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ADDRESSING THE WEIGHT OF CARING FOR SOULS AND
THE TROUBLED HEART OF THE PASTOR THROUGH
BIBLICAL COUNSELING

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To my wife, Audrey, and my daughters Gabrielle, and Charlotte.

This work is not possible without your sacrifice.

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PREFACE

The work of this thesis was not possible without the sacrifice of so many. While that statement seems cliché, in this moment I have found during this work that to say yes often means less. Saying yes to this thesis has often meant less time spent with my wife, my daughters, my church, and other family, and friends who would rather me enjoy their company. I would like to take a moment here to thank each one of them, for their sacrifice.

To my wife, Audrey, you were the one who started this whole process. You are truly the catalyst of this thesis. Without you telling me I had to go back to school, and I had to write about this topic, this thesis would not have happened. I am so grateful that you see the burden of pastoral ministry and long for a biblical solution for the many pastors who are leaving and have left the ministry. I am thankful for your nights of cheerleading when I did not want to write, the time you spent solo as a parent while I was working on this degree, and the many prayers you have prayed for me throughout this process. You have sacrificed the most for this thesis; I love you and am beyond grateful for God bringing you into my life. I hope that God blesses your sacrifices by now allowing me to be the husband and pastor you need, one without a troubled heart. I can truly say this would not have happened without you! Thank you!

To my daughters, Gabrielle, and Charlotte, you are so young right now, but I want to thank you for sacrificing your time with your daddy so that I could finish this work. After your mom, you have sacrificed more than anyone else for me to finish what lies within these pages. I hope that these sacrifices you have made while you are small will allow you to have your dad in the most complete form, without a troubled heart for

the rest of his life. I hope that the sacrifices we have made will benefit you for years to come. I love you girls more than you know.

To my church where I pastor, Zion Baptist Church in Claxton, Tennessee. You have been so faithful and loving through this process and I am so grateful that you have allowed me the opportunity to gain this degree. However, that came at a cost to you, and there were many Sundays when I was unable to preach because of the work contained in the pages of this document. While you did not get a doctoral project from my time working on a doctorate, I hope that you have gained a more complete pastor. Thank you, for your love and support through this process.

Lastly, to the many friends and family who prayed for me, did not get disappointed when I was unable to attend events, and always took an interest in this thesis. Thank you, for understanding my sacrifice and not making me feel like a loser when I had to write instead of fellowship. Thank you for all your love and support.

To all of you who have sacrificed I desire that this work be used in the mending and restoring of troubled hearts. So that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Tim 3:17). So that the man of God may be able to have his past redeemed, his present moment restored, and give hope to his future.

Alex Stephens

Powell, Tennessee

May 2024

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Failings and fallings of pastors from their ministries are no longer uncommon in this contemporary world. There is less shock when news breaks of another abrupt end to a ministry, or tragically, the life of a minister. It is common to hear pastors speak of their loneliness, the pressure they are under for decision-making, or just the tiredness and grief of day-in, day-out ministry. This begs the question, what is being done to address this issue? It is no longer enough to blog or do a podcast about this problem. The driving force behind this vacancy of ministerial action must be known and exposed. At the same time, a formulation of solutions for the pastor through God’s Word must be given to address this problem. When looking at the silent crisis of increasing ministerial vacancy, one must suggest that many have bought into the idea that the pastorate is just another job and not a divine calling.¹ While it certainly has a business aspect, the pastorate is not a job in the traditional sense. Derek Prime and Alistair Begg define the pastorate by saying, “It is vocation, the answering of a specific call from God. It is the highest calling in Christian service.”² They go on to say, “Christian leadership is paradoxical where the leader is not the boss but a servant—someone who follows in the footsteps of Him who washed the disciples’ feet.”³ Prime and Begg define an important point, that is, to understand the role of a pastor one must understand something of vocation and service.

¹ Ray Ortlund, “Ministry Is Never a Job: Advice for Young Pastors,” *Desiring God*, May 4, 2020, <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/ministry-is-never-just-a-job/>.

² Derek Prime and Alistair Begg, *On Being a Pastor: Understanding Our Calling and Work* (Chicago: Moody, 2004), 17.

³ Prime and Begg, *On Being a Pastor*, 30.

Within the difficulty of their vocation pastors also struggle to find options of godly counsel to turn to in their sin when they are riddled with pressures and guilt too heavy to bear.⁴ While there are many ways for a pastor to be cared for, this thesis will focus on one-another care as a necessary aspect of caring for a pastor with a troubled heart.

Thesis

A pastor is under a burdensome holy calling from God to fulfill both regular and responsive demands in ministry in caring for his flock. The difficult demands required to fulfill these responsibilities will have a wearying effect on the heart of a pastor, rendering him in need of care himself. In this thesis, I will argue that the pastor's need for care is not adequately met by secular models of self-care, but requires biblical care in community, given the unique demands of ministry.

Defining Terms

I have selected the terminology *troubled heart* for this thesis rather than the more common terminology *mental health problems* because I believe it captures the common experience of suffering while keeping the proper emphasis on God's design of people as embodied spiritual beings. For this thesis, which focuses on the context of pastoral ministry, a troubled heart describes the wearying effects of ministry that produce internal suffering in an individual as he fulfills his personal calling to shepherd God's flock in a world of circumstantial opposition.⁵ This suffering often expresses itself as depression, anxiety, grief, and other conditions. While the conditions are natural emotional responses to a stimulus and not always sinful in themselves the pastor must beware that his troubled heart can be an environment of temptation away from the peace found in trusting Jesus Christ. This suffering is spiritual in nature and involves the body.

⁴ Barna Group, "ChurchPulse Weekly: Juli Wilson and Kayla Stoecklein on the Mental Health Struggles of Ministry," May 12, 2021, <https://www.barna.com/research/cpw-wilson-stoecklein/>.

Scripture addresses spiritual responses primarily as a way of stewarding physical responses. This thesis will therefore emphasize spiritual response while acknowledging physical expression.⁶

The biblical counseling ideology that has been selected for this thesis is that of one-another care in the church. The one-another care of the church is best seen in what could be termed one-another passages of the New Testament where believers carry out the commands of God towards each other. The way Christians relate to each other should be different than the world based on the commands of Scripture. There should be a moving towards one another to counsel, correct, guide, and aid one another for the glory of God.⁷

Overview of Pastoral Duty

The next issue that must be examined is what the Bible says about the pastor's

⁶ The idea of a troubled heart is seen in the New Testament in John's gospel in John 14:1, John 14:27, and 1 Peter 3:14. The contents of a troubled heart would be largely related to contemporary concepts of mental health. Matthew Henry when writing about John 14:1 says, "There was anxiety and concern and Christ observed it on them." (Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 5, *Matthew to John*, (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1975), 1107). Henry's commentary states the mental health concepts of anxiety, the concerns of life, and sorrow that Jesus cautions against as a troubled heart. Henry (1107). According to Henry, an unchecked troubled heart will lead to temptation. This temptation according to Matthew Henry (Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1119). And George Beasley-Murray (George Beasley-Murray, "John," *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 36, (Waco: Word Biblical Publisher, 1987), 249). Is to allow distress, in whatever form it takes, to determine a life rather than the peace offered by Jesus. Henry also defines a troubled heart further noticing that present evils trouble the heart, whereas a heart that rejects Christ is afraid of what is to come. Henry (1119). This means a troubled heart is ruled by the anxieties, concerns, sorrows, and fears of life rather than the peace offered in Christ.

⁷ One-Another care is where biblical counseling comes from. The following resources explain the term further. One-Another care is the way God's people move towards each other to help in desperate times. (Ed Welch, *Side By Side: Walking with Others in Wisdom and Love*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 73). Also, it is how one believer should normally be relating to another believer as commanded in the New Testament. (Stuart Scott, and S. Andrew Jin, *31 Ways to be a One-Another Christian: Loving Others with the Love of Christ*, (Wapwallopen: Shepherds Press, 2019), 11). Sometimes one-another care is termed the private ministry of God's word which works to encourage people to live in a way that honors God as displayed in God's word, and when needed counsel or correct others according to God's word in order that all might live as God commanded and be comforted by the Holy Spirit. (Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 86).

responsibility for caring for souls. The care of Christian souls is a responsibility of the leadership within a church, of which the pastor is part of the leading body. Hebrews 13:17 says, “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”⁸ This verse is possibly the clearest command Scripture gives on the topic of how pastors are to care for souls. The writer of Hebrews shows the legitimate burden pastors carry when they take their calling seriously.⁹ Pastors bear this burden as those who will give an account of how they performed their calling. Knowing what God expects helps clarify that the pastor is responsible for preaching a theology that honors God, living a life worthy of the calling to which he is called, and encouraging others to follow in both his teaching and example of life as a Christian. When the fullness of the calling is seen, one can also assess, by all accounts, that it is a monumental undertaking; an undertaking that is impossible without the aid of the Holy Spirit.

Next, the weight of caring for souls must be evaluated by how such a burden can produce unique difficulties within the heart of a pastor. In researching this topic, it seems the majority of pastors, even the most well-prepared, have found themselves at times within the trenches of the ministry feeling alone in life.¹⁰ Some have been too focused on ministry and confess they have forgotten to lean on God daily for this

⁸ All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

⁹ David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, New American Commentary, vol. 35 (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 576. Allen suggests that some of the seriousness of the calling of verse 17 is in reference to a comparison of the leader and the benediction of verse 20 where Jesus is seen as the great Shepherd of the sheep. The calling is serious because the pastor oversees the souls, or eternal life, of the believers as one who will give an account.

¹⁰ Jeff Iorg, *The Painful Side of Leadership: Moving Forward Even When It Hurts*, (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 71-73. Leaders, Iorg writes, are lonely for many reasons. Some of this is because of the information they must keep confidential and others because of their job demands that isolate them from others. There are many reasons for this loneliness, but Iorg suggests that pastors combat the loneliness by being intentional to develop friendships and to be aware of God’s presence.

calling.¹¹ Forgetting to depend on God, if left unchecked, can develop into a warped view of ministry where a pastor is more reliant upon his ability than the power of God. A warped ministry view can breed frustration toward those in the congregation for whom a pastor is responsible because as Paul David Tripp suggests, “You love the ideas [about] God more than the God whom they represent and the people they are meant to free.”¹² Tripp’s assessment shows how it is too easy to merely think about theological ideas and forget that theological ideas represent a God who desires to set free those who study those ideas. Therefore, it is imperative in this age that the pastor’s specific heart issues be exposed by God’s grace in a biblical community so that common troubled heart pitfalls might be avoided. The hope is that biblical counsel given through one-another care can expose the pastor’s heart to God’s Word in fresh ways so that the pastor’s heart can be mended, and his calling renewed to care for souls within his church. This thesis will endeavor to address the theology of pastoral calling. There will be an effort in this thesis to show how the care of souls is a heavy burden that can only be relieved in a biblical community, or the pastor will struggle with a troubled heart. Then show how a pastor under a holy calling can guard his heart and flock from the regular and responsive demands of ministry that tend to affect the pastor’s mental health or troubled heart.

The care of souls is a complicated burden, and the pastor is called by God to carry that weight; however, the weight must not rule the pastor and drive him to a troubled heart. The demands of ministry can at times be overwhelming, but the pastor must be led by Jesus in fulfilling this call. When the pastor is following the leadership of Christ, he will be more likely to submit to biblical community. It is the leadership of

¹¹ Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012, 151-152. Tripp writes about how his success and the busyness of ministry had made him feel as if he had arrived as a pastor. He talks about how his pride had crept in and how he was leaning on his abilities and had an attitude of arrival. According to Tripp, this will bring a variety of temptations that will cause him to look at his accomplishments rather than look to God.

¹² Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 42.

Christ which will guard the heart of the pastor within the ministry he is called to and lead him into peace.

Familiarity with the Literature

In looking for helpful resources for this topic one can get discouraged quickly. Only a few rich sources answer how a pastor can be healed in the daily routine of ministry from troubles of his heart. When evaluating the literature written about the care of souls and the mental health of the pastor, it is best to address this in categories. The first category shows how and why a pastor should care for souls. The second category speaks to ways in which a pastor can care for himself. Lastly are references that give statistical information about the pastor's well-being.

Care of Souls and Pastoral Calling Sources

The first category addressed is a knowledge of how to care for souls. Here, authors have spent countless hours telling pastors ways in which they can faithfully serve their congregation and fulfill the calling God has placed on them. Many of these books are helpful in breaking down the ways pastors have been responsible for their congregations over the centuries. These helpful "how-to" resources aid in this study to view what pastors feel responsible for and how they are to carry out the office entrusted to them through divine calling.

One such work would be Harold L. Senkbeil's *The Care of Souls: Cultivating a Pastor's Heart*.¹³ Senkbeil works to make clear that multiple definitions and models have been presented to the pastor as to what their job is in a church. He shows that many pastors see their job description as ambiguous, which creates confusion as to what a pastor does and how he should engage in his calling. Senkbeil shows that the pastor's job

¹³ Harold L. Senkbeil, *The Care of Souls: Cultivating a Pastor's Heart* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019).

is as wide-ranging as the many definitions given to him. However, his primary role is to care for souls within a congregation.¹⁴ This job is done intentionally by the pastor through applying the Word to others, listening to others, and then helping diagnose heart problems.¹⁵

A book that gives reference to the broad spectrum of job titles a pastor wears is *Counseling Christian Workers*, by Louis McBurney.¹⁶ McBurney tells of the crises pastors face in the demands of their job. He shows how it is not just one area of life that is affected, but the life of the minister's family takes a hit when he cares for the life of a congregation. McBurney also addresses that it is not just the extensive job description, but also that the pastor should be tireless in his work.¹⁷

Another work that will serve this thesis is Derek Prime and Alistair Begg's *On Being a Pastor: Understanding Our Calling and Work*. This book speaks not only to the calling of the pastor but also the way in which a pastor should care for himself. Because of this unique perspective, this resource is quite valuable to this research because it gives practical information to the pastor on how to both fulfill his calling as well as how to refuel his spirit. In Prime and Begg's work, the responsibilities of the pastor are looked at from preaching and studying, to ways to care for the flock. They show the unique difficulty of caring for the souls of one's congregation as well as cultivating one's own soul.¹⁸

Phil Newton answers the questions that are most basic to pastoral ministry with relative brevity. In *40 Questions about Pastoral Ministry*, He covers things from what a

¹⁴ Senkbeil, *The Care of Souls*, 15-35.

¹⁵ Senkbeil, *The Care of Souls*, 61-71.

¹⁶ Louis McBurney, *Counseling Christian Workers*, Resources for Christian Workers Series, (Waco, TX: Word, 1986).

¹⁷ McBurney, *Counseling Christian Workers*, 23-71.

¹⁸ Derek Prime and Alistair Begg, *On Being a Pastor: Understanding Our Calling and Work* (Chicago: Moody, 2013).

pastor is to how to conduct a marriage ceremony. This book offers a concise answer to most of the questions that surround pastoral ministry. One area of particular interest is where Newton speaks about how to maintain the ongoing health of the pastor. He helps pastors by speaking on how to deal with discouragement and minister more effectively to one's wife and children, as well as how to endure well within a ministry context. This book is more of a how-to manual and bases its claims on the author's experiences as well as the experiences of those who helped him through difficult times.¹⁹

An encouraging work for the pastor engaged in caring for souls is *The Heart of a Great Pastor*.²⁰ This book reminds the pastor why he is in pastoral ministry to begin with. It reassures that his congregation needs the biblical preaching he offers, how what God has placed in his hand is the seed of the gospel, and how important that is.²¹ Most of this book is an encouragement, it serves as a helpful reminder that the pastor is to be a humble servant of the church he serves at home.

Hessel J. Zondag, in his research "Motivation for the Pastoral Profession in the Netherlands," speaks to the fact that the amount of investment from a pastor to a congregation is not directly linked to stress and burnout. He shows that many pastors can give without receiving much in return in terms of social relationships. However, an interesting theme for this body of work, Zondag suggests that the expectations of pastoral care not being well defined will create an environment where failure and burnout become possible.²²

¹⁹ Phil A. Newton, *40 Questions about Pastoral Ministry*, 40 Questions Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021).

²⁰ H. B. London Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman, *The Heart of a Great Pastor* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1994).

²¹ London and Wiseman, *The Heart of a Great Pastor*, 25-40.

²² Hessel Zondag, "Motivation for the Pastoral Profession in the Netherlands," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 28 (2000): 116-17.

Pastoral Self-Care Sources

Next would be works related to pastoral self-care. This topic has a spectrum on which many people have written. On one end is self-help, or how to be a better pastor, and on the other end is an ideology that supports the sanctification of the pastor, and submission, or return, to a biblical model. While it seems that more of these pastoral self-care books have been written within the last few years, it is still a topic that lacks a voice, which will be addressed in the next section. The dominant voice within this category is one of self-help, which is counterproductive considering the Bible never teaches to rely on one's own abilities, but on God's grace. Yet, many of these works show the need for a proper understanding of Scripture within pastoral ministry is necessary.

One of the better works within this field includes what Jeff Iorg's *The Painful Side of Leadership: Moving Forward Even When It Hurts*.²³ Within the ministry, a pastor will face, as Iorg says, "sheep who run amok, are attacked by wolves, wonder into trouble, get sick, and bite the one who feeds them."²⁴ This is the reality of most Christian ministries, yet most pastors do not have the necessary tools to handle such an issue.²⁵ Iorg suggests two helpful practices to aid most pastors when dealing with these realities. First, "maintain good close prayerful relationships; second, manage realistic expectations of both themselves and those they serve."²⁶ Then he helps Christian leaders understand a major cause for pain in leadership is not choosing worthy causes to stand for and not being ready for fallout due to their stand.²⁷

The Glory of the Ministry by A. T. Robertson looks at how Paul deals with the

²³ Jeff Iorg, *The Painful Side of Leadership: Moving Forward Even When It Hurts* (Nashville: B & H, 2009).

²⁴ Iorg, *The Painful Side of Leadership*, 1-2.

²⁵ Iorg, *The Painful Side of Leadership*, 113.

²⁶ Iorg, *The Painful Side of Leadership*, 18-31.

²⁷ Iorg, *The Painful Side of Leadership*, 191-95.

pressures of ministry in leaving Ephesus and going to Corinth.²⁸ The church he started at Corinth went away from his teaching and that weighed on Paul as he wrote to the church. Robertson unpacks how Paul processed the pain and is still able to see the joy of ministry in 2 Corinthians. He shows how Paul views the joys of ministry as seeing souls saved.²⁹ He also unpacks how the pastor views the joy of the normal ministry of the Word of God by calling it, “with an open face-the preacher’s privilege.”³⁰ It is a privilege to see God in His word with an unveiled face and present that God to the congregation. This work will serve in this thesis as a reference to scriptures that will be used from 2 Corinthians.

David Rohrer’s *The Sacred Wilderness of Pastoral Ministry* challenges the pastor to take a realistic view of himself, of God, and how God has called the pastor into ministry.³¹ This book focuses on the calling of pastors to preach and care for those within their congregation; to work within their neighborhoods to change the culture for the better. Rohrer also addresses the reality that pastors are not called to maintain the wellness of those within their care, but to apply God’s Word to their lives in a way that allows for the healing of the foreknown hurts within the churchgoer. Rohrer is a long-time pastor who draws on both his experience and God’s Word to form his conclusions, most of which are strong, but some serve as an opportunity for question.³²

In *Dangerous Calling*, Paul David Tripp addresses the challenges that face pastors that are unique to their calling. These challenges include issues such as knowing God’s Word for presentation purposes and forgetting the ability it has to set one free from the burdens of sin. He addresses that the main focus of ministry problems is a war on the

²⁸ A. T. Robertson, *The Glory of the Ministry* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1911).

²⁹ Robertson, *The Glory of the Ministry*, 45.

³⁰ Robertson, *The Glory of Ministry*, 115-40.

³¹ David Rohrer, *The Sacred Wilderness of Pastoral Ministry: Preparing a People for the Presence of the Lord* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012).

³² Rohrer, *The Sacred Wilderness of Pastoral Ministry*, 47.

heart of the pastor due to the war over the gospel he presents. Then he gives a method on how the pastor can overcome in the war of the heart by applying the “gospel passionately to his own heart before presenting it.”³³ Tripp encourages pastors to be familiar with God, but to not get comfortable within what they know. Rather, stand in awe of the God they serve.³⁴

In *A Minister's Obstacles*, Ralph Turnbull has taken the time to outline many pastoral pitfalls or shortcomings. Some of these obstacles are familiar to the population in a generic sense. However, all the barriers are written to the minister specifically, and many fit them uniquely. Turnbull shows how each of these sinful behaviors affects the minister and his calling. Each chapter serves as a clinic in that behavior, its particular nuances, the way those can manifest in the life of a pastor, and the scriptural way to overcome the said problem. All of the behaviors that Turnbull addresses require at their heart the humility of the pastor to acknowledge such a stumbling block to his ministry and to faithfully overcome it.³⁵

Lance Witt's *Replenish: Leading from a Healthy Soul* looks at the way the depleted pastor's soul has been refilled with leadership language and rituals that better fit within a Fortune 500 company than a church. Witt suggests that most of the pressures and problems for the pastor do not come from external circumstances but instead situations reveal the inner workings of a pastor's soul that need to be addressed. In this work, he shows how pastors often substitute the ministry calling for the person of Jesus, and ministry takes a role of God within the pastor's life. Witt gives several interesting alternatives to refreshing one's soul, such as rest, “building in people who know you well as a pastor and person who are able to speak into your dryness,”³⁶ and learning where to

³³ Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, 136.

³⁴ Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, 141-50.

³⁵ Ralph G. Turnbull, *A Minister's Obstacles* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1964).

³⁶ Lance Witt, *Replenish: Leading from a Healthy Soul* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 107.

say no. Witt's work is backed by years of experience within the pastorate and helping pastors in their local context.

God's Grace in Your Suffering by David Powlison is a work that can be used to address God's presence in the life of the minister even when it is not felt.³⁷ So often the dark moments of suffering in ministry can be unnerving because of the unknown. Powlison walks through how to see God's grace in the midst of suffering by looking at what is known about God amid difficult circumstances.³⁸ His book is directed to help the suffering person see that God's desire in suffering is to direct the individual to dependence upon God.

