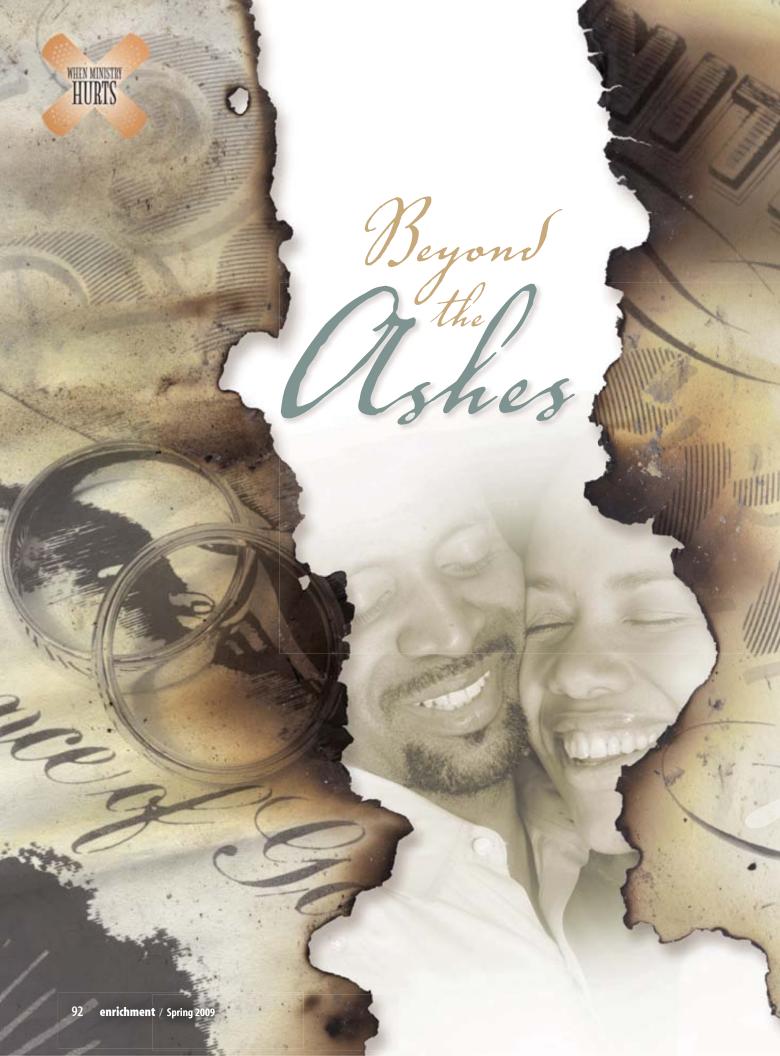


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THE JOURNEY BACK TO WHOLENESS

Ministry wives who limp along the dark and lonely path of their husband's moral failure share a common desire — to find healing for their broken hearts.

BY TRISHA MATTHEWS*

dedicate this article to the ministry wife who might be limping along a dark and lonely path carved by her husband's moral failure. This failure can create issues that range from the inability to fulfill one's role in ministry to the shame that accompanies moral failure. One thing is certain: Those who limp along this path share a common desire to find healing for their broken hearts.

No other pain can rival the pain of a broken heart. Details surrounding the events that brought the pain etch themselves into our memories with uncanny distinction. Even the feeblest trigger has the power to bring to mind the intricate elements that surrounded the proceedings of that day.

In a moment we remember the meal we shared. We recall the clothes we wore and the order of the errands we ran. We reawaken to the sensations we endured the moment we learned the devastating news.

January 20, 2006, began as any other normal day for me. I noticed, however, my husband, Tom [not his real name], was uncharacteristically distant that day. We generally touch base

every few hours, but on January 20, calls were brief. During dinner he seemed distracted and troubled. Since we share an open and honest relationship, I knew he would give me an entrance into the circumstances plaguing him after the children were in bed.

That evening he invited me to coffee. He was so agitated we swiftly left the coffee shop and headed to the church. To my surprise, three of our church leaders joined us. As we sat around a small table in our pastor's office, I began to sense something was dreadfully wrong.

Strengthened by the comfort of those witnesses, my husband began to unfold the agonizing truth — he had engaged in compromise and deception. He broke as he shared the details of his marital unfaithfulness.

Irrepressible shakes seemed to overtake my body. Emotions held me captive in a relentless battle between anger and brokenness, deep sorrow and rage.

By the time my husband and I walked out of the office that night, it seemed as if the bottom had fallen out of our world. Life would never be the same.

*Trisha Matthews is an assumed name.



Curse God and Die ... and Other Words We Dare Not Speak

One might acknowledge a sense of reassurance in the fact the sin that once lurked in darkness now cowered before the light of truth. Yet, even today, I marvel at the depth of hemorrhaging pain you endure in the days and weeks following the disclosure of your spouse's sin.

I had criticized Job's wife because of her shortsighted and arrogant request that Job "curse God and die!" (Job 2:9). Today, however, I extend a larger measure of compassion toward this infamous woman. Having identified with her feelings of abandonment, I now admit that words of a similar nature echoed in my mind.

My own confessions of faith mocked me: "I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day" (2 Timothy 1:12). I found myself bitterly questioning God's dedication to me and my family, and I boldly voiced my complaint before Him.

Considering death to be the worst possible punishment I could receive, I acted out in ways in which I thought I was incapable. Death seemed a better option than living with a mutilated heart that forced me to face another moment of my miserable existence.

Undeniable Grace

Two years prior to Tom's confession, we had resigned from a senior pastorate in Colorado. For 3 years this church seemed to reject his call and ministry. Tom felt wounded, discouraged, and disillusioned. It seemed that people had questioned his ministry gifts. He doubted God's ability to use him.

Two months after his resignation, he received an invitation from a friend in the South. He felt humbled by God's affirmation reflected in this call. He rejoiced in the opportunity to experience a fresh start in ministry alongside a friend.

This new assignment, however, did not mend the deep brokenness in my husband's spirit or heal the wounds he attempted to bury. He grew skilled in elevating his gifts to hide his broken spirit.

He experienced incredible favor and external success in this new ministry. Yet inwardly he was not functioning with the spiritual fervor and passionate trust in God that had once guided his thoughts and actions.

The enemy soon crafted a choice weapon, fashioned to the moment and to the insecurities in my husband's emotional tank. He began to rely on the affirmation and approval of those with whom he ministered. The enemy used this dependency to issue a deathblow to my wounded shepherd. He attempted to take him out of the race once and for all.



Sin has staggering wages. We experienced the loss of reputation, friends, opportunity, ministry, trust, security, finances, joy, and freedom. I had been

investing more than 150 hours in the lives of our four children each month. This priority swiftly changed because I was forced to work full time to assist Tom in meeting the financial needs of our family.

Yet, even amid this riveting loss, I could not deny God's faithfulness to guard what I had entrusted to His care. He placed himself in the middle of our situation. He gently removed every scale of deception from my husband's eyes, led him to genuine repentance, and gave him a passionate commitment to restore all that was shattered.

Even though this dark season caught me by surprise, it did not catch the Lord off guard, nor did He need a plan B for our lives. The words recorded in His Book did not need amending (Psalm 139:16). He was orchestrating these events concerning my family, even though we could not always discern His footprints.

A New Beginning

After confessing to the church leaders and to our family, Tom met with our district leadership. They expressed their willingness to walk with him on the pathway of rehabilitation. They committed to lead our family toward restoration.

The leadership team provided the means for an extensive season of counseling with a team of highly trained and equally discerning counselors. Over the next 2 years, these counselors proved to be a contemporary portrait of Ezra's reconstruction team. They assisted every member of our family after our foundations had crumbled. It would have been impossible to emerge from the rubble that buried us and begin to rebuild if we had tried to accomplish the task alone.

Tom and I sensed opposition from the enemy as we attempted to rebuild the foundations of our marriage and family. The enemy's condemnation threatened to hinder the work of God in Tom's life. I often added my own accusations: "What kind of a husband would do this to his family? How dare you say you love us and treat us with such indifference?"

My emotional state was inadequate to make great strides in the rebuilding project. I was isolated, scared, and a target for the enemy's attacks. His attacks came with relentless cruelty and penetrated my spirit. But in the same way God sent Haggai and Zechariah to aid those who were faltering in the task of rebuilding the house of God, the Lord sent counselors who remained by our side. They continue to assist us in the completion of God's healing journey.

Just as the workers rebuilt Jerusalem's foundations and walls to make them stronger than ever, unprecedented resolves and renewed commitments became the protective walls surrounding and providing security for our family. As recorded in Ezra, all the rebuilding costs came from the king's treasury, paid for by taxes collected from those who had attempted to destroy the rebuilding project.

Tom and I marveled in the truth that the enemy, who had tried to stop God's renown through our lives, would suffer loss as the rebuilding continued (Ezra 6:8). Our own supply was inadequate for the daunting task ahead of us. The means to rebuild our lives must come from the King's treasury. Without fail, God has provided for our daily needs.

Uncharted Waters

During rehabilitation, one key concern for a minister and his family is finding a source of steady income. After serving in ministry for 22 years, my husband was concerned about how he would provide for our family.

After sending several résumés with no response, Tom launched his own commercial cleaning service. He spent the next 2 1/2 years in various aspects of business property upkeep.

The One who met humanity face-to-face once again made himself available to visit Tom in his loneliness and pain. As a result, his life began to reflect a heart of deep adoration. God's approval began to define my husband's value.

Tom had no longing to return to the place he had once known. He had experienced decades of life as a doer. Now, for the first time, he could embrace the joy of God's love, affirmation, forgiveness, and approval.

I rejoiced in God's thorough restoration of my husband's heart. I, however, found myself wrestling with issues I believed I had mastered as a mature Christ follower.

If you want to find the shallow roots in your life, send a hurricane. This storm uprooted and left exposed whatever the wind could shake loose.

Victims of betrayal wrestle with the validity of biblical forgiveness in the context of their own unique circumstances. I quietly clung to feelings of bitterness and unforgiveness as a constant companion and comforting friend. I soon discovered this friend was a viper, aimed at my destruction.

another moment of my Bitterness is like drinking poison miserable existence. and waiting for the other person to die.1 The longer I embraced condemnation, hatred, and retaliation, the less capable I was of moving forward in my relationship with Christ. I found myself in a place of desperation. I prayed that the Lord would remove every root of bitterness that sought to defile my life.

Forgiveness became a daily choice, practiced in fits and starts. As I began to extend the same forgiveness I desperately needed, God brought new levels of healing grace and spiritual liberty.

The Journey Toward Wholeness

Even though Tom and I processed this journey from different

perspectives and our own distinct needs, the healing power of God's agape love has knit our spirits together. We cherish each moment together more than ever before, and we have sensed God's renewal of our marriage and family as we have spent consistent time together in prayer. We now exercise a deeper, more authentic level of intimacy and honest communication with one another.

Even though discipline, surrender, boundaries, and isolation have all been real and necessary elements in our healing, one vital truth is exalted above the others: Agape love heals.² Embracing the richness of God's boundless love through the many promises in His Word has been a key factor in our healing journey. God did not provide His Word so we might enjoy heads that are full, but hearts that are whole.3

His Word is an irreplaceable anchor for the wounded spirit. It is our source of hope for a brighter tomorrow. It enables us to daily renew our minds (Romans 12:2).

Satan attempts to paralyze victims of betrayal with low feelings of self-esteem and mistrust. I grew to realize my need to daily renew my mind with the truth of God's Word to refute Satan's twisted truth about my situation. I sought creative means of ingesting it.

The Daily Audio Bible, available on iTunes, has become a regular companion when I run or work out at the gym. During lunch breaks I read the Bible, study, and meditate. Scripture passages adorn the dashboard of my car, my bathroom mirror, and random areas of my home, offering hope in my suffering.

> Through biblical meditation, the wounds that can become strongholds in one's life lose their

> > power to morph people into something much less than who they really are through Christ. God sends forth His living, healing Word into places of brokenness: "The ruins will be rebuilt. The desolate land will be cultivated instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass through it. They will say, 'This land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now

fortified and inhabited.' Then the nations around you that remain will know that I, the Lord, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it" (Ezekiel 36:33–36).

Rebuilding the ruins in our life is an intimidating task for most of us. This task, however, does not extend beyond God's ability to restore.

We can choose to gaze at the desolation around us and lose hope, or we may set our hearts on a pilgrimage to find God in the storm. God has not called us to lie down in the Valley

Death seemed a better

option than living

with a mutilated heart

that forced me to face

Beyond the Ashes

of Baca (the place of suffering), but to pass through it, moving forward in the strength He supplies.⁴

While on this healing journey, I have often reflected on an eagle's perspective on a storm: Its goal is not to survive the storm, but to overcome it. As it opens its wings to the thermal currents of the storm, it finds that what might have appeared to bring disaster is capable of lifting it upward to a safer elevation that it was incapable of reaching in its own strength.⁵

I have chosen to embrace this storm rather than hide from its fury. Even on days when I am too weak to open my wings to its thermal current, I remember that God declared, "I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself" (Exodus 19:4).

When Does the Journey End?

Man ascribes time frames to rehabilitation. After the completion of my husband's rehabilitation program, God revealed to him that the work in his life was not yet complete. Rehabilitation had removed huge boulders, but finer gravel buried since Tom's childhood became visible in the light of God's love.

My husband had been introduced to pornography at a young age. During our marriage, he gave in to this temptation every few years. Deeply embarrassed, he would confess his sin to me. We would pray for healing but were too ashamed to seek help. How does a pastor admit his involvement in this kind of degrading activity to his colleagues? I was too ashamed to share the pain I felt with my friends.

We both agreed we had completed 20 miles of a challenging marathon, but miles separated us from the finish line. Tom re-entered rehabilitation through the district to work on these areas to prevent defiling the work God had accomplished. The district leadership and our counseling staff surrounded us in gracious support.

Today, our healing journey continues. Our situation could have destroyed our lives, the lives of our children, and our marriage. Calvary's invitation, however, offers the redeeming power of the Cross in our situation.

The Cross overcomes all that would bring discouragement, despair, and even death. It powerfully adds new meaning to our pain. It can turn our misery into ministry. After all, isn't our confidence that "all things work together for good"? (Romans 8:28, NKJV).6

"All things" includes devastating pain that can shatter your heart. God promises in the Book of Hosea to make the Valley of Achor (trouble) into a door of hope. There, in that valley, He will give us back our vineyards and cause us to sing again (Hosea 2:14–16).

You may have lost rich vineyards or circumstances may

You do not have the *one* situation that is beyond God's ability to redeem. have stolen your song. You may have wounds that are decades old, yet God's desire is perfect healing and to renew your song.⁷

Every painful situation is unique and can bring genuine brokenness. I am certain, however, of this fact: You do not have the *one* situation that is beyond God's ability to redeem.

God does not offer a one-time act of redemption. He offers us daily redemption because this is His nature as Redeemer.⁸

Can your valley of devastated, dry bones live? I can testify that He breathed life back into me and my marriage and family by His power and grace.

God has lifted me out of the ash heap of suffering (1 Samuel 2:8). Just as a master refiner uses ash to create glorious, colorful glass treasures, God is tranforming the ash of our own suffering into a celebrated display for His glory. This is my confidence. This is my prayer for everyone whose heart is broken.

TRISHA MATTHEWS is an Assemblies of God pastor's wife living on the west coast.

NOTES

- 1. Joyce Meyer Ministries 1999 radio broadcast.
- 2. Concepts from Jack Rozell, MRAP director and counselor, Kirkland, Wash., 2006.
- 3. Beth Moore, Breaking Free (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2000).
- 4. Reflections from Psalm 84:5-7.
- 5. Joyce Meyer Ministries, Mount Up With Wings as Eagles.
- Scripture quotations marked NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
- 7. Nicole Johnson, Fresh Brewed Life (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999).
- 8. Concept from Jack Hayford, pastors conference, Van Nuys, Calif., 2002.







www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org

Following Derailed Clergy: A Message of Healing for a Shocked Congregation

BY GEOFFREY.W.SUTTON, PH.D., AND ELOISE K.THOMAS, MS

"Did you know he was having an affair?" Jim asked his wife, Linda, following their pastor's emotionally wrenching apology. Church members who find themselves in these situations need to learn how to deal with their emotions and understand how to work through a biblical model of forgiveness. The minister who follows a pastor who has had an affair needs special grace to lead his church through this tragedy. The authors explain how to help parishioners deal with this devastating issue.





ANOREXIA OF THE SOUL

A Burnout Checklist for Pastors

BY HARVEY A. HERMAN

Maybe it all started when Martin Luther said, "If I rest, I rust."

Regardless of Luther's intent, in today's ecclesiastical circles these words mean unflinching commitment, tireless service, and a consuming passion. A pastor's dedication to be available 24/7, to self-sacrifice, and to be addicted to work, however, shrivels his emotional, physical, and spiritual reserves. Harvey Herman provides practical advice for pastors who are experiencing spiritual anorexia.



Payday Someday: How To Ask for and Get a Pay Increase From Your Church BY HAROLD R. NEWSOME.JR.

Many pastors live on limited incomes, but they are often reticent to ask their board for a raise in salary because they do not want to appear as money hungry. There are practical ways a pastor can ask for a raise and receive it. These words of wisdom may be what it takes to help you receive the pay raise you need.



Abused by My Senior Pastor

What can a staff person do when his senior pastor abuses him? In this *audio* file a ministry couple describes what it means to be dismissed from their ministry position. Listen as this couple relays their experience and how it strengthened their marriage and their resolve to serve Christ in the midst of their ministry pain.

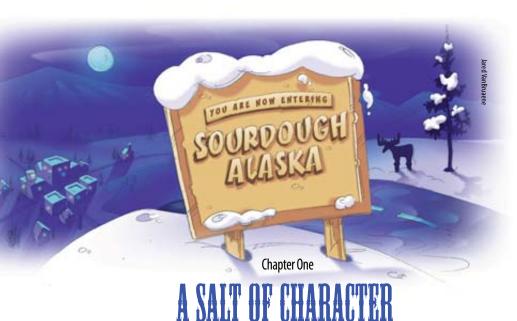


The Moses-Joshua Succession From Joshua 1:1-18 BY KEVIN BEERY

How does a senior pastor leave his church and make sure the pastoral transition is smooth and the next pastor is God's man for that position? One of the greatest examples of pastoral transition is found in the example of Moses and Joshua. The principles outlined in this example can help pastors and churches during this important transition in leadership.



From the Light Side / JACK AIKEN and TORRY "MOOSE" MARTIN



Introduction to Sourdough, AK

I had just opened the Wednesday night service at King's Way Assembly in Eagle River, Alaska, when Torry Martin and his friend, Rob, slipped in. After the service, I chatted with them.

Torry and Rob became frequent visitors in our home. This is where I first heard the stories about Torry's misadventures in Alaska that form the basis for his comedy routine and this column. Torry credits his current performance ministry to my suggesting he combine his stories with a spiritual application.

I discovered he was writing Christian drama sketches and wanted to compete in the comedy writing and performance categories at the Christian Artists Convention in Estes Park, Colorado. He could not afford the trip, so I asked the church to help him. At this convention he won both individual categories and the overall grand prize. Beside writing for *Adventures in Odyssey* Torry has also published seven books, numerous magazines articles, and performs his "Torry Stories" nationwide.

