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DEVELOPING AN APPROACH FOR
UNANTICIPATED LEADERSHIP
TRANSITION IN THE CHURCH

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Jeremy Elton Bedenbaugh
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APPROVAL SHEET

DEVELOPING AN APPROACH FOR UNANTICIPATED
LEADERSHIP TRANSITION IN THE CHURCH

Jeremy Elton Bedenbaugh

Read and Approved by:

Shane W. Parker (Faculty Supervisor)

Danny R. Bowen

Date _____

I dedicate this project to all the wounded, lonely pastors and to all the elders who are unsure how to shepherd such men. I pray this work would serve you in profound ways that lead you back to the true life Jesus offers.

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PREFACE

As I conclude my project, I am overwhelmed again at God's grace to "save a wretch like me," and I am even more excited about the continued proclamation of His grace to the ends of the earth. I am also more aware than ever, through this work, that His grace must be guarded against cheap counterfeits, so that the same grace that has saved us and "brought us safe thus far" will also be the grace that takes us "home."

My wife, Amy Bedenbaugh, sacrificed the most to make this project happen, has been the greatest gift in my life, and deserves this degree more than I do. She is the most fun, faithful, supportive, beautiful woman I know. The most valuable thing in my life outside of Jesus Christ Himself is the life I share with her.

Our three children, Jude, Samuel, and Kharis are the joy of my heart. Being away from them and their mom to complete this work was more difficult than they will ever know. I want to thank them for their patience with their daddy, for their smiles, their love, their stories, and their open-arm running to me every time I walked in the door.

My parents, Ricky and Angie Bedenbaugh, provided more support and encouragement than I ever expected. They cared about this project and prodded me to keep going even when I wanted to walk away.

The elders of The Journey graciously allowed me to pursue this project in the midst of a hectic time and put great trust in me as well as great resources toward me. Their love and prayer will never be forgotten.

I also want to thank all the people of The Journey who remained steadfast in faithfulness to the Lord and to His bride when storms of unimaginable proportions fell upon our house. Because of God's grace and their zeal for Jesus, when the "rain fell, and

the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock” (Matt 7.25). May the glory of our current house be greater than the first!

Mike Werkheiser, TJ Wolters, and Phil Woods have been my best friends since 2001, and without them I would not be in ministry nor would I be the man I am today. Sharing our ministries, marriages, failures, successes, burdens, joys, struggles, kids, vacations—indeed our very lives—has been my greatest impetus to flee sin and pursue Jesus. True spiritual friendship remains rare, but we have found it in each other.

I am also grateful to the faculty and staff of Southern Seminary in their faithful mission to equip pastors like me. I especially want to thank Dr. Shane Parker for supervising this work, providing helpful feedback, and constantly telling me to keep going. Dan Dumas has invested deeply and generously in me and always sought to bring out the best of my leadership potential. Uncle Dan is truly one of a kind! In addition, Dr. Danny Bowen offered a deeply thorough reading and review of my work, and his notes changed this work for the better.

My cohort of fellow pastors in this program will never understand the extent to which they have influenced and lifted me. When I arrived for our first class in October of 2016, I rolled into Louisville on emotional, physical, and spiritual fumes, but they stood me back up and filled my tank in ways they will never fully know. They continue to do the same today, and I believe they will long into the future.

Finally, I pray that this work would impact and benefit wounded pastors, elders who are unsure how to shepherd such men, and churches who long to be filled with the life Christ offers.

Jeremy Bedenbaugh

St. Louis, Missouri

May 2018

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Many churches across the American landscape are in crisis, and many more are moving toward potential crisis due to the threat of pastoral disqualification. Still others are recovering and in the process of rebuilding after experiencing the crisis of unanticipated leadership transition due to moral failure. The purpose of this project was to determine the warning signs of unanticipated leadership transition in the church and develop a plan to identify early warning signs of, lead through, and redeem such situations.

Goals

In order to understand and assist churches in or facing such crises, three goals were developed which sought identification of warning signs on the front end, leadership during the crisis, and restoration afterwards:

1. Identify common early warning signs of personal/moral failure, disqualification, or burnout.
2. Create a crisis roadmap and resources for organizations and churches walking into or through unanticipated leader transition.
3. Develop a template that churches can use to develop a restoration plan for a fallen pastor/leader, including common mistakes as well as common successes.

Research Methodology

As noted above, three specific goals were developed to drive the effectiveness of the project. The first goal identified the early warning signs of pastoral

disqualification or burnout.¹ These signs were gleaned from extensive interviews with five medium or large churches where pastoral failure has occurred, sociological research on the nature of power, and through the biblical exegesis of 1 Kings 1-11, the Gospel of Luke, and the Pastoral Epistles.

The second goal was to create a crisis roadmap and resources for organizations or churches that enter unanticipated leader transition. The roadmap was built from data gathered from the aforementioned interviews, as well as through biblical exegesis focused on Jesus as a crisis leader in the Gospel of Luke.

The third goal acknowledged that few attempts at pastoral restoration are actually successful and sought to develop a model that churches can use for both personal and corporate restoration when an unanticipated leadership transition does occur. The focus was not punishment, but discipline that leads to restoration. This goal was measured by data from the interviews as well as its direct accord with biblical restoration passages such as Matthew 18, Galatians 6, 1 Corinthians 5, and 1 Timothy 5.

Context

Unanticipated transition of a senior leader creates massive upheaval in any organization, but especially in the church where leadership is predicated upon personal integrity and kept by trust. Any leader must be a person of competence, but in the church he must also be a person of character. However, when the curtain is torn away, revealing the beloved pastor as a mere mortal, trust erodes quickly and upheaval ensues.

On April 12, 2016, The Journey, a church in St. Louis, Missouri, experienced just such an upheaval, when the elders announced the disqualification and dismissal of the founding and well-known pastor, Darrin Patrick. The proclamation plunged the

¹All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use.

church into heretofore-unknown crisis and fell like a bomb in the evangelical world, as websites, news organizations, and individuals on social media rapidly spread the news. Calls, queries, and messages flooded into the church, demanding heightened levels of responsiveness, wisdom, and leadership.

As anyone would expect, Patrick, his wife, and children needed care for the present and clarity for the future while the church body clamored for answers, leadership, and gospel sensitivity. The simultaneous combination of these needs created fearful uncertainty, strain, and pain on the elders, pastors, and staff of the church in ways no one was fully prepared to face.