This next work can be used in both sections but for the sake of caring for souls, it makes sense to place it here. In *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry*, Heath Lambert works to build a doctrinal framework for biblical counseling.³⁹ This book takes a doctrine and makes it practical for counseling situations. An area of interest for this thesis will be the Theology of Suffering. Lambert gives reasons for suffering, God's role in suffering, and how suffering can become God-honoring when it deepens dependence on God.⁴⁰

In pastoral ministry, far too often the problems experienced are directly related to an incorrect emphasis on people. In *When People Are Big and God Is Small: Overcoming Peer Pressure, Codependency, and the Fear of Man*, Ed Welch speaks to the human desire to create idols out of the people that God entrusts into the minister's care.⁴¹

³⁷ David Powlison, *God's Grace in Your Suffering* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018).

³⁸ Powlison, *God's Grace in Your Suffering*, 43-46.

³⁹ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016).

⁴⁰ Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 247-73.

⁴¹ Edward T. Welch, *When People Are Big and God Is Small: Overcoming Peer Pressure, Codependency, and Fear of Man* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1997), 45.

Welch directs his readers to combat this idolatry by imagining the glory of God.⁴² People who glorify God see Him as the self-sufficient one who needs mankind to mimic his holiness and bear His image well. Welch encourages to delight in God and love others, just as He has commanded mankind to do.

Often the goal of a pastoral self-care resource is to give the pastor a list of things to try and do differently so that he can be healed. One work that breaks the mold and gives a biblical approach to right living is David Saxton's *God's Battle Plan for the Mind: The Puritan Practice of Biblical Meditation*.⁴³ Saxton unpacks a discipline that is lacking in today's church that was prioritized in years past; meditation on God's Word. Rather than having a mind that is drifting into the unknown area of what if, Saxton suggests that one, "fasten our mind to the objective truth of God's Word."⁴⁴ He highlights the need for daily meditation on God's Word and spends time expressing how this can be done effectively. This work will aid in the research of this thesis because of the practice it suggests and gives a mode for overcoming troubled heart problems biblically.

Another work in the vein of spiritual discipline is D. A. Carson's *Praying with Paul: A Call to Spiritual Reformation*.⁴⁵ This work largely encourages Scripture-based reflections on prayer. However, Carson also gives a topic-based approach to Paul's prayers in the New Testament. These topics are common to every minister, both in care of souls and self-care. This work helps in developing prescriptive models of prayer for overcoming the troubled heart within the pastor as he also navigates caring for the souls of his congregation.

⁴² Welch, *When People Are Big and God Is Small*, 153-58.

⁴³ David W. Saxton, *God's Battle Plan for the Mind: The Puritan Practice of Biblical Meditation* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2015).

⁴⁴ Saxton, *God's Battle Plan for the Mind*, 20.

⁴⁵ D. A. Carson, *Praying with Paul: A Call to Spiritual Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).

Statistical Research

Barna Group Research periodically releases statistical analysis from surveys done on certain interest groups. One such analysis is *The State of Pastors*. This book serves as a trusted source of high-volume survey statistics on pastoral well-being and many other areas of a pastor's life. These areas include but are not limited to, mental health, financial well-being, and spiritual well-being. Barna Group also gives insight into how pastors believe they are doing when it comes to leadership effectiveness, what pastors enjoy most within their ministry, and the rate of burnout and ineffectiveness within the ministry. This work shows the unique direction and trends present in a given timeframe within the pastorate, as well as how those trends affect the pastor.⁴⁶

In looking at the pastor's daily stress, an article of help is "Comparison of Two Modes of Stress Measurement: Daily Hassles and Uplifts Versus Major Life Events" by Allen D. Kanner et al.⁴⁷ The major way this article gives clarity is through a statistical analysis of stress. This article proves that the minor daily hassles of life affect psychology more than major life events. What changes one's life is not one or two major events, but rather the daily small difficulties.⁴⁸

Void in the Literature

There are several resources about the care of souls and several pastoral books to help the pastor heal himself or practice some form of self-care. However, little is written on how a pastor under the demands of ministry can find relief within biblical community and find relief for his heart. Such a void can cause a pastor to become soul-depleted, leading to more isolation. Most resources written for pastors fall within self-help and how-to style books. These resources encourage more things to do, some of

⁴⁶ Barna Group, *The State of Pastors: How Today's Faith Leaders Are Navigating Life and Leadership in an Age of Complexity* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2017).

⁴⁷ Allen D. Kanner et al., "Comparison of Two Modes of Stress Measurement: Daily Hassles and Uplifts versus Major Life Events," *Journal of Behavioral Medicine* 4, no. 1 (1981): 1-39.

⁴⁸ Kanner et al., "Comparison of Two Modes of Stress," 20-23.

which could prove helpful if time and situation would permit. Yet, it is rare to find literature that addresses the unique weight a pastor carries when shepherding his congregation, and even more rare is a message that pushes the pastor into one-another soul care ministry of the church in which he pastors. The message of one-another soul care is what the Bible teaches and is key in church life. Yet, when it comes to the pastor, this message of one-another care is commonly overlooked, and he is forced into more isolation.

According to new research by Barna Group done in 2020, American pastors have shown an increase in feelings of burnout and depression yet a decreased number of pastors in comparison are going to counseling.⁴⁹ In light of this research, much work remains to address the issues pastors face. One way to address this is to permit pastors to receive one-another soul care from their congregation and give them practical tools from Scripture to guard their heart and their flock. The pastor's biggest burdens can become his biggest peace if his heart is focused correctly, and he is given a healthy biblical community to live and minister within.

Outline of Chapters

The following sections give an overview of the topic discussion contained therein, as well as show the need for this study.

Chapter 2: Paul's Encouragement to the Pastor to Guard Himself

This chapter will explore the need for a pastor to guard his own life or heart. It will be seen that the pastor is called by God to keep watch on his character and his doctrine. By doing this he will guard his life from false teaching and living. It will also be shown that Paul left Timothy a pattern of doctrine that he should guard. When he perseveres in good doctrine it is a peace for his heart in troubled times. Lastly, the idea

⁴⁹ Barna Group, "ChurchPulse Weekly."

of orienting himself to God for approval and working hard to rightly preach God's word in order to show a morally superior model to what the world offers. Each of these topics are expressed in Paul's writing in the Pastoral Epistles specifically 1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:13-14, and 2 Timothy 2:15.

Chapter 3: Paul's Encouragement to the Pastor to Guard His Flock

Chapter 3 will address the ways a pastor can guard his flock as Paul encourages in the Pastoral Epistles. It will argue that the pastor should be the example to the church of Christian maturity through love, faith, speech, conduct, and purity. When a church sees their pastor they see the example of Christ. It will also be shown how a pastor best serves his flock is by preaching sound doctrine. In so doing he will guard them from the false teachers who seek to lead them astray. Lastly, the theme of suffering and completing ministry in the face of hardship will be explored. Showing that a pastor never gives up on the calling for the sake of the flock. Again in this chapter the Bible texts that will be used come from the Pastoral Epistles, and for guarding the flock 1 Timothy 4:12, 1 Timothy 4:6, and 2 Timothy 4:5 will be surveyed.

Chapter 4: The Inadequacy of a Self-Care Model for Care of the Pastor in Community

This chapter will survey the emerging theme of self-care as a mental health treatment and show how it is inadequate to address the troubled heart of the pastor. It will be shown that while the practices of self-care that are often prescribed are not evil, they also do not offer lasting help for a troubled heart. For the troubled heart of the pastor, this chapter will suggest that a pastor who is in community with other believers, submitting to God's Word will find help for his troubled heart. These suggestions for community will be made through evaluating how a pastor should submit to one-another care in a healthy church context, as well as an unhealthy church context, and show how God is always speaking to a pastor even when his heart is troubled.

Chapter 5: Practical Implications— How a Pastor Can Rightly Respond to the Weight of Caring For Souls

This chapter will gauge the pastor's need for care by examining the areas of ministry he is responsible for. This chapter will encourage areas of care for pastors by older or longer-tenured pastors to keep to encourage the hearts of younger pastors who are burdened by ministry demands. The main purpose of this chapter, however, will be to outline the way ministry demands weigh upon the heart of a pastor and describe these tasks in their present contemporary forms. The chapter will also show the safeguards that God in His wisdom has built into each ministry demand. Then show that if effort is not exerted towards meeting these demands they can trouble his heart. These demands will be put into the regular demands a pastor meets in a normal week, as well as the responsive, or the rare ministry-type demands that he must answer to bring life back into balance. All of these will be met while facing the reality that sin has corrupted every moment and that God is beautifully working redemption for his creation.

CHAPTER 2

PAUL’S ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE PASTOR TO GUARD HIMSELF

Amid ministry demands it is important for a pastor to guard his heart from the pressures he faces. The pastor is a central part of God’s plan for his church. If the pastor is so important, then there must be awareness and emphasis placed upon the guarding of his own heart. It is a point of emphasis in this thesis that pastors must guard themselves in regular and responsive ways. This guarding of himself must be done in regular ways or a weekly routine, and done in a way that allows for responsively guarding himself when his norms are disrupted. Guarding himself is done not because the pastor in himself is something special, rather he must guard himself because the message he must present is important. The pastor as the leader must guard himself so that the doctrine, he is entrusted with is seen as glorious. The pastor must guard himself for the purpose of orienting himself rightly to where true authority rests within the church and come to the reality as noted when Thomas Schreiner writes, “Paul emphasizes the authoritative teaching, not the authoritative person.”¹ The pastor guards his heart as a leader when he knows his role is to preach truth faithfully. A temptation the pastor can face is to think that his influence comes from his position and to emphasize his role as important more than God’s Word. This way of thinking can produce a troubled heart, and the remedy for such thinking is to remind the pastor that God’s Word alone holds authority for change. Throughout this chapter, the argument will be made for how sound doctrine guards the

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 738. According to Schreiner in the Pastoral Epistles, the pastor only holds authority as long as the message he preaches is gospel truth. The pastor’s authority is directly related to the message he proclaims. False teachers will not remain in preaching of the truth, therefore, the pastor must make the message of salvation central to his ministry.

pastors heart. Therefore, Paul encourages the pastor to guard his heart by consistently nurturing his faith (1 Tim 4:16), guarding what was entrusted (2 Tim 1:13-14), and living faithful to God’s Word (2 Tim 2:15).

The Pastor Must Consistently Nurture His Faith

Paul throughout the Pastoral Epistles urges his young ministers to focus not only on the problems they must face but also upon themselves as a vessel that must address this world with God’s good news. It is not enough to say the right things and know the right answers, Timothy, Titus, and all other pastors must not neglect their character when doing the work of the Lord. John Stott speaks to this idea: “It is fatally easy to become so busy in the Lord’s work that we leave no time for the Lord Himself, to be so concerned with the welfare of others that we fail to keep a watchful eye upon ourselves.”² Stott’s observation shows how easily at times a pastor can become so focused on the ministry done to others that they overlook themselves. The call for keeping a watchful eye on oneself is outlined for the pastor in 1 Timothy 4:16, “Keep a close watch on yourself and the teaching. Persist in this, for by doing so you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Tim. 4:16). In this verse Paul encourages Timothy to persistently watch matters that concern his character, and his doctrine. Therefore, this thesis will suggest that to guard one’s heart he must be persistent in matters of character and sound doctrine.

The Pastor’s Character

The pastor is called to guard his heart by cultivating his faith through persistent attention to his character. This can be seen in at least two ways, a general pursuit of spiritual well-being, and a specific focus on a holy character. Stanley E. Porter writes, “Timothy is to watch out for himself, to pay attention to and be persistent with regard to

² John R. W. Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus*, rev. ed., Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove IL: Intervarsity, 2021), 113.

himself, this implies a focus on Timothy’s spiritual well-being.”³ It seems like Porter is suggesting the idea that Timothy is to have a conviction of righteous character, such a character embodies spiritual well-being.⁴ Paul encourages the pastor to persist in the formation of his spiritual life because effectiveness in life and ministry is partially related to the pastor’s depth of character and relationship with God.⁵ The temptation is to live in a state of spiritual arrival where one has become a godly person without a need to deepen or develop that title. Instead of giving in to that temptation, the pastor will guard his heart well if he realizes as David Murray writes, “Character is formed primarily in communion with God.”⁶ The reason a pastor needs to live in communion with God for the deepening of his character is that as William Mounce writes, “The proclamation of the gospel cannot be separated from the character of the proclaimer.”⁷ This devotion to character means a pastor is focused on any area of life that could be a blight on their integrity. Phil Newton observes this when he writes, “Pastors must guard their spiritual walks, marriages, finances, and all areas that might threaten their integrity to lead God’s people.”⁸ Newton shows that the character of a pastor is not limited to quiet times, but is

³ Stanley E. Porter, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023), 371. Porter shows how, in the Greek text, Paul is making a command to Timothy to watch out. This idea of watching out would convey the idea of holding with strength and conviction to something.

⁴ Porter, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 371-372. Within this chapter spiritual well-being and character will be used synonymously due to the way Porter’s synonymous use of the words within his work.

⁵ Stanley E. Porter, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 372. Porter shows how Paul’s message to the pastor to be effective in all matters he is called to he must persist in his attention to his spiritual well-being and the doctrines he teaches. All the commands to Timothy previous to this verse rely on his persistence in character and teaching.

⁶ David Murray, *Reset: Living a Grace-Paced Life in a Burnout Culture*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 160.

⁷ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary vol. 46, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 264. Mounce also affirms that “keeping watch on yourself” is Paul referring to the character of the pastor.

⁸ Phil A. Newton, *40 Questions about Pastoral Ministry*, 40 Question Series, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2021), 34.

lived out practically in areas like one's marriage and finances. The pastor mustn't imagine his character to be helpful in leading people to pursue holiness if it isn't practical—his character must be observable to those he leads. A pastor with a character that is full of integrity in all areas of life will live with God guarding his heart, and as an added benefit inspire others towards a pursuit of salvation.

To give a more tangible goal the pastor must be persistent in the pursuit of holiness. Such a pursuit may have a wearying effect on the life of the pastor in light of him living within a sinful culture. Holiness comes from God alone and has allegiance to God alone. As Heath Lambert writes, "When we say God is holy, we are saying that God is devoted to Himself."⁹ This means that a pastor in pursuit of holiness is a man in pursuit of God alone. It means that while a pastor understands the importance of his character, he also knows that a holy God alone changes lives. Therefore, he is wise when he submits to God for the change in character he needs. As Thomas D Lea and Hayne P. Griffin Jr. write, "It is not that Timothy's endurance would merit salvation but that a stamina that produces holiness and doctrinal orthodoxy gave incontrovertible evidence of salvation...it is the inevitable fruit of saving faith."¹⁰ It is the holiness of God being worked out in the character of a pastor that confirms his salvation and the effectiveness of salvation by a holy God who is invisible to the eyes.¹¹ Such developments work to guard the heart and give assurance of God's love and His desire to keep His promises to His pastor. These persistent outworkings of holiness in the character of the pastor will also

⁹ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2016), 124.

¹⁰ Thomas D. Lea, Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy & Titus*, The New American Commentary vol. 34, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 141. The holy living of the pastor is the fruit or the evidence of his salvation. It is also important to notice how the pastor's heart is guarded as his character grows in holiness.

¹¹ Stanley E. Porter, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 372. Porter emphasizes, and rightly so, that the salvation spoken by Paul at the end of the verse is not about the believer's original conversion to Christianity. Rather, this salvation for Timothy is the evidence of salvation when it is lived out which serves as an assurance or confirmation of salvation.

prove the reliability of God to his heart. They will prove the love of God for him in times of despair. The heart is guarded in this holy persistence because the Holy Spirit's work is evident through guiding the pastor to overcome error and misunderstanding through righteous stamina.¹² This pursuit of holy character must not be neglected in the life of the pastor as the process of working out salvation assures his heart of God's love for Him.

The Pastor's Doctrine

Paul also encourages the pastor to "keep a close watch on his teaching" (1 Tim. 4:16). Jerome Quinn and William Wacker put this command in its context when they write, "In this charge, Timothy is told to fix his attention first on himself. However, the self is not valued for its own sake but insofar as it is joined to Pauline instruction and mode of interpretation."¹³ The content of the teaching is believed to be all that Paul has just instructed Timothy on in the previous verses.¹⁴ Keeping a watch on his teaching would consist of at least two themes, an encouragement to keep teaching and to consistently teach the truth.

In this verse, Paul is encouraging Timothy in his already established good preaching habits.¹⁵ There are moments when a faithful pastor needs to be told he is a good preacher and to persist in his preaching. This command somewhat serves as that encouragement. This would be a loving command as Porter writes, "Paul's command to

¹² Thomas D. Lea, Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy & Titus*, 141. If one is going to show righteousness in his day— that one must be wholly devoted to pursuing God's holiness. According to Lea and Griffin the best antidote to error is positive presentation of truth. That is accomplished in part when a pastor is focused on developing his character in the holiness of God.

¹³ Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 2000), 407.

¹⁴ Willaim Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 265. Mounce sees the reference to the Greek words: "them" and "these things" as referencing the verses from 1 Timothy 4:6-15. This verse is a general encouragement that ends the section to persist in all of Paul's previous instructions and teach likewise.

¹⁵ Stanley E. Porter, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 372. Porter points out that nothing in the verse or the book of 1 Timothy is a warning to Timothy about bad behavior or bad teaching that Timothy possesses. Rather it is a loving command to persist in truth and righteousness personally and publicly. Because Timothy's teaching reflects himself and more importantly God's salvific work in his life.

Timothy is to endure and persevere in his already good preaching over the course of time.”¹⁶ In the face of false teaching, a real temptation is to let gospel truth fade, and Paul’s command serves as an encouragement to pastors of all generations: persevere. As George Knight writes, “Paul is reminding Timothy that he must embrace and personally persevere in that which he teaches.”¹⁷ There can arise moments in a pastor’s ministry when he needs to be reminded to keep preaching and living the gospel message. Such a reminder can aid in guarding the heart of a pastor in a discouraging season of ministry. Sometimes a pastor needs to be encouraged and reminded to keep preaching.

Paul also encourages Timothy to persist in teaching the truth because that alone can save those who hear. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes, “It is the will of God that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. Salvation is the knowledge of the truth.”¹⁸ It is only through preaching and teaching truth that Timothy can save himself and his hearers. Paul commands the teaching of truth here as a way of reminding Timothy again of his purpose in Ephesus, and Paul’s purpose in writing the book. The purpose of 1 Timothy is to remind Timothy of his role in Ephesus of rebuking false teachers.¹⁹ This means that Timothy’s attention to himself should reflect how adherence to the truth can produce salvation and Christian growth. As Philip Towner writes, “Essential to growth, however, is the ministry of God’s Word in preaching and teaching in the church, from which we draw spiritual nourishment, as well as the model of

¹⁶ Stanley E. Porter, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 372.

¹⁷ George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: WB Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 211. The perseverance of teaching and rightly living is the focus of this verse. Knight references that “holding fast and persevering are synonymous concepts.” George W. Knight III, “*The Pastoral Epistles*,” 211.

¹⁸ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 39.

¹⁹ Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, Charles L Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd edition, (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2016), 733. The reason for Paul leaving Timothy in Ephesus was to instruct certain people to stop teaching false doctrine (1 Tim. 1:13, and 18-20). This context aids in the following interpretation of what kind of teaching Paul would call Timothy to watch in himself, and persist in.

godliness by the more mature for those younger in the faith. Important, too, for the salvation process is faithfulness in carrying out the calling of God.”²⁰ The church needs a pastor who is both living and teaching the truth. As he perseveres in the truth he will find a salvation for his heart that guards him and matures him, as well as see others grow in salvation under his leadership which can also encourage his heart to persist in ministry.

The pastor must address at least three areas of care: his (1) personal faith; (2) doctrine or teaching, and (3) his wellness.²¹ The pastor loves his congregation when he nurtures all three of these areas of his life. The pastor must be acquainted with himself and know when he is mentally taxed, and when his bad physical habits need to be addressed, as well as knowing the ebbs and flows of ministry and the times when he is spiritually dry and needs alone time or refreshment from the Lord. At the same time, the pastor must also pay attention to his doctrine. While this will be more fully addressed in the next section, it will be helpful to give a brief overview here as well. William Mounce writes, “Timothy must hold tightly to who he is and not allow himself to be caught by the teaching of the opponents. Timothy must carry out Paul’s instructions with persistence.”²² Mounce shows Paul’s knowledge of how easily one can drift to false teaching. Paul commands Timothy to constantly remind himself of orthodox teachings so that he might weather the storms of false teaching by standing on the rock that is the gospel. A regular demand upon the pastor is to persistently teach sound doctrine to himself and his

²⁰ Philip H. Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 14, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1994), 113. Towner shows how the growth comes from not only the preaching of salvation, but also the proper understanding of salvation in conversion, regeneration, and glorification.

²¹ While the first two points are directly tied to 1 Timothy 4:16 the third point draws from what Paul will say later in the book in 1 Timothy 5:23. In this section Paul references an ailment unique to Timothy. Paul knows that Timothy must take care of himself physically as he guards his doctrine and character. His physical well-being is important only as it profits Timothy’s doctrine and character.

²² William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 265.

congregation. While in the moment this will be heavy, God will comfort the pastor's heart in faithfully executing this responsibility.

The Pastor Must Guard What is Entrusted to Him

Every pastor must hold fast to the sound doctrine entrusted to him just like Paul commanded of Timothy. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 1, "Follow the pattern of sound words that you have heard from me, in faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you" (vv. 13-14). Paul encourages Timothy, and all other pastors, to fulfill the regular task of guarding the heart by holding to the pattern of sound words and guarding the good deposit. When a pastor closely adheres to the truth, he guards his heart to face any ministry demand.

Holding to the Pattern of Sound Words

Timothy has been taught a pattern of sound words by Paul that he is to closely cling to.²³ Timothy is to hold to truth out of his faith and love.²⁴ The act of a pastor's attitude toward truth or sound teaching should be one of faith and love. Yet if he is to hold to sound teaching with such high virtues then a deep abiding relationship with Jesus is necessary.²⁵ The only way a pastor keeps the pattern of sound words is to keep them in faith and love, which is only possible when he abides in Christ. When the pastor abides in Christ, he finds himself loyal to the words of truth in the most genuine of ways and this in turn will guard his heart.

²³ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 14, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1976), 132-133. Guthrie expresses this emphasis on sound words as a characteristic of the Pastoral Epistles, and here in this verse is the clearest link to Paul's teachings as sound doctrine, and Paul's methods as a pattern to follow.