"Sourdough, AK" is a combination of our imaginations and actual events. You decide which is which. It is about a fictional town in Alaska with a fictional pastor and congregants. So, I introduce you to the members of Sourdough Assembly in Sourdough, Alaska. We are glad you could join us, and we hope you decide to stay.

Jack



JACK AIKEN is senior pastor, King's Way Assembly of God, Eagle River, Alaska. He is also the treasurer for the Alaska District Council and holds a master of science in geology.



TORRY"MOOSE" MARTIN is a former Alaskan and an award-winning Christian comedian and author who currently resides in Sparta, Tennessee. He also writes for *Adventures in Odyssey*, produced by Focus on the Family.

t was Monday morning. Pastor Mack was sitting at his desk rehashing the Sunday services. Attendance was low — again. He groaned as he leaned back hard in his ancient chair, forgetting that it always tipped violently to one side when he did that.

As he struggled to right himself, his secretary/bookkeeper/Jill-of-all-trades buzzed his intercom. "Someone wants to speak to you, but he wouldn't give me his name or tell me what he wanted," she said as she chomped furiously on her wad of gum. "Some people just have no concept of phone etiquette." Bertha then popped her gum with a loud smack as an added emphasis of her displeasure.

Pastor Mack rolled his eyes as he reached for the phone.

"Hello, this is Pastor Mack. May I help you?"

"What kind of preacher are you?" the voice growled.

Dynamic, insightful, anointed, and totally awesome, Pastor Mack thought in a sudden burst of egotism. But he answered, "I'm not sure I know what you mean."

"Look," the gruff voice said, "I just got outta prison, and I'm looking fer a preacher like the chaplain that done our services. Name was Chaplain Beyers. Know him?"

"Yes, I do. He's one of the chaplains our denomination sponsors," Pastor Mack responded.

"Well, ain't that something!" Jake Smedley exclaimed. "Preacher, I just done 15 years for murder, though God as my witness, I swear it was self-defense. Anyway, now I'm living here in Sourdough, but ain't got no car, so's I was wonderin' if'n ya might come over to my place? I got saved in prison, and all, but I still got me a mess of questions 'bout God, and church, and stuff."

"Why, sure, Jake, I'll be glad to visit with you. Just tell me where and when."

"The when don't matter diddly.
I'm here pretty much all the time. My



address is 101 Totem Street. I'll be looking for ya."

She didn't say it, but her expression screamed *Are you nuts?* when Pastor Mack told Sister Bertha what he had agreed to do.

"Probably some bum looking for a

handout. Honestly, you'd think those people would just get up off their lazy backsides and do something for themselves." Bertha then gestured toward a stapler just barely out of reach. "Now, be a hon, and hand me that stapler. Someone moved it clear

across the room where I cain't reach it."

Pastor Mack scooted the stapler about three inches across the desk toward her. "You know, Sister Bertha, I was thinking it'd be great if Jake would begin attending our church. Maybe you could be his sponsor," Pastor Mack teased.

"Humptft," she said, "maybe grizzly bears will become vegetarians, but I don't think so."

Bertha's negative reaction to Jake caused Pastor Mack a bit of consternation. Where is Jesus in that attitude? he asked himself.

The following day Pastor Mack finished his essential tasks a bit early and decided to make his first visit to Jake. When he arrived at the address Jake had given him, he discovered it was the Mush-Inn Motel, Bar, and Grill, one of the most disreputable places in town. After making enquiries at the bar, Mack climbed a dark stairway to the second floor and entered a shabby hallway.

Mack tentatively tapped on the door of room 1, as Jake had directed him. The door opened and a rough-cut man of about 60 years with startlingly clear blue eyes stuck out his hand and said, "Hello, preacher, I'm Jake. Come on in, and take a load off."

After they were seated, Jake began, "Preacher, the only church I've went to since I left home is the prison chapel. So I'm just a tad nervous about going to a real church and all. I guess that's really why I invited ya over. On accounta I wanted to check ya out first to make sure ya was legit — someone kinda like my Chaplain Beyers was — not all stiff and stuffy like the preachers in my parents' church."

Pastor Mack thought, *This is probably* the first time an inmate has done a background check on a church. But what he said was, "Go ahead, tell me what you remember about your parents' church, and we'll see if my church is any different."

"Well, I don't remember much

'ceptin the men couldn't wear neckties. 'Ties,' they said, 'is a sign of pride.' In fact, there was one guy who cut all the buttons off his suit coat and used big silver safety pins instead because he was convinced buttons were also a sign of pride. It's like they was proud to be humble, if'n ya git my gist."

"You know the Bible kind of speaks to that," Pastor Mack answered." Jesus called it 'straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel.' Can you imagine what a camel would taste like?"

"After 15 years of prison food, probably pretty good, I reckon, especially if you had a soda to wash it down with. Hey, that reminds me of another one of them 'rules'. You weren't allowed to drink soda out of a bottle at that church neither."

"No kidding?" Pastor Mack interjected.

"Yeah, because they said that from a ways off, a person might recognize ya, see the bottle, and think you was drinking beer — you's gotta avoid all appearance of evil, ya know." Jake paused, then continued, "Your church don't have no rules like that, do it?" he asked apprehensively.

"No," Pastor Mack laughed, "we don't have any rules like that. We have enough trouble just doing what the Bible says."

Jake grinned, "Ain't that the truth!"
"Jake, I really would like to encourage
you to come to Sourdough Assembly
this Sunday. We have a great bunch of
folks who will welcome you and accept
you just as you are."

"Ya think so? Even when they find out I jest got outta the joint?"

"As long as you were released and didn't break out, they should be just fine with it." Pastor Mack chuckled at his own joke. "Seriously, though, no one at my church will think a thing about it. Our motto is, 'Judge not, and you will not be judged.'"

In the meantime, Sister Myrtle, Sourdough Assembly's Women's Ministries director, just happened to drive by the Mush-Inn Motel where she spotted Pastor Mack's tan minivan parked out front. She turned around and drove by again — slowly this time for confirmation. When she saw the "Don't Laugh, It's Paid For" bumper sticker, she knew it was, in fact, Pastor Mack's van.

She turned around again, almost hitting an oncoming car as she madly dug to extract her cell phone from her purse.



Pastor Mack

Most churches have a prayer chain, and Sourdough Assembly was no exception. However, it was the gossip chain that Sister Myrtle was activating — and a more efficient means of disseminating information has yet to be devised.

"Lilly, you won't believe what I just saw! Pastor Mack's car is right this very minute parked directly in front of the Mush-Inn Motel!"

"What in the world could he be doing there?" Lilly gasped.

"Well, I'm sure he'll come up with a good story," Sister Myrtle replied, adding a significant sniff after the word *good*. "I just wanted to ask you to pray with me about what I saw. What should I do? You know me. I'd never start any trouble, especially for our pastor. But what do we really know about him, him being from the lower 48 and all?"

A few minutes later Myrtle rang off with Lilly as she drove into the parking lot of the Trading Post, Sourdough's grocery store and unofficial community center. She grabbed a cart with a wobbly wheel and headed down the produce aisle. Providentially, as she shopped, she ran into several Sourdough Assembly ladies with whom she was able to share her prayer concern. The *gossip chain* was soon in full operation.

By the next Sunday, practically the whole church had heard about Pastor Mack's visit to the Mush-Inn Motel. And on some branches of the gossip tree, people had embellished the facts considerably. Fortunately, Sister Bertha, who is a skilled eavesdropper, caught wind of the gossip and informed Pastor Mack of the potentially catastrophic situation. After much prayer, he felt God gave him a plan to deal with the gossip, and assure that Jake would be well received.

When Pastor Mack spoke the next Sunday morning, he began by telling a story. "Before the advent of salt shakers, when ladies set their tables, they often placed a little dish of salt at each place. These salt dishes have always fascinated Annie. Over the years she has accumulated quite a collection of them. She delights in using them, especially when entertaining guests.

"One Sunday, a few years ago, while we were living in Tennessee, we entertained an evangelist and his wife. His wife was really nice, but he had an exaggerated view of his knowledge of all things. When his wife picked up the salt dish with the obvious intent to inquire about it, she received a not-so-subtle kick under the table. She promptly sat the dish down without

saying a word. Then, to display his superior knowledge, he promptly picked up his salt dish and dumped it into his unsweetened iced tea.

"I'm not sure how we did it, but nobody said a word. Perhaps we were just too stunned to speak. Once the crucial moment

had passed, we all waited with bated breath for Mr. Know-It-All to realize his mistake. When he took his first sip, we all exploded in laughter. When we caught our breath, Annie gave him a fresh glass of tea and explained the purpose of the little dishes filled with a granulated substance.

"To his credit, the evangelist took it well and enjoyed a good laugh at himself."



Pastor Mack continued, "I've told you this story to make a couple of points. First, things are not always as they seem, and second, making prideful assumptions often leads to distasteful situations.

"Something distaste-ful has developed this week. Someone — not from Sourdough Assembly, I'm sure — saw my car at the Mush-Inn Motel. And rather than giving me an opportunity to explain my mission there, they dumped the salt into the tea and created a very distasteful situation. If they had given me opportunity, I would have been happy to tell them why I was there. Be that as it may, I am

thrilled to tell you my mission to the Mush-Inn was successful. It was there I met Jake Smedley. I would like you to meet my new friend." Pastor Mack motioned toward the stranger on the back pew.

"This is an example how dangerous assumptions can be. You see, making assumptions is just another form of judging, which Jesus condemned."

As the service ended, some members wore sheepish grins, and others gave Jake Smedley a warm and friendly welcome to Sourdough Assembly — including smiles and a firm handshake from Bertha, who also gave him a piece of her inexhaustible supply of gum. However, she did this more out of self-preservation than politeness. Bertha thought, I suppose ex-inmates are acceptable in church. But halitosis? Never!



the stock market, retirement funds, or home equity, but rather in the triumphal return of Christ.

The purpose of this article is to address this question: Do we believe Jesus can come at any moment? In fact, when we can answer this question with an unequivocal affirmative, that reality alone will go a long way toward solving the problem of infrequent preaching on the subject.

Why Another Discussion of Imminent Return?

Many pastors, missionaries, educators, evangelists, and administrators confess that they believe in the imminent return of Christ, but often teach beliefs that contradict this doctrine. What are some of the commonly held beliefs that contradict or undermine the doctrine of the imminent return of Jesus?

Popular Prerequisites

Some believe Jesus cannot return until some lost aspect of the church has been restored — such as Davidic worship or the fivefold ministry. Others believe all Jews must first return to the land of Israel or come to faith in Jesus. Other groups believe that Christians must first take dominion of the earth back from Satan and his followers. Still others believe some eschatological event such as the appearance of the Antichrist, the battle of Gog and Magog, Armageddon, rebuilding Solomon's Temple, or the reinstitution of the sacrificial system must precede the return of Christ.

Many believe, preach, and teach there must be a final, sweeping revival that will usher millions into the Kingdom before Jesus can return. This would be wonderful, and we have every right

to pray for and work toward that end. Scripture, however, makes no promise that such a revival will immediately precede the coming of the Lord. In fact, many passages reflect the opposite: a great falling away will mark the time just prior to Jesus' appearance (Matthew 24:10–12,22,36–41; 25:1–13; Luke 18:8; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:1–9; 2 Peter 3:3,4; Jude 18,19).

Some maintain the gospel must reach every person, nation, or language group before Jesus returns. This position derives almost exclusively from a particular interpretation of Matthew 24:14, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all nations, and then the end shall come" (NASB), and Mark 13:10, "And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations" (NASB).

Because this teaching is so prevalent

are 6,775 unreached people groups who have never been reached with the gospel.⁵ If Jesus cannot return until each individual, people group, or language group receives an adequate witness of the gospel, He cannot come today. Nor can He come tomorrow, next month, next year, and probably not in our lifetime.

This view does *not* mirror the fervent expectation of the imminent return of Christ held by the Early Church. The disciples believed "the Judge is standing right at the door" (James 5:9, NASB). At this point, a word of caution is in order: the Early Church (not the 21st century church) is our paradigm. If it was in error in accepting Jesus at His word and believing He could return at any moment, we must also view the remainder of its theology and proclamation as questionable.

The Early Church turned the world upside down with their preaching while believing Jesus could come at any moment.

within the Assemblies of God, two observations are in order. First, according to our own literature, there are an "estimated 4.4 billion people in the world who still have not had an adequate witness of the gospel ... more than two-thirds of the world's population"⁴ According to another AG author, there

A second and far more important issue is the teaching of Scripture. When

issue is the teaching of Scripture. When we carefully examine passages relevant to the interpretation of Matthew 24:14 and Mark 13:10, we find an astounding reality: Before the martyrdom of Paul in A.D. 64, the Early Church had already reached the *world* to which Jesus referred. According to Acts 2:5, there were Jews in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost from "every nation under heaven" (NASB). After 3,000 of these accepted Christ as their Savior, the vast majority of these new believers



W.E. NUNNALLY, Ph.D., professor of Early Judaism and Christian Origins, Evangel University, Springfield, Missouri

eventually returned to their country taking the gospel to "every nation under heaven."

When Acts speaks of more organized missionary activity, even unbelievers admitted the first Christian generation had succeeded in "turn[ing] the whole world upside down" (17:6, literal translations, emphasis added). Admittedly, this statement is partially overstatement. These unbelievers were agitated at Paul because of the powerful progress the gospel was having on the then known world. They wanted to present Christianity in the worst possible light. But there was some fact for this charge to have gained immediate importance with the local population and its leaders (verses 8,9). We base another reference to the gospel's widespread impact in Paul's lifetime on a reaction the leaders of the Jewish community in Rome had against Paul and Christianity. They declared that Christianity "is spoken against everywhere" (28:22, NASB, emphasis added). Again, it is likely this statement is somewhat hyperbolic, but it nevertheless attests to the degree to which the gospel had impacted the Mediterranean world by A.D. 62.

We're gonna skip the theatrics today and get right into the Word...

"It's his way of instant messaging."

The Book of Acts is not the only place where we have reports of *world* evangelism within the lifetimes of the apostles. About A.D. 57, Paul told Christians in Rome that the faith they had embraced "is being proclaimed throughout the whole world" (Romans 1:8, NASB). In contrast to the statements made in Acts by unbelievers, it is *not* likely that Paul is exaggerating. Certainly no one would attempt to make this charge against his earlier statements in this passage about Jesus' Davidic ancestry (verse 3), resurrection (verse 4), or grace (verse 5).

In another passage in Romans, Paul describes the spiritual status of the Jewish people in his day. He readily notes that not all Jews have accepted the message of the lordship of Jesus (10:16). Two verses later, however, he explains that this is *not* because they have not heard; "Indeed they have [heard because]: "Their voice has gone into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world" (10:18, NASB, emphasis added).

Further evidence of the impact the gospel had in Paul's lifetime appears in his letter to the Christians at Colossae.

He notes that "the gospel which has come to you, just as in all the world also ... is constantly bearing fruit and increasing" (Colossians 1:6, NASB, emphasis added). Paul affirmed that the gospel he had been preaching already had a worldwide impact and was still bringing forth fruit.

As in Romans, Paul underscored the progress of the gospel at the end of the first half of the first century. In Colossians 1:23, he wrote of "the hope of

the gospel ... which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven." We must note the similarity of this language with that of Acts 2:5 — "every nation under heaven."

It is easy for us to dismiss the use of such language by the authors of Scripture and assert the impossibility the Early Church could have evangelized places such as the Far East, North, Central, and South America, and Scandinavia by the end of Paul's ministry. Stanley Horton, however, has noted that the synonymous phrase "every nation under heaven" was a common idiom used to speak primarily of those in the known world or even in the Roman Empire."6 The first-century Jewish historian Josephus describes the Feast of Pentecost using similar language. He states that at Pentecost, Jerusalem was crowded with tens of thousands of people.⁷ Paraphrasing Deuteronomy 16:16, he says that all these pilgrims come "from the ends of the earth" (Antiquities 4:203). This same phrase appears in the writings of Luke (Acts 1:8) as synonymous with "every nation under heaven" (2:5) and referred to the farthest reaches of the Roman Empire.

We should note that the second generation of Christians were equally aware of the extent of the exploits of Christians in the apostolic era. In A.D. 95. Clement states that Paul had already "taught righteousness unto the whole world ... having reached the farthest bounds of the West."8 Similarly, "John [the apostle] ... when he was a very old man ... dictated the Gospel to his own disciple, the virtuous Papias of Heirapolis [A.D. 60–120], to fill up what was lacking in those who before him had proclaimed the word to the nations throughout all the earth."9

What is true of Paul and Luke must also be true of Jesus. All shared a firstcentury Mediterranean worldview, mindset, and vocabulary with which they described realities around them. Therefore, when Jesus used the word world (Matthew 24:14) to refer to the extent of the spread of His message, His frame of reference was the same as that of Paul, Josephus, Luke, and countless other contemporaries. Like them, He used these words and phrases to describe the known or civilized or Romanized context in which He lived and taught.

Having briefly surveyed the relevant biblical material, it is easy to see how the Early Church could embrace, preach, and teach the imminent return of Christ. They saw absolutely *no* impediment to Jesus' return, including revival or world evangelization. They knew these things had already taken place and that Jesus could come at any moment.

Does This Raise More Questions Than It Solves?

Some will claim that if we remove these prerequisites there will be less impetus for missions and personal evangelism. Against this assertion, the following arguments need to be considered:

- 1. The Early Church that turned the whole world upside down with their preaching did so while at the same time believing Jesus could come at any moment. They believed in imminent return, and this belief did not diminish the fervency of their personal witness or their emphasis on the mission of the Church. Quite the contrary; their belief in imminent return seems to have encouraged faithfulness in personal witness and missionary activity.
- 2. Neither Luke nor John records Jesus' prediction about world evangelism recorded by Matthew 24:14 and Mark 13:10. Nevertheless, the communities in which they were a part (traditionally, Rome and Asia Minor) that (at least originally) did not have access to the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Mark were as active as any other in the prosecution of the Great Commission.



- 3. We do not become involved in missions and personal evangelism *so* Jesus can return; we do them *because* He is going to return. This is not a case of semantics: the former is Kingdom Now and Dominion Theology, both of which are officially disapproved doctrines.¹⁰
- 4. We do not become involved in missions and personal evangelism to fulfill prophecy. *He* does that. We are involved in missions because we love Him and want to keep His commandments (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15; cf. Luke 24:47), and

because we love people and want to see them in right relationship with God (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:20).

5. The Father has already set the time of Jesus' return and the setting up of His earthly kingdom (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7). Jesus taught this to the Early Church himself. Nevertheless, they took His message throughout their world within three decades after His ascension.

The point is this: It makes absolutely no difference *which* impediment we place in the way of Jesus' return or *what* motivates us to do so — all equally nullify belief in the doctrine of imminent return. ¹¹ Either He can return at any moment or He cannot return until certain prerequisites are met. If the latter is the case, we cannot truly believe in imminent return.

A Related Concern: Date Setting

Having established that believers can truly embrace the return of Jesus as imminent, it is crucial to the health of the Church and the integrity of its message that the Church avoids a related error. The desire to know the exact date of the Lord's return is as old as the New Testament (Acts 1:6,7), and the impetus toward date setting has continued unabated into the information age. To date, however, every attempt to specify the time of Jesus' return has met with failure.