Patrick founded the church nearly fourteen years prior and had since become the Vice President of Acts 29, chaplain for the St. Louis Cardinals, a Gospel Coalition (TGC) Council member, the author of numerous books, and a prolific conference speaker. The Journey elders' action to dismiss came in the wake of other high profile, reformed pastors such as Mark Driscoll and Tullian Tchividjian stepping down in the midst of public controversy and scandal, and were followed by Perry Noble at New Spring, Jonathan McIntosh at Christ Church, and Pete Wilson at Cross Pointe, as well as many other lesser-known men across the country.²

Historical and Organizational Context

In 2001, Patrick and his family moved to St. Louis with seven other people and a dream to plant a church that would reach the kinds of people most churches had abandoned. In September 2002, The Journey held its first worship service in the Patrick family's basement with about thirty attenders. Patrick proved to be a charismatic and prophetic preacher who denounced the status quo, lived on the cultural edge, and called

²Some may object to the public naming of these individuals. However, the motivation is not to shame these men or their churches. In fact, each case is public domain, and Scripture often names men publicly when they have had persistent, unrepentant, and disqualifying sin. See 1 Tim 1.20 for Hymenaeus and Alexander, and 2 Tim 4.10 for Demas.

the church to make a holistic difference in their city. This type of preaching and leadership attracted many of St. Louis's "de-churched" population; conversions followed, and the church eventually grew to a multi-site megachurch of about 6,000 people.

The success and size of the church, combined with skilled communication and culturally relevant preaching attracted numerous requests to speak at conferences and launched the Journey founding pastor into multiple venues of leadership and influence such as Acts 29, The Gospel Coalition, and a major league Baseball chaplain. As good as those things were, it became clear over time that the "backstage" of character was not keeping pace with the "front stage" of skill. As early as 2010, the elders, senior leaders, and certain direct reports began to observe some of the initial warning signs that would lead ultimately to disqualification.

In the spring of 2011, the elder board and a few outside advisers had an intervention which led to a "forced sabbatical" to deal with the personal and spiritual issues that had begun to plague him and the overall culture of the church. The sabbatical included regular counseling and rest from all Journey ministry in order to focus deeply on restoring the pastor's personal relationship with Jesus as well as family. The elders intended the time away to provide a new and stronger foundation that would support the church's growth for years to come.

Patrick's return in late 2011 was marked by the attempt to surround him with healthier leaders, offer him outside executive coaching, establish a rhythm of professional counseling, and ensure personal accountability as well as corporately agreed upon rhythms of health. The plan seemed to be working for a time, but it soon became clear that meetings were being skipped and set rhythms were being violated. The sabbatical had been helpful but not decisive in changing the tide.

I was hired in January 2012 to lead the central campus at Tower Grove (South City St. Louis) and bring internal leadership health to the organization. While remaining in that role, I was also added to the Executive Leadership Team, which oversaw all six

campuses. In those roles, I participated in two subsequent interventions with Patrick over similar issues in 2013 and 2014. Each intervention produced a period of confession and short-term change but quickly receded into unfulfilled promises, reversion to old patterns, and broken trust with pastors/elders. Elders and staff did everything they could envision would lead to renewed vigor over the course of those years. In addition, I was named co-lead pastor in April 2015 and assumed oversight of all Journey staff, with firm hopes that our partnership together in newly defined roles would lead to health for the pastors, the elders, the staff, and the church.

The church culture grew slowly stronger and internal trust began to rebuild, but that progress halted abruptly on March 2, 2016, when I received a call from a woman in the church outlining further serious accusations against our founding pastor.³ Another elder and I privately investigated the charges to determine if there was any legitimacy, after which we involved the full board of elders. The findings of the investigation, the inappropriate phone calls with multiple women, and further confession, combined with deep historical patterns of sin, led our Board of elders to the heart-breaking decision to remove our founding pastor from the office of elder and require him to step down from all internal and external leadership positions.⁴

On April 11, 2016, I gathered my leadership team via conference call for the purpose of formal approval of the church-wide communication regarding Patrick's removal. We corporately discussed the weight of the moment, knowing that when we pressed the "send" button, the private would immediately become public, the finality of the decision would set in, and further leadership crisis would ensue. Hitting "send" would begin a cycle of necessary questions, conversations, gossip, media requests,

³Many naturally assume a character accusation implies sexual infidelity. However, though there were multiple highly inappropriate conversations, there was no sexual contact outside of marriage to the best of the elders' knowledge.

⁴See appendix 5 for the full public letter and statement outlining the reasons for the decision.

accusations, assumptions, and decisions that all of us knew were coming but none of us were ready to face.

I prayed desperately with the leadership team, after which my communication director became uncharacteristically formal in order to call the question, “Jeremy, do you approve of the distribution of this letter to our people?” As I attempted to answer, a lump caught in my throat, rendering me incapable of speech but very capable of imagining the potential consequences of these actions. The momentary pause opened a window of cascading pain and possibilities in my mind: the family’s potential humiliation made public, the negative effect of stress and time on my own wife and kids, the coming decision fatigue, all of the personal cost to bear, the criticisms to be endured, the potential of the church to crater or split, and most importantly, the very public dishonoring of the name of Jesus and his bride.

This story is unique but also old, personal but also universal. The Journey is not the first nor will it be the last to experience the crisis of leadership failure and transition. The prevalent questions faced are the same questions faced by many other churches in similar situations: How did we get here? Did we do enough to prevent this? What were the warning signs? Did we allow his gifts to overrule his character? Were there concrete steps or signs missed along the way? How do we move forward now? Can he be restored to ministry? What do we say or not say to our congregation? How do we respond to extremes, some who say we acted too hastily and others who say we acted too sluggishly? Those were the questions this project sought to answer, not simply for The Journey, but for the church as a whole.

Rationale

Unfortunately, most churches and organizations are completely unprepared to engage these questions and events, especially if they have been lulled into a false sense of security through past success. In a recent conversation with a member of the Board of Governors from the University of Missouri, he noted that when public crisis struck the

university in 2015, the president “totally underestimated the needed response” and had “no clue what steps to take or how to proceed.”⁵ The president eventually stepped down and plunged the university into further chaos, declining enrollment, and recruits de-committing from athletic teams. Everywhere one looks, organizations need the tools to prevent, lead through, and/or heal unanticipated leader transition. The cost and care for losing or removing senior leaders is enormously taxing on both economic and human resources. The need beckons especially loudly in the church where financial resources are more limited, public relations skills less adroit, and consequences have higher-stakes, moving beyond the organizational and into the eternal.

Character Is King

Pastoral disqualification in the church is not new but it is identifiable, pernicious, and redeemable. Scripture teaches leaders and churches to guard diligently against such failures yet realistically reminds that some such failures will nevertheless occur.⁶ Not all transitions can be prevented but with the right priorities and tools, churches and their pastors can be inoculated against the damaging effects of disqualifying sin. Inoculations do not guarantee their recipients will never get sick but they do greatly reduce the likelihood of disease. Similarly, the right priorities and tools cannot guarantee a pastor will succeed but they can make it much more likely.

With the rise of social media, pastoral failures among large, influential churches have filled the headlines of evangelical publications. While pastoral failure is not new, today’s “celebrity Christian culture” is new, making such failures much more

⁵While that conversation must remain anonymous due to legal sensitivities, a good summary of the racially-charged events leading to crisis, chaos, and the eventual resignation of the president at the University of Missouri can be found in a *Washington Post*: Izadi Elahe, “The Incidents That Led to the University of Missouri Presidents’ Resignation,” *The Washington Post*, November 9, 2015, accessed October 29, 2016. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2015/11/09/the-incidents-that-led-to-the-university-of-missouri-presidents-resignation/>.