²⁴ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 133. Guthrie outlines that the words faith and love are qualifiers for the act of holding, and do not serve as qualifiers for sound words. Stanley E. Porter, "*The Pastoral Epistles*," 530. Shows the same understanding of the Greek text and, as such shows how it offers a difficult understanding in the English translation of the text. The problem isn't, as Porter shows, with the original but with the translation of the original.

²⁵ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 133. According to Guthrie, "in Christ Jesus" is a favorite Pauline phrase, and here in 2 Timothy it shows that faith and love flow from abiding in Christ.

These words that Timothy and the pastor of today must guard, keep, and persevere in need to be defined. They are, as outlined by George Knight, “The standard of sound words that Timothy heard from Paul, i.e., the contents of apostolic teaching.”²⁶ Meaning, for the pastor today he will do well to be loyal to a reading of truth that seeks to honor God. The pastor who seeks to guard his heart will pay close attention to the apostles teaching and seek to define that teaching for those who trust him for an interpretation.

Guarding The Good Deposit

The pastor must also guard the good deposit entrusted to him. Guarding the truth, or sound doctrine, is a regular task of the pastor in guarding his own heart. However, Thomas Lea and Hayne P. Griffin Jr. say this command is too great for any human: “The task of preserving the truth of the gospel is so demanding and difficult that human strength alone cannot assure it.”²⁷ The regular task of guarding the gospel deposit is more than the pastor can do on his own, he needs help. Mounce tells of that help when he writes, “When the Spirit calls believers to minister, the call is accompanied by supernatural empowerment.”²⁸ Paul shows the pastor that the work to guard isn’t done in one’s own capacity, but is accomplished in the Spirit’s power.²⁹ When a pastor embraces the doctrine to which he has been entrusted, he will experience God’s salvation in his life and the lives of those around him. He will preach in a way that glorifies God and builds up his congregation, and he will ready his heart to see his God on the final day. One of

²⁶ George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 381. Knight shows how Paul sees himself as a trusted source on God’s truth as one appointed as an apostle. Paul is God’s messenger and what he communicates is life for those who will listen.

²⁷ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin Jr., *1, 2 Timothy and Titus*, New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 196.

²⁸ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 490.

²⁹ George W Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 382. Knight specifically says that Paul does not intend that guarding be done in Timothy’s strength but through the Holy Spirit who dwells within him. The Spirit enables and carries out the ministry through Timothy.

Paul's initial charges here is not to change the message. Timothy and other pastors can use the pattern of truth and apply it how they see fit, but they are not to change the core message.³⁰ One who swerves from the pattern of sound teaching will find things that do not resemble Christ, which will mean trouble for the pastor's heart. The love of God for his pastor is manifested in God's giving of a pattern of truth so as not to leave the man he called to drift without a plotted course.

Not only is a pastor to follow the pattern of sound teaching, but he is also to guard that teaching. A pastor guards what is entrusted to him by not making changes to the original message. Every pastor must see what has been entrusted as precious or rare and therefore stand his ground on not changing it. This guarding of the message is done through how the pastor lives his life. Philip Towner writes, "The message of the gospel is to have a practical effect on the life of the bearer."³¹ Only those whose lives have been impacted by the message will guard it and also entrust it to others who will handle it with the same care. Guarding the gospel and carefully passing the good doctrine off to others is a regular task in which every pastor is involved. A pastor who engages in guarding the deposit entrusted to him will at times rebuke false teaching because it does not fit the pattern. Other times he will take his time to show every angle of the message so that those he gives it to will faithfully execute this charge too. To be faithful in guarding the good deposit one must know what makes up the pattern of godliness. Knowing the pattern of godliness is most evident when a pastor faithfully lives a life of godliness. Guarding in this way will take long hours of study so that the man of God is ready to show people God's plan in both word and deed.

³⁰ Mounce talks extensively about the "basic sketch" or pattern that Paul is passing on. Mounce does this to show that Paul is not passing along "the pattern" of Christian teaching, but the gospel and what sound teaching looks like. He also says that "any teaching that falls outside of the sketch would have received instant criticism from Paul." William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 489.

³¹ Philip H. Towner, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, IVP New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1994), 167.

The Pastor Must Live Faithfully to God’s Word

Paul writes in 2 Timothy, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). While the character of a man is important, he is also called to preach and teach so that those who hear him might find salvation—both salvation from sin and salvation from false teaching. To guard a pastor’s heart this thesis will look at the ideas of orienting oneself for God’s approval, being a worker, and the right handling of truth.

Orienting Oneself for God’s Approval

The pastor is commanded to present himself to God in 2 Timothy 2:15. As Philip H. Towner writes, “While false teachers and opponents of truth look to other people for approval the pastor must look to God for the approval of his work.”³² The pastor must be so focused on God for approval that he never considers looking to men for accolades on the work he is called to.³³ Instead, Timothy and every other pastor are to, as William Mounce says, “Take great pains to present himself to God as one who is tested and found to be genuine.”³⁴ As Philip H. Towner notices it takes great pain to leave behind the quarrels over words that false teachers want to drag one into.³⁵ These quarrels will cause great trauma to a pastor’s heart if he succumbs to the temptation to argue. However, the pastor’s heart is guarded when he does as Donald Guthrie writes, “It is

³² Philip H. Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, 181. Towner suggests that the pastor must stand in contrast to false teachers as a workman. The first place this is seen is where he gains approval.

³³ George W. Knight III., *The Pastoral Epistles*, 411. According to Knight the general meaning of the word “present” in the Greek text becomes almost equivalent to “make or render.” This raises the meaning of the text where the pastor is so given to God that all other thoughts of his work don’t matter. Knight later says, “Paul lifts the whole question of attestation out of the hands of men and sets it in those of God. God alone decides the issue...” George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 411.

³⁴ William D. Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 524. While a false teacher is seen in their myths and misconduct, a genuine pastor will be seen in their teaching and character. A man of God teaches and lives the truth of God’s word more than he seeks to be relevant.

³⁵ Philip H. Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, 181. Towner shows how 2 Timothy 2:15 stands against the verse preceding and shows how some will wish to be divisive and fight over the words used. Instead, the workman of God stands on truth in character and teaching and only orients himself toward God.

better to leave all wordy strifes alone and seek the approval of God, whose estimation always is infallible.”³⁶ As shown above, many commentators have pointed out that false teachers will focus on words and myths to gain men’s approval; however, God calls to the pastor to look only to Him for approval. It is only when the pastor makes every effort and does his best to orient himself to God that his heart is guarded.³⁷

Being a Workman for the Gospel

A pastor is to be a laborer or a workman in gospel ministry. As Paul writes the pastor is to be a “workman who does not need to be ashamed” (2 Timothy 2:15). As C.H. Spurgeon notes, “If any man will preach as he should preach, his work will take more out of him than any other labor under heaven.”³⁸ Spurgeon notices just like Paul’s command, that a pastor who is given to gospel ministry is in a tiresome field of work. The shame comes when the pastor is not given to the work in the way the Lord calls him to be. He must as be as Donald Guthrie writes, “A Christian teacher who can unblushingly submit his work for God’s approval...”³⁹ A pastor must not plagiarize, nor consistently lean on one person’s explanation of the biblical text. Rather the pastor must work hard to ascertain the meaning of a biblical text so that he knows God’s approval from his hard work and does not feel shame from laziness.⁴⁰ The labor of the pastor in the endeavor of the right understanding of God’s word will lead them to a guarded heart

³⁶ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 147.

³⁷ Philip H. Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, 181. Towner shows that it is a conscious effort of the pastor to present himself to God.

³⁸ C.H. Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry*, (Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1981), 133f. Quote found in Derek J. Prime and Alistair Begg, *On Being a Pastor: Understanding our Calling and Work*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 2004), 98.

³⁹ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 147. Guthrie rightly points out that shame is only present when the work of a man in the ministry is detected to not be up to the level of one who is called by God. It is only in those moments when a pastor feels shame.

⁴⁰ Stanley E. Porter, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 588. Porter shows that the Christian worker emphasizes the work of expositing God’s word so that they do not disgrace themselves in what they do or in what they teach.

because it will remove the shame from his work.⁴¹

Rightly Handling God’s Word to Guard One’s Heart

Lastly, a pastor must, “rightly handle the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). A pastor’s doctrine holds the key to guarding his heart. If it is rightly understood, then he will stand without regret before God. Some hold to the understanding that what Paul references when he says “rightly handling,” he means, to cut a straight path.⁴² Yet others show that “rightly handling” is not in reference to just an understanding of the text to be taught, but a way in which one lives their life.⁴³ Either way, Paul is commanding Timothy to teach the truth plainly and live what he teaches. The one who rightly handles the truth should example God’s presence in their life, and their relationship with God should produce within them a morally superior example to those of the culture. This example shows that a pastor who rightly handles God’s word will live a life that he needs not be ashamed of. A life where his actions, attitudes, and teaching will show his relationship with God to himself and those who listen to him. This manner of life will guard the pastor’s heart and keep him from stumbling into false teaching.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed some Scriptures from the Pastoral Epistles where Paul was commanding the pastor to guard himself or his heart. The pastor's doctrine and his character were highlighted regularly and it serves to conclude that a pastor who is diligent

⁴¹ George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 411. Knight notices that a pastor might be ashamed of their work in terms of their profession or in terms of the actual product they have produced. So the right handling of the truth can guard the heart of the pastor against even wanting to quit the ministry when he feels ashamed of his profession.

⁴² Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 675. Quinn and Wacker propose this wording means for one to ‘build a road.’ But there is no way of knowing if this is accurate as they show there is no other uses of this word in Hellenistic Jewish Greek.

⁴³ William D. Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 525. Mounce notes that the original imagery of the original metaphor has been lost. So the best understanding of the term is “ethically correct behavior.” What seems to be the emphasis in this verse is a teaching and behavior that shows a relationship with God.

in those areas is working to guard himself for the glory of God. It is also helpful to observe that a pastor is not merely guarding himself from personal sin, but also working to answer the sin of false teachers as well as not becoming entangled in that world himself. The practical aspects of caring for one's heart will be further discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

CHAPTER 3

PAUL'S ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE PASTOR TO GUARD HIS FLOCK

A pastor must show himself as a genuine shepherd who guards the flock, and not as a hireling. The thought of being a guard and shepherd should, and will, weigh heavy upon a pastor. To be prepared for such a task he must acknowledge that it cannot be done apart from God's power and attention. The demand to guard the flock will consist of being an example of Christian maturity, serving selflessly, and teaching the truth of God in salvation. These three tasks must be done to guard the flock from living in sin, but they must also be done to keep false teachers from rising up in the church. As Thomas Schreiner notes, "Overseers (pastors) are to shepherd the church and to be on guard because false teachers will arise from within the elders themselves to draw believers away from the truth."¹ Therefore, the pastor must be diligent to guard the flock in these three areas that will be examined in order to set the example of Christian living and Christian leadership.

The work of guarding the flock is difficult because the nature of being a pastor consists of constant visibility and critique before a given community of people. The pastor is the example God has given to his congregation of how to live and how to endure in difficult times. This work of guarding will partly serve as his one-another care to his flock. While many verses could be used to address this demand of ministry, Paul's

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2008), 693. This section of Schreiner's book is dedicated to knowing what true overseers and elders are in the church. Schreiner is attempting to establish that leadership in the church is not restricted to the apostles. However, the leadership should be guarded so that false teachers do not rise up.

encouragement to the pastor to guard his flock is best seen by looking at the pastor as the example of holy living (1 Tim 4:12), the pastor must as servant (1 Tim 4:6), and the pastor as a sober-minded sufferer (2 Tim 4:5).

Be The Example of Holy Living

In 1 Timothy 4:12, Paul gives Timothy a charge to lead by example: “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.” Stott writes about this verse, “People would not despise his youth if they could admire his example.”² It is not uncommon for a pastor to think the position of authority he has should be enough to give him the respect he thinks he deserves. Yet, when facing demanding ministry claims this line of thinking can quickly trouble a heart and scatter the flock from the shepherd. Instead, the man of God should do his best to show himself virtuous in all areas of life so that those under his tutelage will be blessed. Towner writes, “Nothing bridges the generation gap in the church like the spiritual maturity of the younger. At a more important level, nothing proves the veracity of the gospel as well as evidence of its life-changing power.”³ A pastor can often find himself under the demands of ministry and feel despised by those whom he is to care for. However, if he makes a habit of setting the example for godly living often the congregation may be quicker to forgive his moments of failure, especially if his failures are few and they are unhidden. In setting this example he also shows, as Donald Guthrie

² John R.W. Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus*, The Bible Speaks Today Series, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2021), 108. Stott notes that Paul was never shy to call his followers to imitate him, and he is establishing his pastors to set the same pattern for those who would follow them in this section.

³ Philip H. Towner, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 14, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1994), 109. Leadership positions call for one to prove themselves as capable for the task they have been entrusted with. Paul here gives the young, and older pastors, the way they can prove themselves as ready for the task.

writes, “That Christianity is contingent upon character and not age.”⁴ To set such an example the pastor must know how he needs to be a good example, and Paul outlines five areas for the pastor to be the primary human example to the body.

Be the Example in Speech

Paul commands first that a pastor must be an example of speech. Knowing the words of Jesus, “The mouth speaks out of the overflow of the heart” (Matt 12:34). If there is a propensity to lie, gossip, or any other sinful speech listed in the Bible it can show that there might be some kind of impurity in his heart. Towner notes, “Through what a Christian says and does the truth of the Christian faith will either be demonstrated or denied.”⁵ The pastor must not give into a worldly way of speaking; rather, he should seek to build up, give grace, and reconcile with the words of his mouth to demonstrate the faith. While he will never be perfect in what he says, the pastor must strive to be a regular example of godly speech.⁶ In so doing the pastor guards the flock by meeting a regular demand of setting an example for how one should speak; this will also give his congregation an example for how one should speak to them.⁷

Be the Example in Conduct

The second area the pastor is to be the lead example is in conduct. The pastor

⁴ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 14, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), 97. When a Christian, regardless of their age, demonstrates the qualities of Christian character that qualifies them as an example for the faith.

⁵ Towner, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, 109.

⁶ George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 206. Knight suggests that Paul is encouraging the pastor to regularly avoid certain kinds of speech and seek to speak with tenderness, edification, forgiveness, and thanksgiving.

⁷ Stanley E. Porter, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023), 363. According to Porter, some have taken this to mean preaching and not just general conversation. Porter suggests the opposite by saying, “When Paul is referring to preaching more contextual indicators are provided. Therefore, there is no reason here to modulate the word to mean preaching. Instead, it seems to indicate general conversation.” Porter (363).

must be a model of righteous living. It is through the pastor's good conduct, or "way of living,"⁸ that the church will know what sanctification should look like. When the pastor is renewed in his conduct through the work of the Holy Spirit he will daily put on the new life in Christ and work to exterminate the deeds of the flesh.⁹ This radical change is what is expected of a Christian and to see it in practice in the pastor will give a pattern of living to the congregation.

It is important to note that often the message of the gospel will come under attack from those outside the church. John MacArthur outlines how righteous living can be paired with biblical teaching for a defense of Christian living: "A biblical message paired with an ungodly lifestyle is nothing but blatant hypocrisy. Worse, people will tend to follow how the man lives, not what he teaches. On the other hand, a godly life brings power and authority to a man's message."¹⁰ However, through the good conduct of believers those who oppose the message are put to shame (1 Pet 3:16). Pastors should not seek to preach godly messages to which their lives do not match; instead, they should live with righteous conduct and allow that conduct to give power to the message they preach. Such conduct will illuminate the proper living so that those under the pastor's care will know how gospel power should change them for God's glory.

Be an Example of Love

Third, Paul commands an example of love or an example of sacrifice. Love is not based on a feeling but is based on knowledge of the needs and sacrificing for others to meet the needs they cannot attain. MacArthur gives clarity to this idea when he writes, "The minister gives of his time and energy to the people he is called to serve, devoting

⁸ Porter, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 364. Porter translates the word for conduct as a way of life.

⁹ Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 206. Knight highlights the need in conduct to reject the former way of life in favor of the new life in Christ. The pastor, as Paul outlines in other scriptures (Eph. 4:22-24), puts off the old self and is renewed.

¹⁰ John MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1995), 173.

his whole life to seeing them strengthened and built up in the Lord. No personal sacrifice is too great.”¹¹ While this is true and a helpful description of sacrifice and love, one must not take MacArthur’s comment that “no personal sacrifice is too great”¹² literally. The pastor must not consistently sacrifice personal time with the Lord, or time with his family, to serve his church. To do as MacArthur suggests would mean short-term success in guarding the flock but it would be a failure at guarding oneself. While loving his church is where he must be an example, he must also be consistent in nurturing his faith.

The pastor is to example a love for the church, it is a great love, and it is the love that runs throughout the whole of Scripture.¹³ The pastor’s example of love should also stand in stark contrast to the opponents of the gospel according to Mounce, “The opponents had no love, only greed.”¹⁴ While the opponents of the faith will seek something from the congregation a true pastor will seek to example God’s redemptive work towards them in a way that draws them closer to God.

Be an Example of Faith

Fourth, the pastor must be an example of faith.¹⁵ A pastor must be an example of how to trust in God for the things God has promised as well as being an example of trustworthiness, and good stewardship.¹⁶ John Stott defines living as an example of “faith

¹¹ MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, 174.

¹² MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, 174.

¹³ William D. Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 22. Mounce refers to 1 Timothy 1:5 for a commentary on love. He shows there that love is at the center of God’s redemption of mankind.

¹⁴ Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 260.

¹⁵ Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 22. Mounce observes that throughout the Pastoral Epistles faith always accompanies love with only one exception, 1 Timothy 1:7.

¹⁶ Porter, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 364. Porter notes that faith is a compatible characteristic with love and purity. It would take faith in Christ to love people as God commands for the outcomes that God desires, and to keep oneself pure one must trust that God’s plan for chastity is right.

which could mean either trust in God and in Christ, or trustworthiness, or both.”¹⁷ The pastor must fulfill the regular demand of being the example to the flock by trusting in God and being trustworthy. In doing so he will guard his flock in moments when listening to false teachers seems appealing because they know they can trust their pastor. The pastor by his trust in God and trustworthy nature before the congregation will guard the flock against the wiles of the devil.

Be an Example of Purity

Fifth and finally, the pastor must be an example of purity. In moments when the demands of ministry are most heavy the pastor must not resort to any kind of impure practice but instead lean on Jesus alone. Most scholars agree that the particular purity mentioned here is sexual purity. Towner gives clarity to this when he writes, “Paul singles out this concern undoubtedly because questionable conduct here will ruin the Christian leader’s reputation and ministry.”¹⁸ The pastor must be a regular example of purity to preserve his ministry and his credibility as a trustworthy teacher. H. B. London and Neil Wiseman say, “Men in ministry are not victims of their glands nor slaves to their seductions. They control their appetites. They allow God’s power to keep them from senseless sin and stupidity.”¹⁹ While London and Wiseman are not clear on what they mean by trusting God’s power, this thesis acknowledges that trusting God’s power is found in God’s Spirit and by trusting in God’s Word, which says to “flee youthful lusts” (2 Tim 2:22). Pastors should not submit themselves to situations that can leave them vulnerable to temptation or even to question. Those entrapped by a sexual sin must find one-another care for the addressing of such sins. It may be found that they are no longer fit for the ministry and should seek more extensive counseling to overcome the snare of

¹⁷ Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus*, 109.

¹⁸ Towner, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, 109.

¹⁹ H. B. London and Neil B. Wiseman, *The Heart of a Great Pastor: How to Grow Strong and Thrive Wherever God Has Planted You* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1994), 237.

the devil. The pastor is called to fulfill the regular demands of setting high standards regarding purity and living up to those standards as he guards his heart and his flock.

All five of these virtues must be examples set by the pastor to guard his ministry, but also to guard his flock. If attention is given to each one, then the pastor will do well in the face of the demands of ministry.

The Pastor As a Servant

As a pastor is guarding his flock and his own heart, he must be vigilant to fight off the wolves. However, this fighting off of the wolves is best done through unconventional ways. The pastor must remain humble and do the work of a good servant. A pastor who sees the enticements of false teaching and worldly ways will do well in guarding his flock if he serves the church through diligent teaching of truth.²² Of all the things Paul could command of Timothy in the face of false teaching, he commands that one be a good servant: “If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed” (1 Tim 4:6). In handling the demands of ministry Paul requires that a pastor be a man of service to his flock, laying out sound doctrine openly and plainly. Stott writes, “Indeed, he is to put these instructions before brothers and sisters, like a waiter serving guests at a table, like a merchant displaying merchandise to a customer.”²¹ When a pastor fails to see himself intentionally in service to his Lord and congregation, he runs the risk of allowing false teaching to grip his church. The church is more receptive to those who serve them, not those who demand adherence to commands. Therefore, as Donald Guthrie writes, “It is a sign of a good minister to lay before his people the positive answer to negative doctrine, and anyone who fails in this respect forfeits the right to be

²² Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 95. Guthrie says a pastor should focus his attention on the pursuit of good doctrine.

²¹ Stott, *1 Timothy and Titus*, 104.

accounted worthy of the ministry.”²² Being worthy of the ministry means, in one sense, a pastor regularly guards his flock from false teaching.

Paul urges the pastor to remain humble and keep feeding good doctrine to the brothers. MacArthur writes, “Having discussed the inevitability of false teachers in 4:1-5, Paul now instructs Timothy in how to be and to evaluate those suited to be an effective minister of the Lord in the face of demonic opposition.”²³ MacArthur points out the difference between false teaching and its demonic ways is how sound doctrine is simply service to Christ.²⁴ The way a pastor serves the body will guard his flock from the temptations to adhere to a false doctrine that is more acceptable within the masses. The service he performs is a laying down of his life for the flock so they might have a better life. David Powlison speaks to this servanthood when he writes, “Ministry is menial work. It means being a servant, someone’s assistant, a helper. You lay down your life so that another person’s life might go better.”²⁵ The pastor regularly serves the flock so that they will have a better life. The pastor could promote himself and show himself as an exemplary preacher, but that is not what he is called to.²⁶ The pastor is called to guard the flock, which means serving those under his care in order that they might see truth as attractive.