The fact Jesus did not appear at the end of the first millennium A.D. dashed the hopes of many. When 1914 came and went, the Jehovah's Witnesses needed to reinterpret their prediction by claiming there had been an "invisible [rather than literal] return." More recently, considerable spiritual fallout came in the wake of the book, 88 Reasons Why the Rapture Could Be in 1988. Despite the millions of copies sold, at least three retries and worldwide exposure on Christian television, the author died in 2001 without seeing his predictions realized.

In 1994, a charismatic pastor prophesied that God was going to "rip the evil out of this world" on Thursday, June 9, of that year. Such a cleansing is indeed predicted by Scripture as a prominent aspect of the end of human history (Isaiah 2:2–4; 66:15–24; Zechariah 14:9-21; Romans 14:11; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 11:15; 18:18; 21:1-5). However, when that day came and went and evil remained a very real part of this world, that pastor resorted to a spiritual interpretation of his prophecy reminiscent of the Jehovah's Witnesses. As at the end of the first millennium A.D., the approach of Y2K signaled vet another outpouring of dire predictions, none of which came to pass. Undaunted, new Web sites regularly predict the year or time of year that Jesus will return. One relatively new Web site claims to have accurately calculated the return of Christ to take place in 2013 (www.danielstimeline.com).

Unintended Bad Fruit

Irrespective of the date, once people set one, this automatically precludes Jesus — at least in the minds of some — from being able to return at any moment before that magic moment. This in turn undermines the doctrine of imminent return. And as with all other impediments, this inadvertently places man in control of end-time events rather than God. In addition, each of the examples cited above only serves to hurt the health of the body of Christ and minimize the effectiveness of its witness.

The teaching of Scripture is clear: "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone" (Matthew 24:36 and parallels). Although some claim it is possible to know the general time period or season, the Scriptures are equally clear: "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority" (Acts 1:7). If we are able to accurately calculate the time of His return, we will be true and

the Scriptures will be in error. He will not really be able to come "like a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:2, NASB).

Scriptural Prescription for Christian Living in Light of the Imminent Return of Christ

If accurately predicting the return of Jesus is not the task of His disciples, what is our responsibility in light of the imminent return of Christ?

- 1. We are to be constantly engaged in witness (John 4:35; 9:4; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Galatians 6:9; Ephesians 5:16) that emphasizes the time of His return is near (Matthew 4:17; 2 Corinthians 6:2).
- 2. We are to be on guard against the increasing number of deceivers and deceptions characteristic of the end-time (Matthew 24:4,5,11,24; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Peter 3:17).
- 3. We are to be awake, sober, and alert (Matthew 24:42,43; 25:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:6; 1 Peter 4:7; Revelation 16:15).
- 4. We are to be ready, prepared (Matthew 24:44; 25:10; Luke 12:35–37; Revelation 19:7).
- 5. We are to be wise (Matthew 25:2; 1 Peter 4:7; 2 Peter 3:18).
- 6. We are to be holy in conduct and thought (Luke 21:34; 2 Peter 3:11; Revelation 16:15).
- 7. We are to be living servant lives filled with the fruit of good deeds (Hebrews 10:24,25; 1 Peter 4:8–10).
- 8. We are to be earnestly and expectantly desiring His appearing (Luke 12:36; 2 Timothy 4:8; 2 Peter 3:12; Revelation 22:17,20).

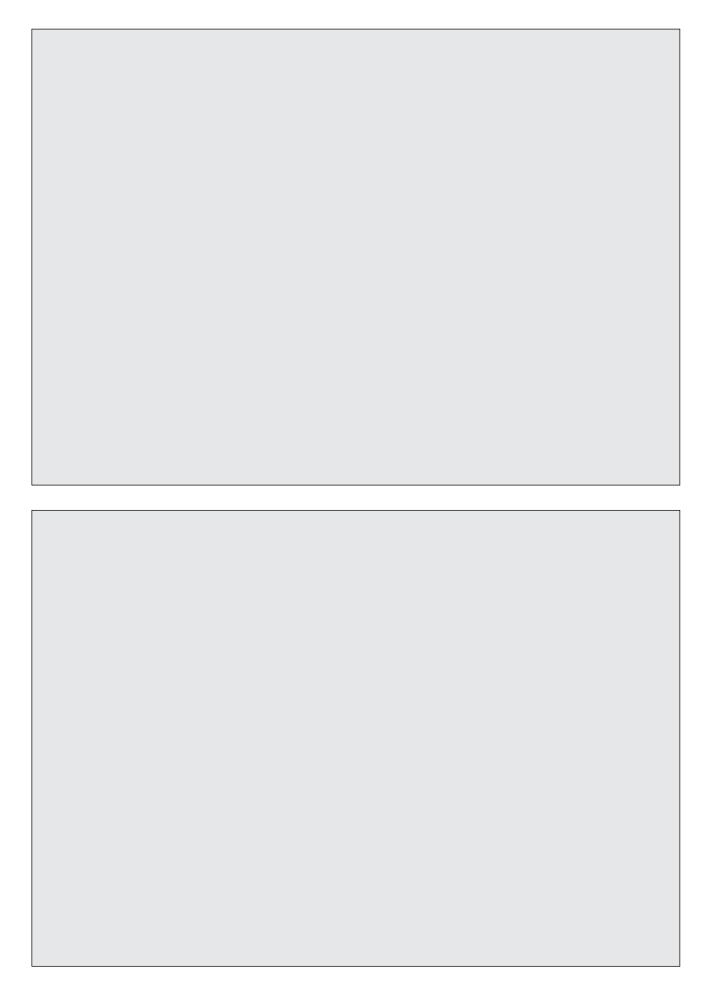
Conclusion

Scripture emphasizes that Jesus can come at any moment. At no time does this suggest we can embrace the doctrine of imminent return and at the same time maintain that there are certain unmet prerequisites that prohibit it. Regarding human responsibility, the consistent emphasis of the New Testament is on living in obedient service and

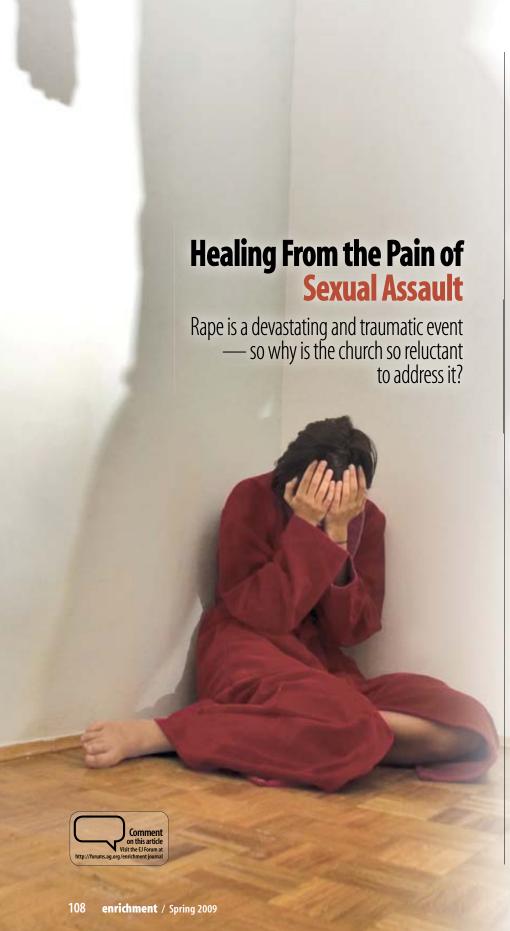
effective witness in light of His imminent return. Date setting not only impedes the testimony of the Church, it also undermines the doctrine of imminent return. The timetable of Jesus' return is within the purview of God alone. Until that day, let the Bride of the 21st century say the same thing the Bride of the first century said, "Come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20, NASB).

NOTES

- http://www.ag.org/top/Beliefs/Statement_of_ Fundamental_Truths/sft_full.cfm.
- 2. Neither the Bible nor the doctrinal statements of the Assemblies of God is so nuanced that we are able to argue that the Rapture is imminent but the revelation of Jesus Christ is not. Nor on the basis of these same documents are we able to argue the reverse. In fact, whether the term in use is second coming, return, rapture, or coming, the Scriptures and our own literature suggest that these events are imminent (cf., e.g., Hardy W. Steinberg, "The Rapture and the Revelation," http:// $enrichment journal. ag. org/top/sermon_data/200732.$ pdf; http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/gendoct_17_endtime_ events.cfm.cfm; George D. Cope, "Living in light of the Lord's return," pentecostalevangel.ag.org/ Coverpages2002/4583_cvr_pg.cfm; George Wood, "Five major priorities," tpe.ag.org/2007PDFs/4879_Wood. pdf; Jim Railey, "What does the future hold?" http:// www.pentecostalevangel.ag.org/Articles2002/ foundational_eight.cfm; Statement of Fundamental Truths, www.ag.org/top/Beliefs/ Statement_of_Fundamental_Truths/sft.pdf, etc.
- 3. Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission (http://www. Lockman.org).
- 4. Hurst, Randy, "Unreached," Today's Pentecostal Evangel, 2 March 2008, 12.
- 5. Alan Johnson, "The Call to Extreme Missions," *Rapport* 22.1 (Winter 2006):13,14.
- 6. Stanley M. Horton. *Acts* (Springfield, Mo.: Logion, 2001), 60, note 34, emphasis added.
- 7. War 1:253; 2:42; Antiquities 14:337; 17:254.
- Clement 5:7; translation is taken from J.B. Lightfoot and J.R. Harmer, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 59.
- Fragments of Papias 20 in Lightfoot and Harmer, 535.
 "Endtime Revival Spirit-Led and Spirit-Controlled:
 A Response To Resolution 16." Prepared by the Commission on Doctrinal Purity and Ratified by the General Presbytery, August 2000. http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/2000102/088_endtime_revival.cfm; the latter is largely what motivated the evangelistic efforts of the Early Church.
- 11. Nunnally, Wave, "Looking Back at Y2K," *Pentecostal Evangel*, 25 March 2001, 15.



The Greatest Challenges of Pastoral Care / JENNIFER CISNEY



s a Christian counselor, I recognize the progress the church has made in dealing with emotional pain and struggles in Christians. Many churches have support groups and lay counseling ministries. Some have professional counseling centers. Many churches have groups for divorce recovery, grief, addictions, depression, or even sexual abuse. Pastors often preach on issues related to marital conflict and divorce, depression, anxiety, and abuse. But there is one issue I rarely hear addressed in the church. Few Christian books address this topic. I have worked with the American Association of Christian Counselors for nearly 10 years and can count on one hand the number of workshops that have addressed this critically important issue.

Rape is a devastating and traumatic event, so why is our society and the church so reluctant to address it? A significant reason we give so little attention to rape is the shame and stigma surrounding sexual assault. This sense of shame keeps most rape victims from reporting the crime or seeking help for their physical, emotional, and spiritual wounds.

Perhaps the Christian community does not address rape because we mistakenly believe it is not a pervasive problem. Not only is rape a significant issue facing the church and society, but the pain and devastation of rape go back to the beginning of recorded history.

The most well-known biblical case is the rape of Tamar, the sister of Absalom and daughter of David. Read the story of her assault in 2 Samuel 13. This gives clear insights into the pain and problem of rape. We also have misconceptions about rape. All of these contribute to a failure of the church to meet the needs of sexual assault victims and their families.

Let me address a few of these misconceptions.

1. We believe rape is not a widespread problem and/or we do not personally

know anyone who has been raped. Statistics from the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network¹ show:

- 1 in 6 women* is sexually assaulted in her lifetime.
- Someone in the United States is sexually assaulted every 2 minutes.
- 7.7 million American women have been raped.

If these statistics are accurate (I believe they are conservative.), you probably know a woman who has been raped. You may know this woman well — perhaps she is even your wife, sister, best friend, or daughter. There is also a good chance she has never told you about this painful event. Sixty percent of sexual assault victims do not report their assault to the police. A large percentage of victims never tell anyone except a therapist or close friend about the assault.

2. We imagine that rape involves a stranger breaking into a home or jumping out of the bushes and attacking a woman with a gun or knife. While this is true in some instances, the largest percentage of women who are sexually assaulted happen from date or acquaintance rape. In 73 percent of cases (some estimates are as high as 90 percent), rape victims know their assailants. Only 11 percent of rapes involve the use of a weapon. In 84 percent of cases, the rapist only used physical force in the attack. All of these details were true of the rape of Tamar. When her brother, Amnon, raped her, he did not use a weapon, only physical force.

3. We often believe if the attacker

*Men can also be victims of rape. However, the majority of rape and sexual assault victims are female. In this article, I have referred to victims as female.

did not physically harm or seriously injure her during the attack, she will not experience any long-term consequences.

Many women do not consciously connect the problems they are currently experiencing to the rape in their past until a caring and knowledgeable counselor or pastor helps them connect the dots.

This is a serious and damaging misconception. Let me offer the truth:

Victims of sexual assault are:

- 3 times more likely to suffer from depression
- 6 times more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder
- 13 times more likely to abuse alcohol
- 26 times more likely to abuse drugs
- 4 times more likely to contemplate suicide

Scripture describes Tamar's pain following her attack by saying she "put ashes on her head and tore the ornamented robe she was wearing. She put her hand on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went" (2 Samuel 13:19). Scripture also describes her long-term consequences: she "lived in her brother Absalom's house, a desolate woman" (verse 20).

Many of the women who come to

your office with addictions, depression, panic attacks, or marital problems may have been sexually assaulted in their past — perhaps many years ago. This event is contributing to their present problems. Most of these women do not consciously connect the problems they are currently experiencing to the rape in their past until a caring and knowledgeable counselor or pastor helps them connect the dots.

Here is how you can help victims of sexual assault.

Ask the right questions

Woman who come to you for help dealing with a rape will often present another problem. I have helped clients who have been raped work through those painful issues. Not one of these women, however, came to her first session stating that she had been raped. The problems they mention first are depression, panic attacks, addictions, eating disorders, and most frequently, relationship issues with their husband or boyfriend. Only after I build trust and ask key questions do I uncover the deep. painful secret they are living with. I also discover that many women, especially if the assault happened when they were young, have never called the experience rape. Asking, "Have you ever had any unwanted sexual experiences?" seems to be easier for women to answer.

I ask them to tell me about their first unwanted sexual experience. Many times, their first sexual experience was an assault.

It is often easier for women to speak to other women about these issues. While there are many male counselors and pastors who have training to deal with these issues, women are more comfortable discussing sexual assault with another woman or with another woman present.

Do not ask the wrong questions

Most of the shame carried by rape victims comes from society, courts, and even



JENNIFER CISNEY is executive board member of American Association of Certified Christian Sexual Addiction Specialists.

well-meaning individuals. They will imply that the victim is responsible for what happened to her. In the account of Tamar, her brother, Amnon, hated her after he assaulted her and sent her away like a worthless piece of trash. Rape victims often feel rejection and secondary wounding following their assault. In 2 Samuel 13:16, Tamar told Amnon, "Sending me away would be a greater wrong than what you have already done to me." We often heap more pain and shame on rape victims by the way we interact with them about their experience.

Be careful in the questions you ask and the responses you give to a victim of sexual assault. Never ask questions that imply the victim asked for or encouraged the assault. Questions about her clothing, past sexual behavior, or why she made the choices she made at the time of the assault ("Why were you there alone at that time of night?") are not helpful. She has already run through every *If only I had*

... in her mind. The majority of rape victims blame themselves, in whole or in part, for what happened to them.

No matter what a woman chooses to wear, no matter what poor choices she has made about relationships or sexuality in the past, or bad judgment in regard to safety or alcohol consumption — justifies someone sexually assaulting her. We must never imply — directly or indirectly — that a woman is to blame for being raped. We want to educate girls and women about personal safety and choices they can make to prevent sexual assault. But the time for this education is not when you are trying to help a victim heal.

Give them a safe place to tell their story to the degree they are comfortable

Rape victims need to tell their story. When to tell, whom to tell, and how much to tell should be left up to them.

Rape victims find it incredibly difficult to talk about such a terrifying

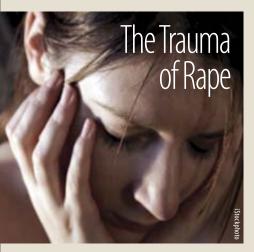
and painful experience. A woman needs a safe place to talk. A counselor should not pressure her to tell her story or reveal details of the assault before she is ready to do so.

Listen to her story with understanding and compassion. Two things are helpful: First, tell the victim you are sorry about what happened. Second, assure her it was not her fault. These are critically important to the healing process.

Direct sexual assault victims to people who can help them heal physically

The first person I refer a victim of sexual assault to is her gynecologist. I keep a list of female gynecologists I trust in my office. While many male gynecologists are qualified and comfortable assisting rape victims, women are more comfortable with a female physician.

If she has not shared information about the rape with her physician, she needs to do so immediately. While it



tates have no reporting requirements or

limits to confidentiality for sexual assault. Reporting is at the discretion of the victim. If she does, however, report it to police she has no control over how they will handle the case. The only requirement for reporting is in the case of statutory rape, when the victim is under the age of 16. In that case, it is also child abuse and mandatory reporting is required.

Acute Stress Disorder & Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

A number of symptoms are normal in the wake of crisis and trauma. A person who experiences an event that threatens her life, safety, or well-being, or witnesses an event where another person is injured or killed, will likely experience physical, cognitive, behavioral, and spiritual symptoms. These

symptoms, when experienced in the immediate aftermath of a crisis, are not pathological and need to be normalized. Explaining and normalizing these symptoms is a significant aspect of crisis intervention. The severity and duration of these symptoms, however, indicate the presence of an anxiety disorder such as ASD or PTSD.

Acute Stress Disorder

ASD is a psychiatric diagnosis that psychologists give individuals in the first month following a traumatic event. The symptoms that define ASD overlap with those for PTSD, although there are a greater number of dissociative symptoms for ASD, such as not knowing where you are or feeling as if you are outside of your body. Because ASD is a relatively new diagnosis, research on the disorder is in the early stages. Diagnosis rates range from 6 percent to 33 percent depending on the type of trauma. Individuals must have three or more of the following dissociative symptoms to be diagnosed with ASD:

- 1. Subjective sense of numbing, detachment, or absence of emotional responsiveness
 - 2. A reduction in awareness of one's surroundings
 - 3. Derealization
 - 4. Depersonalization

may be difficult for her to face the reality, rape victims need to have a thorough exam and necessary tests, even if they are not reporting the assault. Any woman who has had an unwanted sexual experience needs to be fully tested for all sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. Women are terrified at this thought and are reluctant to face the possibility they may carry lasting physical effects from the assault. But it is always better to know for sure.

For many women, these tests bring a peace of mind when they learn they are disease free. Knowing this will speed the emotional healing process. Women who do contract a disease can get treatment immediately and avoid potential long-term effects such as infertility or cervical cancer. It is also critical that they know they have a disease they can pass on to their spouse (or future spouse). I often do extensive education because the majority of people are ignorant about STDs. They are generally unaware that many STDs have few or

no side effects, and they can have one of these diseases for years without knowing it.