⁶See 2 Sam 11; 1 Kgs 1-11; 1 Tim 4.1-16; and 2 Tim 2 just to name a few.

public and far more discrediting to the gospel.⁷ Whether or not these popular preachers have intentionally sought notoriety, the speed of communication, the prevalence of social media, and nearly unlimited access to content have created a historically unique environment. With the stakes higher than ever, God calls the church to even greater vigilance, preparation, and training, on both the early identification and the redemption side.

Again and again, the Bible teaches that character is king, and the church ignores these warnings at her own peril.⁸ Pastors need competency and spiritual gifting, but without character that matches or exceeds professional talent, these remarkable gifts always devolve into personal aggrandizement, abuse of the church, and/or dishonoring of the name of Jesus Christ.

From Sold Out to Sell Out

Usually, after a pastoral fall, many will wonder incredulously, “How could he preach that fantastic series on marriage while his marriage was falling apart?” “I grew so much under his preaching, was it all just a farce?”⁹ “How could he rail so convincingly against sexual sin while he himself was committing the same sins?” It is easy to see the

⁷This term is in no way meant pejoratively. Of course, it is absolutely true that many pastors become well known and popular simply by being faithful to use their gifts and passion for Christ. However, the term does recognize that such popularity brings unique temptations and problems.

⁸The priority of character also brings to mind the story of Saul and David. Saul certainly looked the part, being a head taller than every other Israelite (1 Sam 10.23). In other words, he was supposed to be Israel’s champion, their giant who could face Goliath, yet he stood trembling on the sidelines with the rest of his people (1 Sam 17). His body was strong but his character was weak. He rebelled against God (1 Sam 13.13-14, 15.17-26), and eventually The Lord removed him as king. Contrastingly, when Samuel goes to anoint David, his brothers look the part of king, even to Samuel. Yet God rebukes Samuel, Jesse, and Christians today: But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam 16.7-8).

⁹It is noted later in page 10 of this chapter that God can still legitimately use a leader’s gifts in spite of unfaithfulness. As one of my African American members said to me, “Just imagine how powerful the Gospel of Jesus Christ is, that people who were enslaved and owned were drawn to the love of Christ even through the very people who abused them!”

outward gifts but difficult to discern the inward character; nevertheless over-emphasis on gifts and under-emphasis on character must change.¹⁰ Seminaries and churches must strive to evaluate, guard, and promote men according to their character, not simply their skill.

In Psalm 78, Asaph recognizes that skill can never be divorced from character as he describes David's leadership: "With upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand" (Ps 78.72). Christian leaders need the upright heart and the skillful hand, but over time, great gifts can mask great sin. In addition, a gifted man usually receives accolades and reward for his gifts much more than his character. Over time, the leader's platform and level of leadership grows much faster than his character can bear. Thus, early recognition is vital. When leaders begin to show patterns of anger and self-righteousness like Jonah, entitlement and self-pity like Elijah, greed like Judas, fear of man like Saul, pride like Peter, duplicity like Abraham, favoritism like Isaac and Rebekah, neglect of responsibilities like Samson, defensiveness like the Pharisees, loss of genuine love of Jesus like the church in Ephesus (Rev 2.1-5), and similar signs, then it is time to step in and gently bring back the straying leader before it is too late (Gal 6.1-2).¹¹

Often, however, organizational leaders will turn their heads, mentally calculate the cost-benefit analysis of acting, wait, avoid, and/or hope things will get better on their own. However, without wisdom, action, and intentionality, they almost never do. Usually, such leaders are not self-aware of the small steps that are leading them away from the Lord until it is too late.¹² Such inaction does not communicate the pursuit of

¹⁰See appendix 10 for a tool to discern a leader's Maturity Gap Index (MGI)—the scored difference between a leader's talent (front-stage) and character (back-stage).

¹¹"Pattern" is a key word here. All leaders are sinners. All will fail at times, but when patterns arise and leaders are not aware of or repentant over their sin, then danger of disqualification becomes extremely high.

¹²See chap. 2 of this paper for a fuller treatment of Solomon's slow, step-by-step descent.

peace but rather the implicit message that this leader is not worth fighting for. Thus, recognizing these signs and taking early action can often prevent the failure from happening and preserve the relationships among the team of elders.

Of course, all leaders are broken and sinful people, but there is a vast difference between the battle with sin and unrepentant duplicity, bullying, and hypocrisy. If the focus on character does not change, the church will likely see more and more of both its high and low-profile leaders suspended or disqualified. Such instances are already numerous.¹³

Larger churches certainly garner more publicity when their pastors fall, but they are not unique or more vulnerable regarding such transitions. For instance, former Methodist bishop, Will Willimon notes that during his tenure as a bishop overseeing the Alabama district,¹⁴ half his time was spent protecting congregations from toxic pastors, the other half protecting pastors from toxic congregations. Of the 600 pastors Willimon oversaw, he recalled that he removed at least 30 (5 percent) from ministry between 2004 and 2012.¹⁵

¹³For example, though not disqualified from ministry, John Piper took leave from his church in 2010, citing his need for “a reality check from the Holy Spirit.” See Kate Shellnut, “Darrin Patrick Removed from Acts 29 Megachurch for ‘Historical Pattern of Sin’,” *Christianity Today*, April 16, 2016, accessed November 18, 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2016/april/darrin-patrick-removed-acts-29-megachurch-journey.html>. The following year, Sovereign Grace Ministries president C. J. Mahaney (not disqualified either) stepped down due to “various expressions of pride, un-entreatability [*sic*], deceit, sinful judgment, and hypocrisy.” In addition, David Loveless of Discovery Church, Sam Hinn of The Gathering Place, and Isaac Hunter of Summit Church were all forced to step down from their Orlando-area Megachurches within six months of one another due to extra-marital affairs. Then, Mars Hill pastor, Mark Driscoll, resigned in 2014, after his church found him guilty of arrogance and domineering leadership. See Kate Shellnut and Morgan Lee, “Mark Driscoll Resigns from Mars Hill,” *Christianity Today*, October 15, 2014, accessed November 28, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/october-web-only/mark-driscoll-resigns-from-mars-hill.html>. After that, Pete Wilson, founder of Cross Point Church, resigned due to burnout and extra-marital affairs, and Perry Noble, founder of New Spring, was fired for disqualification related to alcohol abuse. Daniel Montgomery, founder of the Louisville-based Sojourn Church and Sojourn church-planting network, is another prominent pastor who was placed on sabbatical, and although he was not disqualified, he eventually resigned.

¹⁴Almost all of these churches maintained fewer than 200 regular attenders.