Paul also reminds the pastor that he was trained in this faithful way of teaching, and not to forget his faithful track record of sound doctrine. While some may become weary of being a servant teacher, the pastor must faithfully bear the demands of ministry

²² Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 94. The pastor is laying a foundation for his congregation of sound doctrine and it is like “stepping stones over treacherous ground” (Guthrie 94).

²³ MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, 158.

²⁴ Porter, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 349. Porter also notices how the apostate teachings have their origins in demons.

²⁵ David Powlison, *God’s Grace in Your Suffering* (Wheaton IL: Crossway, 2018), 41.

²⁶ Porter, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 347. Paul’s use of the word “good” here is the same Greek word used in 1 Tim. 4:4 and is noting to Timothy the high value of service. Specifically a service of teaching.

and not grow weary of this good. While some may allow their desire for recognition and wealth to drive their drift from sound doctrine, the faithful preacher must stay in a position of humble servitude to the body of Christ. Through service, the pastor imitates Christ's example and gives the church a maturity model. Stott explains, "Good teaching makes a good minister, and that in two ways, namely good teachers both instruct people in it and nourish themselves on it."²⁷ By being a good servant, the pastor will know his example exhibits Jesus, and that any member of his congregation can follow because he is nourished from the example and teaching. In the faithful servitude of the Word of God, the pastor will remove the allegiance any parishioner may have to false teaching by exposing something greater. The pastor must not grow weary of this good service to his church. Though it will be a wearisome work he must fulfill this demand to guard the flock and honor God.

The Pastor Must Be Sober-Minded and Endure Suffering

Lastly, to guard the flock well the pastor must be sober-minded and ready to endure suffering for his ministry. Paul tells Timothy, "As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Tim 4:5). Here the pastor is called to be stable in his teaching, which means that the man of God must be stable in both his thoughts and beliefs. Thomas D. Lea and Hyne P. Griffin Jr. explain, "In contrast to those listeners who have itching ears, Timothy was to respond with spiritual intelligence."²⁸ Without a sound-minded approach to the Scripture the pastor will be misguided in most if not all issues, and as a result, lead his flock astray. A spiritually intelligent pastor knows the issues and the temptations that will entice his flock from the truth, and seeks to guide faithfully even if it causes personal pain. The

²⁷ Stott, *1 Timothy and Titus*, 104.

²⁸ Thomas D. Lea and Hyne P. Griffin Jr., *1, 2 Timothy and Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 245.

context of this verse shows Timothy how people will swerve from the truth, and Paul charges Timothy not to be silent when facing this difficulty. But that difficulty may lead to pain, as Lea and Griffin write, “In remaining composed, Timothy would face hardship; but he was to endure it without flinching.”²⁹ The pastor will regularly deal with pain for the sake of the body, and this must be endured “without flinching.”³⁰ The pastor endures this and works to preach clearly and calmly what is true and pleasing to God because his soul and the souls who are listening are at stake. MacArthur says, “The faithful preacher refuses to be trendy or compromising, to be an ear-tickler and men-pleaser rather than a God-pleaser.”³¹ The pastor is preaching to please God and to edify his congregation. He preaches to guard his congregation with correct doctrine through faithfully and calmly applying God's word to address a world that is largely uninterested in sound teaching. Pastors must be warned that being a sober-minded Christian will often be the very thing that causes a pastor to endure suffering, and at times he must endure suffering and fulfill his ministry.

Endure Suffering

Suffering can produce a weary soul in a pastor, and if not managed can lead to a troubled heart. While it would be more comfortable to avoid suffering Paul commands the pastor to endure it faithfully. The pastor will fulfill this command by being sober-minded.³² The idea of suffering here is in reference to patience in the midst of suffering.³³

²⁹ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy and Titus*, 245.

³⁰ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy and Titus*, 245.

³¹ MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, 184.

³² Porter, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 660. The wording used here according to Porter means that the pastor should be alert and not given to indulgences or extremes. That through sober-mindedness or alertness one is prepared to suffer.

³³ Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 456. This section is Paul speaking from experience that hardship is to be borne through patience.

As difficult as it may be the pastor is to be rational at all times.³⁴ It is the faithful pastor expecting God to do great things through sound doctrine even in a moment of suffering that inspires trust in God. Though a pastor is likely aware of his need to endure suffering, as commanded by God, yet during the moment of suffering for the flock the pastor may be tempted to think God has forgotten him. David Powlison speaks to this forgotten feeling one can have amid moments of suffering:

Our discipleship materials don't often teach us much about this. We learn to have a quiet time. We study good doctrine. Learn to study the Bible and memorize Scripture. These are all good things. But we don't learn how to need help. "How Firm a Foundation" teaches you to need help. God uses significant suffering to teach us to need Him. And when we need Him, we find Him.³⁵

Powlison helps the pastor cut to the point and shows how in moments of suffering he needs God. The pastor needs to endure suffering and not seek to avoid it because in times of suffering a pastor grows in his capacity to guard the flock. He grows in that endeavor because he is no longer dependent on his wisdom. Paul encourages Timothy, and every pastor, to endure suffering because that endurance will lead to an opportunity for the gospel to be preached.

One way the preacher may suffer and endure hardship is in his concern for the general well-being of his church. While the command in 2 Timothy 4:5 can mean that the preacher must deal with persecution, it is also possible that every pastor will endure a general hardship or feeling of pressure that comes from caring for the flock. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 11:28 that he had "daily pressure upon him of concern for the church." The pastor will never escape the demand of caring for souls. At times this regular demand will be a burden that will be deeply felt by the pastor. Paul Barrett references this burden of Paul and the pastor saying: "In referring to his concern for all the churches he particularly

³⁴ Towner, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, 205. Towner says that a pastor must keep his head in all situations. He mustn't act rashly and suddenly when it comes to false doctrine. Instead, teach with clarity in all areas of doctrine for the salvation of those who listen to him.

³⁵ Powlison, *God's Grace in Your Suffering*, 38.

has in mind the weak Christian, that is, the one is likely to be led into sin. . . . Paul inwardly burns at the prospect of such a Christian falling away from Christ.”³⁶ Whether it is seen or unseen, regular or responsive, the prospect of those who are weak falling away is a burden for the pastor. The pastor will endure the hardship of concern for the person facing a trial that may make them deny the faith.³⁷ The pastor will endure the hardship of carrying the burden of pain for every prayer request he is given and living a life holding those requests before God and in confidence before his congregation.³⁸ Not every hardship is a shipwreck or a beating like Paul faced, but if a pastor is concerned for the faithfulness of his church, then he has suffered like Paul. D. A. Carson notes, “Paul seems to view his concern for all the churches as the climax of his trials.”³⁹ Carson shows that the pastor must expect pain from his concerns about those under his leadership. That pain might be from a current problem or from the fervent prayer for those under his care.⁴⁰ That pain may come from the regular demand of caring for the flock to which God has called him.

³⁶ Paul Barnett, *The Message of 2 Corinthians*, Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1988) 174.

³⁷ Barnett, *The Message of 2 Corinthians*, 174. Barnett notes this verse shows a deep concern of Paul for the new Christians sensing them to be vulnerable and weak. There is a burning desire for those who are new to stand firm in trials.

³⁸ Barnett, *The Message of 2 Corinthians*, 174. The pastor must associate gently and humbly with those he is called to minister to, and at times this will be a wearisome burden.

³⁹ D. A. Carson, *A Model of Christian Maturity: An Exposition of 2 Corinthians 10-13* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 152.

⁴⁰ Carson, *Model of Christian Maturity*, 152. Carson seems to think that Paul’s daily anguish is not based on multiple problems needing to be solved all the time; rather, it is the constant prospect of a new problem that could materialize and lead young Christians to fall away. This can be a pain that pastors today can feel too. They can see what the world offers and be prayerfully in anguish for those who might be swayed. However, one must be honest in their views of themselves; one must be able to tell the difference between worry and being prayerfully in anguish for the congregation.

Fulfill Your Ministry

The present conflict of false teaching in the United States is a heavy struggle in which the pastor is engaged for the purpose of responsively guarding his flock. In this contemporary world, the options for a teacher through the Internet are limitless. However, one must be cautious with so many false teachers seemingly surging to offer aid to hurting congregants, and a true pastor should remain steadfast in teaching God's Word. God is calling his pastor to teach sound doctrine and care for the flock. God is calling the pastor to fulfill his ministry. The pastor is to be steadfast and loyal to the task to which he has been entrusted in guarding the flock.⁴¹ In having a mindset of persistence to the calling of ministry the pastor carries out all the duties of ministry. As Donald Guthrie writes, "Timothy is putting his hand to the plow and must not look back until his ministry is completed."⁴² In days of suffering or hardship, the temptation can be to give up and become discouraged. However, Paul's command here is to keep doing ministry work even when it seems useless. As John Stott writes, "The harder the times and the dearer the people, the clearer and more persuasive our proclamation must be."⁴³ Even in times when no one is interested in Christian ministry, the pastor must remain faithful to God doing exactly what God called him to do. His sermons and his pastoral duties are for God's glory alone and God will use him to guard the flock as long as he remains faithful.

Conclusion

Pastors have a big responsibility in guarding the hearts of their congregation. The pastor is called to be the example to the flock in words and deeds, in faith and love,

⁴¹ Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 577. Paul, when looking at his life in service to the call of Christ has seen his own loyalty and persistence to God's call. With that in mind, Paul is calling Timothy in this passage to complete his ministry with the same persistence so that he can finish his race well.

⁴² Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 168. Guthrie emphasizes the need for Timothy to accomplish the ministry. That Paul wants him to push until the end and not quit.

⁴³ John R.W. Stott, *The Message of 2 Timothy*, The Bible Speaks Today Series, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 88. Stott believes this was to spur Timothy to not trim his messages to suit those who listen and to encourage him to keep doing ministry even though no one is interested in it.

and in purity. He is to show them what Christian living looks like so that they have a tangible example of a mature believer. In so doing, he will guard the flock and preserve them from a false definition of Christian maturity. He is also to serve his church by presenting sound doctrine to them and regularly guarding the flock from false teaching. This service will both orient the congregation for truth as well as guard them from falsehood. Lastly, this chapter discussed the need for the pastor to endure suffering as well as fulfill his ministry in times of hardship. While suffering will most likely produce a weariness in the pastor it is a burden he accepts in fulfilling his ministry. He will keep doing what God has called him to so that God is glorified and the flock is guarded.

Considering the call of the pastor to guard himself and guard the flock at times the burden of this call can be wearying on his life. In moments where caring for self and flock are troublesome a pastor must have a total care for his heart. In the next chapter the idea of finding adequate care for the pastor will be addressed in order that a pastor might unburden himself from the wearying effects of ministry in a healthy manner.

CHAPTER 4
THE INADEQUACY OF A SELF-CARE MODEL FOR
THE CARE OF A PASTOR IN COMMUNITY

Throughout this thesis the thoughts of the pastor guarding his heart and guarding his flock have been presented. It is important to notice that these areas of ministry can serve to trouble the pastor’s heart if not understood within the framework of his holy calling. Speaking about the demands of a pastor, J. Drake Terry, and Christopher J. L. Cunningham write, “Clergy often face consistently high levels of job-related demands. These demands include setting high, often unrealistic expectations for themselves (e.g., constant availability), being closely monitored by congregation members at and outside of work, and providing services in high-stress situations involving crisis intervention and abuse.”¹ When faced with these ministry demands, with a full understanding of his calling, the pastor must also know where to turn when his heart is troubled. The pastor is often working toward meeting the demands of ministry and knows something is not what it should be, but may not recognize that his heart is troubled. Kristen Poppa states, “Most people are busy living their lives, without taking the time to think about if their soul needs to be refreshed or restored. . . . The self is worn down and it is not immediately clear how to take care of it and what refreshment it needs.”² In such a dilemma, the pastor must not take just any method that promises to restore his soul and his heart. He must focus on healthy biblical methods that allow for a true understanding of his state of being and also submit to God’s standards of care for his

¹ J. Drake Terry and Christopher J. L. Cunningham, “Some Rest for the Weary? A Qualitative Analysis of Clergy Methods for Managing Demands,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 60 (2021): 1232.

² Kristen Poppa, “Self-Care Is Soul Care,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 1, no. 1 (2019): 52.

troubled heart. This chapter will argue that the pastor must build and apply a healthy context of one-another care that emphasizes using God's Word to address the problems of the heart. The complete wellness of the pastor will be argued for throughout this chapter, with the understanding that while therapy offers some benefit the secular models of this care are inadequate on their own. Instead of offering a therapy-only approach, which will add some benefit to the pastor, this thesis suggests that the best results will be found when using therapy concepts within a biblical framework. Part of the reason people turn to the modern psychological approaches is because they have seen lines like what is written in one article, "Psychological treatments work. They are the first line of interventions for mental illness, particularly the ones most commonly experienced; anxiety and depression."³ It is not uncommon for people to associate mental illness with psychology. However, Jay Adams in *Competent to Counsel* has a different approach: "The thesis of this book is that qualified Christian counselors properly trained in the Scriptures are competent to counsel-more competent than psychiatrists or anyone else."⁴ Adams' argument is not one where psychology has no place, but rather the counselor should be trained in the Scriptures, not in the modern methods of the day. Only the Bible understands the regular and responsive demands of the holy calling of the pastor, and as such is the only place that can offer lasting healing.

One modern concept that will be discussed in this chapter is self-care as it is related to mental health. The idea of self-care is not new as it dates back to the 1950s; however, it was exclusively related to nursing at that time.⁵ While this thesis does not

³ Louise Bradley, "Rethinking Access to Psychotherapy," *Psynopsis* 39, no. 3 (Summer 2017): 38.

⁴ Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 18.

⁵ Mary L. White, "Spirituality Self-Care Practices as a Mediator between Quality of Life and Depression," *MDPI Journal Religions* 7 (2016): 1. In the opening of this journal, White shows how self-care was started to help in the nursing community. It included the activities needed to maintain "quality of life and well-being." These activities were often used to aid those struggling with chronic illnesses and

condemn self-care in its original design and can see benefits stemming from taking control of one’s health and recovery when ill, this chapter will discuss how self-care in its current state for mental health is not adequate to completely address every troubled heart issue of the pastor. Instead, this thesis will advise the pastor to lean into his holy calling, and the biblical demands to which God has called him to answer, and then allow what Scripture outlines to heal his troubled heart. These objectives will be outlined in this chapter through surveying the modern self-care approach as it aims to address mental health, look at the areas of shortcomings in the field, and lastly offer modes of biblical counseling and one-another care in the church to adequately address the troubled heart of the pastor.

A Survey of the Modern Self-Care Approach

The interest in self-care seems to be trending upward, especially in the US. According to Google Trends, searches on self-care have been on the rise since 2004, with April 2020 being the highest trending time (see Figure 1).⁶

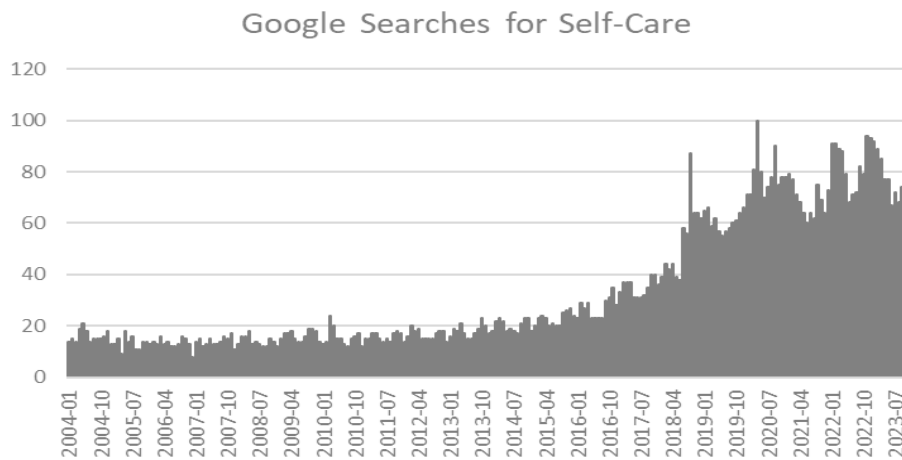


Figure 1. Google searches for self-care 2004 to November 2023

encourage them to follow up with medical care, as well as self-monitoring (glucose checks for diabetics or blood pressure checks for hypertension). Self-care could also be related to taking medication for illnesses or diet and exercise to aid recovery. White seems to have a Christian adaptation of self-care.

⁶ Google Trends, “Self-Care,” accessed November 2023, <https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=all&geo=US&q=self%20care>. All of the data for the graph was taken from Google Trends.

The numbers in Figure 1 show that people are at least interested in the concept of self-care and want to know how to maintain a quality of well-being. While much of the drive behind these sources could be related to the COVID-19 pandemic, it could be argued from these data points that there are other reasons for the search. The reason the spike in self-care searches started around the COVID-19 pandemic but the continuation could be, as Hundzukani P. Khosa-Nkatni notes, “The beginning of the lockdown was the beginning of a series of losses experienced by people; losses which were inevitable, but nevertheless, unpleasant. Losses that many were not prepared for.”⁷ Losses could be why people are looking at managing their well-being through self-care—because they lost so much, they wanted to make sure to maintain themselves. Another reason could be, as Ari Gomez-Borges et al. state, “With the growth of positive psychology, self-care has been increasingly emphasized as a means for enhancing well-being.”⁸ Whether because of COVID-19 or just a new emphasis on the term self-care in this current age, many in the US seem interested in this topic, which is why it is being examined here. The following section will survey what self-care is in definition and practice.

Self-Care in Definition and Practice

While talk about the practices of self-care and the cases where self-care can be implemented are easy to find, concise definitions of self-care are harder to come by. Hartness M. Samushonga attempts to define self-care and gives a broad definition: “Self-care is generally defined as the active process of recovering, maintaining, and improving one’s health.”⁹ The biggest issue with this definition is how broad it is, and how it could

⁷ Hundzukani P. Khosa-Nkatni, “Clergies and Self-Care during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Challenge to Pastoral Care,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 43 (2022): 2. It is unclear if the author is Christian, however, many of the references given show a more secular adaptation of self-care.

⁸ Ari Gomez-Borges et al., “Self-Care at Work Matters: How Job and Personal Resources Mediate between Self-Care and Psychological Well-being,” *Journal of Work and Organized Psychology* 38, no. 3 (2022): 231. This journal was a secular view of self-care and was helpful from that view.

⁹ Hartness M. Samushonga, “Distinguishing between the Pastor and the Superhero: God on Burnout and Self-Care,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 31 (2021): 12.

apply to any area of health care. While in some ways this isn't bad because pastors should care for every area of their health; however, it highlights how inadequate this model is for the total care of the pastor because it doesn't give clear direction for his heart when it is troubled. Some of the vagueness of the definition may be related to how self-care has traditionally been tied to the nursing profession and recently made a jump to the area of mental health and psychology.¹⁰ Due to the promotion of practice over definition in some self-care articles, one complaint that is brought up related to self-care is the idea of "individualistic understanding."¹¹ Leanna Fuller in an attempt to defend self-care expresses, "The notion of self-care in pastoral ministry has been a subject of critique, particularly when perceived as an individualistic practice. The consideration of self-care can also raise internal conflict if it is wrongly constructed as being in conflict with the principle of self-denial."¹² Fuller makes a great point as self-denial would be a biblical command that the pastor must exemplify and self-care, if too broadly defined, might possibly undermine biblical commands. This type of problem is to be expected when one doesn't define how self-care ultimately applies to mental health for both wellness and maintenance. Without an understanding of the purpose of self-care, it seems to be a promotion of self above the group which goes against the bible. Such a promotion would cause a problem within the circles of those who attempt to use it in pastoral ministry. If it is going to be an aid for those who want to use it as an answer for the issues of burnout,

¹⁰ White, "Spirituality Self-care Practices as a Mediator between Quality of Life and Depression," 1. This is a supported model of self-care by this thesis for the pastor with a troubled heart, or for a pastor who is just maintaining his life. This self-care model is one where a medical professional has diagnosed a problem, and it is up to the patient to perform certain tasks to maintain or regain health. The pastor, like any other Christian, should adhere to self-care practices that promote the total well-being of himself. In doing so he will allow himself to be more in tune with himself so that he knows if he can perform the ministry tasks and to what level if he is able.

¹¹Samushonga, "Distinguishing between the Pastor and the Superhero," 13.

¹² Leanna K. Fuller, "In Defense of Self-Care," *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 28 (2018): 5. In this article Fuller never gives a clear definition of what self-care is, yet spends a lot of time speaking to it being the "cornerstone" of pastoral ministry. She even says that self-care is more about the community than the "self" who benefits from the care (8-10). Throughout this article it seems that Fuller is a professing Christian professor who has adopted secular models of self-care.

anxiety, and depression a better definition must be used.¹³ If it is to be an aid for one another care in the church it needs to have a more concise definition.

A more helpful definition is given by Mary White who defines Spiritual Self-care as, “the set of spiritually based practices in which people engage to promote continued personal development and well-being in times of health and illness.”¹⁴ White’s definition is practical and gives elements that a pastor would be wise to adhere to. A pastor should promote continued personal development. Personal development has been discussed throughout much of this thesis as the pastor’s doctrine and character. A pastor should also be engaged in caring for his body in both health and illness. A pastor should exercise, work at having healthy sleep patterns, as well as seeing his doctor in times of health and illness. These items are beneficial for the pastor’s life and ministry; however, to aid him in critical seasons these practices alone are inadequate for a troubled heart. Self-care practices must be in conjunction with one-another care in the church so that the pastor can have an objective view of God’s plan for his wellness.

With a working definition of self-care, the well-documented suggested practices associated with self-care must be explored. Many of these practices are quite healthy for people to implement into their daily routines. David K. Pooler writes that self-care could be “finding silence, keeping Sabbath, and being grateful.”¹⁵ Fuller notes, “Sustainable self-care is about setting boundaries on your time. It’s about nurturing healthy relationships. Making space for playfulness, and regular periods of rest that invite

¹³ Kimberly D. Thompson et al., “Boundaries, Self-Care, and Empathy: Building an Empathic Teaching Survival Kit,” *Composition Studies* 50, no. 2 (2022): 34-35. This article is from a secular worldview on self-care.

¹⁴ White, “Spirituality Self-care Practices as a Mediator between Quality of Life and Depression,” 2. White promotes self-care as a mind-spirit-body connection, along with the emotions, moral and religious background, upbringing, faith, and many other personal elements as the needed information to develop and maintain an on-going self-care regimen.