Direct them to people who can help them heal emotionally and spiritually

While not every rape victim will need professional therapy to heal, many will. Many women will only seek counseling after the emotional fallout has caused their life to become unmanageable. This can occur years after the rape, but the consequences can be devastating.

I suggest that all rape victims see a professional counselor for at least a few sessions. This allows the therapist to assess for complications and possibly prevent the more serious disorders that can be a long-term result of rape. It also provides a safe relationship for a woman to turn to if issues crop up later.

When they are available, I find that rape support groups provide one of the greatest opportunities for healing. They not only provide a safe place

for the victim to discuss her experience and pain, but she can share with others who have had the same experience. This is one of the most powerful weapons against the shame and pain of rape. When possible, I recommend a Christian counselor or support group. If none are available, there are many well-qualified clinicians who can help in the emotional healing from rape.

Spiritual healing, however, will require someone who can address faith issues. Rape victims struggle with two primary spiritual issues. The first is a crisis of faith that most believers experience when something terrible happens in their life. They struggle with why a loving God let something so terrible happen to them. The other major spiritual issue is that of forgiveness. Most secular counselors do not address this issue or understand the importance of forgiveness as part of the overall healing process. While it may take time sometimes years — it is critical for rape victims to get to the point where they

5. Dissociative amnesia

ASD is also characterized by persistent re-experiencing the event, avoidance of stimuli that bring back memories of the trauma, and marked symptoms of anxiety such as sleeplessness, irritability, and hypervigilance. ASD can only be diagnosed within the first 30 days following the event. A diagnosis of ASD appears to be a strong predictor of subsequent PTSD. In one study, more than three quarters of the individuals who were in motor vehicle accidents and met criteria for ASD went on to develop PTSD. This finding is consistent with other studies that found that over 80 percent of people with ASD develop PTSD by the time they are assessed 6 months later. ^{2,3}

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

If post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms persist for longer than 30 days, psychologists often diagnosis the patient as having PTSD. Although there is considerable variation among factors, the estimates are that 5 to 11 percent of trauma victims will develop PTSD⁴. Symptoms include:

- 1. Re-experiencing the event through intrusive thoughts or dreams and intense distress upon exposure to any stimuli or cue that causes the individual to recall the event.
- 2. Avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness through efforts to avoid thoughts, feelings, or

conversations associated with the trauma and avoidance of anything that triggers recollection of the trauma. Individuals may also experience an inability to recall certain aspects of the event, diminished interest in significant activities, feelings of detachment from other people, a restricted range of affect, and a sense of a foreshortened future.

3. Individuals may also experience symptoms such as sleep disturbances, irritability or anger, difficulty concentrating, hypervigilance, and exaggerated startle response.

If the symptoms persist between 30 days and 3 months, the PTSD is Acute. If duration of the symptoms is 3 months or more, the PTSD is considered Chronic.

— MARK CAMPER, editor, Christian Counseling Today

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- Creamer, M., & Manning, C. (1998). Acute Stress Disorder following an industrial accident. Australian Psychologist, 33, 125-129.
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can consider forgiving their rapist. Even more important is that they can forgive themselves.

A spouse must be included in the healing and recovery

The one exception in allowing the victim to keep the assault private has to do with her spouse or future spouse. In marriage, husband and wife become one flesh. This spiritual, emotional, and physical union requires openness and honesty. Withholding significant information such as a sexual assault from a spouse will undermine the foundation of the marital union and cause misunderstanding and confusion.

In almost every case, a victim of sexual assault needs significant time and help to heal sexually. Even if a rape happened years before a marriage, it can dramatically affect marital and sexual intimacy. Many women thought they had healed from a sexual assault in their past, until their wedding night.

Victims of all traumas, including rape, can have symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (see sidebar The Trauma of Rape) when faced with a situation that triggers memories of the rape. For a rape victim, this can occur even during a desired sexual encounter with her husband — the man she loves and trusts. A rape victim can become overwhelmed with fear, anger, disgust, and shame during sexual intimacy with her husband. These feelings can come on suddenly and unexpectedly. And often, the victim does not understand what triggered the feelings and is powerless to control them. This can be confusing and frustrating for couples who do not understand what is happening or why.

The issues surrounding sexual healing for rape victims are complex. I suggest that couples work with a trained counselor to assist them in this journey. Both husband and wife need to understand that sexual recovery from rape is a process, and both partners must be committed to the healing process with

Resources for Rape/Sexual Assault*

- Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network (RAINN): www.rainn.org
- National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE Provides 24/7 free, confidential advice.
- National Sexual Violence Resource Center: www.nsvrg.org
- Sex Laws.org: www.sexlaws.org
 Provides information on statutory rape charges, age of consent by state, and sexual assault laws.
- Joyful Heart Foundation: www.joyfulheartfoundation.org
 Provides information and resources for victims of sexual assault.
- *The above sites are not faith-based, but provide excellent information and assistance. For referral to a Christian counselor, contact the following:
- American Association of Christian Counselors: www.aacc.net Go to "Find a counselor."
- www.e-counseling.com: Site for online Christian counseling
- The Assemblies of God Ministerial Enrichment counseling referral service has an up-to-date nationwide referral list of certified, professional Christian counselors. For a referral in your area call 417-862-2781, ext. 3014.

compassion and patience.

The spouse of a rape victim needs to understand that the reactions she experiences during sex have nothing to do with her feelings about or desire for him. While not true of all rape victims, many struggle to enjoy sex and/or to feel safe and comfortable with their body and their sexuality. This is a result of the violation they experienced. I make it clear to the rape victim and her spouse that healing is in sexual intimacy with her husband. But that can be a long road for some women, and it requires patience and understanding from her spouse.

Statutory Rape

There is no such thing as consensual sex between an adult and a child. While the legal age varies from state to state, most states mandate that any adult engaging in a sexual act with a person under the age of 16 is committing rape. Check the guidelines of your state for the statutory age of consent. If someone reports sexual contact between an adult and someone under

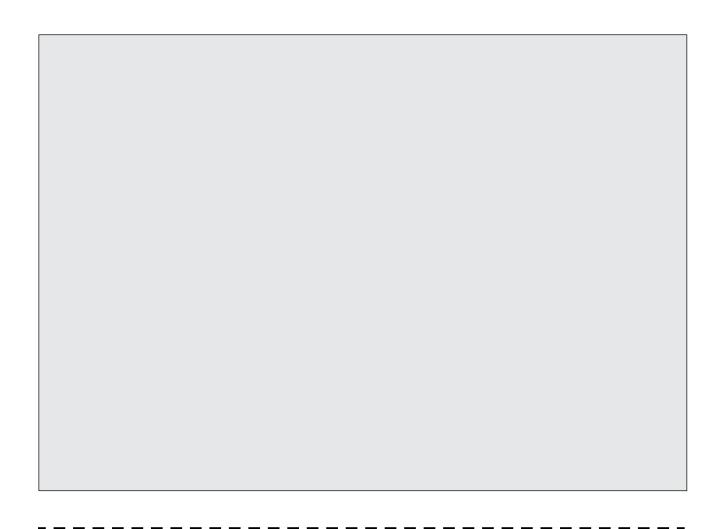
the statutory age of consent, I suggest you report this under the same guidelines as mandatory reporting standards for child sexual abuse.

I am passionate about helping survivors of rape heal, recover, and reclaim the life, relationships, and sexuality God intends them to have. I feel this way not just because I have clients who have been raped, but because I am a survivor of rape. For many years I did not share this traumatic experience with anyone. I suffered the same consequences I mention in this article. But when I finally did get help from a compassionate Christian counselor and from loving and understanding friends, God brought grace and healing to my life. I pray that as a pastor, you offer that same assistance to a woman who is hurting.

If you or someone you love has been sexually assaulted, you may contact the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE. ②

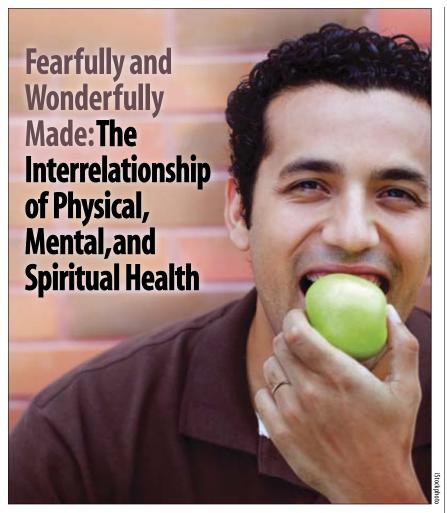
NOTE

1. Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network (RAINN) www. rainn.org



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Ministry & Medical Ethics / CHRISTINA M.H. POWELL



ne goal of a pastor is to bring healing to broken lives. "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness" (Matthew 9:35).

A pastor who follows Jesus' footsteps realizes healing is a vital part of ministry. Biblical healing encompasses physical, mental, and spiritual health. All three aspects are often interrelated.

For example, a problem in one area of human health can often impact the other two areas. We are "fearfully and



wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14) — an interplay of body, mind, and spirit. Understanding this interrelationship will impact practical aspects of your approach to pastoral care.

Physical Health: Your Body as a Temple

The apostle Paul asked the Corinthians, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body" (1 Corinthians

6:19,20). Dealing with sexual immorality, Paul illuminated the truth that the physical aspect of man can impact his mental and spiritual aspects.

For example, an elderly man had been a deacon for many years. People knew him for his gentleness, kindness, and wisdom. Lately he has started swearing, is frequently agitated, and is expressing physical aggression toward his wife of 50 years. Perhaps you might assume that deep-seated emotional issues are now coming to the surface. Suppose I provide a piece of missing information: doctors recently diagnosed the man as having Alzheimer's disease. Lecturing him on the unscriptural nature of his behavior is of little use. The solution concerning his change in behavior involves addressing the physical problems. Teaching his wife techniques for communicating with him, however, may bring relief.

You do not need a diagnosis of an incurable disease for a physical problem to create mental and spiritual problems. Consider the church staff member who has behaved impatiently with other staff members. While such behavior cannot be tolerated, knowing she has recently battled the flu and has gone nights with insufficient sleep caring for her three sick children provide a context for the situation. If she takes several personal days and gets a decent night's sleep, she may become the lady you once were happy to have hired. Physical exhaustion produced changes in her mood and her ability to have the spiritual perspective in relating to others.

Jesus explained to the Pharisees, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). Our bodies need one day a week for rest to function best. Proper rest, nutrition,



CHRISTINA M.H. POWELL, Ph.D., an ordained minister and medical research scientist, preaches in churches and conferences nationwide. She is a research fellow at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital as well as the founder of Life Impact Ministries.

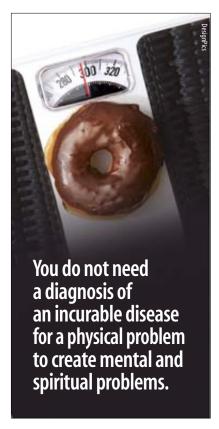
and exercise can improve mental health. Exercise improves cognitive functioning and reduces the risk of developing dementia. Two studies published in the Journal of the American Medical Association September 2004, support this statement. In one study, older men, aged 71 to 93, who walked less than a quarter mile a day, were 1.8 times more likely to develop dementia than men who walked more than 2 miles a day.1 In the second study, researchers from Harvard Medical School and Harvard School of Public Health found that women, aged 70 to 81, who walked at least 1.5 hours per week, had less cognitive decline than those who walked less than 40 minutes per week.2

How nutrition affects a person's mood is another example of physical health impacting mental health. In general, a diet that keeps blood sugars at an acceptable level and provides plenty of tryptophan and omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids is most likely to help a person make and use serotonin, a feel-good chemical in the brain. Thus foods rich in omega-3 fats — salmon, sardines, walnuts, and flaxseed — may help combat mild depression. Good food sources of tryptophan — an essential amino acid in the human diet that the body uses to make serotonin — include fish. turkey, chicken, cheese, beans, milk, eggs, and chocolate. A person who feels healthy and energetic will have greater resources for ministering to others and bouncing back from setbacks. While physical suffering and anxiety over health concerns certainly can draw us closer to God, it is easier to resist temptation and make wise choices when we are feeling well. Thus, a person's physical health can affect a person's spiritual well-being.

Mental Health: A Cheerful Heart as Medicine

Mental health can impact physical and

spiritual health. For example, prolonged stress can weaken the immune system and lower resistance to disease. Stress causes the release of adrenaline and cortisol, two powerful hormones that increase alertness and boost energy.



This fight-or-flight stress response is perfect for responding to physical danger, preparing people to fight or flee a threat to survival. However, when the constant stresses of life trigger this response, it can compromise one's health. Mental stress may increase blood pressure by constricting blood flow in arteries, resulting in cardiovascular problems. Cortisol increases blood sugar, which is normal if one needs to run from danger. However, chronically elevated cortisol levels can lead to insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes. Many people who suffer from depression have elevated cortisol levels, mimicking the effects of chronic stress. Thus, medical science corroborates the

truth in Proverbs 17:22: "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones."

One's mental health can also adversely affect spiritual health. For example, a woman who suffers from agoraphobia — fear of the marketplace — may be unable to enjoy church services. In a large sanctuary, she may experience panic attacks or become overwhelmed by the fear of panic attacks. However, she might be able to participate in church by viewing services by video in a smaller room in the building. She may benefit from a sermon podcast or a DVD of the service so she can view it at home. A sensitive pastor can support her spiritual growth as she undergoes the healing process by finding creative ways to facilitate her participation in church life.

Mental illness is a handicap like a broken leg. Those suffering mental problems often do not share their need out of shame or the fear of being misunderstood. A church staff willing to be creative can make a life-changing difference for the individual suffering from mental illness.

Another mental disorder that may interfere with church attendance is obsessive-compulsive disorder. A person with this disorder may keep checking his pew at the end of the service to make sure he did not leave anything. A person with OCD feels powerless to stop such compulsions, but is acutely aware that his behavior is not normal. To avoid the stress of trying to overcome such ritual behavior as well as the stress of being noticed behaving bizarrely, a person may quit attending church. A pastor who talks with a person about the challenges of his mental illness may be able to help that person find a way to integrate into church life. Perhaps a person with OCD simply needs to sit in a back pew where his behavior would not attract unwanted attention. Making accommodations for the person's needs during the healing

process is essential for ministering to the whole person.

A final example of a mental illness that can adversely impact spiritual health is depression. Depression may lead to feelings of spiritual failure. Spiritual disciplines such as prayer and Bible reading may go by the wayside. A pastor can help the person let go of unrealistic expectations and perfectionistic thinking and embrace the doable goal of gradual progress in the right direction. Perhaps returning to an hour of prayer and Bible study a day is not feasible until the physical symptoms of depression subside. However, 10 minutes of prayer a day in the morning and reading one Psalm before bedtime might be a reachable goal. The person needs to focus on receiving God's grace and love in his life, while understanding his mental illness may be distorting his view of God.

A pastor can help a person learn to better manage the mental stress that is detrimental to his physical and spiritual health. Being able to handle normal levels of stress, maintain fulfilling relationships, and bounce back from tough circumstances are all signs of good mental health. Scriptures

teach principles that lead to good mental health.

Spiritual Health: His Words As Source of Life

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28–30, NRSV).³ This spiritual answer is capable of providing the rest needed for good health on all levels. In Proverbs 4:22, God's words of wisdom "are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body." Spiritual health brings health to the whole person.

The Bible promotes balance in life and avoidance of destructive choices. The Bible warns against drunkenness (Ephesians 5:18), gluttony (Proverbs 23: 20,21), and promiscuity (Hebrews 13:4). These three behaviors have negative consequences for physical health. In following spiritual choices for life, a person is choosing physical health as well. The Bible promotes an approach to life that results in sound mental health. Take the

advice found in Philippians 4:8 as an example, "Finally, brothers [and sisters], whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is noble, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things."

God is concerned with redeeming the whole man. In the words of the Psalmist, "Praise

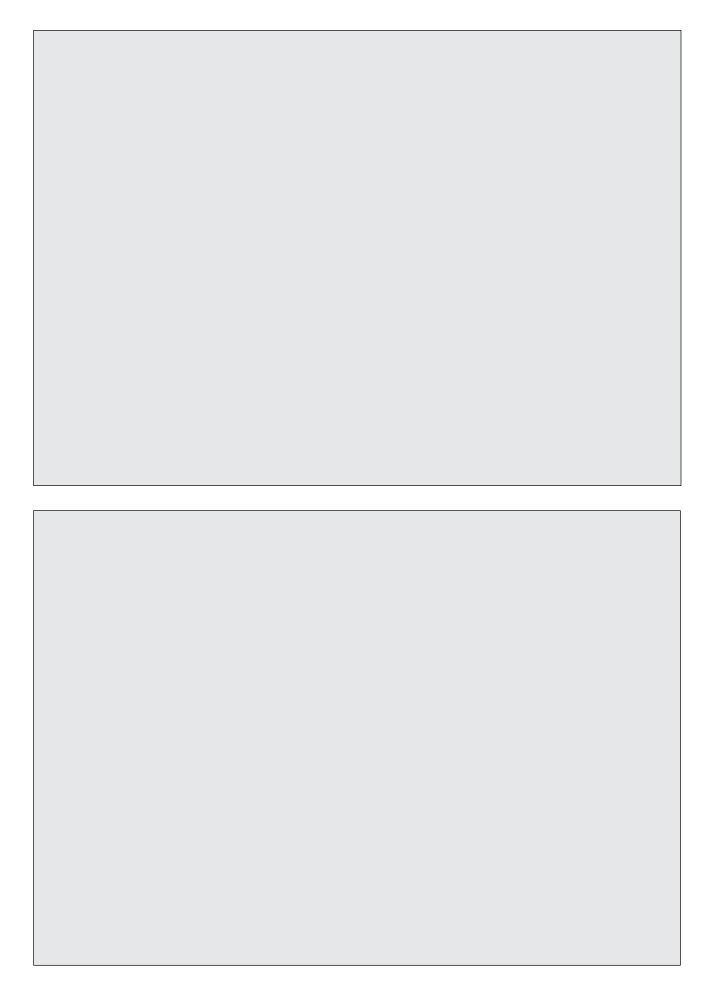
the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits — who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's" (Psalm 103:2-5). The good news you share with your congregation is that Jesus not only came so our sins can be forgiven, but also so we can be made whole again. While not all sickness is a result of sin. sin does harm our physical and mental health. God desires that the bondage of sin be broken in a person's life. Addressing a person's spiritual needs can set a person free from guilt, addictions, and habits harmful to physical and mental health.

The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, the young man he was mentoring, "physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (1 Timothy 4:8). Spiritual exercises such as prayer, worship, Bible reading, and fellowship impact the whole person. As you discipline believers to grow spiritually, you are leading them in the path to better health on all levels. While sickness and poor health will be a part of life until Jesus returns, you can help bring healing to broken lives one person at a time. As you do, you will be following in the footsteps of Jesus, the Good Shepherd who was also the Great Physician. @



NOTES

- R.D. Abbott et al., "Walking and Dementia in Physically Capable Elderly Men," JAMA 2004;292:1447–1453.
- J. Weuve et al., "Physical Activity, Including Walking, and Cognitive Function in Older Women," JAMA 2004:292:1454-1461.
- 3. Scripture quotations marked NRSV are taken from The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version/Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America.—Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, ©1989. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



Q&A for Ministry Wives / GABRIELE RIENAS



situation in which a group grew dissatisfied with my husband's leadership. They criticized and demeaned his competence, character, and spirituality. They attacked me; but even worse, they went after our children as well. It was very mean-spirited and ugly. Things have settled down somewhat because a large part of this group left the church, but I am having a hard time getting over it. I do not trust anyone. What can I do to bounce back from this painful situation?