¹⁵Jesse Bogan, “Fired Megachurch Preacher in St. Louis illustrates Familiar Journey,” *St Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 3, 2016, accessed May 3, 2016, <http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/metro/fired->

Despite the shocking stories and statistics in addition to numerous biblical warnings, few churches have any plan or process for preventing or identifying the early warning signs of a pastoral descent. Based on a recent Lifeway Research study of 734 pastors who made unanticipated transitions,

1. 92 percent worked in churches with no formal plan to support the pastor or his family.
2. 91 percent offered no lay counseling ministry
3. 88 percent of those churches had no sabbatical policy
4. 78 percent had no written expectations of the pastor
5. 73 percent provided no referral list for their pastor to refer congregants for counseling
6. 48 percent provided none of the above¹⁶

Most pastoral failures do not happen in one big moment of temptation but gradually, day by day. Often, statistics of growing attendance, baptisms, and other signs of “fruit” deceive both pastor and church. After all, many conclude that if God is blessing the church or ministry, they must be doing something right. Though common, this attitude completely reverses the gospel of grace and fails to take into account that the gifts of the Spirit can often remain in operation long after the fruit of the Spirit has died away.¹⁷

Thus, by the time full pastoral failure strikes, the church is usually caught unaware, without any process for healing, and doomed to purely reactive leadership. If churches were equipped instead to proactively care for their pastors and identify early warning signs, many failures could be prevented before they occur. Likewise, if churches

megachurch-preacher-in-st-louis-illustrates-familiar-journey/article_1139eb16-3ec6-54fd-83b3-e17b67c69357.html

¹⁶Lisa Cannon Green, “Former Pastors Report Lack of Support Led to Abandoning Pastorate,” *LifeWay*, January 12, 2016, accessed December 15, 2016. The research from which the above statistics were taken was based on 2015 “Pastor Protection Study” conducted by Lifeway Research, <http://lifewayresearch.com/2016/01/12/former-pastors-report-lack-of-support-led-to-abandoning-pastorate/>.

¹⁷Chap. 2 of this paper demonstrates how fruit can remain for a while after the root dies with the stories of David and Solomon.

knew how to respond when they do occur, more restorations would be successful and damage to both pastor and church could be minimized.

Definitions and Delimitations

The scope of this project had necessary delimitations to maintain focus and impact. The first delimitation is in the word *unanticipated*. There are many fine articles, books, and teaching on intentional leader transition, but this work only addressed unanticipated transition due to moral failure or personal burnout of the leaders. This definition also excluded a leader's termination on the basis of performance or personal gifting. In addition, *unanticipated* might also include the leader dying or some other unforeseen cause. While principles in this paper would help leaders lead through those transitions, the focus here remained on moral disqualification.

Exegetically, this work was limited to the falls of David and Solomon, the crisis leadership of Jesus as seen in the Gospel of Luke, the nature of character in the Pastoral Epistles, and the aforementioned biblical passages on discipline and restoration.

Multi-site church. *The Multi-Site Church Revolution* defines the term *multi-site church* as “one church meeting in multiple locations—different rooms on the same campus, different locations in the same region, or in some instances, different cities, states, or nations. A multi-site church shares a common vision, budget, leadership and board.”¹⁸

Church discipline. *Discipline* is the exercise of authority given the church by the Lord Jesus Christ to instruct and guide its members and their children and to promote its purity and welfare. The term has two senses: one referring to the whole government, inspection, training, guardianship, and control, which the church maintains with respect to its members and officers; the other a restricted and technical sense, signifying

¹⁸Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, and Warren Bird, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution: Being One Church in Many Locations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2009), 18.

ecclesiastical judicial procedures to remedy sins of immorality, heresy, and insubordination. For the purposes of this project, the second sense is intended.¹⁹

Elder. In biblical terminology, elders shepherd, oversee, lead, and care for the local church through teaching and preaching the Word, protecting the church from false teachers, exhorting and admonishing the saints in sound doctrine, visiting the sick and praying, and judging doctrinal issues. The character of the man who qualifies to fulfill that office is described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. An elder is simply a man of exemplary, Christ-like character who is able to lead God’s people by teaching them God’s Word in a way that profits them spiritually. At The Journey, an elder as “a man appointed by the church who is so Gospel-saturated in his inner-life, family life, and outer life that he is Spirit-enabled to corporately shepherd the congregation as well as personally train others to follow Jesus and fight Satan.”

Board elder or board of elders. Some churches do not have this terminology, but in multi-site churches it is common to have a team or executive or “board” elders who are ultimately responsible for the church, spiritually, financially, and organizationally. Though varying in function from church to church, board elders oversee by making business and spiritual decisions for the congregation and serve individually as examples and mentors to the rest of the congregation. This structure, with variation, is common in Baptist, Presbyterian, Congregational, and Lutheran churches.

Pastor. The word *pastor* is almost never used in the New Testament. Different churches certainly define the term in sundry ways. For the purposes of this work, a *pastor* is a man who meets the qualifications for elder (1 Tim 3.1-7, Titus 1.5-9, 1 Pet 5.1-5) and is also employed by the church. To distinguish elders on staff from non-staff elders, Presbyterians typically use “Ruling Elder” and “Teaching Elder,” while Baptists

¹⁹Adapted from EPC Book of Discipline 1-1. The Book of Discipline is the Governing document for the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) and can be accessed in full at <https://www.epc.org/resources>.

often use “lay elder” and “pastor,” and some simply create new nomenclature.

Ordain. Many churches or denominations do not use the term *ordain* since the word is not used of formal office in the New Testament. In this work, however, *ordain* does not necessarily refer to a specific denominational view of ordination or a specific ritual, but rather to the public recognition of those who are becoming elders in a particular congregation.

Disqualification. The New Testament offers several passages that describe the character and abilities that a man must possess to qualify him for eldership.²⁰ When an elder no longer possesses the qualities that originally qualified him, as determined by the other elders through the process outlined in 1 Timothy 5.17-25, then he has disqualified himself. Disqualification is a moral category while termination of employment is a performance category. The two categories may certainly be related but need to be distinguished. In fact, termination almost always follows from disqualification but disqualification is not necessarily implied through termination.²¹

Accountability. The New Testament reveals that the pastoral oversight of many of the first churches was committed to a plurality of elders, or shared leadership. Each elder shares equally the position, authority, and responsibility of the office. According to Alexander Strauch, the benefit of the plurality is that it “balances people’s weaknesses, lightens the work load, and provides accountability.”²² Multiple elders within a church “serve as a ‘check and balance’ on each other and serve as a safeguard against the very human tendency to play God over other people.”²³ Strauch comments, “Left to ourselves, we do mainly what we want to do, not what we should do or what is

²⁰See previous definition of “pastor,” as well as Acts 6 and 20.

²¹For more, see the exegesis of 1 Tim 5.17-25 in chap. 2.

²²Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Colorado Springs: Lewis and Roth Publishers, 1995), 37-38.

²³Ibid.

best for others.”²⁴

Megachurch. Though in conversation, the term *megachurch* carries with it varied connotations, it technically refers to any (typically Protestant) Christian congregation with a sustained average weekly attendance of 2,000 persons or more in its worship services, counting all adults and children at all its worship locations. Though size is clearly a shared characteristic among megachurches, they generally share many other traits. Based on 2015, survey data, the majority of megachurches (71 percent) self-describe as *evangelical*. In addition, the majority of megachurches (over 70 percent) are located in the southern Sunbelt of the United States. Megachurches tend to grow their great size within a very short period of time, usually in less than ten years, and under the tenure of a single senior pastor. Nearly all megachurch pastors are male, and are viewed as having considerable personal charisma.