¹⁵ David K. Pooler, “Professional Flourishing: Re-visioning Self-care Using Imago Dei,” *Social Work and Christianity* 38, no. 4 (2011): 441. Pooler is a Christian who seems to lean more toward a secular application of self-care.

renewal.”¹⁶ While Terry and Cunningham suggest that self-care strategies might include “time spent in hobbies, physical activities, and time spent with family and friends,”¹⁷ one could suggest the inclusion of all these practices into their life would be beneficial for well-being. Several of these practices have been referenced in this thesis to help relieve a pastor in a stressful season. However, the effectiveness of these practices in relieving burnout¹⁸ and meeting ministry demands in the long term is inconclusive. Terry and Cunningham’s work measures the methods for managing demands and suggesting self-care and explains, “We cannot draw conclusions on the effectiveness of the self-care practices and strategies for meeting demands mentioned by the participants in this study.”¹⁹ Yet another study says, “Promoting self-care in organizations *may* contribute to promoting healthy organizations.”²⁰ While the effectiveness of the practice of self-care is not confirmed for genuine mental health change it is still promoted as beneficial. The benefits could be attributed to the fact that some of the practices of self-care are activities a person should be participating in. However, for this thesis, it should be noted that while the practices of self-care can benefit the one who applies themselves to that activity, it is an inadequate sole treatment plan for the troubled heart of the pastor.

¹⁶ Fuller, “In Defense of Self-Care,” 16.

¹⁷ Terry and Cunningham, “Some Rest for the Weary?,” 1243.

¹⁸ According to the World Health Organization, “Burn-out is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions: feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; increased mental distance from one’s job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one’s job; and reduced professional efficacy. Burn-out refers specifically to phenomena in the occupational context and should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life.” “Burn-out an Occupational Phenomenon: International Classification of Disease.” *World Health Organization*, May 28, 2019, <https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases>. While this thesis doesn’t discuss the elements of burnout the definition may be helpful for why some think that self-care is the answer to this problem. This is a real phenomenon in pastors and many have spoken about it, and this thesis suggests that self-care practices along with one-another care may be the best course of action to remedy burnout.

¹⁹ Terry and Cunningham, “Some Rest for the Weary?,” 1244.

²⁰ Gomez-Borges et al., “Self-Care at Work Matters,” 237.

Shortcomings of the Modern Self-Care Approach for the Troubled Heart of Pastors

After a brief survey on the topic of self-care, it is now important to see why it comes up short of addressing the troubled heart of the pastor. The pastor has the regular and responsive calling to “preach the Word: be ready in season and out of season” (2 Tim 4:2). A charge such as the one in 2 Timothy should highlight the need for comprehensive quality care that allows a pastor to fulfill this mandate. To aid the pastor in keeping the command of Paul in 2 Timothy 4:2, this section will show how some self-care practices are helpful for the pastor. The section will then explore areas where self-care is weak and not a benefit for the pastor.

Self-Care Practices as Helpful for the Pastor

Most practices of self-care, are activities that a pastor would be wise to implement into his life, activities like, “healthy nutrition, exercise, maintaining a good sleep schedule, engaging in hobbies or leisurely activities, and using adaptive coping strategies.”²¹ Further, some of these activities will be suggested in the next chapter of this thesis within regular demands of the pastor to guard his own heart because they promote the general well-being of any person. Yet each of these activities should be done to the glory of God. As Paul reminds Timothy, “While bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and the life to come” (1 Tim. 4:8). George Knight writes on this section of scripture and says, “Paul is comparing the limited benefit of exercise to the limitless benefit of godliness.”²² The benefits of self-care while helpful are limited and must be managed with a hope that is placed in godliness which knows no limits. Godliness is best managed in a church

²¹ Gomez-Borges et al., “Self-Care at Work Matters,” 232.

²² George W. Knight III. *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 199. Knight goes on to say that the benefit of godliness is in the promise it holds because the promise of godliness is eternal.

community where others can give an objective opinion of the good each activity brings to the individual. It is also helpful to notice that there are times when self-care directs one to aim at the elimination of suffering²³ where the bible shows that in suffering God's comfort is found and that comfort is what the pastor needs.²⁴

There are some self-care practices in which a pastor should not participate as they have ties to other religions, one such example is that of mindfulness. Kaylee Friedman explains, "Mindfulness originated some thousands of years ago, mentioned in ancient yogic texts. It is a universal concept, not religion, belief, or philosophy, but simply a highly refined practice of training the mind to become attentive to the present moment with the possibility of alleviating suffering."²⁵ It is important to notice that this act of mindfulness attempts at what only true spiritual disciplines can bring, clarity. In situations where the self-care practice prescribed comes from other religions or goes against biblical mandates, a pastor would be wise to look to spiritual disciplines of the Christian faith as a substitute. For example, in the case of mindfulness, the pastor might be better served to practice the discipline of Scripture meditation. To meditate is to do as Thomas White says, "Meditation is solemn thinking and consideration of the things of God to the end that we might understand how much they concern us, and our hearts thereby be raised to some holy affections and resolutions."²⁶ This would allow the pastor

²³Kaylee Friedman, "Counselor Self-Care and Mindfulness," *Contemporary Buddhism* 18, no. 2 (2017): 325.

²⁴ A. T. Robertson, *The Glory of the Ministry: Paul's Exultation in Preaching*, (Grand Rapids: Baker House Publishing, 1979), 31-32. Robertson says, "Paul is able to look at the bright side of preaching in 2 Corinthians because he knows what the dark side is...because joy lives next door to sorrow in the same house and heart." Robertson (32). Robertson outlines the need for boasting in weakness and suffering like Paul because in this the minister finds God's triumphs and God's joys (or comforts) in his life. A minister should not seek to alleviate sorrow and pain but boast in it like Paul for the sake of finding the joy and triumph that God would lead him to.

²⁵ Kaylee Friedman, "Counselor Self-Care and Mindfulness," 325.

²⁶ Thomas White, "*A Method and Instruction for the art of Divine Meditation*," (London: Printed for Thomas Parkhurst, 1672) 13. This quote was found in David W. Saxton, "*God's Battle Plan for the Mind: The Puritan Practice of Biblical Meditation*," (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2015), 30.

to participate in a self-care-labeled activity and not compromise or blend his religion with another. In this way, he would still be solely devoted to the Word of God and his holy calling in a way that aids his well-being. In an activity like Scripture meditation, the pastor is not seeking to avoid suffering, rather he would be seeking God's plan in his suffering because Christians live to be holy whether or not it leads to suffering.

Another self-care prescribed practice that this thesis finds helpful is support group care.²⁷ While the idea of a support group in a secular context is not necessarily the direction of this thesis, the idea of being in a group for fellowship and counsel during times of a troubled heart is in keeping with biblical practice.²⁸ Another article recommends that a pastor form groups of other pastors to help,²⁹ which may be helpful to aid pastors in the case of an unhealthy church environment where one-another care is unavailable. Pastor groups can be helpful, especially in situations of sin confession. Some confessions are such that church members will not understand the situation or be ready to receive a confession from their pastor. It is also helpful to note that care from another shepherd will often times bring with it comfort as that shepherd knows the unique burden that a pastor carries. However, these ideas of one-another care will be explored in greater detail later in this chapter, and the need for shepherding from other pastors in chapter 5.

Where Self-Care Is Weak for Healing the Pastor's Troubled Heart

While a pastor could better himself with some practices prescribed through self-care, they are inadequate to completely answer his troubled heart. If a pastor in a difficult season were to practice healthy resting patterns and exercise, that could offer temporary aid in his suffering, but changes in those areas will not resolve his troubled

²⁷ Pooler, "Professional Flourishing," 449.

²⁸ Later in this chapter, support group care will be referenced as one-another care of the church.

²⁹ Khosa-Nkatini, "Clergies and Self-Care," 6.

heart. When a pastor is struggling with his calling and suffering depression or even suicidal thoughts, a self-care practice may alleviate some of the suffering but will not offer cause and solution to his weary soul. It is important during these difficult seasons that a pastor continues to engage in the regular demands of guarding his heart through preaching, devotion, and prayer. Only when these types of practices accompany self-care will the pastor find the medicine he needs for his troubled heart. The remainder of this section will show that self-care will fail to be life-giving for the pastor due to its tendency towards a self-focused nature, and how if unchecked it can breed self-actualization, and the narrative of self-care as the cornerstone within pastoral ministry and Christian living.

When thinking about self-focused self-care Sally Schwer Canning writes, “I think the language of self-care puts the focus too heavily on us . . . seeing my life as God’s, rather than my own, guides me toward humility, gratitude, and worshipful service and away from self-centeredness or striving.”³⁰ When a Christian, or a pastor, surrenders his life to Jesus as savior he is forgoing a life that seeks to engage in self-indulgence. Instead, a pastor (or Christian) is focused ultimately on Christ. This focus cannot be done with merely secular self-care practices because the focus is either on self or as Fuller says on ministry, “The purpose of self-care is ultimately to feed renewed energy and vitality back into one’s ministry.”³¹ However, feeding energy into ministry cannot be done without focusing on Christ, which will lead to fulfilling the regular and responsive demands of ministry. Instead of secular self-care, a pastor must “look to Jesus the founder and protector of your faith” (Heb 12:2a). Jeffery Gates explains that self-care is focused on “the preventing of excessive self-sacrifice sacrifice.”³² Amid painful circumstances,

³⁰ Sally Schwer Canning, “Out of Balance: Why I Hesitate to Practice and Teach ‘Self-Care,’” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 30, no. 1 (2011): 71. Canning may be for conservative than most with self-care, yet is attempting to put a Christian view on self-care.

³¹ Fuller, “In Defense of Self-Care,” 8.

³² Jeffery Gates, “Self-Care: A Christian Perspective,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 28, no. 1 (2015): 14. Gates seems to have be attempting to put a more secular emphasis on self-care for the Christian.

the pastor must not take his queues from the world's sources; instead, he must focus on the example of Christ. Thomas Schreiner writes on looking to Jesus for encouragement in life, based on Hebrews 12:

The main admonition (for verse 2) is found in verse 1. Believers must run the race with endurance, which is another way of saying they must persevere to the end. The author tells them how to run the race. First, he says in verse 1 that they must lay aside every hindrance to running well, that is, the sin which can trip believers up in the race. Second, they run with endurance by "keeping their eyes on Jesus." Jesus is the supreme exemplar of faith, and believers will be motivated to continue their journey if they look to him.³³

Only when a pastor is focused on Jesus and the way Jesus lived a life of faith does he find direction for living in difficult seasons. Unless a pastor looks to Jesus, he will not find the energy his ministry needs, and more than that, he will not continue his journey within his holy calling. When looking at Hebrews 12:2 David Allen writes, "This underscores the key theme in the epistle which the author is developing: pressing on to maturity rather than falling back through disobedience and lack of faith."³⁴ If a pastor focuses on self-care practices without a focus on Christ he will lack the tools he needs for maturity and faith because he will be looking to himself and not to Christ. It is important to emphasize that a biblical care model offers the tools for maturity and deeper faith. When a pastor leans into biblical commands such as surrendering to his church for one-another care in times of difficulty, he will find Christians who are pursuing Christ and have benefited from his care which will encourage his heart.

Another area that presents a problem for pastors within some self-care sources is the idea of self-actualization. Self-actualization is, as Jones and Butman write, "The realization of our potential."³⁵ Anmol Chaudhari et al. note that it is "the need to fulfill

³³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Commentary on Hebrews*, Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation (Nashville: B & H, 2015), 378.

³⁴ David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, New American Commentary, vol. 35 (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 576.

³⁵ Jones and Butman, *Modern Psychotherapies*, 264.

one's potential."³⁶ The ideas of self-actualization in self-care come from the need to see oneself positively so that they may flourish.³⁷ In other words, when people rightly relate to themselves and see their potential, they will care for themselves because they can affect change. Fuller explains, "Self-care is an invitation to revisit the notion of the self as an appropriate place to focus one's energies as a pathway to life-giving ministry."³⁸ According to some self-care sources, it is not Christ who supplies life to pastors for ministry, but rather the self has potential that must be unleashed within. This type of thinking can cause a pastor to withdraw and become even more isolated from the church to which he ministers and other pastors. It can cause the pastor to think that if he could invest in himself more than maybe his ministry, family, or troubled heart would be better.

Because of research done by Jones and Butman, one can observe that self-actualization has some associations with person-centered therapy. Jones and Butman explain one principle of person-centered therapy that is evident in some writing on self-care: "Person-centered therapy boldly states that when one's self-actualizing tendency is in tune with the organismic valuing process, trustworthy self-knowledge is fully obtainable."³⁹ The idea of self-actualization is not as boldly stated in the literature surrounding self-care. Some say that self-actualization is not what self-care is about.⁴⁰ However, one can see the similarities when reading what Friedman writes, "Mindfulness as a self-care tool can be incredibly powerful to increase cognitive empathy, increase

³⁶ Anmol Chaudhari et al., "Relationship between Life Satisfaction and Self-Actualization in the Geriatric Population," *Journal of Psychosocial Research* 17, no. 2 (2022): 416.

³⁷ Pooler, "Professional Flourishing," 446-47. The argument made in this article is that when one see themselves as valuable then they can care for themselves appropriately. Once they care for themselves appropriately, they will see flourishing in their life. Another important note is that this article is directed at social workers and their care for others.

³⁸ Fuller, "In Defense of Self-Care," 16.

³⁹ Jones and Butman, *Modern Psychotherapies*, 272.

⁴⁰ Fuller, "In Defense of Self-Care," 10.

cognitive flexibility and resilience, and boost self-efficacy.”⁴¹ While self-care in most circles where it is promoted may not be seeking to indulge self-actualization it is important to notice that there are areas that desire to use self-care in this way.

Lastly, while it is an outlier, one article has taken the narrative that self-care is the cornerstone for pastoral ministry and Christian living. Fuller writes, “Within the field of pastoral theology, self-care is often upheld as a cornerstone of effective pastoral care.”⁴² While Fuller is right in saying that self-care can be helpful in pastoral care one must also understand what pastoral care is. John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue define pastoral counseling and care as “the organization of Scripture with an emphasis on the personal application of doctrinal truth in the lives of the church and individual Christians.”⁴³ From this definition, it is hard to understand how one can rightly call self-care the “cornerstone of pastoral care.”⁴⁴ While those who are reputable on self-care advocate for its place in the care of individuals it should be emphasized as coming alongside pastoral care. A pastor is to care for his flock by calling them to “be holy as God is holy” (1 Pet 1:16). He is also to “keep watch over their souls” (Heb 13:17). As a method of care for others, self-care alone is inadequate to call the pastor and his flock to holiness. He must be armed, for both himself and his flock, with life-changing truth that will combat the issues that so quickly beset him.

Continuing to think about making self-care more important than it claims to be some have gone so far as to say self-care is modeled from God’s care for himself.⁴⁵ The

⁴¹ Friedman, “Counselor Self-Care and Mindfulness,” 326.

⁴² Fuller, “In Defense of Self-Care,” 6.

⁴³ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 35.

⁴⁴ Fuller, “In Defense of Self-Care,” 6.

⁴⁵ Gates, “Self-Care,” 4-17. Gates talks about the idea that self-care for the Christian benefits God and others as much as the one actively caring for themselves. Gates also speaks at times that self-care imitates God’s care of himself because God always does what benefits him.

problem with this idea is that it elevates mankind and makes God small. Gates writes, “There are good reasons to believe that God is not selfless and that he is motivated to benefit himself.”⁴⁶ He goes on to say, “God wants us to care for ourselves and to seek love from him and others, just as he cares for himself and loves us so that we will return his love.”⁴⁷ Gates seems to make self-care a spiritual discipline that should be adhered to because it mimics God and honors him. The problem with this kind of approach to self-care is that it misses the character of God, namely his self-sufficiency. The self-sufficiency of God allows him to never need anything, and in this situation, God does not need to change or have a need met in his care of himself. A. W. Tozer writes about the self-sufficiency of God: “God did not bring His worlds into being to meet some unfulfilled need in Himself. . . . Being supreme being overall, it follows that God cannot be elevated.”⁴⁸ Tozer shows that God does not benefit in any way from what mankind does or does not do. Not only that but suggesting that God needs to be cared for is to suggest that God could make some form of improvements upon himself. Therefore, it would be right to assume that self-care is not a practice that mimics God. However, that does not mean that for a pastor to practice self-care methods in some way does not bring God glory. God can be glorified in taking care of the temple in which he dwells (1 Cor 3:16). A pastor who focuses on God’s never-changing self-sufficiency will know that God has all that is needed to calm his troubled heart. In focusing on ministry demands and God’s ability to supply the pastor’s needs, he is then able to grow in maturity and faith in a way that guards his heart and God’s flock.

Summary

It is important to notice that reputable sources on self-care are extremely

⁴⁶ Gates, “Self-Care,” 6.

⁴⁷ Gates, “Self-Care,” 15.

⁴⁸ A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1961), 33.

helpful aids to the pastor in health and wellness. They are not the final answer to his troubled heart, and he still needs biblical care, but a pastor who focuses on God should also focus on his wellness. However, some self-care resources promise more than the model can perform and elevate it to a level that is unhealthy. This unhealthy view of self-care is a reminder to the pastor to keep his care within a biblical community and framework and use methods that glorify God.

Biblical One-Another Care to Accurately Address the Troubled Heart

It is possible in the American culture that an emphasis on self-care could undermine the healing of a troubled heart for the pastor, especially when pastors are more interested in isolation from church care rather than engagement in church-related care.⁴⁹ The idea of self-care may also be attractive to a pastor because it directs him to merely reflect on his life rather than be vulnerable in his suffering. All of these situations, and many more, may play a role in the ongoing troubled heart of the pastor. However, there must be a solution for the pastor who is carrying the burden of the regular and responsive demands of ministry. Self-care practices of exercise and sleep patterns may help to alleviate some of the burden of the ministry demands, but when a pastor is in the hard seasons of ministry, he needs an answer for his heart. A merely self-care model as has been discussed in this thesis is inadequate for the pastor's troubled heart and ignores the importance of keeping the pastor encouraged. This section will examine what God might be saying to the pastor through his troubled heart, how a pastor should respond to God with his troubled heart in a healthy context, and how he should respond in an unhealthy context.

⁴⁹ Ed T. Welch, *Side By Side: Walking With Others in Wisdom and Love*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 15. Welch says, "We spend too much time concealing our neediness. We need to stop hiding." Welch (15).

What God Might Be Saying Through a Troubled Heart

This section is the starting point for the pastor when his heart is troubled. The pastor must understand not only that he is depressed, weary, or whatever his heart feels, but also that God is speaking to him during this season of his life. He must not focus solely on the troubled nature of his heart and miss the greater message God is speaking to him. The following paragraphs are dedicated to knowing what God is saying through a personal evaluation of his troubled heart. Second, the pastor must know what God is saying to his troubled heart. In this section, two ideas concerning what God could be speaking to the pastor's heart will be explored. It is important to note that these two solutions are not the only solutions God can reveal, but within each idea is a framework for what God could be saying.

The pastor must evaluate his troubled heart. When a pastor finds himself under the burden that comes from meeting the demands of ministry and his heart is troubled, he must take some time to evaluate why his heart is troubled. It is not enough for him to acknowledge he is burnt out, anxious, depressed, or just weary—he must know why his heart is troubled. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes, “Start by examining yourself. Do not just say that your dreary state cannot be helped. Do not take the stimulants. Sit down and say to yourself: ‘Well now, why am I weary, what is the cause of this weariness?’”⁵⁰ Lloyd-Jones clarifies a starting point for the pastor when his heart is troubled: he must stop and assess what is wrong. This examination might be done with a trusted brother in Christ or a counselor, or he may do this examination and then take the findings to a trusted brother to process his heart. Regardless of the embarrassment this may bring, the method of the examination must take place so that the pastor can know what God is telling him.

⁵⁰ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965), 196.

Lloyd-Jones writes, “It is foolish to think that trials and drudgery of ministry will not come.”⁵¹ However, when it does, God has direction for the pastor, and that direction may be as simple as what David Murray writes, “It is important to understand causes so that you can avoid repeating the same mistakes a few years down the road.”⁵² Murray’s estimation is right for the pastor who is consumed with his troubles, and an evaluation may reveal that he cannot change this present situation but can learn from it to know how to avoid it in the future. This evaluation only acknowledges that there is a problem and that God still wants to speak to the pastor in his pain. Through the observation process one might find God has revealed a deeper identity problem. Jeremy Pierre writes about such a revelation: “People are not depressed by choice, but the overflow of the beliefs you hold about the world (like, life is pointless without accomplishment) the values they measure themselves by (like, I am not successful) and the commitments they hold (like, my life ought to be better than this).”⁵³ These reflections help one know what is happening in their heart and where to see God speaking into their context. When God speaks into a life in the self-evaluation process sometimes a false identity is revealed to be addressed. It is important to understand that the purpose of the reflection process is to reveal false identities and beliefs so that God’s Word can be applied to the heart. The reflection only shows where truth is not believed so that God’s Word can heal, and the minister is able to live a life that portrays truth.

Lastly, Lloyd-Jones explains one safeguard for the pastor’s self-evaluation:

⁵¹ Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression*, 192-93. In these pages, Lloyd-Jones outlines the fact that often those in ministry, especially in the middle years he calls it, find themselves weary of their calling. It outlines several reasons for this weariness including a focus on an older or younger generation but not the Christian, when the Christian is no longer surprised by God’s working, but focuses on troubles that are caused by others in his life. These issues can make answering the demands of ministry difficult.

⁵² David Murray, *Reset: Living a Grace Paced Life in a Burnout Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 33.

⁵³ Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connection Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2016), 193.

“Above everything else avoid making premature claims that your blindness is cured.”⁵⁴

At times, the truths God is speaking to the pastor’s heart are issues he will need to change through a longer process and not instantly. Sometimes the truth God wishes to convey to his pastor is something he must dwell on within his heart for a season, which leads to trying to understand what sort of solutions God may be trying to speak into a pastor’s heart.

The pastor must know what God is saying to his heart. There are many solutions God could give to a pastor during his times of trial. This section will explain two areas of need that God could be illuminating for growth and maturity: God wants to deepen his faith, and God wants to bring him greater joy.