> I am heartbroken when I hear of situations such as yours. I am positive that it breaks God's heart as well. You (and your

not measure up, or you are incompetent and unworthy, this does not reflect God's thoughts toward you. God is capable of correcting you in ways that do not demean you or leave you wounded. He sometimes uses people: but when He does, He uses them to empower and give hope, not to destroy and discourage.

What you describe happens because people are immature in the way they handle conflict and tensions. Under the guise of concern for the church, these people show disrespect to the office of the pastor. Groups like this rise up because they believe they have insight that is crucial to the well-being of the church. They often draw assumptions and conclusions and then take steps to correct the problem. If the pastor does not conform to their satisfaction, they launch personal and condemning attacks on him. Unfortunately, they leave behind true humility and respect as their arrogance grows. As a result, the pastor often questions his calling and competence in ministry.

will. He would never crush your spirits or belittle you. Let me talk about the message these people conveyed to you and your husband. Their message said you and your husband were failures and incompetent. Whatever this group was trying to communicate, they failed miserably in reflecting the heart of God toward

you. If you came away feeling you do



GABRIELE RIENAS, a pastor's wife for 27 years and a professional counselor, lives in Beaverton, Oregon. She speaks at retreats, conferences, and events worldwide. Contact her at 503-705-9230.

One reason you may be reluctant to go to church is because you now associate the environment with pain. It is human nature to avoid environments in which we have experienced trauma. However, if you push through and confront your fear, over time you can once again establish trust and safety. This is a little like getting back up on the horse.

Someone said that one negative comment could outweigh five positive ones. You might be tempted to let the negative interactions from this limited group of

Under the guise of concern for the church, some people launch personal and condemning attacks when the pastor does not conform to their satisfaction.

people outweigh the positive feedback you have experienced during your ministry. Do not let that happen. Focus on those who love you and truly wish the best for you and for your family. Remember the people who have let you know your ministry has greatly impacted their lives. Think of those innocent ones who know nothing about church



politics and simply want to worship God. Remember most of all that you answer to an audience of One. What He thinks of you counts the most by far.

It does not surprise me that you feel vulnerable. I am assuming you did not expect what transpired. The more unexpected it is, the more it undermines your trust. As a wife, you are also feeling protective of your husband. No doubt you have watched him suffer in this. Resist the temptation to become hardened and disillusioned about people. The only way to do this is to keep a soft heart by forgiving them. Ask God to help you with this. If this seems overwhelming, offer God your willing heart. "Lord, I'm willing to be made willing."

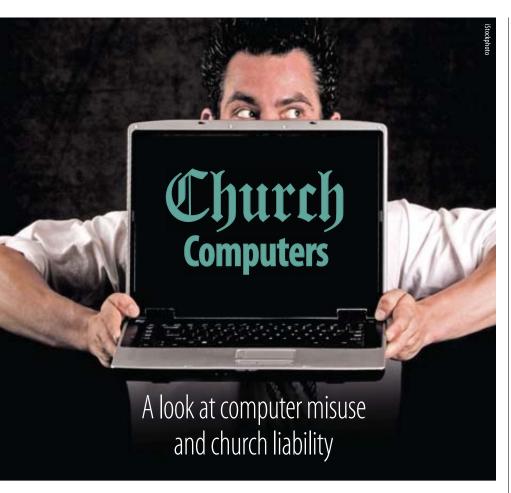
Do not underestimate the kind of wounds this trauma can inflict. It can be devastating. Give yourself time, but commit yourself to a process of healing. God is aware of your brokenness and calls you to himself for binding those wounds. If you stay pliable and broken before God, you will heal. Perhaps you will be a little wiser and a little less naïve, but in time you will feel less vulnerable

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and will grow to trust once again. He will use every experience — even this one — to equip you for your ministry journey with Him.



Clergy, Church, & Law / RICHARD R. HAMMAR



Article summary. Do church leaders have the legal right to inspect computers the church purchases and provides to staff members? Can they, and their church, be sued for doing so? If so, on what grounds? What steps can church leaders take to manage this risk? These questions are addressed in this article.

hurch computers can be a great blessing. Just ask any church employee a church hired before the church purchased its first computer. But, as with many blessings, computers also can be a curse when used for inappropriate purposes. Consider the following examples.



Example. A staff member informs the senior pastor she observed

pornography on the youth pastor's computer when she entered his office to speak with him.

Example. A church board adopts a motion requiring the covert inspection of every church-owned computer to check for inappropriate use. Two board members come to the church one evening, when no staff members are present, and begin inspecting each computer. On the computer of one of the pastors they discover several bookmarks to pornographic Web sites.

Example. A mother accuses a church's youth pastor of an inappropriate

relationship with her teenage daughter. When the youth pastor is out of the office, the senior pastor accesses his church-provided computer and inspects his e-mail account. He discovers several amatory e-mail exchanges between the youth pastor and the girl.

Example. Church leaders accuse their pastor of engaging in conduct in violation of the church's teachings. The church board confiscates his office computer and sends it to a computer forensics firm for evaluation. The computer contains evidence that the pastor has visited several inappropriate Web sites.

Is the church exposed to liability in any of these cases? If so, on what grounds? What steps can the church take to reduce this risk?

Legal Risks

Employers may be exposed to liability for nonconsensual searches of employer-provided computers on any one or more of the following grounds:

Electronic Communications Privacy Act

The federal Electronic Communications Privacy Act, also known as the Wiretap Act, prohibits the *intentional interception* of "wire, oral or electronic communications." The Act defines an "interception" as "the acquisition of the contents of any wire, electronic, or oral communication through the use of any electronic, mechanical, or other device."

The Act specifies that those who violate the Act "shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than five years, or both." The Act also specifies that persons whose telephone or other electronic communications are intercepted in violation of the Act may sue the perpetrator for money damages.



RICHARD R. HAMMAR, J.D., LL.M., CPA, is an attorney and CPA. He serves as legal counsel to The General Council of the Assemblies of God, and is editor of the *Church Law & Tax Report* newsletter. He has written over 50 books on church legal and tax issues, including the newly released third edition to *Pastor, Church & Law*.

Private lawsuits must be filed within two years "after the date upon which the claimant first has a reasonable opportunity to discover the violation."

Electronic Communications Storage Act

The Electronic Communications Storage Act, also known as the Stored Communications Act, was added to the Wiretap Act in 1986. The Act specifies that "whoever (1) intentionally accesses without authorization a facility through which an electronic communication service is provided; or (2) intentionally exceeds an authorization to access that facility; and thereby obtains, alters, or prevents authorized access to a wire or electronic communication while it is in electronic storage in such system" violates the Act. "Electronic storage" is defined as "(A) any temporary, intermediate storage of a wire or electronic communication incidental to the electronic transmission thereof; and (B) any storage of such communication by an electronic communication service for purposes of backup protection of such communication."

Very few courts have applied the **Electronic Communications Storage** Act to an employer's access to an employee's e-mail account. From the limited precedent, it would appear that an employer does not violate the Act by accessing e-mails on a computer after an employee has downloaded them to his hard drive. An employer violates the Act when the employer accesses without consent an employee's e-mail account directly on the "electronic communication service provider" (such as Hotmail) and in addition "obtains, alters, or prevents authorized access" to an electronic communication "while it is in electronic storage in such system." While a church may not violate the Act when it accesses an employee's e-mail after it has been downloaded to the employee's computer hard drive, it may invade the employee's privacy by doing so (as noted above).

Computer Fraud and Abuse Act

Under the federal Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, anyone who "intentionally accesses a computer without authorization ... and thereby obtains ... information from any protected computer if the conduct involved an interstate or foreign communication" may have violated the Act. However, in order to maintain a civil action under the Act, an employee must have suffered "damage or loss" by reason of a violation.



Do church leaders have the legal right to inspect computers the church purchases and provides to staff members?

"Damage" is defined as "any impairment to the integrity or availability of data, a program, a system, or information that ... causes loss aggregating at least \$5,000 in value during any 1-year period to one or more individuals." Damages are limited to economic damages. The Act does not define a "loss," but the courts have interpreted it to cover "remedial expenses."

State electronic privacy laws

Church leaders need to realize that several states have their own electronic privacy laws that may apply to the interception or inspection of e-mails on church computers. Church leaders need to consult these laws.

Invasion of privacy

Some courts have ruled that employers

who inspect employees' computers may be liable on the basis of invasion of privacy, even if the computers are owned and provided by the employer.

Example. A federal court in Wisconsin ruled that a church could be sued by a former youth pastor whom the church dismissed as a result of a "pornographic" telephone conversation other church staff members had overheard, as well as the fact church leaders discovered pornographic materials on his office computer. The court concluded that the church violated various federal electronic privacy laws in inspecting the youth pastor's church-provided computer, and also invaded his privacy. Fischer v. Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, Inc., 2002 WL 1306900 (W.D. Wis. 2002).

Example. A federal court in North Carolina dismissed a lawsuit brought by a pastor against his former church in which he claimed that the church had violated his rights under federal electronic privacy laws by searching his laptop computer for pornography. The church brought formal allegations of misconduct against the pastor during his tenure. These allegations included using his laptop computer in his church office to view pornography, and sexual relations with a female church member. The pastor denied any wrongdoing. Upon hearing of the allegations, members of the church's investigation committee entered the pastor's office and attempted to access information on his laptop computer. The pastor later resigned as a result of the allegations, and received a severance package. He then sued the church on the basis of several alleged wrongs, including a violation of the federal Electronic Privacy Act as a result of the church's inspection of his church-provided computer. The court dismissed the lawsuit on the ground that it was barred by the First Amendment guaranty of religious freedom from resolving what it considered to be a dispute involving the qualifications

Key Elements of a Computer-Use Policy



The U.S. General Accounting Office has prepared this table identifying the key elements of a computer-use policy. While the table leaves out some important elements, it nonetheless is a valuable resource from a reputable source.

Source: U.S. General Accounting Office's analysis of recommended computer-use policies

Monitoring use of proprietary assets	Statements that company computing systems are provided as tools for business and all information created, accessed, or stored using these systems are the property of the company and subject to monitoring, auditing, or review.
Establishing no expectation of privacy	Statements about the extent or limitations of privacy protections for employee use of e-mail, the Internet, and computer files.
Improper employee use	Statements that some uses of company computers are inappropriate — including specific notice banning offensive material (e.g., obscenity, sexual content, racial slurs, derogation of people's personal characteristics), and language relating e-mail and Internet use to general prohibitions of harassment.
Allowable employee uses	Statements explaining proper or acceptable uses of the company systems, including whether or not personal use is permitted.
Protecting sensitive company information	Statements providing instructions for handling proprietary information on company systems.
Disciplinary action	Statements that there are penalties and disciplinary actions for violations of company usage policy.

of a minister. Jacobs v. Mallard Creek Presbyterian Church, 214 F.Supp. 2d 552 (W.D.N.C. 2002).

Risk Management

The best way for churches to manage the legal risks associated with inspection of employees' computers is to have an appropriate computer policy. Such a policy will minimize or eliminate employees' expectation of privacy in employer-provided computers, thereby providing a viable defense against alleged invasions of privacy. In addition, such a policy — by providing for employee consent to inspection of church-provided computers — will provide the church with a defense against alleged violations of electronic privacy laws.

"The companies we reviewed all have

written policies that included most of the elements recommended in the literature and by experts as critical to a company computer-use policy. There is a general consensus that policies should at least affirm the employer's right to review employee use of company computer assets, explain how these computer assets should and should not be used, and forewarn employees of penalties for misuse. We also found that all companies disseminated information about these policies through their company handbooks, and most discussed their computer-use policies with new employees at the time of hire. In addition, some companies provided annual training to employees on company policies, and others sent employees periodic reminders on appropriate

computer conduct." [From a Report by the General Accounting Office to the Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness, Committee on Education and the Workforce. House of Representatives, September 2002.]

Several important issues should be addressed in a church's computer policy, including the following:

- The policy should cover employerowned and provided computers.
- The policy should clearly describe authorized and unauthorized use of church-provided computers, and give examples of both.
- The computer policy should describe the possible consequences of inappropriate use of churchprovided computers.
- The policy should clearly authorize

- the employer to access, monitor, analyze, and inspect its computers at any time, with or without permission or advance notice.
- The policy should specify which officers or employees are authorized to inspect church-owned computers. These may include the senior pastor, board members, church administrator, denominational officials, law enforcement officials, computer specialists (whether or not employed by the church), or anyone authorized by the senior pastor or board.
- The policy should state that employees have no "expectation of privacy" in their church-provided computer, or its contents.
- The policy should advise employees that the church will cooperate fully with law enforcement officers in the detection of criminal activity involving church-provided computers.
- All church-provided computers should have a start screen that reminds employees of the terms of the employer's computer policy.
- The policy should explain the reasons for the employer's right to access computers. These may include some or all of the following, depending on the circumstances: (1) monitoring inappropriate use of the Internet; (2) monitoring excessive use of the Internet; (3) access to information on employees' computers in their absence; (4) preventing copyright violations by employees who copy computer software without authorization; (5) minimizing the risk of computer viruses; (6) updating churchowned software; (7) detection of communications among employees that may constitute sexual or other forms of harassment for which the church may be liable.
- Explain the policy to all new employees at the time of hiring.

- Have all new employees sign a statement acknowledging that they understand and agree to the policy "in consideration of their employment." Alternatively, they can sign a statement agreeing to be bound by the church's employee policy manual, if it contains the church's computer policy.
- It is not clear whether a church's computer policy can apply to cur*rent* employees unless the church provides them with something of value in return for their consent to the policy. This is a result of the basic principle of contract law that no contractual commitment is binding unless a party receives something of value in exchange for his commitment. This problem may be avoided by having current employees sign a written form (agreeing to the policy) at the time they receive a pay raise. This is an issue that should be addressed with a local attorney.
- The computer policy should state that the church retains ownership of both its computers and the data stored on them.

"From our review of the literature and discussions with legal experts, privacy advocates, and business consultants, we identified common elements that should be included in company computer-use policies. These experts generally believed that the most important part of a company's computer-use policy is to inform employees that the tools and information created and accessed from a company's computer system are the property

of the company and that employees should have no 'expectation of privacy' on their employers' systems. Courts have consistently upheld companies' monitoring practices where the company has a stated policy that employees have no expectation of privacy on company computer systems. The experts also agreed computer-use policies should achieve other company goals, such as stopping release of sensitive information, prohibiting copyright infringement, and making due effort to ensure that employees do not use company computers to create a hostile work environment for others. Finally, according to experts, employees should clearly understand the consequences for violating company computer policies. For example, one company's computer-use policy states that 'violators [of company Internet/Intranet use policy] are subject to disciplinary action up to termination of employment and legal action." [From a Report by the General Accounting Office to the Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness. Committee on Education and the Workforce. House of Representatives, September 2002.] @



Everything But Preaching / DICK HARDY



groan when I think about needing to let somebody go. Don't you? You think of the spouse and the kids. Then the sympathy pangs start. Maybe he isn't as bad as my mind has made him out to be. After all, the guy I hire to replace him could be as bad or worse.

An initial assumption. I assume you did what is necessary to be a good leader. You have communicated expectations. You provided an adequate job description. You genuinely reached out to this employee. You do not run a grind-them-in-the-ground factory. You are generally sensitive relative to your employees and their families. You want to get along with your coworkers, and you want to get things done.

Think about this. Regardless of what went wrong or why, you now feel you need to release an employee, maybe a staff pastor or support staff member. It is never fun, no matter how bad the employee is and how terrible his offense.

Have all your bases covered. You should have had multiple conversations with this employee to make sure he clearly understood what you expected of him. Here is one place where a pastor often makes a misstep. He tells the employee what he did wrong. Then he tells the employee how he wanted

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it to be done correctly. After that he tells the employee what will be the

consequences of that continued errant behavior. Finally he asks, "Do you understand what I just said to you?"

The employee responds, "Yes, I understand."

Then the pastor says, "Good." The end. Wrong.

"Wrong" is an understatement. The end occurs when the pastor asks the employee to recite back what the pastor just told him including the consequences of the errant behavior. The pastor, doing the talking and explaining, is doing nothing to ensure the employee hears and properly understands. The employee must recite back the actions and the consequences. Then document.

Document everything. Write the results of each meeting including what you told the employee about his actions and the potential consequences of continuing that errant behavior. You are dealing with one of two types of employees.

- 1. One who hears what you say, repeats it back to you, and then does it. In this case you ultimately will not need the documentation and can leave it in his file.
- 2. One who hears what you say, repeats it back to you, and then does not do it. In this case you will need all of your documentation.

This is getting serious. It may be appropriate that — in your last meeting before the *I hope-it-doesn't-happen* dismissal meeting — you bring another leader with you. This helps solidify the seriousness of the issue and provides verification of the actions you have taken to bring this employee back in line with the conduct you expect of him.

How many times do I have to warn an employee before I release him? That is a judgment call, but my experience has been to talk to him minimally three times before dismissal. In each case, you need to raise the ante on the seriousness of the infraction and the reality of the consequences. Do not change

consequences as you go along. The consequences of errant behavior do not change simply because you gradually become more ticked off. Set the consequences and stick with them. Document.

Finally, when dismissal is the only answer, do the following:

- Be sure you have consulted your legal counsel.
- Call him to your office; do not go to his.
- Have another leader with you.
- Notify him why he is there within the first 30-60 seconds. This meeting is to talk about your need to make the change and transition him out of the organization. You are not meeting to negotiate the employee's behavior and continued employment. It is over.
- Do not be harsh. Be direct.
 Have your documentation ready, if needed.
- Override your emotions and sympathy. The employee made the choice with repeated violations of what you asked of him.
- This meeting can last 3 to 5 minutes.
 Doing the actual dismissal meeting quickly with a follow-up meeting to iron out transition details makes some sense.
- If you have followed all the steps above, including documentation, then your decision is final. Any negotiation the employee wants to do at this point is for naught. He should have done this after meetings number one, two, or three. But he didn't.

Exit strategy/severance. After the decision to dismiss a staff member is final, it is time to direct the transition. Some employees will be disgruntled at their dismissal. Others will not. Your job is to tell the difference.

If the dismissed employee is not inclined to do harm to you or the mission of the church, allow him to resign



DICK HARDY, Springfield, Missouri, is president of The Hardy Group, an executive consulting firm for senior pastors. He publishes "Everything But Preaching" articles at www.thehardygroup.com.

to save face. This course of action is most desirable. However, the terminated employee must understand that any negative speech or behavior during the 2-week transition period will result in immediate termination and loss of severance pay.

If the person is inclined to do harm, put together an exit strategy that looks something like this.