²⁴Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Colorado Springs: Lewis and Roth Publishers, 1995), 42.

CHAPTER 2

LEADERSHIP FAILURE AND RESPONSE IN SCRIPTURE

The Bible does not present readers with hagiographies of its chief characters but with stark honesty regarding the weaknesses and sins of those God calls. Noah's drunkenness (Gen 9.20-25), Abraham's cowardice (Gen 20.1-7), Sarah's scoffing (Gen. 18.12), Naomi's bitterness (Ruth 1.20-21), Elijah's depression (1 Kgs 19.1-18), Jonah's self-righteous anger (Jonah 4.1-10), Peter's arrogance (Luke 22.33), and numerous other stories testify that our God is a God of grace and that Jesus Christ is the only hero of the story. Yet, through the fullness of the biblical story, God reveals how churches and leaders today can live and lead imperfectly yet with Gospel integrity. Through innumerable stories, warnings, and teachings, the Bible calls leaders to proactively guard against disqualification, to act decisively when disqualification occurs, to shepherd the sheep through crisis, and if possible, to restore the fallen leader.

This chapter will explore how greatly gifted leaders can fall by examining the life of Solomon, demonstrating how churches and leaders can heed the urgent call to prevent pastoral disqualification through the Pastoral Epistles, determining what to do when charges against a pastor or elder arise, and focusing on how to lead during crises such as unanticipated leadership transitions from Jesus in the Gospel of Luke.

Even the Best Can Fall

David, the “man after God’s own heart” and Solomon, the world’s wisest man,

were the greatest kings Israel ever knew, which is what made their falls so shocking.¹ David was not the obvious choice to follow Saul as King; his selection shocked even the godly Samuel (1 Sam 15.6-13). God chose David for his character, deepened that character through years of wilderness pressure under the persecution of Saul, and then placed him on the throne. After years of success leading God's people, David's character cracked as he succumbed to adultery, deception, and even murder (2 Sam 11-12). Rather than plastering over the sin of David, the biblical authors use it to warn and instruct God's people in the present day. As Robert Alter writes,

The book of Samuel is one of those rare masterworks that evinces an unblinking and abidingly instructive knowingness about man as a political animal in all his contradictions and venality and in all his susceptibility to the brutalization and the seductions of exercising power.²

The apostle Paul concurs, noting "these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did" (1 Cor 10.6). David fell fast but repented quickly (2 Sam 12 and Pss 32 and 51), while Solomon fell slowly and never repented (as far as the biblical witness attests).³

Solomon—A Thousand Small Steps

Through the ministrations of Bathsheba, Nathan the Prophet, and others,

¹Though the David story is certainly relevant, space does not permit a detailed look at his rise and fall outside a brief summary and setup to his son Solomon.

²Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), xviii.

³David's seemingly fast fall is not to suggest that David's character was not cracking over time as well. In fact, 1 Sam 11.1 seems to indicate that when a king should be going out to war with his men, David remained at home in comfort. Still, the fall happens in one large moment with rippling consequences. See appendix 15 for Tim Keller's signs to tell the difference between repentance and remorse. Repentance is demonstrated in long-term fruit rather than short-term tears. Unless the person self-confesses, he will likely not even know himself whether or not he is repentant for at least six months and probably more. In addition, if dealing with a potential narcissistic personality, special diagnosis and care will be required, not only for the fallen leader but also for the entire system created around him. See Diane Langberg, "Narcissism and the Systems It Breeds," June 1, 2015, accessed September 20, 2017, <http://foclonline.org/talk/narcissism-and-systems-it-breeds>.

Solomon takes the throne subsequent to David's death. Following some initial strife, Solomon firmly establishes his reign, after which, the Lord speaks to Solomon in a dream, "Ask what I shall give you" (1 Kgs 3.5). Solomon responds wisely and begins his reign where all good Christian leadership begins: a prayer of sober desperation: "I do not know how to go out or come in... Therefore, give your servant an understanding mind to govern your people" (1 Kgs 3.7, 9). Solomon's request pleased the Lord and so God gave Solomon both the wisdom he requested and the wealth he did not.

His administration initially focused on fortifying and strengthening borders, ordering provision for Himself and the people, storing for the future, giving clarity and responsibility of leadership (dividing the nation into 12 districts), and establishing mutually beneficial relationships outside his kingdom. He worships the Lord deeply through numerous sacrifices (1 Kgs 3.4, 15), studies nature (1 Kgs 4.33, Prov 30.15-31), writes songs (1 Kgs 4.32), and learns from other kingdoms (taking proverbial wisdom and from Egypt and expanding it to the covenant community). Under Solomon's wise rule, the nation of Israel officially reaches its high watermark. The rare combination of a leader with wisdom, godliness, compassion, and competence contained unlimited potential and at its height seemed unbreakable. Such is the great hubris that leads to the greatest falls.

In a clear allusion to God's promise to Abraham from Genesis 12.1-3, even surrounding nations are being blessed (1 Kgs 4.34). Yet in the midst of glory and power, Solomon's slow demise was already in progress. Small self-deceptions, daily decisions, neglect of God's Word, and easily-justifiable compromises created character cracks that ultimately led him away from the Lord. The narrative that begins with "Solomon loved the Lord" (1 Kgs 3.3) ends tragically with "Now King Solomon loved many foreign

women.”⁴ Both passages use the same word for “love” (*’ahab*), namely the love and affections he once had for his God now rests on his wives, wealth, and political alliances. Furthermore, the text says he “clung” (Hb. *dabaq*) to these women, which is the same word used in Deuteronomy for unswerving human loyalty to God.⁵ Peter Leithart comments, “Instead of ‘clinging to Yahweh’ as the law requires (Deut 10:20, 11.22, 13.4, 30.20), he ‘clung to’ foreign women and their gods” (1 Kgs 11.2).⁶

The key is the change in his heart, the change of his affections, which turn slowly, almost imperceptibly over time.⁷ The one who built the Temple of Yahweh winds down his life by building temples for other gods (1 Kgs 11.7-8). The Biblical author pens the devastating conclusion in verse 4: “When Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God” (1 Kgs 11.4). He not only loved his wives, but the author further emphasizes that Solomon “attached himself to them” in the way he used to be attached to Yahweh.⁸ This tragic end did not come from one huge devastating decision at the end of his life, but rather, from hundreds of small devastating decisions over the course of his life.

How did a man so wise and so gifted take such a wrong turn? It is the question many churches ask when their formerly vaunted pastor is caught in some grave pattern of

⁴In today’s context of tense racial history, division, oppression, and intensity, it must be made plain that such a command was not about national or racial purity, but rather, religious purity. The emphasis of the text has nothing to do with nationality, but with the fact that they “turned his heart away from God.” In addition, God curses Miriam’s criticism of Moses’s marriage to a Cushite (Ethiopian) in Num 12, clearly approves of Ruth the Moabite marrying Boaz the Israelite, and even includes Ruth and Rahab in the public ancestry of Jesus Himself.