The first area of growth could be his need to deepen his faith. Sometimes in trials, a pastor forgets, like all Christians are prone to, that God calls the believer to “count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness” (Jas 1:2-3). When the demands of ministry mount up and the heart becomes troubled, God may be telling the pastor to go deeper in his faith and become steadfast in his belief. Lloyd-Jones notes,

If you find yourself in this position of trial and trouble and testing, take it as a wonderful opportunity of proving your faith, of showing your faith, of manifesting your faith, and bringing glory to His great and Holy name. But if you should fail to do that, if you should apparently be too weak to apply faith, if you are being so besieged and attacked by the devil and hell and by the world, well, then, I say, just fly to Him at once and He will receive you and bless you, He will give you deliverance, He will give you peace. But remember always that faith is an activity, it is something that has to be applied.⁵⁵

Lloyd-Jones gives the pastor an answer within his trial: God is asking him to prove his faith. Through this troubled heart, God may be calling the pastor to take a stand in this season regardless of the repercussions. In these moments of trial, God is calling

⁵⁴ Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression*, 46.

⁵⁵ Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression*, 147.

the pastor to exhibit more faith. However, there might come times when the battle may be too intense for the pastor's heart. Though he must stand in faith and he can hear God's command to stand in faith, for some reason he is unable to answer the call. In such a season he can always call on Jesus who will bring him deliverance in due time, and apply peace to his heart. More than anything the pastor must call his heart to remain calm. Lloyd-Jones reminds his readers that "faith is the refusal to panic, come what may."⁵⁶ If the pastor stands in faith or flees to the Savior both are faith-producing within the pastor as long as he does not panic, but trusts God.

In this calling to stand in faith, God wants to call the pastor to a deeper faith and a new way of living. Paul David Tripp writes about this new way of living: "Faith is deeply more than what you do with your brain. Knowledge is an aspect of faith, but it doesn't define faith. Ultimately, faith is an investment of the heart that leads to a radically new way of living."⁵⁷ Amid a troubled heart, as a pastor faithfully responds to ministry demands, God may be calling him in his heart to invest in a new way of living. Because God is calling the pastor to a new way of living, he must understand that he needs the current suffering so that he might become the minister God intended.

Lastly, God could be speaking to the pastor's troubled heart in the area of joy. Sometimes in ministry, a pastor becomes discouraged and must be reminded that he is not responsible for results in others but is required to be faithful to his holy calling. Harold Senkbeil illustrates, "A sheepdog doesn't become discouraged when the sheep return to their old habits; he sticks with doing the shepherd's will. His tail never ceases to wag because he knew the shepherd had things under control . . . we like the sheepdog joyfully take on what we have been given to do."⁵⁸ The pastor's heart can be troubled in

⁵⁶ Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression*, 143.

⁵⁷ Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 155.

⁵⁸ Harold Senkbeil, *The Care of Souls: Cultivating a Pastor's Heart* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019), 142.

seasons where nothing has gone how he wished. However, God did not call the pastor to produce ministry success; God called him to himself. Paul writes, “Moreover, it is required of a steward that they be found faithful” (2 Cor 4:2). When a pastor is focused on the results, he often loses his joy due to taking his eyes off of God. God has called the pastor to be trustworthy within the regular and responsive demands of ministry. Therefore, a wayward congregant for the pastor is nothing more than part of his calling to preach the gospel, yet it tends to distract and steal the joy of the pastor when he is not rightly focused on God. It should be noted that a wayward congregant should cause some angst in a pastor’s life and may for a season steal his joy. However, a long-term lack of joy over a wayward congregant reveals a deeper heart issue that must be addressed.

A pastor’s heart becomes troubled and he loses his joy because he has taken his eyes off the Savior. Lloyd-Jones writes about the reason many people, including pastors, are depressed: “Do you want to know supreme joy; do you want to experience happiness that eludes description? There is only one thing to do, really seek Him, turn to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. If you find that your feelings are depressed do not sit down and commiserate with yourself—go directly to Him and seek His face.”⁵⁹ When a pastor’s heart is troubled, he has taken his eyes off of Jesus. Joy when facing the demands of ministry is only obtained when a pastor is focused on Christ. Sometimes, in fact, most of the time, the pastor needs other God-fearing people to direct his heart to the things God is saying to him.

To know God’s direction and will in these situations a pastor must be given to the spiritual disciplines and possibly even implementing practices of self-care. However, all of these methods are used to direct his heart towards God to understand his heart and relieve the trouble therein. More than individual care it is important for the pastor to lead out in surrender to one-another care in the church. He must show how in times of

⁵⁹ Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression*, 117.

difficulty isolation is harmful and how the church needs each other.

A Pastor's Response in a Healthy Church Context

This thesis recognizes that a self-care model is not adequate for helping a pastor process what is happening within his troubled heart. Knowing the inadequacies of self-care, this section will offer a more helpful alternative from biblical counseling, specifically, one-another care. Biblical counsel through one-another care can help the pastor unpack his heart that has been burdened by the demands of ministry. In this section, the concept of biblical counsel through one another care for the pastor will be explored in a healthy church context. First, a definition of a healthy church will be given for clarity. Next, the idea of submission to one-another care will be shown as making the pastor more connected to God and his church, and lastly how biblical counsel from others will guide the pastor's heart.

First, a healthy church must be defined so that the pastor will know how to proceed in caring for his troubled heart. A pastor newly appointed within his church, or in a revitalization context may need to consider how to submit to one-another care and biblical counsel within his context. If his church context is unhealthy this will mean a limited amount of this care will be available for him and he may need to find other avenues for biblical care as he builds a healthier church context. A pastor must be careful in his submission and confess to immature believers; however, if they are in Christ one-another care is possible, but limited. While a pastor disciples a healthier context, he will need trusted brothers to confide in for his own heart. Mark Dever defines a healthy church as “a congregation that increasingly reflects God's character as his character has been revealed in his Word.”⁶⁰ A healthy church will not be a perfect church; rather, a church that is humbly growing into the image God has set for them within His Word.

⁶⁰ Mark Dever, *What Is a Healthy Church?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 40.

Dever continues, “A healthy church is not a church that is perfect or without sin. It hasn’t figured everything out. It just seeks to regularly conform itself to God’s word.”⁶¹ This definition and the qualifier give the pastor a picture for what a church member who can offer appropriate church care looks like. Which means for a pastor call his church to submit to one another for care, the church context needs to be humble, and desire God’s Word as the focus of their lives and conversations.

One other qualifier for a healthy church context is that the people are of strong faith. This means, as Lloyd-Jones explains, that they “refuse to be controlled by any situation, and they refuse to panic.”⁶² The more this piece of faith is part of the congregation the more a pastor can trust his people when it comes to his life. The reason for this level of trust is that the pastor knows his congregation trusts God in good or bad times and will not panic if sin is confessed, but will trust and seek God for how to deal with the sin that has been confessed.

Second, when a pastor is in a healthy context and able to submit himself to one-another care his life is more connected to his church and his God. Stuart Scott and S. Andrew Jin define the concept of one-another care as: “One-another passages of scripture that give very clear guidance on how to develop and maintain good relationships.”⁶³ It is important for a pastor to both develop and maintain relationships within his church. A pastor must have friends within his church that he can trust with various parts of his life, as they trust him almost exclusively with theirs. The pastor must be vocal about needing this type of care, but the fulfillment of this type of care falls to the congregation. They must have a heart and vision for their pastor to benefit from the ministry of fellowship in the church. Tripp states, “Church, determine that you will not let your pastor and his

⁶¹ Dever, *What Is a Healthy Church?* 41.

⁶² Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression*, 143.

⁶³ Stuart Scott and S. Andrew Jin, *31 Ways to Be a One Another Christian* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd, 2019), 12.

family live in isolation. . . . Get them out of hiding and invite them into situations where they can relax and be as ordinary as possible.”⁶⁴ They need to have enjoyable conversations with their Christian family that have nothing to do with church work or winning souls. They need to be able to engage in care that will be a mutual calling to remember the good of Christian life. However, the pastor also must be wise in these situations; although he has an opportunity to relax he is still a pastor under a holy calling. Tripp writes, “While a pastor must not wall himself off completely, he must also be wise about what he discloses to whom.”⁶⁵ A wise pastor will be open to fellowship but know when he must keep his mouth shut and his expressions silent. He must be open to invitations but know when he is there to enjoy the fellowship with the sheep he shepherds and not engage in action that would lose their confidence in him.

The idea of calling a pastor into congregational fellowship where he is inspired to live and walk in a way that pleases God is scriptural. One such verse is found in Colossians where the church is called to engage in a mutual calling to remember: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom” (3:16). This verse is a command for admonishing or counseling one another. Adams writes about this verse: “Whatever nouthetic [admonishing] may be, it is clear that the New Testament assumes that all Christians, not simply ministers of the Gospel, engage in it.”⁶⁶ Some pastors may oppose the idea of submitting to church members for care and maintenance of their hearts because it makes them submit to those beneath them. Yet, God has called his pastor into that church context and as long as there is continued growth in God in the individuals he trusts to speak to him, he should humbly obey God and be seek encouragement and counsel from fellow church members.

Lastly, biblical counsel from others will guide the pastor’s heart. Biblical

⁶⁴ Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, 81.

⁶⁵ Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, 76.

⁶⁶ Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 41.

counsel acknowledges that, as Adams writes, “Problems that are left unresolved by side-stepping them tend to grow larger as time goes on.”⁶⁷ There needs to be an urgency with the pastor to deal with his problems as quickly and openly as possible. There are, however, some things a pastor cannot in all wisdom expose to his congregation. Some of these areas a pastor may not be able to expose to his congregation include new confessions of sins, delicate family situations, problems in the church, or personal health concerns. These issues still need loving Christian eyes to aid in resolving the trouble in his heart. The pastor may need a trusted loved one, a local pastor, or a counselor to go to and speak with. In situations like these, a pastor needs someone to expose his heart to God’s healing Word. In the remainder of this section the need to have sound counsel, which may come from his church members or someone trusted outside of his church, will be examined.

If the pastor does not have anyone to share his life with then he is in danger of what Hebrews 3:12-13 outlines: “Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day as long as it is called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” This section of Scripture outlines the idea of encouragement through one-another care and counsel for a heart that is close to falling away from God. Tripp when speaking on Hebrews 3 addresses what happens when a pastor isolates and does not engage in encouraging activity: “This passage puts before us a critical warning and an essential call that together reinforce the presence and power of remaining sin and the need for the daily ministry of the body of Christ in the life of every member (pastor included) of the body of Christ.”⁶⁸ The pastor needs people to call him out of his sinful ways and thought processes. He needs people who will expose the power sin can have if

⁶⁷ Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 130.

⁶⁸ Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, 70.

he continues to wallow in a troubled heart. He also needs faithful people who will show the work of Christ to love him and redeem him in this situation.

These counselors need to be picked prayerfully and in all wisdom. Murray writes on this need for carefully choosing counselors:

My wife can bring an outsider's view, resulting in greater objectivity and accuracy. I've also sought an objective assessment of my life situation, and lifestyle from a trusted friend, colleague, or wise elder. Whomever you choose, you must be sure that he or she will be totally honest with you. Be cautious about seeking advice from someone who stands to lose if you slow down.⁶⁹

When a pastor has a troubled heart, he must seek counsel from others for an objective view of his life. When his heart is troubled, he can only see what he wants, not what he needs. The pastor needs another pastor or counselor who can direct him to God in these moments—exercise plans alone will not help. Craig Barnes shares a story about how an outside objective view helped him deal with his troubled heart when processing a cancer diagnosis: “Then Father Ted’s countenance changed as he went into priest mode, paused, and asked, ‘How have your conversations with God been going?’ And that’s what I most needed from Father Ted because there have been no conversations between God and me about this disease.”⁷⁰ A pastor is normally the one who asks the questions, and he needs someone he trusts who can ask him the hard questions that will draw his heart into the light of God’s Word and allow healing to take place.

While the pastor knows he should be praying through his troubled heart, sometimes he forgets to offer those petitions. The pastor needs a counselor or another pastor who can listen to the concerns of his heart and offer a view that he would not think of on his own or expose a blind spot in his heart that he missed. Every pastor needs trusted people to whom he can unburden his heart. He needs people who will listen and also give feedback that will aid in heart change. Even more, he needs biblical doctrine in

⁶⁹ Murray, *Reset*, 44.

⁷⁰ M. Craig Barnes, *Diary of a Pastor's Heart* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2020), 102.

times of trouble. Lloyd-Jones addresses the need for doctrine: “The great antidote of spiritual depression is the knowledge of Biblical doctrine, Christian doctrine. Not having the feelings worked up for church meeting, but knowing the principles of faith, knowing, and understanding the doctrines.”⁷¹ When a pastor has a troubled heart and is burdened, he must not have a self-care practice that only numbs the pain for a short period. He needs the loving tender doctrines of his faith to heal his heart and set him free.

The pastor must do everything he can to not suffer alone. In a healthy context, while his church may not be able to handle his deep heart concerns, they wish to offer him a realm where can fellowship and be cared for like the rest of the church. However, the pastor must seek accountability from trusted sources for counsel so he can care for the souls God has entrusted to him.

A Pastor’s Response in an Unhealthy Context

When a pastor is in an unhealthy church context the availability of one-another care is limited in a traditional sense and must be built. Yet in an unhealthy context, his need for counsel remains, as does his need to assess why his heart is troubled in his given situation. In the following paragraphs the ideas of not neglecting a troubled heart while building healthy practices in a church will be examined as will the pastor’s need to not neglect self-assessment and biblical counsel.

The pastor’s main priority is always to build a healthy church context. In cases where the pastor is working toward a healthy concept, he will be tempted to place himself as the last to receive care. Yet, it is in these seasons when he most needs refreshment. Poppa makes a good assessment on this need for refreshment: “Most people are busy living their lives, without taking the time to think about if their souls needs to be

⁷¹ Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression*, 156.

refreshed or restored.”⁷² The pastor must take regular time with brothers outside of his church for mere fellowship and to get perspective on his heart. When the pastor gains the care he needs for his own heart he can more readily address the demands of ministry. Building this context will be done by the pastor giving himself to the work of the regular and responsive demands of ministry, and he will slowly build a healthy church context. David Rohrer writes, “Congregational change comes about slowly through the non-anxious presence of the pastor.”⁷³ The pastor must be a non-anxious presence when immaturity is present and not allow his heart to become troubled. Instead, he should maintain a sense of wonder about the God he serves and the Bible he teaches and remember that the vessel that brings the change is important to God. Paul David Tripp speaks of a time in his life when he lost a sense of wonder: “There was no hunger for God. There was no grief over sin. There was no celebration of grace. There was no movement in my commitment to live by faith. There was no awe of God. . . . There was no ‘me’ in that moment of personal worship.”⁷⁴ The pastor must not lose himself as a worshiper in the process of building a healthy context. He must not sacrifice the good worship between him and God for a one-another care that should be present in his church. He must not give into, as Tripp explains, “The battle of preparation and personal devotion within his heart.”⁷⁵ He must remember that one another care is needed in the church, but personal devotion is needed as well.

As a pastor is building a healthy context, he needs at least two things in his life: regular days of self-assessment and prayer, and a godly counselor or two that he meets with consistently. Self-assessment is nothing different than what has already been

⁷² Poppa, “Self-Care Is Soul Care,” 52.

⁷³ David Rohrer, *The Sacred Wilderness of Pastoral Ministry: Preparing a People for the Presence of the Lord* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2012), 31.

⁷⁴ Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, 184.

⁷⁵ Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, 183.

mentioned in this thesis. It is evaluating what God is saying to the pastor when his heart is troubled. While a pastor may need many resolutions for his troubled heart, every pastor will need to hear four truths from his counselors: he needs to be reminded that he is loved by God, that God is with him, that he is not a failure, and he must reject sinful tendencies and do the work to which he is called. Reminding the pastor of who he is and how God sees him will be done through fellowship with biblical counselors, not in isolation and exclusively self-care model. These four areas of counsel are also not exclusively something a pastor in an unhealthy church context needs to hear. These are also the counseling topics a pastor in a healthy church context must be reminded of when burdened with the regular and responsive demands of ministry.

When the pastor's heart is troubled he will need to be reassured of the love God has for him. It is not that a pastor forgets God loves him, but rather God's love is not a focus of his devotional time. In times of difficulty, the pastor must be reminded of passages such as Matthew 9:36: "When he saw the crowd, he had compassion for them, because they were sheep harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." The pastor must be reminded that he is still a sheep, one whom the Shepherd loves and cares for. Richard Sibbes writes concerning this verse: "He never turned any back again that came to him, though some went away themselves."⁷⁶ Jesus wants to love the pastor during his season of pain, and the only way that love is not realized is if the pastor turns away. Through faithfulness in ministry, the love of Christ will sustain the pastor to keep loving God and the people he is called to. Senkbeil writes, "The ministry we do in his service to his people is a ministry of love—both love for us and our love for him. This love of Christ impels us day after day, taking up our tasks one after another, in the full knowledge that our work no matter how tiring and repetitive is really his own."⁷⁷ When

⁷⁶ Richard Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2021), 8.

⁷⁷ Senkbeil, *The Care of Souls*, 124.

the pastor knows he is loved by Christ it drives him to keep going, even when the problem that has troubled his heart is not solved.

Next, the pastor needs to be reminded that God is with him. Sometimes during life's trials, a pastor can feel forgotten by God. Luke 8:22-25 notes when the disciples felt forgotten by God when they were in the boat with Jesus:

One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they set out, and as they sailed he fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger. And they went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm. He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?"

The disciples were anxious in the boat. Lloyd-Jones writes, "The disciples were wondering 'Are you unconcerned about it all?' Then Jesus rebuked them for their state of agitation, terror, and alarm while he was in the boat."⁷⁸ When a pastor feels forgotten he must be reminded that God called him into the boat, and God allowed the storm, but he should not become anxious, and have a troubled heart, but should have faith. Lloyd-Jones goes on to say, "A Christian should never, like a worldly person, be depressed, agitated, alarmed, frantic, not knowing what to do."⁷⁹ Sometimes the pastor must be told that he is not alone and the reason why he is suffering may have more to do with his perspective of the situation than it does the actual issue. The beauty of this text is that Jesus does not disregard the one who comes to him in pain. Sibbes states, "Christ's sheep are weak sheep and lacking in something or other. . . . He was most familiar and open to troubled souls."⁸⁰ The pastor needs to be reminded of God's presence, and sometimes the pastor needs to be counseled to pray and ask God to intervene on behalf of his troubled heart.

Another area in which a pastor needs to be counseled would be that of his

⁷⁸ Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression*, 137.

⁷⁹ Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression*, 137.

⁸⁰ Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed*, 10.

values. Sometimes the pastor may view himself as a failure and this could signal a need to realign his values. Pierre writes, “Only when you embrace God’s perspective of you as wise, good, and true will you be able to expel those rival values. Being popular, pretty, and successful, are not values that can deliver on what they promise. Your heart was designed to desire to be like what you value most; when you want to be like God, your heart is working right.”⁸¹ A pastor can be motivated by desires that are less than what God calls him to. Because his desire is defined outside of Scripture, he finds himself seeking something that does not keep its promise. However, when the pastor desires to please God, he remembers success is found when he is keeping God’s Word. Joshua 1:8 says, “The book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” When a pastor allows the world to define success, he will find himself desiring something God never promised and the world cannot fulfill. Sibbes explains, “We must beware of false reasoning, such as because our fire does not blaze out as others, therefore we have no fire at all.”⁸² Sometimes the pastor’s focus is on where another’s ministry is shining bright, and he needs to be counseled to see where God measures success. He needs a counselor who will remind him that success is found in knowing sound doctrine and teaching and preaching the gospel along with doctrine.

Lastly, the pastor must be encouraged in times of counsel and care to reject sinful ways. There are moments when a pastor may not like the situation in which he finds himself and needs to be confronted with the truth that his situation reflects who he is. Proverbs 27:19 says, “As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects the man.” Though it may not be evident to him at the moment, his thoughts are leading to a

⁸¹ Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 217.

⁸² Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed*, 39.

situation he does not like, and now must be counseled to repent. Sibbes addresses this problem: “All scandalous actions are only thoughts at first. Ill thoughts are as little thieves, which creeping in at the window, open the door to greater.”⁸³ Though the sin may be small to him now, if he does not repent and change it will surely ruin him. A godly counselor will call that pastor to repent and resolve his heart of today’s problems and many larger future problems. When the pastor repents and allows God to heal his troubled heart he can see, as Pierre writes, “a promise of restoration as Jesus, who perfectly embodies the human heart, exchanges his perfection for human’s sin. . . . It is the center of hope for the restoration of humanity. It is the gospel.”⁸⁴ The pastor needs the gospel to confront him of his sin. More than that he needs the person of the loving Jesus, through the gospel community of his church, to heal his troubled heart and absolve him from sin.

Summary

In light of self-care being inadequate to heal a troubled heart, the pastor must have a supplement, and that companion is one-another care. The pastor should seek the fellowship and counsel of other Christians he worships with, and at times the counsel and opportunity to confess from other shepherds and counselors whom he can trust. God didn’t make the pastor for ministry in isolation. God desires for the pastor to hear the truth and be encouraged as one of His sheep.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the model of contemporary self-care for the aid of the troubled heart of the pastor was explored. Self-care as a rising model of care in the U.S. was evaluated and it was shown that while self-care can prove helpful for the pastor in

⁸³ Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed*, 51.

⁸⁴ Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 68.

promoting health and well-being it is insufficient for total care of the pastor's heart. This chapter outlined how a pastor should implement for his heart the one-another care of the church to be encouraged in the truth of God's word as a fellow sheep. However, there will be times when a pastor must look for one-another care from those who are outside of his local congregation.

CHAPTER 5

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS—HOW A PASTOR CAN RIGHTLY RESPOND TO THE WEIGHT OF CARING FOR SOULS

In light of the conclusions made in this thesis, this chapter will work to provide a framework for pastors to understand the burdens of their calling so that they might be able to gauge their need for care. The following pages provide resources for the pastor who is trying to figure out how to live under the weight of his calling in a way that both honors God and prioritizes the correct practices. It is important to notice that every ministry demand is different; some are ongoing while others are demands a pastor must answer in the most faithful way he can. As a pastor is dealing with his health and well-being, and being devoted to one-another care in the church the pastor must also carry out his calling in regular and responsive ways to guard his heart and his flock. Before the regular and responsive demands of ministry are defined in detail in the following pages the needs of the pastor for one-another care from fellow sheep and fellow shepherds must be examined.