- Communicate the need for a swift physical departure.
- The dismissed employee must understand the importance of not talking negatively or behaving badly toward the pastor or church at any time during or after his departure.
- The severance package (if one is to be included) should be accelerated with the smaller payments coming first and then accelerating. The largest check is at the end. The key is acceleration. A disgruntled employee is less likely to bad mouth the pastor or church after his departure if he knows he

- risks losing his severance pay.
- If there is a breach of the agreement, immediately discontinue payments.
- Health insurance coverage should continue for a set period of time after his departure.
- Have him leave that day.
- Be cautious to not create much drama by escorting him to the door or to his car. At the same time, be careful he leaves in an orderly manner.
- Setting the amount of the severance package should depend upon length of service. Payouts can extend from 2 weeks to 5 months.

Remember, as senior pastor, your primary obligation is to the church, not to a friendship. Many times those we dismiss are our friends on the team. However, the overall church mission and your responsibility to protect that mission and move it forward require their dismissal. Do not communicate private personnel issues to the church body. People will ask why the staff person

was let go, but you must not deride a former employee who failed to do his job. You will take undeserved heat, but that is a price of leadership.

You can choose to ignore these suggestions. However, in doing so you will accept the time loss that results from you continuing to fret over what has become an issue with you and this employee.

These decisions are not always black and white. It hurts every time I dismiss an employee. But these decisions come with leadership, and the stakes are high when a pastor has to make the call to advance the Kingdom by releasing a person who failed to respond to corrective action.

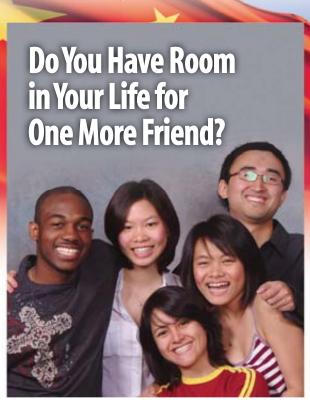
Make the call, and the Kingdom and that person will be better for it. ②

Note: This article is not intended nor purports to serve as legal advice or counsel. Consult your attorney when questions arise regarding termination.

iUniversity: Empowering Collegians for Christ / HARVEY A. HERMAN









Karen Keyser



If so, would you make it an international friend?

love university ministry. As a pastor, you can travel to the ends of the earth as a Christ follower and never leave your Jerusalem. One way your church can fulfill Christ's Great Commission is to love the gifted future world leaders that God brings every fall to a nearby university campus.

Karen Keyser, a nationally appointed Chi Alpha campus missionary serving international students at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., shares how to serve and befriend international students.

How many international students come in the U.S. to study and from where do they come?

Karen: Each year over 550,000 of the best and brightest scholars from every region of the world are studying on U.S. campuses. Asia is the greatest

sending region with India, China, and Korea leading the way. These future business and political leaders are eager to learn and build friendships with Americans. What an opportunity to touch them with God's love while they are our guests.

In what ways are international students interested in Christianity?

Karen: Away from the pressure of family and cultural expectations, international students are often open to exploring Christianity (though not quick to convert). Most have heard something about Christianity, but have not yet felt Jesus' touch. Telling stories about Jesus and your stories about His personal relationship with you is compelling to international students. Students who

become Christians and are filled with the Spirit will become powerful spiritual influencers.

How can a pastor meet international students and establish a relationship?

Karen: As a pastor in a college town, there are three main ways to meet internationals: 1) Contact the international student office on campus and ask for programs that need community volunteers (English conversation partners, airport transportation, host families for Thanksgiving, office help, etc.). Let them know you are interested in serving. 2) Ask an international student you already know to introduce you to his or her friends on campus. Trust me, this network will grow. 3) Connect with a recognized Christian group on campus (like Chi Alpha) to host a welcome reception on campus at the beginning of the school year where you can meet international students, get email addresses, and begin friendships.

Explain the idea behind one more friend."

Karen: We recognize that as a pastor you and those in your congregation are busy. Nevertheless, ask, "Do you have room in your heart for one more friend? If so, would you make it an international friend?" If we would open our hearts to one international student, we can touch the world on Christ's behalf.

What place does servanthood play in ministry with international students?

Karen: Servanthood is the foundation of international student ministry. Think how it would feel to arrive in Thailand for 4 years of education and not know one person. How grateful you would



HARVEY A.HERMAN, DSL, is Chi Alpha national director for the American Northeast. Contact him at HarcXA@hotmail.com, or visit http://www.harvsallyherman.net



















be for people who would serve you like Jesus would. Your hospitality is powerful. That is our goal: To serve in His name.

What activities seem to be most appreciated by internationals?

Karen: Students are thrilled when you give them a ride from the airport. They appreciate you helping them get supplies for apartments.

International students love events where they can experience things uniquely American (football, pumpkin carving, Thanksgiving dinner, etc.). Shopping at ethnic grocery stores and Wal-Mart are hits. Students love to share their culture and food, so let them cook for you. Many are interested in experiencing an American church service (if you carefully explain it beforehand).

How can a church start a program for international students?

Karen: Begin a small Friendship Partner program. Appoint a person to invite families and singles in your church to befriend and meet monthly with an assigned international student. Screen volunteers for Christian maturity and orient them to ethical guidelines (see question below). Then match them with interested students and let them become friends (e.g. host for dinner, play tennis, bring to church potluck). E-mail for resources: kysrxa@yahoo.com

How do volunteers initiate faith conversations with international students? In what context does this need to happen?

Karen: We use 1 Peter 3:15 as the rule of thumb: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." Answer their questions with



dialogue, not preaching. After establishing a friendship, sharing stories of God's work in your life provides a compelling atmosphere for them to further explore Christianity.

If you know a godly international student who can lead an investigative Bible study for international students (with your assistance), this can also work well. Two of my favorite international Bible study guides are: Crossing Over With Parables by Bill Perry (Multi-Language Media) and Passport to the Bible (multiple authors, InterVarsity Press). These studies work in both group and individual settings. Also, consider sponsoring international students to attend one of Chi Alpha's international student conferences. (Check out www. onemorefriend.org.) Other Web sites for international ministry are: www. intervarsity.org/ism; www.isionline.org.

What is the spiritual goal of international student ministry?

Karen: We hope to be a blessing to each student. Someone noted it takes at least nine exposures to the gospel before someone makes a decision to become Christ's follower, and at least nine steps afterward to become mature in Christ. It is our hope to help each one — the vehement atheist, the seeker, the growing Christian — to come one step closer to God. Scripture teaches that one plants, one waters, but God gives the increase.

Explain the code of ethics Chi Alpha adheres to in international student ministry.

Karen: We follow the godly ethic of genuine loving service to international students without strings attached.

- 1. We are a noncoercive, nonmanipulative organization. We befriend international students regardless of race, status, or religion (or spiritual interest), and we are invitational, not pushy.
- 2. We make advertisements for our programs and events clear and transparent. If we are having a Bible study, it is advertised as such (no bait and switch). We make students aware that a Christian organization is sponsoring

this program.

3. We seek to have clear communication with the international student office on campus. This adheres to the ethical guidelines recognized by the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors. All volunteers must understand and agree to these guidelines.

How have you seen church members make a difference?

Karen: Ruth Wirtz retired after 32 years of teaching. She called the international student office at her local university in Baltimore and said she would be happy to entertain any international students who had no place to go for Thanksgiving. Two students responded — one from Bangladesh and Maenki from South Korea.

Maenki began coming to church every Sunday and bringing other students to Ruth's home to eat and play games. He brought a Chinese friend, Ming, and Ruth invited Ming to church and bowling afterward. Ming started coming to church every Sunday. He eventually came to Christ and was baptized.

Ruth now has a welcome dinner for the new international students at the beginning of each semester with food supplied by church members. She does not preach, but just serves the students by helping them prepare for drivers tests, providing transportation to doctors appointments, and taking day trips to places of interest. But mainly students love to come to Ruth's house. They celebrate birthdays and holidays and play games. The students invite Ruth into their world and introduce their families. These international students have become her dear friends.

Ruth says working with international students has been the most rewarding time of her life. Her advice: "Jesus told us to go into all the world. If you have a college near you, the world is there. Get in touch with the college and find out how you can serve the international students. You will be so glad you did."

Richard G. Spurling (1857–1935) "A Theology Rooted and Grounded in Love"

ichard G. Spurling grew up in the tri-state region where Tennessee, Georgia, and North Carolina meet. He came from a Baptist family and at some point the Missionary Baptist Church ordained him. We know relatively little of his early years, but by the time he was an adult he seems to have developed a strong restorationist view of what the church ought to be. This restorationist perspective stressed the need to go back to the Bible alone — to the earliest roots of the church — to a time before the ascendancy of formal creedal statements

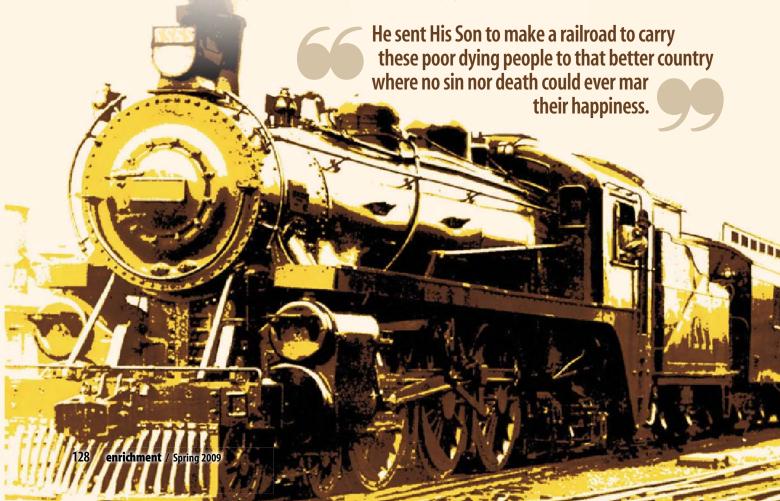


when people called Christians followers of the Way. Ignoring the years of history between Christ and themselves, restorationists like Spurling wanted, in essence, to wipe the slate clean and start the Christian movement all over as if from a new beginning.

In the mid-1880s, Spurling, along with a small group of other Baptist restorationists, began to pray that God would send a revival of primitive, first-century Christianity to the hills of Appalachia. A few years later, Spurling and nine other men decided to step out on faith in that direction by leaving their Baptist community to start a new group called the Christian Union. During the next 10 years, they formed three other Christian Union congregations. They hoped these congregations

would together become the nucleus of a restored first-century church in their region of the country.

We know almost nothing about the early years of Spurling's movement. Clearly his fledgling organization had troubles and growth was slow. His former Baptist friends most likely saw him as a cranky sectarian, and his leave-mealone mountain neighbors probably viewed him as a troublesome fanatic who was always trying to tell them how God wanted them to live. That kind of behavior could be dangerous in turnof-the-century Appalachia where feuding and shooting were still in vogue. But Spurling and his colleagues held on, and their ministry gradually gained traction.



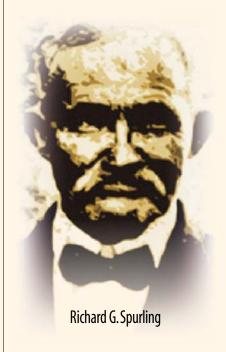
A key turning point came in the mid-1890s when a Baptist deacon named William F. Bryant joined Spurling in a preaching tour of the area. Some members of Benjamin Hardin Irwin's Fire Baptized Holiness Church were also active in the region around this time. Then a revival broke out in Camp Creek, North Carolina, which included a range of powerful physical manifestations of the Spirit's presence, including speaking in tongues. Spurling and many others took this revival to be a sign that the full restoration of the church might possibly be close at hand.

Shortly after these events Spurling penned the first draft of what would later become his one and only published book, a short volume entitled The Lost Link. Spurling's book uses the analogy of a railroad to describe the origins and decline of the Church. He says that at first the gospel train ran well on the two tracks laid down by Christ: love of God and love of neighbor. But later the leaders of the church decided to replace Christ's tracks of love with new tracks based on doctrinal conformity. Before long the train crashed and, according to Spurling, severely hindered the cause of the gospel. The Lost Link is a poignant plea for followers of Jesus to go back to their roots and to reclaim the love of God and neighbor as their central purpose and concern.

The Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) that A.J. Tomlinson and others built into a substantial Pentecostal denomination during the early decades of the 20th century later subsumed

of the 20th century later subsumed
Spurling's small Christian Union.
As this new denomination grew and expanded,

Spurling's older vision of the church as a noncreedal and egalitarian Christian community bound together by love began to wane in influence. This was, no doubt, part of the reason Spurling



finally decided to publish his little book in 1920, nearly a quarter century after he had originally composed it. To the end, he remained convinced that love was the core of the gospel, and he wanted the Pentecostal movement to preach that love as the core and foundation of the Christian way of life.

have said many times that love is the law on which Christ built the church. To make this clear in your mind I will use a figure like that of building and operating a railroad. Spiritually speaking this world is a wilderness full of reptiles and so sickly that all of its

inhabitants die. And there was also a fair and happy land, almost in sight, where no serpents ever marked the elision plain, where no death bells ring, no funeral nor sad good-bye, but so deep were the chasms and so huge were the bluffs that they never could reach that healthful shore. There was a great King in that good land who loved these poor dying people in this wilderness so he sent His Son to make a railroad to carry these poor dying people to that better country where no sin nor death could ever mar their happiness. He first started His civil engineer to survey out and locate the best route. This was John the Baptist who located the route by repentance and faith. He met the King's Son at the Iordan, who made known Himself and received all necessary preparations for making said railroad.

He began to select men suitable to help make this road. Then he began to blow down the bluffs of Judaism and filled the valleys of idolatry and to bridge the rivers of infidelity. When this was done hear Him saying, "Upon this rock I will build my church." The foundation is ready, the great underlying principle of the road is next, the rails the great law of love that reaches all the way to heaven. Yes, and upon it every wheel that rolls heavenward must roll. As we behold the mighty Christ laying down these golden rails as He thunders again the first and second commandment of God with double force, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, mind and strength." The second is like unto it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Upon these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. These are the golden rails that reach all the way to heaven and on



DOUGLAS JACOBSEN is distinguished professor of Church History and Theology at Messiah College in Grantham, Pennsylvania. He is the author of *Thinking in the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement* (Indiana University Press, 2003), which won the 2004 Pneuma Award from the Society for Pentecostal Studies, and of *A Reader in Pentecostal Theology: Voices From the First Generation* (Indiana University Press, 2006) from which this series of articles is adapted. He is also the co-author of an introduction to theology entitled *Gracious Christianity: Living the Love We Profess* (Baker, 2006).

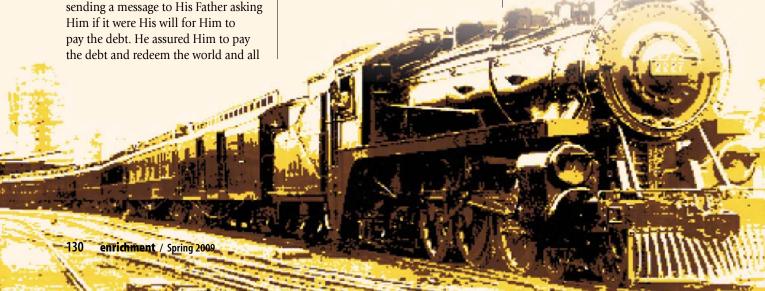
which every wheel must roll.

Next comes the great drive wheels, the law of liberty and equality. Hear Him saying, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." The commandment of God has been so abused that no sect of earth is willing to let their brother read, believe and practice for themselves. Read it like we see it and do as our doctrine says or we will exclude you from our church. Here is where the side track is set in. But see the mighty Christ as all things were ready for His glorious church. The engine on the track ready to roll but just then old grim death steps up and says, This land and all its inhabitants are mine. Your Father gave it to me to reign over and unless you can pay for it not one that has lived or will live shall escape by eternal vengeance. The King's Son turns to His chosen ones and says, Will you help Me to pay the debt, will you take up your cross and follow Me? That is, walk in this world as I have walked denying yourself of the lusts and pleasures of this world, and not you only, but all that will may help Me redeem the world and share in the glory that shall be revealed? Oh, poor Christians, are you helping Christ redeem the world? Are you drinking of the cup that He drank of? Are you baptized with the baptism that He was baptized with? Are you filling the measure of the affliction of Christ which is behind? We see Christ in the garden sending a message to His Father asking the debt and redeem the world and all

should be His. Hear Him saying, You shall not take My life as you take the lives of these poor people. My life will I give for the life of the world. I lay My life down and I take it again. So He paid the debt and after His resurrection, He came to His chosen ones and told them to wait for the Guide who would show them how to operate this heavenly engine, and to carry these people through to a better land. After ten days the Guide which is the Holy Ghost came from heaven with the fire that makes the power and so the steam was raised in the heavenly engine. The porters cried "All Aboard" and three thousand boarded the train the first day. On and on went the heavenly engine until Satan saw that the world would be saved if he could not wreck the train and get the heavenly engine off of those golden rails. One day in absence of the Guide, there being several engineers, firemen and porters (officers of the church) Satan tells them that the other fire will run this engine as well as the fire from heaven, and that

Spurling wanted, in essence, to wipe the slate clean and start the Christian movement all over, as if from a new beginning. other rails would be lighter and easier managed than the golden rails, so they hewed out wooden rails (men-made creeds); they took out the golden link of God's law and set in the wooden rails. Then they tried to roll ahead, but alas, their new track was narrow gauged. So on to the wooden rails goes the heavenly engine and a great crash followed.

Shall I be as one calling unto a deaf man or one that waveth a signal to the blind? Oh, my brethren, can you not see and do you not know the awful state of the churches? Who can imagine for a moment that all this discord. confusion and strife is the will of God? It is a slanderous falsehood to say that Christ gave a law that caused confusion, malice and strife. Do you know that they are the cunning works of men and have proved destructive to all the true elements of religion, love, liberty, equality, being led of the Spirit and sanctification? Without these you have a dead mass of confusion. Even now when a man departs from iniquity he becomes an object of persecution. The spirit of persecution is awakened and aroused from its slumber when we begin to draw the line between the law of Christ and the laws of men, between holiness and sin, between a gluttonous and a self-denying ministry; when we begin to hew down the walls of prejudice and cut asunder the line of



separation, to shake off the bonds of men-made creeds and laws, come into the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace unto the faith that sweetly works by love unto the charity which is the bond of perfectness. As we return from our captivity in Babylon to rebuild the temple of God, to crown it with the chief cornerstone of Christ and His law, they will persecute us, they will mock and say that we are a band of cranks and are fanatic, and say all manner of evil against us falsely for Christ's sake. Not because they love God or holiness or the church but because they love honor, money, division, a great name and greeting in the markets, chief seats in the council, conferences and associations, but some will persecute us because of their honest zeal, believing they are right. But I trust the Lord will give all my brethren spirit and light to see the truth and enough love for God to accept it. at any cost. Moses like, Christ like, Paul like, Luther like, in fact, like every one who would do God's holy will and not the will of man.

A land of gospel light have we, How thankful then ought we to be; What profit is that light to us, If now that light we fail to see? How shall we that light discern, Which only in Thy Spirit burns? O, Lord, each heart from darkness free, That it may borrow light of Thee.