⁵Simon J. Devries, *I Kings*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 12 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 142.

⁶Peter Leithart, *I Kings*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 83.

⁷Dale Ralph Davis, *I Kings*, Focus on the Bible (London: Bell, Bain, & Glasgow, 2009), 114.

⁸Devries, *I Kings*, 142.

sin. Careful attention to the overall narrative demonstrates that Solomon's moral collapse (and almost all such collapses) happen in small ways over a long time. The narrative of 1 Kings is purposefully deceptive,⁹ describing the glories of the kingdom and drawing readers into admiration of Solomon's splendor while subtly showing the shift in Solomon's heart and attention.¹⁰ Readers also miss the subtlety of Solomon's slow demise because they view the Old Testament as incapable of such literary nuance. Even scholars often mistake the "cryptic conciseness" of biblical narrative for just a primitive form of modern story telling, but in reality, the Bible presents a highly sophisticated art form in its own rights, as easily demonstrated by the 1 Kings narrative in general and Solomon in particular.¹¹

Thus, readers generally find themselves approving of Solomon's rise all along the way, culminating in the Queen of Sheba's admiration and his vast stores of gold (1 Kgs 10.1-14). By chapter 10, the reader sees the unmitigated rise of Solomon and Israel in wealth, wisdom, buildings, borders, and power. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, 11.1-8 falls like an undetected bomb from the sky. That passage produces the intended effect of the shocked question, "how did this happen," which forces readers to go back and find the hints of failure all along the way. In finding those hints, the reader finds the

⁹Saying the text is "deceptive," is not to intimate that the Bible is deceiving, but that the form of the text intends to force all readers to see Solomon in their own hearts and lives. When reading the narrative, most Christians find themselves approving of Solomon's greatness while missing the subtle hints that were there all along. Such a slow demise happens similarly in any person's life, especially when experiencing success. This revelation calls Christians today not only to self-examination but to deep community with people who can see into their lives things they might never see for themselves.

¹⁰A few commentators are fooled by the narrative setup and argue that chaps. 1-10 are an apologetic for Solomon's reign, followed by another author's insertion in chap. 11. See Terence E. Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 61.

¹¹Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (Washington DC: Basic Books), 17. In fact, "The organization of the narrative, however, its lexical and syntactic choices, its small shifts in point of view, its brief but strategic uses of dialogue, produce an imaginative reenactment of the historical event, conferring upon it a strong attitudinal definition and discovering in it a pattern of meaning." Ibid., 41.

slow-growing seeds of sin in Solomon’s heart and in his/her own. In other words, the form of the narrative demonstrates the substance of the issue—subtle hints of demise, all overshadowed by the growth of the Kingdom, deterioration of his internal kingdom amid the explosion of his external one.

Many churches can tell the same “Solomon story” of a gifted and passionate leader followed by exponential growth and influence, and culminating in a massive collapse. For these leaders and for Solomon, the hints are often so subtle that they rarely merit attention individually, but taken together, they paint a complex and tragic picture.

Nobody Goes from “Sold Out” to “Sell Out” Overnight

Most pastors begin where Solomon did, with wholehearted devotion to the Lord, and they do not go from sold out to sellout overnight. Philip Graham Ryken concurs: “This change did not happen overnight. Solomon did not wake up one day and suddenly decide to stop loving God and start loving someone else. Rather, the spiritual change happened little by little, as it always does.”¹² In other words, Solomon (as do most pastors today) fell into sin long before he fell into disgrace. Astute biblical students see the slow and subtle turning of Solomon’s heart clearly only when they view his reign in light of what God had already commanded for kings in his Law.¹³

When you come to the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, “I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,” you may indeed set a king over you whom the Lord your God will choose.... Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the Lord has said to you, “You shall never return that way again.” And he shall not acquire many wives

¹²Philip Graham Ryken, *1 Kings*, Reformed Expository Series (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2009), 295.

¹³Contrary to Goldingay, who claims, without argument, that Deuteronomy was written subsequent to Solomon’s reign and thus he could not have known these commandments. John Goldingay, *1 & 2 Kings*, The Old Testament for Everyone (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 25.

for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold...He shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law...and it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life (Deut 17.14-17).

The passage contains one admonition and three prohibitions. The prohibitions forbid any Israelite king from acquiring excess weapons, wives, and wealth. The admonition is to write, read, and study God's Law. Each of the prohibitions have the purpose of keeping the king's heart from turning away from the Lord while the admonition has the purpose of turning his heart continually to the Lord. Yet, these are very commands Solomon forsakes. His adherence to copy the Law is curiously absent over the entire narrative. In 1 Kings 1 the prophets merit nine mentions, but a prophet does not appear again until chapter 11, when he is foretelling the division of the kingdom. A priest or priests feature nineteen times in chapters 1-4 but not again until chapter 12.¹⁴ The hints are subtle but clear: during the vast expansion, God's word has been neglected. Most readers will initially evaluate Solomon by worldly standards rather than by God's commands, and the same mistakes are repeated in churches today.

Regarding the three prohibitions of Deuteronomy 17, each features subtly until the broadside of excessive gold and women in 1 Kings 10.14-11.8. First, kings were not to return to Egypt and marry foreign women but Solomon quickly makes an alliance with Egypt by marrying Pharaoh's daughter and bringing her publicly into the City of David (1 Kgs 3.1). Second, amid the descriptions of Solomonic glory, 1 Kings 4.26 suddenly tells of Solomon's 40,000 horse stalls and chariots.¹⁵ The sudden insertion of thousands of horses serves, in the words of Ian Provan, "to bring us down to earth in the midst of

¹⁴With the exception of chap. 8, where priests appear as necessary functionaries in the Temple dedication.

¹⁵Scholars debate whether the text should read 4,000 or 40,000, or if the given number includes stalls and horsemen as well. That question is beyond the scope of this discussion, but regardless of the exact numbers, the author is clear that Solomon has a vast number of horses, a clear violation of Deut 17.

this heavenly picture.”¹⁶ If the commandment had prohibited “any” horses rather than “many” horses, it would have been easy to obey, but who can say how many “many” would be? The vast number demonstrates that Solomon no longer measures his kingdom by the standards of God’s Law but by the standards of other kingdoms.¹⁷ Third, excessive gold was prohibited but the author mentions gold twenty-four times in chapters 6-11, showing that the allure of wealth grows alongside his love of weapons and women. Solomon used to offer a thousand sacrifices (1 Kgs 3.4) but the giver became a grabber.

Perhaps Solomon is best known for his building projects, most notably the Temple. But even there, his greed grows greater when he builds the Temple for seven years but his own palace for an astounding thirteen (1 Kgs 6.38-7.1). Some scholars question the significance of these years, but in the context of God’s call to build a “house for his name” (2 Sam 7.13), the author forces the contrast by noting two houses in emphatic competition in back to back sentences.¹⁸

Further hints and shifts of heart come when the king who once wrote, “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due” (Prov 3.27) defrauded his supplier, Hiram, king of Tyre by paying him in twenty useless cities (1 Kgs 9.10-14). Even worse, the king who represented a people rescued from slavery resorts to slavery to build God’s Temple and his palace (1 Kgs 5.13-18). Israel became a new Egypt with Solomon as their new Pharaoh.¹⁹ Contrastingly, YHWH intended the covenant people to uphold a totally different type of system, a system of egalitarian care for the whole of Israel. God’s

¹⁶Iain Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, New International Bible Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 59.