The Pastor's Need for One-Another Care from Fellow Sheep and Shepherds

As has already been explored in the previous chapter there is one-another care that a pastor must have from the church in healthy and unhealthy contexts. He needs this care from fellow sheep, or those in his congregation, who can pray for him in difficult times and listen to the trials of his life as they would from every other person in their fellowship. However, a wise practice for the pastor in gauging his need for care, given the uniqueness of the ministry demands, would be to seek care from another more experienced pastor in his pursuit of adequate care for his soul. In the pursuit of total care,

a pastor will at times need someone who is personally aware of the remarkable way in which the demands of ministry unfold in a pastor's life. This section will outline how at times it is helpful to hear someone who pastorally understands the wearisome burdens of ministry and has comfort to offer from pastoral experience of the regular and responsive demands of ministry.

Pastorally Understanding the Burden

There are moments in the ministry where a pastor needs another who knows the unique and complex position his role has placed him in. Phil Newton writes, "The Pastoral Epistles model pastoring pastors. Paul pastored Timothy and Titus."¹ At times when the demands are heavy, to have the experience of a longer-tenured faithful pastor who will just associate and share in the journey can produce healing that was otherwise unattainable. Sometimes it is helpful to hear words like John Newton wrote John Ryland, "You describe a case which my own experience has made very familiar to me."² While this particular statement is not profound it does offer comfort to those who suffer from the isolation which the pastorate can produce. A statement that merely relates to the burden is often what an isolated pastor needs. Sometimes a pastor needs to be reminded of his one-another role in the church by a fellow shepherd.³ However, there are times a pastor just needs a friend who understands. Phil Newton writes, "Friends care enough to

¹ Phil A. Newton, *40 Questions About Pastoral Ministry*, The 40 Questions Series, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2021), 91. Newton also notes that Paul sent Timothy and Titus as his representatives to the church. This is helpful for the pastor to remember, that he is not the one who effects change he is merely the representative God has placed in that church for the change he wishes to bring about in the lives of that congregation.

² John Newton, *Wise Counsel: John Newton's Letters to John Ryland Jr.*, edited by Grant Gordon, (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2011), 33.

³ Phil A. Newton, *40 Questions About Pastoral Ministry*, 92-94. Newton offers 5 specific places of a pastor's role in one-another care of the church. Newton outlines Reminding one-another of the gospel, Reminding one-another to live a holy life, Reminding one-another to persevere in the faith, reminding one-another to study God's Word, and reminding one-another to stay out of arguments. These areas are helpful along with the ministry demands of this paper to watch out for the pastor you care for.

know and serve one-another.”⁴ Friends take responsibility for, and at times an older pastor just needs to be responsible for a younger pastor as one who knows the challenges a pastor faces and can serve his friend to help him navigate his burden. However, to relate as a friend can sometimes mean that one should be leading a younger pastor to translate his burden for ministry into comfort for others.

Comfort to Offer from Pastoral Experience

At times a younger pastor will need a more experienced or older pastor to offer comfort from his experiences. As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Cor 1:3-4). There are moments when merely understanding and relaying shared ministry experience are to be put on hold for the extending of comfort to a discouraged or hurting brother in ministry. As Paul Barnett writes, “The comfort we receive from God through Jesus Christ we are both to give to and receive from one another. God’s comfort, therefore, is not to terminate on the one who receives it.”⁵ There are moments when older ministers who understand the unique burden of ministry can impart great comfort and wisdom, and encourage a younger brother in discouraging times from the comfort which he has received from God. An older minister who is like Paul will also remind a young minister that suffering in the ministry demands is where God’s comfort is found in their own life.⁶ One such illustration of this is found in John Newton’s writing to John Ryland about pain and preaching said,

⁴ Phil A. Newton, *40 Questions About Pastoral Ministry*, 95.

⁵ Paul Barnett, *The Message of 2 Corinthians*, The Bible Speaks Today Commentary, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1988), 31.

⁶ Paul Barnett, *The Message of 2 Corinthians*, 32. Barnett shows the contrast of Paul’s language where suffering and comfort are looked at as within the same experience only on different ends. While often what people are looking for is immediate healing and success.

For the glory and grace of our Savior seems a fitter subject for an angel's power than a poor stammering tongue of sinful man, yet an angel could not preach experimentally, nor could describe the warfare between grace and sin from his own feelings. And if we could suppose a minister as full of comforts and as free from failings as an angel, though he would be a good and happy man, I cannot conceive that he would be a good or useful preacher; for he would not know how to sympathize with the weak and afflicted of the flock or to comfort them in their difficulties with consolations wherewith he himself, in similar circumstances, had been comforted of God.⁷

Young pastors need to be reminded by older pastors that their preaching will become richer through their endurance in suffering. They should also be reminded that their ministry will become stronger as they embrace the regular and responsive demands of the ministry with the grace and comfort afforded them by God. However, as they gauge their need for care they will at times need to be reminded of their need to be faithful in the ministry demands as God's comfort is given to them in that season of ministry.

Regular and Responsive Demands of Ministry

As a pastor guards his heart and flock and submits to the one-another care of the church he must have a gauge for where ministry demands fit and how to fulfill them. The following pages will serve as such a gauge. The following pages acknowledge the seriousness of the demands but also notice that every ministry demand cannot be listed so a limited few are examined to aid the troubled heart of the pastor. These demands are often the avenues through which ministries are found to be joyous and life-giving or if ignored can cause ministry disruption or ruin. That is, they can disrupt and ruin a ministry if a pastor does not take adequate measures to guard his heart and doctrine. The following table illustrates the specific areas a pastor must work at guarding his heart, along with some points to explain situations that might fall into these categories.

⁷ John Newton, *Wise Counsel*, 34.

Table 1. The Ministry Demands Table

	Pastor Guards Himself	Pastor Guards His Flock
Regular Demands in Ministry	Priority of devotion Priority of petition	Study of God's Word The preaching of the Word Intercession for the flock
Responsive Demands in Ministry	Through the energy of Christ for the ministry By reminding himself, that his calling is to serve	The call for greater commitment to Christ Modeling the Right Heart Expecting Pain

Table 1 outlines some areas of protection a pastor can have in place to both guard his heart and guard his flock. These areas are some of the ways a pastor guards his heart so that he can “preach the word in season and out” (2 Tim 4:2). For this thesis, the regular demands of ministry will be found in the weekly routine of the pastor. Within this category consists the tasks, or services, that must be performed by every faithful pastor. As he stewards these tasks, he finds them to be a keeper for his heart. While regular demands are those weekly tasks that every pastor is aware of, the responsive are less tangible in their definition. Within this category are the ministry tasks that disrupt the normal flow of a pastor’s routine. Regardless of the ministry, the pastor would be wise to give attention to all four quadrants of the ministry demand table.

Regular Demands in Ministry

The regular demands of ministry are the weekly demands a pastor must perform to be faithful in his vocation. While there may be differences between churches of different sizes and denominations the pastor has weekly demands that weigh upon his heart. For this thesis, they have been limited to what most pastors are required to do according to scripture and cultural norms. These demands must be performed to guard his heart and his flock in the normal rhythms of life. Yet, it is God’s providence to build into that weight an aspect for the pastor to guard his own heart and an aspect that aids him in guarding his flock.

How the Pastor Guards Himself

One of the pastor’s primary responsibilities is to guard his heart for the sake of

ministry. The pastor must set aside time to be available to the Spirit's shaping of his heart. He must work to develop trustworthiness and values that magnify the truth. These practices must be submitted to by the pastor, and he should desire for these to be present within his life as a guard against the demands of ministry. Without these times a pastor will not rightly guard himself against what Pierre outlines as the "corruption of sin,"⁸ and also know the ways God wishes to work into his life, as Pierre says, "God's redemptive working."⁹ When a pastor is in devotion and prayer, he is better positioned to see the areas of sin's corruption and the areas of God's wonderful redemptions and graces.

Devotion as a regular demand should be prioritized by the pastor. Yet varying demands upon his life in a given week can make this responsibility seem less important. However, devotional application of God's word is one of the most important uses of time in a pastor's week. Devotional time is important because it postures his heart in a way that pleases God and is most useful in every situation.¹⁰ Devotional time is for the pastor to ask God to make him holy as His God is holy (1 Pet 1:16). Through this time with the Lord, one comes to understand that, as Paul David Tripp writes,

Daily Bible study, meditation, and prayer have the power and potential to make the glory of God big in our eyes. When we are daily confronted with his grandeur, not only will that give us hope and courage but also it will work to remind us that we are neither grand nor glorious. Personal worship has the power to progressively put us in our place. Because it places God in the center of the universe. Personal worship is one of the things God uses to free us from any remaining trust that we have that we can do what only the Messiah can do.¹¹

Tripp's assessment illuminates the reason many avoid devotional time with their Lord, and it has less to do with time and more to do with the reality faced in

⁸ Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to the Human Experience*, (Greensboro: New Growth Press, 2016), 62.

⁹ Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart*, 83.

¹⁰ Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 51.

¹¹ Tripp, *A Dangerous Calling*, 191

devotional times: mankind is not God. In these times of devotion, the pastor's heart is realigned because he comes face to face with his reality that God is God, and he, the pastor, is only a man. The pastor's heart is also broken in these times because at times he sees that he did not aspire to a more righteous lifestyle, or that a point in his message lacked the clarity of the holiness he now is reading about. Moments of devotional application of God's Word bring to light where the pastor has overestimated himself and where he has limits,¹² which is precisely why a pastor should give his time and attention to devotional application of God's Word. When a pastor is in devotion he is working to see more clearly the sins that displease God and God's graceful workings within those corrupted areas.

These daily meetings with God will guard the pastor's heart and mind, transform him from self-righteous to humble, and, most importantly, allow him to know God's heart. While knowing theological principles and the meaning of a text is important, more important is what David Saxton says, "The pastor must personally digest the truth in his own soul."¹³ When a pastor "digests the truth in his soul,"¹⁴ he cultivates the holiness of God within his soul. In applying his heart to devotion, the pastor knows the pleasure of God in his submission to God's commands and senses the pleasure of God amid a world of chaos. Knowing and sensing these realities of God allows the pastor to reflect upon the truth about God in his heart.

The aspect of devotional reading of God's Word, along with prayer, will better prepare a pastor for the pressures of guarding the flock that will weigh upon his life. Phil Newton reminds the pastor, "Without constant attention to our spiritual lives, we

¹² David Murray, *Reset: Living a Grace-Paced Life in a Burnout Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway: 2017), 42. Murray insists that the pastor, like most of humankind, often thinks he is without limits. Murray gives a grave prognosis to this type of thinking by showing that belief in limits can be what keeps a pastor from "straining, fraying and even breaking."

¹³ David W. Saxton, *God's Battle Plan for the Mind: The Puritan Practice of Biblical Meditation* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Heritage, 2015), 69.

¹⁴ Saxton, *God's Battle Plan for the Mind*, 69.

ultimately have little to offer those we're charged to shepherd. The most important focus of pastoral ministry should be the pastor's own care of his soul."¹⁵ When a pastor applies God's Word to his own life in a healthy devotional way, he will navigate the weight of ministry with more grace. A pastor with lively devotion to God's Word will carry with less effort other regular demands in his life, and ultimately be better prepared for the responsive demands that come his way. Because his soul is more in tune with the Father, he shoulders the high-stake demand and ministers gracefully as he is commanded (1 Pet 5:2-3).

Petitionary prayer as a regular demand should be prioritized by the pastor. The pastor who lives in fellowship with God, walking in the light of God's holiness sees his need for God's continued grace. The pastor under the demand of ministry should often feel his inadequacy in carrying that weight in a balanced way and should cry out to God. Crying out to God in petition is not saying that one mostly carries this weight in a balanced way, but occasionally needs God to intervene; rather, it is a daily petition the pastor makes knowing He needs God's grace for success under the regular and responsive demands of ministry. D. A. Carson reminds his readers that in prayer, "We become fruitful by grace; we persevere by grace; we mature by grace; by grace, we grow to love one another more, and by grace, we cherish holiness and deepening knowledge of God."¹⁶ To live a holy life the pastor needs God's grace. Because of this deep need, the pastor goes daily to the "throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in his time of need" (Heb 4:16). Each pastor needs to have moments where God pours out his grace in a way causes him to trust God in the midst of bearing the weight of caring for souls. This area of petitionary prayer is one

¹⁵ Phil A. Newton, *40 Questions about Pastoral Ministry*, 40 Question Series, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021), 67.

¹⁶ D. A. Carson, *Praying with Paul: A Call to Spiritual Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 41.

where an older pastor's input can be helpful, given he is a man of prayer. Having an older long-tenured man of prayer give insight into how to pray for oneself and could prove invaluable for guarding one's heart.

To guard his heart from sin and care for souls properly, the pastor must be willing to pray for himself amid his trials. Only he knows how the demands of ministry are affecting his life. Only the pastor knows to what level he needs God's redemptive working to instruct his view of the holy calling of ministry. If he allows himself to drift in the area of petition, the result could be deadly. David Murray warns, "The gradual loss of contact with God through missed or rushed daily devotions, or a life lived independently of God will result in a growing distance between us and God, and a growing proximity to temptation and sin."¹⁷ Murray gives a grave prognosis for the one who thinks his life can be independent, lived outside of a petitioning prayer life. When the pastor feels as if he has arrived and no longer needs to pray for himself, then he is closing in on sinful behavior rather than living a life in fellowship with God. Personal prayer and devotion are only one part of carrying the regular demand of ministry, the other is more public.

How a Pastor Guards His Flock

The pastor is not only responsible for his own heart but for the hearts of those within his congregation. The pastor is watching over souls (Heb 13:17), and with this comes a stricter judgment (Jas 3:1). It is the pastor's job to bear the weight of guarding the hearts of those within his congregation. It is his job to preach a full gospel that comes from time spent in the study of God's Word, and then present it in a way that can be applied to lives. And finally, the pastor is responsible for praying for those within his care.

Pastoral study for preaching: a regular demand for guarding the flock.

¹⁷ Murray, *Reset*, 51.

While study is also an aspect of devotional life, here the emphasis will be on how the pastor studies so he is better equipped to call others to submit to God's holiness. The danger for the pastor is avoiding study, which seems obvious, but also as David Saxton warns, the pastor must not study to the point that he "sounds like a running commentary rather than an insightful voice crying out in the wilderness."¹⁸ To be insightful, as Saxton notes, and not a drone of information, one must be given to study and know the meaning of the text, and its range of applications. Only when a pastor studies does he sound like a preacher and not a repeater of facts and ideas from other people. He must allow the text in front of him to have a place within his heart before he proclaims it to God's people. The pastor must know how the text of Scripture is revealing sin's workings, and showing God's great power to redeem that failure for his congregation. Otherwise, all he has to offer is what others have said about that text in a way that seems disconnected from the problems of the congregation. A teaching so disconnected could lead a congregation to become untrusting of God's Word. It is a regular weight of the pastor to guard his flock by studying God's Word in a way that arouses excitement within the heart of the reader.

The burden of study has a clear biblical mandate: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15). One of the most common observations from this text comes from the King James translation where it commands, "Study to show thyself approved" (2 Tim 2:15). In the shadow of this verse Prime and Begg write, "God does not expect from us *as pastors* what He expects from others. He knows what we are capable of, and that alone is what He wants."¹⁹ A pastor is devoted to study in a way that others are not called to, but this is due to the nature of the calling. The pastor is called to be a person who urges the children of God to holiness, and this type of exhortation is only

¹⁸ Saxton, *God's Battle Plan for the Mind*, 69.

¹⁹ Prime and Begg, *On Being a Pastor*, 115, emphasis added.

done when one has studied and knows the God to whom he calls others. In these deep study times, the pastor gains comfort for his soul; comfort for leading well the flock of God he has been entrusted with, and comfort for his walk with the Spirit of God. Without robust study of God's Word, the pastor becomes a man devoid of conviction, and at best offers a truth in a manner that is most unhelpful. C. H. Spurgeon says, "If pastors do not spend much time in diligent study, they would get poverty-stricken sermons. . . . If any man will preach as he should preach, his work will take more out of him than any labor under heaven."²⁰ For the pastor, study of God's Word is the moment for discovery of what God means with what He has said. In that moment of discovery, a pastor knows the meaning of the text in front of him, as well as the range of application for that text, and his congregation. In studying God's Word, the pastor is doing the work of guarding his flock from wrong doctrine. Because through study he can know what he calls his congregation to stand for is exactly God's heart on the subject. Although a polished craft of preaching is necessary, its value for the church is truly found when a pastor is responsible for studying.

Preaching as a regular demand for guarding the flock. The demand of study upon the pastor is tied to the demand of preaching. Preaching is almost synonymous with being a pastor. Although it is not his only responsibility, it is possibly the greatest regular demand in the pastor's week. Often pastors preach multiple times a week, though some say this trend is becoming less common.²¹ Nonetheless, preaching is

²⁰ C. H. Spurgeon, *An All-Around Ministry* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1981), 133.

²¹ Thom Rainer, "Trends in the Number of Weekends a Pastor Preaches Each Year," Church Answers, November 27, 2018, <https://churchanswers.com/podcasts/rainer-on-leadership/trends-in-the-number-of-weekends-a-pastor-preaches-each-year/>. Rainer introduces the idea that most pastors are not holding the traditional model of preaching three times a week at least 45-50 weeks a year. Today, most pastors preach less than they have in history, by preaching only forty times out of the year, and responsible for only one sermon per week. Rainer surmises that the traditional model of multiple sermons, several days a week is a past ritual. This new trend could be a good one in that pastors must exposit one passage of Scripture deeply with precision and excellence. However, if it is a new trend, the danger is that pastors are not studying their Bibles deeply every week and risk hermeneutical errors in their exposition.

the most visible aspect of the pastor's calling and the area of his calling where accountability for his example of faithful living is examined. To fulfill the command to "preach the Word" (2 Tim 4:2), the pastor must do at least these two things: "Cultivate a knowledge of the scriptures, and read widely, especially on topics of theology."²² The purpose of preaching is to give the congregation a rich view of the holiness of God through both the pastor's words and his lifestyle. Such a calling must be done from a heart saturated in the person of God who is represented in the Scriptures, then done practically by reading widely and discovering how to apply God's truth in a way that honors God and stays culturally relevant.

Knowing God's Word and having it dwell richly within one's life allows the pastor to speak truth with greater confidence. Bryan Chapell, when speaking to the manner of preaching, writes, "A pastor confident of the bible's truth is able to preach with great force or with great gentleness and still speak with authority."²³ However, the reflections of holiness within the mind of a pastor are often best governed when fenced in by the wisdom of biblical scholars throughout the ages. When reading the theological writings of scholars throughout the ages, a pastor can ascertain the truest meaning of a text as well as the range of applications. A pastor must be well-studied to call his congregation to the holy standing that God demands through preaching. In gauging his need for care a pastor may want to submit his sermons and study notes to a mentor pastor for sharpening of his craft. At times it is good to have someone from outside the congregation listen and look at a sermon to better guard the flock by being precise to the text and within the cultural context. Through this a greater need for study, devotion, or cultural awareness may arise that can be addressed and guard the pastor's ministry.

Study, preaching, and devotional application of God's Word are a part of the

²² Prime and Begg, *On Being a Pastor*, 120-21.

²³ Bryan Chapell, *Christ Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 79.

regular weight that a pastor must carry. When he rightly carries this weight, he is focused on the holy heart of God and how to call others to God's life-changing will. By nature, he will understand what parts of any given circumstance represent the high-stakes nature of God's calling on human life, and how to dissect rightly holy calling from daily life. When a pastor rightly applies God's Word within his life, he better equips himself to meet the demands God has called him to, and it will be solace for his heart.

Intercession as a regular demand for guarding the flock. The pastor should be devoted to prayer as a primary work for his flock. Praying for his congregation to have a stronger relationship with the Father and the holiness that God demands of His people.²⁴ To be a shepherd who cares for the sheep, and to do this well he must carry them to the Chief Shepherd in prayer consistently. Prime and Begg write, "The principal part of our pastoral care is unseen by those who benefit from it since it is done in secret. We must be intercessors for the members of Christ's flock entrusted to us."²⁵ Intercessory work is a regular demand for the pastor that varies from week to week and from person to person. There will be weeks that the regular demand of praying is the only focus for the minister, and then several times a year something large will capture his attention and it seems his prayer times. All of these prayer requests, though taxing on the soul of the pastor, are joyous weights he bears to the throne of grace so that his congregants "obtain grace and mercy in this their time of need" (Heb 4:16).

While intercessory prayer seems like a noble and honorable task, it is often tainted with human reasons to avoid it. These reasons could include a parishioner who refuses counsel and is now living with the consequence of their decision, or a member who is vocal in the disapproval of a decision, or of leadership in general. Regardless of the reason to not intercede, the pastor must live a mature life in Christ and bring those

²⁴ Prime and Begg, *On Being a Pastor*, 65.

²⁵ Prime and Begg, *On Being a Pastor*, 68.

entrusted to him before God. With situations like these, Craig Barnes reminds pastors, “As a pastor my calling is not to love my dreams for my congregation more than I love them as they are today.”²⁶ Pastors who are focused on their idea of perfection in their people over God’s idea tend to not pray for their people. They can be tempted to think that people do not deserve prayer because they reject counsel. However, the pastor should constantly be in prayer for his congregation—not just because God commands all Christians to pray for one another (Jas 5:16), but also because the pastor is watching over the souls of those within his congregation (Heb 13:7). When praying for the people within the congregation God can use those times to call the pastor to examine his own heart. God then might challenge the pastor’s resentments and show how the pastor cannot adequately care for the souls of his congregation with the issues of his heart.²⁷ In that moment of realization and confession, as the pastor carries his sinful resentment to God, he opens up the pathways of full fellowship and allows true ministry to burst forth in his church. Sometimes a fellow shepherd can help in a blind spot for this regular demand of the pastor. After listening to a pastor friend give his story about the problem he is facing, the advice given may be as simple as asking the question, “How are you praying for that person or about that problem?” This question could highlight a need for a different kind of praying and one that would both address the cares of the pastor’s heart, and the problems he is facing with new perspective.

The Misnomer of Regular Demands on a Life

When a pastor works to manage his heart, it would be easy to think that if he could delegate all the majorly traumatic demands, then the regular daily tasks would be

²⁶ M. Craig Barnes, *Diary of a Pastor’s Soul: The Holy Moments in a Life of Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2020), 31.