Send forth Thy law in every heart, The law of God to us impart, Like Thee, dear Father, and Thy Son May we Thy children join in one.

May now the holy law of love, Which cometh only from above, In strongest ties our hearts unite, That we may walk in gospel light.

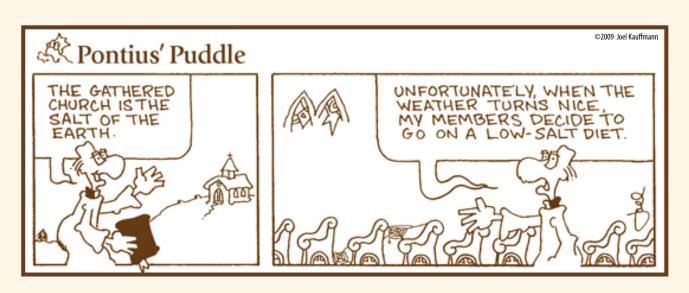
What has been the greatest hindrance to the cause of Christ? You say infidelity. I admit that it is but who is the cause of so much unbelief or infidelity? Was it Tom Payne, Voltaire or Bob Ingersoll? No, no, but few ever read their books. Then what has caused the great trouble wherever Christ is preached? It is because every church or denomination's internal laws are contrary to Christ's law. See the little preacher in the stand riding some hobby, branding all others as heretics or devils. So he wounds someone or more and breaks the unity of the Spirit and brings division instead of unity, hatred instead of love. Thus the world stands in unbelief for Christ said

that we [would] all be one, that the world may believe. This division causes infidelity. ... Oh preacher do not scatter the flock and preach infidelity. ... Many preachers preach about love and dwell on charity ... but fail to see it to be the law of the new covenant by which to infallibly know each other as members of God's church, and it is the law by which God will judge the world.

Spurling's "Original Wisdom" for Today

Spurling unambiguously placed love at the core of his understanding of both the gospel and the life of the church.

- 1. Is love of God and neighbor the core of your own faith and ministry? Does love provide a common theme in your sermons? In what other ways is love visible in your ministry?
- 2. While love clearly is central to the gospel, Christians also stress the importance of truth. Are there tensions between truth and love in your ministry? If so, how do you balance these two concerns?
- 3. At the end of this piece, Spurling talks about the negative impact of "riding some hobby" and condemning everyone who disagrees with us. What "hobby" do you need to be careful not to ride?





The Power of Jesus' Name

TEXT: Acts 3:16

INTRODUCTION

"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" is a popular hymn of the church. Consider the scriptural revelation of the power of Jesus' name.

MESSAGE

1. Prominence of His name

- a. Wonderful (Isaiah 9:6).
- b. Savior (Matthew 1:21).
- c. Above every name (Philippians 2:9–11).
- d. Motivating factor for every deed (Colossians 3:17).

2. Power through His name.

- a. Securing forgiveness and salvation (Acts 4:12; Romans 10:13).
- b. Working mighty miracles (Acts 3:16; 16:18).
- c. Supplying every need (Philippians 4:19; John 14:14).

3. Persecution because of His name.

- a. Predicted by Jesus (John 16:1-3).
- b. Physical suffering (Acts 7:57–60; 16:23).
- c. Mental persecution (Acts 4:16–18).

4. Power of attorney in His name.

- a. Delegated power and authority (Luke 10:19; Mark 16:17,18).
- b. Power to perform, to act, to accomplish in His stead (John 14:12).

CONCLUSION

There is still power in the name of Jesus. He is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8). Let us preach, teach, witness, and minister in the power of Jesus' name.

A Happy New Year

HERB HULL, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

INTRODUCTION

It has been said that the three essentials of happiness are: (1) someone to love, (2) something to do, and (3) something for which to hope. This is true in both the natural and spiritual realms.

MESSAGE

1. Someone To Love.1

The true believer has the best "someone" to love in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. "He is altogether lovely" (Song of Solomon 5:16).

- a. "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).
- b. "Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose god is the Lord" (Psalm 144:15).

2. Something To Do.

Eternal life is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23). The gift is free; but once it is received, there are many things the believer can do to please the Lord who saved him.

- a. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10).
- b. He should seek to "do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).
- c. Jesus said,"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them (John 13:17).

3. Something for Which To Hope.

- a. The believer has the best possible hope the return of his Lord to take him to be with and like Him.
- b. The Lord promised: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3).

CONCLUSION

Every person who fervently loves the Lord Jesus Christ and faithfully serves Him, while patiently awaiting His return, will know the real meaning of a happy new year.

NOTE:

1. Scriptures are KJV

The Lord's Supper

HARRIS L. JANSEN, Springfield, Missouri

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Matthew 26:26-29

INTRODUCTION

From the paschal lamb in the Wilderness of Sinai to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, the awesome cost of our redemption is recalled by a holy meal. Today Christians of almost every tradition still give thanks to God for His grace to man by celebrating the Lord's Supper.

Practices vary widely. But the celebration is never intentionally peripheral or casual. All partake of the Lord's Supper as the supreme demonstration of the word of Jesus Christ.

What is the Lord's Supper? Why is it so vital to church life that likely there has never been a week since the Emmaus table that the Lord's Supper was not celebrated somewhere in the world? What does it mean to us believers now? The Lord's Supper is (1) the table of the Lord; (2) the signature of our Christian pilgrimage; and (3) the pledge of the Christian's hope.

MESSAGE

1. The Table of the Lord

Partaking of the Lord's Supper is with Christ at His invitation. It is *His* supper for He has prepared the feast. He is *at* the table, not on it.

At the Lord's table we:

- a. Remember His humanity Incarnation (John 1:14).
- b. Reflect on His death (1 Corinthians 11:26).
- c. Affirm His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:4).
- d. Express our love (John 13:35).
- e. Present our sins and sicknesses (1 Peter 2:24).

2. The Signature of our Christian Pilgrimage

From the supper in the Upper Room and the Emmaus meal until the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, we must work out our redemption in a fallen and miserable world. We affirm our citizenship in the world to come, but we accept our mission to serve this present world.

At the Lord's table we:

- a. Renew our spiritual life (John 6:27).
- b. Assert our separation from this world (John 15:19).
- c. Proclaim the Word of the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:26).
- d. Realize our humble state (1 Peter 5:5).

3. The Pledge of Christian Hope

Through the Lord's Supper we acknowledge we are in the presence of the living Lord. We joyfully anticipate His call to the Messianic Feast. Jesus' resurrection is the pledge of our own.

At the Lord's table we:

- a. Rejoice that we are already risen with Christ (1 Corinthians 4:8; Colossians 3:1).
- b. Signify Jesus' imminent return (Matthew 24:44; see Acts 24:15).
- c. Eagerly anticipate His coming (John 5:28; Titus 2:13).
- d. Earnestly continue in faith (1 John 2:28).

CONCLUSION

The Lord's Supper celebrates God's sovereign and providential breaking into the world through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Jesus Christ broke the dividing wall between God and man. "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival" (1 Corinthians 5:7,8, NIV).

The Coming of the Lord

TEXT: John 1:1-14

INTRODUCTION

The coming of the Lord to Christians generally denotes what we term the Second Coming — Christ's coming for His church or with His church to rule and reign. Let us consider ways in which Christ already has come.

MESSAGE

1. Jesus came as the Word.

- a. "The Word was God" (verse 1).
- b. The Word spoke the world into existence (verse 3).
- c. "The Word was made flesh" (verse 14).
- d. "They overcame ... by the word" (Revelation 12:11).

2. Jesus came as life.

- a. At Lazarus' grave "I am ... the life" (John 11:25).
- b. "I am come that they might have life" (John 10:10).
- c. "The gift of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:8).
- d. "Alive for evermore" (Revelation 1:18).
- e. "We shall also live with him" (Romans 6:8).

3. Jesus came as light.

- a. "The light of men" (John 1:4-9).
- b. "The light of the world" (John 8:12).
- c. "The Lamb is the light" (Revelation 21:23).

4. Jesus came as power.

- a. His word was with power (Luke 4:32).
- b. He had power to give and take His own life (John 10:17).
- c. He had all power (Matthew 28:18).

Rekindling the Flame

WARREN D. BULLOCK, Auburn, Washington

TEXT: 2 Timothy 1:6

INTRODUCTION

The apostle Paul's exhortation to his "dearly beloved son," Timothy, "stir up the gift," was concerned with the spiritual flame of his life and ministry. The word translated "stir up" (anazopureo) means "to kindle afresh" or "keep in full flame."

MESSAGE

1. Cooling of the coals.

- a. The necessity of Paul's statement implies a lessening of ardor, a dampening of desire, a lack of passion for the Lord.
- b. In church history such a dying of the flame is often seen following an explosion of revival fire.
- c. After being born in the white heat of Pentecostal blessing, will our Movement, our local churches, our own hearts suffer a cooling of the coals?

2. Stirring the embers.

- a. Paul saw the stirring up of the fire as essential to the ongoing of the flame
- b. The embers are being stirred to open flame today in Brazil, Indonesia, even behind the Iron Curtain. and in the charismatic revival in America.
- c. Without a perpetual stirring, the fire can and will soon be ashes.

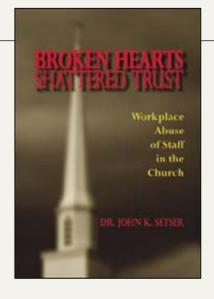
3. Fueling the flame.

- a. The fire can be fueled by a revalidation of our belief.
- b. The flame can be rekindled by a reassessment of our Christian witness in the world.
- c. The fire can be kept in full flame by a reaffirmation of our faith in the power of the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION

Let us pray earnestly that we shall experience a new burning of the warming, purifying, consuming fire of the Holy Spirit. Lord, send the fire. ②

Book Reviews





Broken Hearts, Shattered Trust: Workplace Abuse of Staff in the Church

JOHN K. SETSER (John Setser, 170 pp., paperback)

Droken Hearts, Shattered Trust presents a discussion that demands the attention of every senior pastor — the psychological and spiritual abuse of staff associates.

John Setser, former pastor and founder and director of the Barnabas Group, is devoted to staff advocacy. He tells the sad story of the dysfunction that often characterizes senior pastor and pastoral staff relationships.

In *Broken Hearts, Shattered Trust,* the author discusses factors that turn senior pastors into wounding agents, the characteristics of toxic churches that provide the context for dysfunction, the methods by which senior pastors indoctrinate and then control associates, the ways in which coercion plays into the equation, and the tragic consequences of broken trust. He then concludes with sad and tragic stories of associates who have become victims of senior pastor *wounding*.

I have heard the same horror stories from associates who thought they could love, respect, and trust their senior pastors, but their senior pastors abused and hurt them. Their abuse by their senior pastors turned their idealisms and expectations into a relational nightmare.

Here is a book that will require every senior pastor to look deep inside to be sure that the relational climate in which he or she works with associates is one which heals and not wounds. This book needs to be required reading for every senior pastor — your staff will be glad you did.

- Reviewed by Richard L. Dresselhaus, D.Min., executive presbyter and former senior pastor, First Assembly of God, San Diego, California.



Winning the REAL Battle at Church

Winning the REAL Battle at Church

DAVID and DIANE NOBLE (Beacon Hill, 190 pp., paperback)

Winning the REAL Battle at Church is a practical 6-week Bible study that focuses on dealing with conflict in the church. Designed to train leadership, this study is a biblically sound discipleship resource.

The authors have years of experience in a variety of pastorates. The practical interactive way they present the material provides evidence of their credibility. They use case studies to add to the interest and processing of the individual and group dynamic of the material.

The authors provide ample material for a group facilitator. The weekly meeting format, discussion guide, and individual work sheets for group members provide valuable tools to make the most of the facilitator's preparation time.

The Nobles have divided each of the topics into five daily study modules. The daily study guide for the participant has abundant Scripture and suggestions for personal application of the principles that each group studies.

Here is a brief outline of the six sessions: Week One: "Why Can't We Get Along?" This session focuses on the root cause of conflict. Week Two: "When Two or Three Disagree." The emphasis is on disagreeing without dishonoring one another.

Week Three: "Trouble at the Top." This lesson deals with sedition, rebellion, and the biblical response to each of these heart issues.

Week Four: "Rebellion in the Ranks." This lesson teaches students how to respond when people question spiritual authority with a move to oust leadership.

Week Five: "Matters of the Heart." This study provides a deep probe of the heart that leads to true submission to God and His appointed leadership authority in the body of Christ.

Week Six: "The Ways of a Peace Maker." Modeling peacemaking is the thrust of the final part of the study. This lesson provides insights into staying neutral during times of conflict.

Integrating *Winning the REAL Battle at Church* into life experience will yield lasting fruit individually and corporately.

 Reviewed by Robert Nazarenus, former Nebraska District superintendent, Grand Island, Nebraska

Church Is a Team Sport

JIM PUTMAN (Baker, 256 pp., hardcover)

Jim Putman is a three-time, All-American collegiate wrestler and pastor of Real Life Ministries in Boise, Idaho. Putman breaks down the challenges of leading churches at the senior level into a readable volume with five parts.

The candor of Putman's voice makes the book most effective. He shares his personal journey as a pastor — from growing up in a ministry home to his own struggle to find faith. Like a coach in the locker room at halftime, Putman holds nothing back. He readily shares challenges and failures, as well as successes that have dotted the history of RLM — a congregation that has grown from a handful of families in 1998 to a weekly attendance of 8,000.

Along the way, Putman includes ideas that are worth the price of the book. Even at their size, RLM still practices the high-touch value of contacting absentees weekly by telephone. He urges pastors to resist emphasizing the *show* (the glitzy weekly service) to allow more time for personally discipling believers. One way he multitasks is the weekly Sermon Club where he invites his

team into the sacrosanct act of planning and preparing preaching themes and messages.

While pastors will find this book helpful in further developing the concepts it covers, the epilogue discussion guide can at times seem contrived. One has to respect that in writing this book Putman wants it to be useful in one of the church's 650 small groups.

— Reviewed by Clint Bryan, pastor, First Assembly of God, Lyndhurst, Ohio

Helping Others Receive the Gift

COMPILED and EDITED BY TIM ENLOE (Access Group/Gospel Publishing House, 157 pp., paperback)

Here is a book that delivers precisely what its title promises — Helping Others Receive the Gift: Insights on Spirit Baptism From God's Word and Personal Experience. Tim Enloe and others have written a timely and helpful practitioner's guide for leading people into the Spirit's fullness with the experience of speaking in other tongues.

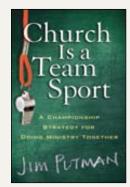
The strength of the book lies in its practicality. Its credibility, however, is rooted in the proven, hands-on experience of its numerous contributors. Enloe, who himself writes some of the chapters, is one of the leading *younger* voices in Pentecostalism who is helping people sidestep the baggage they have accumulated concerning the Holy Spirit and to experience God's tangible power. He has personally led thousands of people into Spirit baptism and an experience of the miraculous.

Other contributors to the book include ministry practitioners Randy Hurst, Ken Cramer, Gary Grogan, Judi Bullock, Scott Erickson, Bill Juoni, Randy Valimont, Dick Gruber, Jim Gerhold, Allen Griffin, and Nate Ruch (in order of appearance).

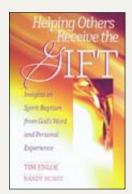
The last two chapters, "Theological, Historical, and Practical Insights on Spirit Baptism" by Gordon Anderson, Ph.D., and "A Linguist Looks at the Mystery of Tongues" by Del Tarr, Ph.D., are fascinating reflections on the contemporary Pentecostal and charismatic worlds as well as, in part, the relationship of tongues to the oral traditions of the Old and New Testaments.

This book is a gift to those who believe in and yearn for the release of the Spirit's power in people's lives.

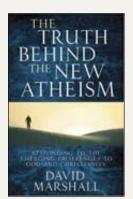
Reviewed by James Bradford, Ph.D., senior pastor,
 Central Assembly of God, Springfield, Missouri.



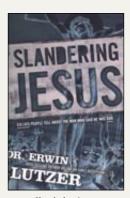
Church Is a Team Sport



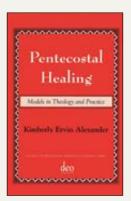
Helping Others Receive the Gift



The Truth Behind the New Atheism



Slandering Jesus: Six Lies People Tell About the Man Who Said He Was God



Pentecostal Healing: Models in Theology and Practice

The Truth Behind the New Atheism

DAVID MARSHALL (Harvest House Publishers, 240 pp., paperback)

David Marshall has written an academically strong work defending Christianity from attacks of new atheists such as Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Sam Harris. Many Christians may never read *The God Delusion* (Dawkins) or *Breaking the Spell* (Dennett). Christian young people today, however, are facing these new challenges to their faith. Marshall's work equips ministers with information they need to help train believers for the struggle.

Marshall sums up the new atheism's seven claims on page 9: (1) Faith is irrational. (2) Evolution undercuts any reason ... to believe in God. (3) Biological and social evolution can explain the origin of religion. (4) The Bible is, at best, a jumbled aggregate of theological cullings that do little to enrich humanity and much to harm us. (5) The Jesus of history was (at best) mortal. (6) Christians in the United States constitute a profound threat to democracy. (7) All in all, the world would be better off without the gospel of Jesus Christ or any religion.

Marshall responds to these claims with solid research, reasoned arguments, and vivid illustrations that will inspire Christians. His research answers the findings of the new atheists by revealing their poor scholarship and idealistic slant. This work has an excellent historical perspective on religion globally. The author has a grasp on a number of subjects. The information in this book can help Christians witness in a world where the new atheistic ideas have infiltrated today's society.

Reviewed by Paul Scheperle, senior pastor,
 First Assembly of God, Washington, Missouri, and adjunct
 instructor of Humanities at Missouri Baptist University.

Slandering Jesus: Six Lies People Tell About the Man Who Said He Was God

ERWIN LUTZER (Tyndale, 176 pp., hardcover)

Webster's defines apologetics as "a branch of theology devoted to the defense of the divine origin and authority of Christianity." For centuries the Church has defended the "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3, NASB). Books written by Christians on apologetics number in the hundreds.

Slandering Jesus discusses six lies that have captured the minds of many people; some of

which have made it into the mainstream media. Drawing from Peter's words that Christians must "always [be] ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15, NASB), Lutzer reminds readers that "the Jesus whose biography is found in the New Testament is being treated like putty in the hands of those who wish to refashion Him to fit their particular view of the world" (Lie No. 4). Slandering Jesus discusses such lies from the discovery of Jesus' family tomb (Lie No. 1) to the belief that Jesus is one way among many (Lie No. 6). He reminds the reader that although the attacks on Jesus may appear to be new, they are in reality old heresies orthodox Christianity has always rejected.

Although *Slandering Jesus* does not cover any new ground in the world of apologetics, it is worth reading. Lutzer helps the 21st century believer intelligently respond to the questions of a post-modern world and enables the reader to "make a defense of the hope that is in him."

— Reviewed by Paul L. Curtis, D.Min. U.S. Missions, Springfield, Missouri.