¹⁷In light of 1 Sam 8, and even Rom 1, God gave Israel what they wanted, a king like the other nations.

¹⁸Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 69.

¹⁹Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings*, 85.

people failed at their vocation, not on the day they desired a king, but on the day they desired a king to be like “other nations.” Thus, they continued down a dark path under Solomon’s leadership. In the end, the king who wrote, “If a king judges the poor fairly, his throne will last forever” (Prov 29.1) conscripted the poor into forced labor and his throne was removed until the One greater than Solomon restored it (Matt 12.42).

By the time the Queen of Sheba visits, the influx of food has changed to the influx of luxury goods, culminating in 1 Kings 10.14-29, which portrays gold so abundant that silver no longer mattered.²⁰ Solomon fully and finally exposes his heart when the text abruptly reveals that he has 700 wives and 300 concubines who worship other gods and for whom he builds places of worship (1 Kgs 11.1-8). How did Solomon get there? Slowly, day by day, choice by choice. As C. S. Lewis famously remarks,

Every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something a little different than it was before. And taking your life as a whole, with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing into a heavenly creature or a hellish creature: either into a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in a state of war and hatred with God, and with its fellow creatures, and with itself. To be the one kind of creature is heaven: that is, it is joy and peace and knowledge and power. To be the other means madness, horror, idiocy, rage, impotence, and eternal loneliness. Each of us at each moment is progressing to the one state of the other.²¹

This is why it is always difficult to tell where a leader’s heart really is, especially if he is gifted. Small decisions, small shifts in the heart are nearly imperceptible. The external kingdom can look good while the internal one wastes away. Even when perceived, they are small and the failings of the gift typically lag far behind the failings of the heart. The visit of Queen Sheba in chapter 10 is the massive contrast to Solomon’s fall in chapter 11. His heart has been in a long, slow descent but his Kingdom is still on the rise. In other words, his internal life (his heart) unravels before long before his external life.

²⁰Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 87.

²¹C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins, 1980), 92.

Likely, the author purposely juxtaposes chapter 10 next to chapter 11 in order to show that Solomon's success was at its highest while his heart was at its sickest. After her visit, the queen exclaims,

The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom, but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report that I heard. Happy are your men! Happy are your servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the Lord loved Israel forever, he has made you king, that you may execute justice and righteousness. (1 Kgs 10.6-9)

Solomon is literally at the peak of wealth, power, and prestige, leaving the Queen literally breathless (v. 5). The outer image is perfect, but inside things are falling apart. Clues that all is not well fill verses 5-8. The queen admires his wisdom, his leadership, and his wealth. But she is astounded, not with the Lord, but with Solomon.

Solomon's story seems on the surface like a dramatic fall but in reality it is a story, not of one big change but rather hundreds of small compromises. Solomon teaches that character is determined not by dramatic events but by daily choices, that a *small difference in trajectory will make a big difference in destination*. The choice for or against the Kingdom of God comes to Christians every single day in every choice made.

The one who wrote, "riches won't help on the day of judgment" (Prov 11.4) fell in love with his money. The same one who said, "trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding" (Prov 3.5), trusted in Egypt in power and in political alliances. The one who advised his son to bind the steadfast love of the Lord on his heart (Prov 3.3) ultimately forgot the Lord. The one who advised his son to be satisfied in his own wife (Prov 5.16-20) took 1000 women for himself. The King who prayed of the king, "May he defend the cause of the poor, and crush the oppressor" (Ps 72.4) became the oppressor.

Like his father before him, Solomon's sin affects not only Solomon but brings strife, and ultimately division, to the entire kingdom (1 Kgs 12). Though the monarchy

and the church do not share a 1:1 connection, there are clear correlations. When churches experience moral failure and unanticipated leadership transition, questions arise, sides are taken, new leaders falter, and the church usually experiences significant strife, reduction, and/or division.

However, the Good News of the Gospel demonstrates that Solomon's story doesn't have to be every story. Jesus was the opposite of Solomon. Solomon, choice by choice divided his heart over time but Jesus, step by step focused his heart on His people, moving toward the cross (Luke 9.51). When they tried to make Him King (John 6), he ran toward a different crown and throne, even the cross. He could have made millions on miracles but he offered them to the poor, the prostitutes, and the marginalized. Though Solomon came to care more about his image than his heart, but Jesus let go of His image for the sake of winning salvation for His people. Solomon willingly took external glory with internal shame but Jesus took on external shame for the internal glory of God. Solomon confused the gifts of God for love of God but Jesus willingly lost God's love on the cross so His people would never have to. Solomon started well but finished poorly while Jesus seemed to start poorly with poverty and Crucifixion, yet He finished well with Salvation and Resurrection! The constant refocusing on Christ, the examination of daily choices, and the spiritual friendships that point back to Him create the kinds of forces necessary to prevent the slow decline of a leader.

Prevention in the Pastorals

The Pastoral Epistles provide realistic and powerful guidance for pastors and churches to prevent and deal with the crisis of leader disqualification. In 1 Timothy, Paul affirms young Timothy as his spiritual son, reaffirms him as his pastoral representative, challenges him to order the Ephesian church properly in his absence, and encourages him

in that work.²² In light of these emphases, the Pastoral Epistles quickly became a manual for pastoral ministry and have guided generations of pastors and churches. Strikingly, Paul stresses the inherent dangers of ministry and the priority of character over skill. To take the Pastoral Epistles seriously, one must take seriously the potential to fall and the urgency to guard against such a fall by focusing on leaders' godliness, as much or more than their giftedness.²³

First Timothy 3:1-7: Elder Character

The Pastoral Epistles provide a comprehensive and beautiful, yet realistic, picture of the nature of Christian ministry. Paul acknowledges the power of unique temptations that come with ministry and implores Timothy to proactively guard his character and doctrine. Paul opens the letter with a standard greeting but quickly comes to the point: "As I urged you...remain at Ephesus" (1 Tim 1.3). The command shows great urgency toward Timothy's task to correct the Ephesian opponents and lead the church toward Gospel health. First, the charge (*parakaleo*) is both "personal and authoritative," which notes both the intimate relationship between Paul and Timothy as well as the inescapability of obedience.²⁴ Second, the word *parakaleo* (urge) combined with *prosmenvai* (remain) convey an authoritative and apostolic command to "persevere."²⁵ The fact that perseverance had to be commanded is surely telling. At

²²Scope and space do not permit a discussion of the long debate regarding Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles, but this paper is built upon traditional Pauline authorship as argued by Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 1-23, and William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), xlvi-cxxix.

²³The book of Titus, especially 1:5-9, is clearly relevant to this discussion; however, its similarities to 1 Tim 3.1-7 allow for focus on the letters to Timothy.