²⁷ Carson, *Praying with Paul*, 56.

manageable. Yet, the eccentric strain on their hearts from the demands of ministry remains. Research suggests that it is not the major events in life that cause the most stress to one's life; rather, it is the "daily hassles."²⁸ Knowing that the daily struggles are the most burdensome eliminates the idea of always delegating distractions, and thinking that will improve the pastor's troubled heart. The research done by Allen Kanner et al. shows, "The remaining relationship between hassles and psychological symptoms was generally greater than between life events and symptoms."²⁹ These findings bring to light the fact that major life events could be difficult to navigate, but it is within the daily hassle or weights of life a pastor develops negative psychological symptoms. To understand these findings for the pastor, one must see that there will always be a sermon to preach and there will always be a prayer time that should be attended. Disagreements between deacons and dramatic accusations will come and go, but the Word of God must be rightly divided and preached every week. These regular weights must be managed within the heart of the pastor. The responsive demand is not the cause of the troubled heart, rather it is merely the means which illuminates the troubled heart. The responsive demands show how a pastor has either managed or mismanaged his regular demands. The responsive demands merely illuminate the regular patterns of fellowship with the holy God within the life of the pastor. Meaning that there is a right way and wrong way for a pastor to manage the high-stakes regular demands of his life so that the high-stakes responsive demands do to disqualify him from ministry.

The regular demands are the normal rhythm and routine of a pastor's schedule and are the things that both bring him joy and satisfaction. These responsibilities include

²⁸ Allen D. Kanner et al., "Comparison of Two Modes of Stress Measurement: Daily Hassles and Uplifts versus Major Life Events," *Journal of Behavioral Medicine* 4, no. 1 (1981): 20-22.

²⁹ Kanner et al., "Comparison of Two Modes of Stress Measurement," 22. "Life events" in the research cited was attributed to traumatic life events, i.e., death of a loved one or loss of a job. According to this medical research, while the trauma was present, the lasting psychological trauma was more closely related to the regular daily demands on one's life.

his application of God's Word and personal and group prayer times, among many other things. Within each of these is an aspect that guards the heart of the pastor as well as the hearts of his flock. It is important to notice how the regular demands matter for the pursuit of holiness within the pastor and his church. Because the regular demands have such daily importance, if they are not responded to with faithful zeal, then a pastor will find himself destroyed over time or when faced with a major responsive demand.

Responsive Demands in Ministry

While the regular demands in ministry always require some level of heart response from the pastor, some demands are purely responsive. These are moments when the minister is faced with a demand completely outside the norm of routine and must be handled. In these responsive demands, the pastor must faithfully guard his heart and guard the flock entrusted to him. Before the responsive demands are explored, it is important to speak to what the pastor is reacting to.

What the Pastor Is Responding To

It is important to notice that any responsive demand holds the capacity to capture all of the pastor's immediate and peripheral attention. These situations can zap the pastor's emotional capital and, if bad enough, clear a ministry schedule in less than a minute due to their nature. Examples of responsive demands could be moments when a pastor finds out an elder or key person on staff has had an affair, the moment the children's minister comes with an allegation of abuse against a long-term volunteer, or one that nearly every current minister is well acquainted with, COVID-19. Knowing what shape these situations could take can be helpful, but more insightful might be knowing what a pastor needs to react to within the abnormal ministry demand in front of him. In each of these situations, the pastor must be working out his holy calling by addressing sin and showing God's love to redeem the situation and those who might be caught in sin.

It is the pastor's responsibility to react to the way sin influences daily life and

do so in a way that inspires faith in God. In this scenario, the pastor, and every person affected by the situation at hand, deals with the way, as Pierre explains, “sin has hijacked the way their heart was supposed to respond.”³⁰ The human heart is meant to value God and what He values in a way that represents Him well. However, in certain situations, individuals look for their own desires. Instead of being committed to holy living, some congregants commit selfishly to themselves. Those moments of self-centeredness are when the pastor feels the responsive demands pull on his heart. In these moments of someone’s selfishness, the pastor should be directing his own heart and all other hearts involved, to find the place where God can be worshiped. While the pastor’s heart is being responsive to the corruption of sin, it must also react to the redemptive work of God in the situation he is currently engaged in. Pierre tells his readers that when the heart is redeemed it “worships God in thought, desire, and choice.”³¹ In a sin-riddled crisis, the pastor’s responsive heart is called upon. In that moment, the pastor must lean into God’s redemptive work to think in a new way, or desire God’s glory more than human prosperity. Reacting in faith-filled ways does not come naturally due to sins’ corruption, yet when the pastor walks daily in fellowship with God his desires should be closely aligned with God’s, and in turn, he should exhibit a redeemed hope to sin’s corruption.

The idea of the pastor’s heart being responsive against sin’s corruption and to God’s redemption will help in formulating the thoughts that in facing any external factors or situations, a pastor must react in a manner that guards his own heart and guards his congregation.

Responsive Demands of Ministry and Guarding the Pastor’s Heart

The pastor is missionally submerged in the world of sin’s corruption and is

³⁰ Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 55.

³¹ Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 71.

always pursuing God’s redemptive work to be realized in his heart. Yet, it seems like the questions raised by others are the ones that plague his heart too. The pastor is in a tension where he is teaching the way to respond to “external conditions,”³² and doing so in a way that shows God’s redemption. Then, he must work to apply those same redemptions to his life responsively while maintaining the regular demands of ministry. This section will explore how a pastor guards his heart when responding to ministry demands. When looking at the responsive demand and how the pastor guards his heart, this thesis will explore how Christ energizes the pastor for the responsive ministry, and how the responsive demands in ministry are summed up in service.

Christ energizes the pastor for the responsive demands in ministry. The heart of the pastor will strain under the load of responding to sin’s corrupting and illuminating God’s desired redemption unless he understands the power of Christ to energize him in this work. As God’s called servant, the pastor cannot abdicate the responsibility to respond to the demands of ministry that are unpleasant. In the middle of this responsive demand, it is normal for the pastor to feel inadequate due to the constant pressure both in ministry and in his personal life. Yet, when the pastor understands and embraces the calling of ministry, he also knows there is relief within ministry through dependence upon Christ. Colossians 1 gives a concise telling of the calling and how the pastor carries the demands of gospel ministry in the energy and power of Christ:

The mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them, God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. (vv. 26-29)

As Colossians makes clear, the obvious work of the pastor is to declare the mysterious nature of the gospel—that God desires for sinners to repent at the preaching

³² Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart*, 91.

of the cross and to receive God's redemptive work into their souls. The greatest message in history is entrusted to the pastor; that message is to proclaim Jesus. The pastor proclaims Jesus as the hope for eternity and the only way to heaven. It is a task that will take all the energy he has, and then the work that remains will still be great. The reason for that is the pastor's job is preaching in the hope of igniting every soul for Jesus, and that is often done by encouraging believers to live out what they already know to do in Jesus. Moments of discouragement often run high when calling people to live out perfect holiness, and that is exactly what a pastor is called to do when Paul calls him to "warn" (Col 1:28) the believers. Richard R. Melick writes, "Admonition in Scripture has the connotation of confronting with the intent of changing one's attitude and action. Here the term speaks to the task of calling to mind a correct course of action."³³ Therefore, the pastor will always be calling his flock to respond to God's Word both attitudinally and in action. However, there will be moments when this calling will be more personal because certain individuals will not be receptive to the pastor's urge to conform to God's Word. This lack of conformity to God's Word will cause a strain on the pastor's heart that he must also respond to with wisdom.

In the moments when a pastor must call an individual to personal holiness, it can be tempting to feel responsible for making another change for God's glory. The trap is often set if the pastor believes he must work within his meager abilities to fulfill his responsibility to equip the saints to live in a holy way. If he does not work through Holy Spirit empowerment for this task, then he risks feeling either guilty or empowered for thinking his abilities or skills made someone change. Either way, the pastor finds himself in a place where trouble seeks out his heart, especially when he has experienced either success or failure with his efforts and abilities. At times he can become prideful thinking his skill changed a life, and other times he can become sorrowful because his skill drove

³³ Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, New American Commentary, vol. 32 (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 242.

a brother away because wisdom was not employed.

The work of equipping the saints, responding to crisis, preaching the Word, and living a life of personal holiness is an impossible calling unless there is a power to fulfill that call. Unless some quality propels the pastor supernaturally to fulfill such a calling, he fails and a troubled heart manifests. However, Colossians 1 goes on to show there is more: “For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me” (v. 29). The energy within the pastor is the Holy Spirit showing him both the mystery of Christ and the ability to know grace within himself. Unless the pastor is filled with the grace of God given by the Holy Spirit, there is no power within his calling to bring people to personal holiness. Without this powerful energy, grace, and mysteries known, the struggle and toil are in vain, and the pastor is wearied from the responsive demands of ministry. Without the power of the Holy Spirit, the minister’s work is ineffective. Harold Senkbeil notes,

While proficiency in biblical languages, church history, dogma, and pastoral skill are all prerequisites for ministry, the cure of souls is more of an art than a science. To make pastors you need the person and power of the Holy Spirit who forms and shapes men inwardly to be vessels for the treasures of God’s transcendent and transforming gifts in his gospel.³⁴

Senkbeil’s conclusion is beautifully written in that he draws out how only through the Holy Spirit is the pastor built to hold all the wonders God can perform. Only through the Holy Spirit can the pastor withstand preaching God’s holiness on Sunday after dealing with church division and calling those involved to personal holiness on the previous Thursday. Christ empowers the work of gospel ministry through the Holy Spirit within the pastor, and it is the Spirit’s power that equips him to combat sin’s corruption and weave God’s grace into those corrupted areas. Only when the pastor is living with an unquenched Holy Spirit in his life can he equip the church for ministry and have the energy to rightly handle the pressures his ministry throws at him. In gauging his need for

³⁴ Senkbeil, *The Care of Souls*, 17-18.

care a pastor must not think that he is the final authority in Holy Spirit-empowered ministry. Instead, at times, he must take his calendar and his ministry issues to a fellow shepherd who can guide him to lead regularly according to the Holy Spirit and to find places for Him to energize the fulfillment of the ministry demand.

The responsive demand in ministry is a call to serve. The demands of ministry must be carried out in service to the church. The pastor will best guard his heart when he understands he is a servant when he finds himself in a responsive demand of ministry. Unfortunately, it is a temptation for the pastor to complain about the pressures of ministry and how underappreciated he feels. Giving into such a temptation would mean in part that one is rejecting Christ's example and command from John 13:

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean." When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (vv. 1-17)

The regular and responsive demands in ministry are fulfilled when one is committed to serving others the way Jesus exemplified. Pastors struggle with the demands of ministry when they ignore them and seek their own recognition. When pastors wish to be seen as splendid orators rather than Spirit-filled preachers, or they become focused on being insightful teachers and timely counselors, they are in danger of a troubled heart.

When the pastor ignores the weight of ministry and forgets he is to be a servant of Christ he could be blindsided by the ministry's weight which is when troubled heart tendencies can emerge.

Paul David Tripp, when speaking about John 13, shows the lesson for pastors when he says, "If you're not greater than your master, and He has been willing to do this disgusting thing, you also must be willing. You must be willing to do the lowest, most debased thing so that my work and my will be done. You must not think of yourselves as too good. You must not be too proud."³⁵ Tripp shows how it is often in the most debased tasks that the will of God is both displayed and relayed to others. The management of the pastor's heart comes when he does not fear the things that people will say and puts aside the pride in his pastoral position so that God's purposes can be accomplished through service to the flock. However, one thing that Tripp misses in his estimation is that Jesus knew his position. It says in John 13:3, "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going back to God." When a pastor knows his calling is service, then the responsive demands of ministry are viewed honorably within his heart. Only because the pastor knows he is not above his master and knows that service is the calling.

Jesus has called the pastor to be responsive in ministry. Only when a pastor is service-minded is he effective in responding to the situations God allows in his life. The pastor must see that the responsive demands of ministry are best performed with a basin and a towel, in service to his King. At times the service of the body and weight of ministry is the humiliation of being the most educated in his congregation and at times feeling the most underappreciated. However, holiness is most often caught by congregants when their pastor actively serves them in their needs. Other times a pastor's service is counseling and knowing the dirty secrets of his congregation and experiencing

³⁵ Tripp, *A Dangerous Calling*, 173.

alienation when those he has held confidence in reject him. These are the acts of service he has been called to, and it is a privilege for the pastor to carry these weights because “the suffering of this present age cannot compare to the glory that awaits” (Rom 8:18). To ensure service in difficult seasons because it doesn’t come naturally, a fellow shepherd might be able to encourage this action for regularly lead the congregation in times of one-another care. Something as simple as asking a younger pastor how he is serving his congregation through the difficulty they are facing could produce the change they need to focus on God and get through the trial.

The Responsive Demands of Ministry and Guarding the Flock

In church life, the pastor must have a heart ready to react to change at a moment’s notice while continuing his daily routines. The logistical aspects of these changes may be enormous, yet the bigger burden is the way the congregation’s heart responds to the changes. It is not enough for the pastor to weigh the options of how to steward resources; he must also consider the responsive heart of the congregation. In each of these areas it would be helpful for a pastor to spend regular time with a fellow pastor who can shepherd his heart through this season as his focus is on his flock For this thesis, the areas of false doctrine and leading through difficulty will be the focus areas of responsive demand on a pastor. When responding to such demands, a pastor should call his congregation to a capacity for greater commitment to Christ, be committed to model the right heart, and lead even when it’s painful to do so. Otherwise, he will not guard the flock well.

The responsive demand of calling the flock to a capacity for greater commitment to Christ. Leading a church through seasons of difficulty or a confrontation on doctrine will challenge the genuineness of the church’s faith. Pierre reminds his readers, “Faith values God above all other objects in creation, even for things

that God created good.”³⁶ During interpersonal conflict in a church, the pastor’s job is to lead his flock to commitment to Christ over the correctness of their position. A situation like this comes up in Philippians 4:2-3, when Paul says, “I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together.” When facing an argument where division is clear, the pastor faces two sides where the corruption of sin makes those involved find evidence and reinforcements for their argument. However, it is the pastor’s job as a true companion to help those in a disagreement to exhibit redemptive faith and value what God does. To reconcile division, the pastor may have to say that one side is incorrect in their stance, but the focus of the argument should not be on right and wrong. Instead, the pastor should respond to the situation by teaching that the redemptive work of God is to commit to Christ and His way. Because, as Robert Jones writes, “Conflicts connect us more intensely to our savior.”³⁷ Even if one side is right and the other wrong, the focus is on commitment to Christ, not merely positional correctness.

A responsive heart that guards the flock in the way discussed above is one that has spent devotional time with the Lord. Only when the pastor agrees with the Lord can he lead others to agree with God rather than their fickle position. Instead, the pastor should devote himself to understanding the heart of God so that when situations outside his control arise, he can respond with grace to preserve the witness of the church. Ken Sande notes, “Conflict always provides an opportunity to glorify God, that is, to bring Him praise and honor by showing who He is, what He is like and what He is doing.”³⁸ In understanding that conflict allows an opportunity to glorify God, the pastor has the opportunity to preserve the church’s witness and guard the hearts of those involved in the

³⁶ Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 89.

³⁷ Robert D. Jones, *Pursuing Peace: A Christian Guide to Handling Our Conflicts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 39.

³⁸ Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 31.

conflict so they continue to please God and live as a witness to the community.

The responsive demand of guarding the flock by the pastor’s commitment to model the right heart through the process.³⁹ It is not enough to guard the heart of the congregation in difficulty and against false doctrine; the pastor must always model the heart his congregation needs to have. Modeling is a massive commitment. Jeff Iorg says that “authenticity and transparency are what is needed to model a right heart in difficult circumstances.”⁴⁰ A pastor must show his struggle with the corruption of sin as well as the way he allows God to work redemptively to change his life. The struggle with sin and how to overcome it through leaning into redemption is what the pastor shows to his congregation daily. As Paul reminded Timothy, “What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2). It has been the pattern of the pastor since the beginning of the church to teach the working out of redemption to overcome sin. The pastor must show his failures along with his successes to inspire his flock to guard their hearts for the work of the kingdom.

During a tumultuous season, the church needs her pastor’s character. While character can be built during seasons of trial, it is also revealed. The pastor must be a man who exemplifies good character when guarding the flock. David Murray shows how what has been labeled in this thesis as the regular demands of a pastor in devotion and fellowship with a holy God are crucial for character development: “Character is formed primarily in communion with God.”⁴¹ In times of trial, a pastor may lose popularity, but to lead effectively he must never waiver in character. The pastor must model a heart that

³⁹ Jeff Iorg, *The Painful Side of Leadership: Moving Forward Even When It Hurts* (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 239. Iorg suggests that a pastor should be the example the righteous attitude that he desires his congregation to have when leading through change and difficult circumstances.

⁴⁰ Iorg, *The Painful Side of Leadership*, 239-40.

⁴¹ Murray, *Reset*, 160.

is both patient and full of endurance. He must navigate the responsive demand in front of him in a way that safety preserves all under his care. Richard Sibbes explains that care like this from the pastor seeks to “preserve us and others from two dangerous rocks which our natures are prone to dash upon, security and pride.”⁴² Sibbes’s instruction to the reader is to know that man’s tendency is not to trust God in times of trial, but rather to run toward comfort or what he knows. However, a pastor who leads well in times of trial knows that God is calling for change, but that rarely comes from comfort and rarely comes from what one knows. This kind of knowledge only comes from character developed in communion with God.

While character is important for navigation, it is also important in care. Murray helpfully writes, “We all need men in our lives who deal lovingly and faithfully with us, who watch for our souls and speak into our lives when we need it.”⁴³ A younger pastor at times needs an older pastor who will draw out his character patiently and lovingly especially in difficult season of ministry. The heart, or the character, that the pastor models in times of difficulty is only as good as the care it gives to the congregation. If the pastor is stoic yet distant, then the church will not feel like they are cared for as the pastor responds to the demands of the church. However, if the pastor models a relationship with God and a desire to cultivate relationships of care with his congregation in times of trouble, then he will be able to help his church avoid the “securities and the prides”⁴⁴ that people so easily dash upon.

The responsive demand of leading the flock, even when it is painful. The most difficult part of a responsive demand in the life of a pastor is that if he deals poorly with the demands then someone, will let him know how badly he missed the mark. On

⁴² Richard Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed* (East Peoria, IL: Banner of Truth Trust, 2021), 20.

⁴³ Murray, *Reset*, 168.

⁴⁴ Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed*, 20.

the other hand, if a pastor performs well under pressure, there may be zero recognition for the success. Yet, one thing is sure, every church member is expecting the pastor to lead, and lead decisively. The moment when a pastor is met with a crisis, he knows he stands at a crossroads and must lead his church into change. Jeff Iorg reminds pastors, “A primary responsibility of leaders is leading change. How can one lead change without pain? It can’t be done.”⁴⁵ Iorg hits at the heart of the responsive demand: regardless of the situation a pastor faces, it is pain he wishes to avoid but the pain will be experienced. It is helpful to remember that when a pastor faces a responsive demand in caring for the flock, he will face pain. It is a pain that cannot be avoided and will hurt regardless of the measures taken to avoid suffering. A pastor knows that sometimes he must lead into change that will cause pain to both himself as well as members of his congregation. It is in these moments that the minister must remember he is called to care for souls and at times be reminded by other shepherds of that truth.

Responsive demands will always reveal the character of the pastor as well as the church’s desire to commit to Christ on a different level. No matter the challenge it will bring with it pain, and a pain that the pastor must bear. However, if he walks with God, Christ will energize him for this work.

Conclusion

The calling of the pastor is a holy vocation, which is worked out through regular and responsive demands. These demands can seem mundane at times, but they serve as a gauge for ministry and for the care that he may need for his own heart. Each demand within the holy pastoral calling is met in order to combat the corruption of sin and show God’s redemptive working in every moment. When a pastor knows his daily life and every trial, he faces will be an endeavor against sin and an opportunity to show God’s redemptive working, the pressures of ministry become more bearable. Though his

⁴⁵ Iorg, *The Painful Side of Leadership*, 209-10.

character, heart, and strength will be tested under these demands, he was never meant to be the solution to this world's problems. It is only when the pastor attempts to be a vessel for the redemptive working of God that he rightly carries his holy calling. Yet this is not carried out in isolation. He shows wisdom when he is surrendered to the care of fellow sheep and fellow shepherds. When he is able to find a wise older or long-tenured shepherd who will come alongside him he will find a perspective to guard his own heart that is valuable.

Thesis Conclusion

A pastor who is under a holy calling from God to guard his flock, and is called to guard his life and doctrine as well will sometimes find himself weary and isolated in the process. In times like these, he must gauge his need for personal care and know where to turn in times of trouble. In this contemporary age self-care has become a mode of care many have turned to. While it is not unhealthy to turn here, this thesis argues that self-care is an inadequate model for the total care of the pastor. The pastor then under the unique burden of ministry must turn to one-another care for the complete care of his soul. In each area of his ministry, the pastor would be wise to look to an older or long-tenured pastor for guidance in certain seasons of life in order to guard his heart from becoming troubled. When faithfulness to the biblical model of one-another care is present in the pastor's life his heart can find the care it needs in difficult times. So that, he can live a life of faithfulness in his calling of guarding his heart and guarding his flock.

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ABSTRACT

ADDRESSING THE WEIGHT OF CARING FOR SOULS AND THE TROUBLED HEART OF THE PASTOR THROUGH BIBLICAL COUNSELING

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This thesis addresses how a pastor who is under a holy calling from God to guard his flock as well as his life and doctrine will sometimes find himself weary and isolated in the process. In times like these, he must gauge his need for personal care and know where to turn in difficult times. In this contemporary age self-care has become a mode of care many have turned to. While it is not unhealthy to self-care, this thesis argues that secular self-care models are inadequate for the total care of the pastor. The pastor, under the unique burden of ministry, must turn to one-another care in the church for the complete care of his soul. This thesis argues that in each area of his ministry, the pastor would be wise to look to an older or long-tenured pastor for guidance in certain seasons of life to guard his heart from becoming troubled. When faithfulness to the biblical model of one-another care is present in the pastor's life his heart can find the care it needs in difficult times. So that he can live a life of faithfulness in his calling of guarding his heart and guarding his flock.

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