NOTE

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Pentecostal Healing: Models in Theology and Practice

KIMBERLY ERVIN ALEXANDER (Deo Publishing/Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series, 258 pp., paperback)

Alexander is a faculty member at Church of God Theological Seminary, Cleveland, Tennessee. She writes from a Wesleyan-Pentecostal tradition. Her book, focusing on the American Pentecostal movement, provides a well-documented history of divine healing in the United States from the mid-19th century onward. She documents influences that appeared prior to the modern Pentecostal movement, impacting the theology and practice of healing that emerged in Pentecostalism.

Alexander's book is more than a historical survey. Much of the book engages theological concerns. In particular, she distinguishes between Wesleyan-Pentecostal theology and the Finished Work theology of groups such as the Assemblies of God. She states, "The most significant contribution of this thesis has been the discovery that the 1910 division over sanctification as a second definite work of grace and the

introduction of Finished Work soteriology into Pentecostalism produced an understanding of the provision of healing quite different from the way healing had been and continued to be perceived in the Wesleyan-Pentecostal soteriology." She assesses the impact of these differing trajectories on Trinitarianism, pneumatology, Christological and soteriological concerns, ecclesiastical issues and, finally, implications for eschatology.

This book contains well-documented information that will stimulate thoughtful reflection on divine healing. Pastors and serious students will welcome this useful resource. Alexander confronts important and practical questions. Even though readers may not agree with all of Alexander's conclusions, her presentation of issues invites prayerful consideration.

— Reviewed by William W. Menzies, Ph.D., longtime Assemblies of God educator and missions consultant, Springfield, Missouri.

Ministering to the Mourning: A Practical Guide for Pastors, Church Leaders, and Other Caregivers

WARREN AND DAVID WIERSBE (Moody Publishers 240 pp., paperback)

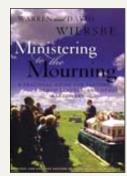
Ministering to the Mourning is a revised and updated edition of Comforting the Bereaved. This revision

presents practical applications for ministry within American culture and supplies excellent suggestions and guidelines for pastors who are ministering to people who have experienced the death of a loved one. Throughout the book the authors intersperse gems of wisdom and insights they have gleaned from hands-on ministry.

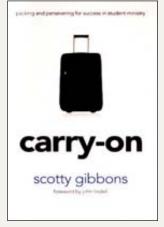
The ministry of Jesus brought comfort and healed the brokenhearted. Quality pastoral care demonstrates compassionate care through ministry of presence, acts of kindness, and timely words of comfort. The authors believe, "Those who minister to the sick, dying, and those who experience the death of loved ones must know what we believe and why we believe it; otherwise, how can we provide guidance and comfort to those who need it?" They further elaborate, "Our task [as ministers] is not to shelter people from the pain of grief but to assist them in drawing upon the spiritual resources available through Jesus Christ."

The book functions as a handbook for people in ministry, particularly new ministers who desire to build a biblical foundation and acquire resources for grief ministry, practical suggestions for ministry at the time of death, funeral services, and an understanding of contemporary culture and death. It would be an invaluable resource in a pastor's library.

—Reviewed by Larry D. Cooper, D.Min., hospital chaplain, Cox Medical Center, Springfield, Missouri.



Ministering to the Mourning: A Practical Guide for Pastors, Church Leaders, and Other Caregivers



Carry-on: Packing and Persevering for Success in Student Ministry

SCOTTY GIBBONS (Onward Books, 163 pp., paperback)

Vouth ministry is a journey. If a youth pastor does not properly prepare for this journey, youth ministry can and will wear him down. Youth ministry can also wear down those around you, including your family, other leaders, and students. But youth ministry through God's strength and vision can be one of the most rewarding ministries of which you can be a part. *Carry-On* helps youth pastors realize just that.

Practical and powerful, this book is a must read for any youth leader. The challenges of youth ministry can be overwhelming at times. This youth ministry handbook shows you how to take practical steps to ensure spiritual growth in the life of your students, as well as your own. It addresses a youth leader's calling, as well as the vision God gives for his students. It also discusses what things can distract youth leaders from the vision God has given them.

Gibbons has a way of telling stories that many youth pastors or leaders can easily identify with and learn from. He also stresses the importance of being willing to always learn.

There is no secret recipe for successful youth ministry. God has specific plans for specific ministries with specific youth leaders. This book will help you realize those incredible God-given plans in the most practical way.

Reviewed by Steven Clements, youth pastor,
 Calvary Assembly of God, Crystal Lake, Illinois.

FIRE Institute Challenges a New Generation to Go Deeper with Christ

lational Youth Ministries announces the rebirth of *FIRE* **Institute,** the discipleship resource to empower a new generation of students in the Word and Spirit. Evangelist Rich Wilkerson produced the original *FIRE Institute* in 1985 in response to his desire to see students reach a greater degree of commitment in their walk with Christ.

In 2007, with Wilkerson's permission, NYM expanded and updated *FIRE* materials to stretch today's student in their walk with Christ by taking him or her through in-depth

Bible and theological study, evangelism basics, Scripture memorization, and more — with every level requiring more focus, intensity and commitment.

One of the main updates expanded the *FIRE Institute* from one 13-week to four separate, 8-week sessions. The first two volumes of *FIRE Institute*,

"Foundation" and "Inspiration," released in 2008. The remaining session manuals, "Responsibility" and "Evangelism," will be released in late spring 2009.

As well as adapting to changes in youth ministry and culture from 1985 to now, Student Discipleship Director Rod Whitlock, who head the project's revival, says the 2008 version incorporates enhanced Web features for student and leader.

"Web technology has given us opportunity to give students and leaders participating in FIRE Institute immediate

access to downloads, study notes, and applications that can be continually updated and added to," Whitlock said. "This access not only makes the *FIRE Institute* an incredible tool for continued discipleship, but also gives great return on a small monetary investment. *FIRE Institute* may very well be the best all around discipleship tool ever offered for leaders and students."

For more information on the FIRE Institute, FIRE BIBLE Student Edition, FIRE Starters, or other FIRE line accessories log on to www. fireinstitute.com.



Assemblies of God World Missions Global AIDS Partnership is launching its first internship for medical students, nurses, physician assistants, and other medical personnel desiring to minister to those affected by HIV/AIDS. AGWM Global AIDS Partnership will also consider nonmedical participants. Scheduled for late spring 2009, attendees can contact GAP for further information.

The initial 4-week training program will be held in Springfield, Mo. Sessions will include HIV 101, Community Health Evangelism, Relief & Development, Testing & Counseling, Trafficking & HIV, HIV & Drugs, Sustainability & Appropriate Technology and Micro-Enterprise

Training, Hospice Care, and orientation for the specific region where the attendees will spend 2 weeks in ministry.

Experienced medical personnel serving as AGWM missionaries assigned to ministries such as HealthCare Ministries, Project Rescue, Global Teen Challenge, and GAP will teach each session. Attendees will also visit a local AIDS facility.

The spread of AIDS continues world-wide. According to UNAIDS (http://www.unaids.org), 33.2 million people are living with AIDS as of December 2007. In 2007, medical personnel diagnosed 2.5 million people as newly infected, and 2.1 million people died from the disease. Although medicines help prolong life prior to the advanced stage of AIDS, there is no cure for the disease. The disease is a major threat in countries such as Russia, China, India, as well as Africa, where it has nearly wiped out entire generations.

Students who are interested in the 6-week rotation should contact GAP at

the address below. This is a self-funded opportunity and the potential for college credit is possible.

Global AIDS Partnership 1445 N. Boonville Ave. Springfield, MO 68502 www.globalaidspartnership.org



21st Century Discipleship Series

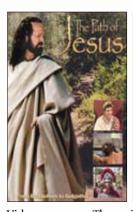
The 21st Century Discipleship Series is a new adult discipleship series produced by Global University's Center for Evangelism and Discipleship. This series features three study guides — *Getting Started, Facing Issues,* and *Making a*

Difference — each with 13 lessons. These easy-to-follow lessons have a distinct Pentecostal orientation and are written by pastors, missionaries, and Christian leaders. Lessons cover vital topics designed to nurture new and experienced Christians, laypersons, and church leaders.

Churches can use the 21st Century Discipleship Series for small groups, discipleship classes, study centers, and individual study. The instructional design makes it convenient for believers to study one lesson per week. All lessons are Bible-based, practical, and expose students to the fundamentals of developing and demonstrating spiritual growth and maturity. Each lesson also offers key Scripture verses for students to memorize and a self-evaluation assessment so a student can easily note his or her comprehension of the material. A summative testing instrument is also available for each book within the series.

For more information on the 21st Century Discipleship courses and/or starting a CED Study Center, call Global University at 1-800-443-1083.

International Media Ministries Releases New DVD



The Path of Jesus, the newest release by International Media Ministries, continues with the theme of the past three Bible Stories

Video programs. These videos give viewers a peek into biblical times and the life and teachings of Jesus.

The Bible Stories Video Project is a visual video library of reenacted Bible stories designed to make Scripture come alive. These videos are historically

accurate, culturally appropriate, and highly dramatic stories of the life, miracles, and parables of Jesus. IMM has licensed this series and is dubbing it for broadcast in more than 26 languages.

"We as a team feel that *The Path of Jesus* exceeds this past effort and many of our expectations, and we pray that it will reach even further around the world than its predecessors," said associate producer, Denise Godwin.

The Path of Jesus is currently available as a music and effects track for translation, or in English for broadcast, as well as on DVD. The DVD contains bonus material, including director's commentary, soundtracks, photos, and recipes.

The program features a total of seven stories:

- The Christmas Story
- The Temptation
- Iesus and the Pharisees
- The Pharisee and the Tax Collector
- The Decision
- The Absent King
- The New Covenant

This new release makes a total of 30 dramatized Bible stories available on four DVDs including: *People Who Met Jesus* 1 and 2, and *The Parables of Jesus*, and *The Path of Jesus*. Churches can use these four DVDs in small group studies, Christian education classes, or as the Scripture presentation for preaching or teaching. The English DVD can be ordered from **VisionVideo.com**.

For more information or to license these DVDs for broadcast, contact info@imm.edu.

The Fire Bible Is The Greatest Gift

Life Publishers has completed 9 international language editions of the *Fire Bible*

during the past 2 years. They have also presented thousands of copies of this Pentecostal study Bible to overseas pastors and lay workers.

Three of the more recent *Fire Bibles* Life Publishers has completed are the Arabic, Malagasy, and Tiddim Chin. Life Publishers expect the Arabic *Fire*

Bible to be a key tool for workers taking the gospel to unreached people groups across the Middle East.

Representatives from several church organizations, including the Assemblies of God, attended the Malagasy *Fire Bible* dedication in Madagascar, Africa, in June 2008. Madagascar's AG General Superintendent Nicolas Rakatomalala expressed his appreciation with these



Nicolas Rakatomalala

words: "The Fire Bible is the greatest thing you can bring to our island and to our people because of the great hunger we have for the Word of God." Madagascar is the

largest island nation in the world with a population of 18 million people.

Representatives from Life Publishers presented the Tiddim Chin *Fire Bible* to the people of Myanmar (Burma) in May 2008, only a few days after Cyclone Nargis brought tremendous devastation

to that land. In spite of the turmoil, pastors and lay workers gathered with great rejoicing to receive their *Fire Bibles*. Delivering the 10,000



The pastors and workers receive their Fire Bibles.

Bibles into Myanmar was treacherous and required a caravan of almost 240 horses to pack the Bibles over the mountains of India and into Myanmar.

The *Fire Bible* is a one-book Pentecostal library. It offers Pentecostal notes/commentary, a concordance, theme articles, maps, and other study helps. It is proving to be an invaluable tool for overseas pastors and lay workers to help them preach and teach the Word more effectively and lay a foundation of sound Pentecostal doctrine in the church.

Assemblies of God Bible Alliance and its partners, Life Publishers and Light for the Lost, produce this Pentecostal study Bible. A total of 26 *Fire Bible* language editions are now available, with at least 30 more at some stage of development.







Griffith

Wolford

Stevenson

National Youth Scholarship Program Winners Announced

The Assemblies of God national Youth and Christian Higher Education departments recently selected the recipients for the 2008 J. Robert Ashcroft National Youth Scholarship Program. The NYSP sponsors judged applicants for this honor in

several categories, including: academics, extracurricular involvement, Christian service, Christian life, financial need, essay, and references.

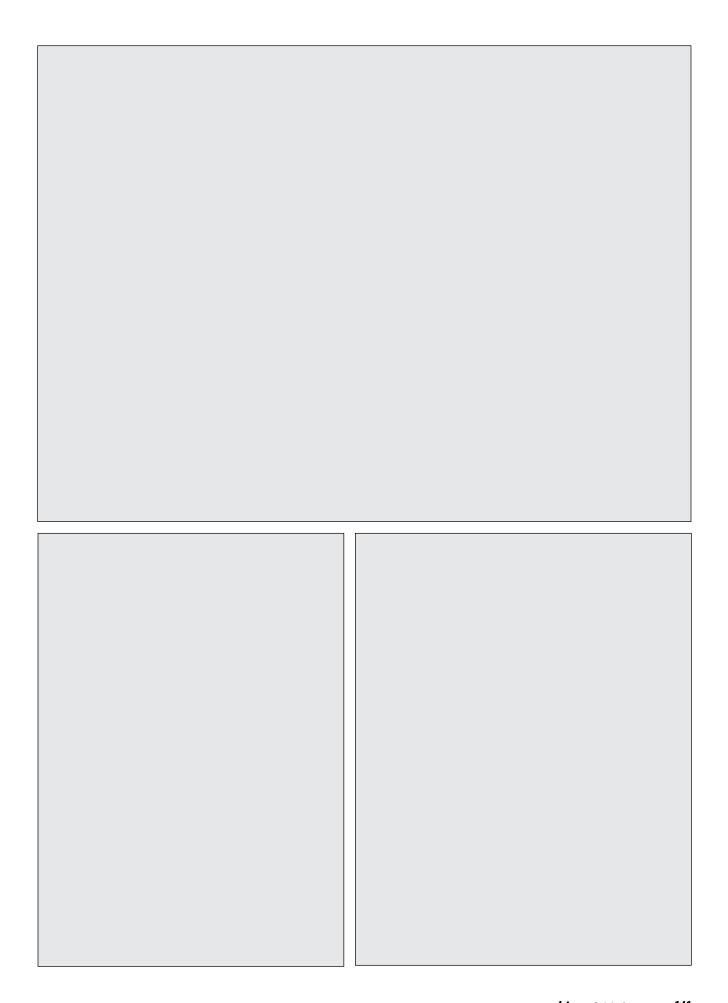
The NYSP awarded first place and a \$5,000 scholarship to Renée Griffith, Butte, Mont. She is the daughter of Lew and Christine Griffith. Griffith graduated first out of 326 students at Butte High School. She is attending Evangel University in Springfield, Mo.

Staci Wolford, Ridgeley, W.Va., received a second-place scholarship of \$3,000. She is the daughter of Donnie and Tammy Wolford. Wolford graduated first out of 148 students at Frankfort High School. She is attending Southeastern University in Lakeland, Fla.

JaNae Stevenson, Howard, S.D., received third place, and a \$1,000 scholar-

ship. She is the daughter of RaNette Stevenson. Stevenson graduated fifth out of 37 students at Howard High School. She is attending Trinity Bible College in Ellendale, N.D.

The Christian Higher Education and national Youth Department sponsors the J. Robert Ashcroft National Youth Scholarship Program annually. They award scholarships to high school seniors who attend Assemblies of God churches (or are dependents of Assemblies of God missionaries) and who plan to attend an Assemblies of God endorsed college upon graduation. Students can obtain applications from district youth directors after November and can turn their applications in to their district youth director's office from January 1 to March 31 each year.



With Christ

Keith N. Abraham San Jacinto, California

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West Paducah, Kentucky

Jay Alford Youngstown, Ohio

Zoila J. Amaya Brownsville, Texas

Troy G. Anderson Kearney, Nebraska

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Jesus D. Arredondo

Des Moines, Iowa
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Stockton, California

Floy V. Baldwin Stockton, California

James E. Bass Alvarado, Texas

William J. Behr Kunkletown, Pennyslvania

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Margaret B. Benson

Marshallberg, North Carolina

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In Closing / M. WAYNE BENSON



ounds are inevitable. Jesus normalized wounds when He warned us that it is "inevitable that stumbling blocks come" (Matthew 18:7).

Everyone on this sin-cursed earth will experience pain through problems, betrayals, conflicts, and heartaches. However, for the minister who has been called by God to invest his life advancing the gospel, the pain is often amplified by the focus of his compassion that brought him into ministry — people. It is not enough that Satan targets pastors in an effort to destroy their moral integrity or effectiveness. It seems he has also chosen as his instruments the object of love that compelled a minister to give up secular pursuits and enter the ministry.

Those in ministry often feel constrained not to share their burdens with others. They face pressures based on false notions or unrealistic expectations of what a minister is to be and do ... and even more so, what a minister is not to be or do. So, while sheep cry for

help and unburden their soul to the shepherd, the shepherd hides his heart from the sheep and feels confined to a small island called Isolation while he carefully buries his struggles in subterranean soil.

Paul dealt with the Corinthian's misconceptions about "most eminent apostles" (2 Corinthians 11:5) and compared them to the reality of his own life filled with struggles and weaknesses.

Members would often rather live with their perceptions than face the reality of the humanness of their pedestal preachers. Ministers who buy into that perception will inevitably deal with hidden pain while wearing the mask of professional competence.

The hurting pastor needs to talk about real-life struggles with people who care and understand. This requires a safe environment where grace abounds. Most often this grace is imparted only through those who have themselves suffered. The adage states: "Never trust a man who does not walk with a limp." I might paraphrase, "Never fully trust the counsel of someone who has never experienced pain."

At EMERGE Ministries, we see over 300 clients each week. Many are minis-

ters from over the world who turn to us for help. Can I tell you a secret? Many of our clinical professionals have endured life's challenges that drove them to their

knees. They have experienced losses, failures, problems, and pain. And the process of victory has become a foundation for helping others find solid ground. Is not this the pathway God

has ordained — that we would comfort "with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted" (2 Corinthians 1:4)? It is far easier for a hurting pastor to find hope when a fellow sufferer models it.

My encouragement for the wounded shepherd is this:

- **1.Face your giants.** Do not give in to the pressure of the challenge. Perhaps your best lessons and greatest ministry will be refined in the fire of your tribulation.
- **2. Build a holy alliance of trusted friends.** Do not be tempted to make this journey alone. Christianity is not a solo act and healing rarely comes in the vacuum of isolation.
- **3. Grasp hold of God's promises.** God's grace is sufficient. He will give you the strength you need from His Word.
- **4. Place your future and your ministry, once again, in His sovereign hands.** Is this not where your ministry began? Surrender is not a one-time event at salvation. It is a way of life.
- **5. Become wounded healers.** God's process is never without purpose. There is a credibility that only comes when you have emerged from a dark valley to the mountaintop.

"I know God will not give me anything I can't handle. I just wish He didn't trust me so much." — Mother Teresa

How can you help a wounded shepherd? Be aware of the problem. Thousands leave the ministry each year, many never to return to their calling. Determine to be part of the solution. Seek out those who are hurting and give them respect, not pity. God is in the redemption business. He does not issue purple hearts, but He does heal broken ones. Wounds are inevitable, but so is God's grace.



M. WAYNE BENSON is president and chairman of the board of EMERGE Ministries, Akron, Ohio.