²⁴George Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 72-73.

²⁵Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 106.

minimum, “persevere” must mean that Timothy felt an ample temptation to leave. He would not need to be urged to remain unless he felt the urge to run. His task was not easy or envied, but the solution could not be to flee from his calling but rather to flee from temptation in the midst of his calling (1 Tim 6.11, 2 Tim 2.22).

Paul’s admonitions grow stronger still by bracketing the letter with comparisons of the Christian life and ministry to warfare. “I charge you Timothy... wage the good warfare; fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim 1.18, 6.12). “O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you” (1 Tim 6.20). Ministry means an encounter with enemies who come to kill, steal, and destroy (John 10.10), temptations that war for the soul, and attacks that seek to damage God’s work. According to John Stott, “Timothy possesses two valuable things which he must carefully guard, an objective treasure called ‘the faith,’ and a subjective one called ‘a good conscience,’” both of which must be protected together (see 1 Tim 1.5, 3.9).²⁶ Similarly, Paul requires the same kind of guardianship from the elders who will lead the church with Timothy. This aligns perfectly with the initial requirements in Acts to be men devoted to the ministry of prayer and the word (Acts 6.4).²⁷

More than any other chapter in the Pastoral Epistles, 1 Timothy 3 “has been interpreted as a church manual,”²⁸ written to create universal standards for church

²⁶John Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus*, Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 57.

²⁷George Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 156. Interestingly, he notes that the same is true of deacon qualifications. They must be men full of the Spirit and of wisdom (Acts 6:3), which comports with Paul’s instructions to Timothy in chap. 3.

²⁸Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 153. Mounce argues that understanding the Ephesian opponents in historical context is paramount to understanding the stated qualifications yet still holds that those qualifications, once properly understood, are universal in nature.

elders.²⁹ Above all else, it is character that must distinguish Timothy and his elders from their greedy and promiscuous opponents.³⁰ Thus, Paul offers a list of eleven qualities and three situations to which elders must conform, and “from this it is clear that Paul’s stress was on the quality of the leaders’ character.”³¹ A good definition of an elder built from 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 would be, “A man appointed by the church who is so Gospel-saturated in his inner-life, family life, and outer life that he is Spirit-enabled to corporately shepherd the congregation as well as personally train others to follow Jesus and fight Satan.”³² One can see here that the elders’ duties (shepherding and training) must flow from the Gospel-saturated life, not operate independently from it.

Rather than providing extensive explanations of each of the eleven qualities of an elder, it is more important for present purposes to note that ten of the qualities relate to the elders’ character while only one relates to his skill.³³ In fact, “above reproach” is not a separate quality but the title and summary of all the qualities that follow.³⁴ To emphasize this point further, the list is framed by verses 2 and 7 with the verb *dei* (“necessary” or “must be”) followed by concern for reputation of character: an elder must be “above reproach” (v. 2) and have a “good reputation with outsiders” (v. 7). Paul calls not primarily for organizational leaders or rhetoricians but for those with proven

²⁹Though different titles are used, it is generally understood that *presbyters* and *episkopoi* are synonymous in function. In this paper, I use “elders.”

³⁰Titus 1:5-9 could also be included in this exposition, but its close similarities to 1 Tim 3 and current space limitations prevent any lengthy discussion of Titus.

³¹Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 239.

³²This is the definition of an elder at The Journey Church in St Louis, MO, and is built directly from 1 Tim 3 and Titus 1.

³³Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 233.

³⁴Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 241. Likewise, Towner notes that Chrysostom says, “Every virtue is implied in this word.”

readiness to seek and obey God. As Philip Towner notes, “Paul is concerned that the right *type* [author’s italics] of person be appointed to leadership, a person whose personal qualities set him apart.”³⁵

Having set apart elders and deacons in chapter 3 by enumerating their qualifications, Paul moves to confront the false teachers in Ephesus directly in chapter 4. Of course, elders must be “able to teach” (1 Tim 3.2) and to “rebuke those who contradict” sound doctrine (Titus 1.9), but primarily they will oppose the false teaching through their own character and example. One can further see Paul’s desire to root out the false teaching in Ephesus by noting how the specific character qualities of elders in chapter 3 offer vivid contrast to the false teaching in chapter 4.³⁶ Rather than following the “teachings of demons” (1 Tim 4.1), elders should avoid the “snare of the devil” (1 Tim 3.7); instead of having “seared consciences” (1 Tim 4.2), elders must be “sober-minded” (3.2); instead of “forbidding marriage” (4.2), they must be the “husband of one wife” (3.2) who “manage their households well” (3.4); instead of arguing over “irreverent, silly myths” (4.7), they must not be “quarrelsome” (3.3); and rather than requiring blanket “abstinence” (4.3), they must be self-controlled and not addicted to alcohol (3.2-3). Leaders are not simply called to teach good doctrine but to live it, to refute falsehood with words and deeds, with doctrine and life, so that “all will *see* your progress” (1 Tim 4.15).³⁷

³⁵Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 159.

³⁶Many have argued that the virtue list of chap. 3 is vague, general, and/or not even distinctly Christian. In some sense this is true because each elder quality is required somewhere in the New Testament of Christians in general. However, contextually, Paul requires elders who would, by their life and example, refute the destructive teaching described in 1 Tim 4.

³⁷Italics mine.

First Timothy 4.1-16: Personal Godliness

In 1 Timothy 4.1, Paul begins his key warning section, not simply with a warning of what might happen but a prophecy of what will happen. He warns, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith.” The church will face the crisis of unanticipated leadership transition, in this case through apostasy. Often, church leaders take these warnings to anticipate criticism or persecution from opponents outside the church, but Paul explicitly points to the more insidious threat of those inside the church that will damage most deeply.³⁸ Such a prophecy should not shock the Ephesian leaders because several years earlier, Paul had gathered the Ephesian elders on the beaches of Miletus and told them through tears that “fierce wolves will come in among you...and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20.29-30).³⁹ This background in Acts 20 gives context to the meaning of Paul’s reference to those departing from “the faith” in 1 Timothy 4.1. While 1 Timothy 4 seems more generic, the charge from Acts 20 shows that he offers two separate categories of ‘wolves:’ those who “come in among you” and those “from among your own selves.” Paul insures against the simplistic ‘us versus them’ dichotomy that easily develops in any organization and fools leaders into believing that those among us are also of us, but the apostle John similarly prophesies that many who were once with us will go out from us and prove they were never “of us” (1 John 2.19-20). Paul’s point is not to create searching suspicion but anticipatory awareness.

Paul’s remedy against the poison of such apostasy is Timothy’s own godliness, which will save “both yourself and your hearers” (1 Tim 4.16).⁴⁰ The admonition begins

³⁸Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 235.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 234.

⁴⁰Though the ESV makes a new division in v. 6, the paragraphs are clearly tied together, not only obviously by content but also more subtly through the word *tauta*, “these things,” which is repeated three times in vv. 6, 11, and 15, and recalling the prophecy of vv. 1-5. *Ibid.*, 246. In addition, the other elders’ godliness was noted above. Here, though, is the charge to Timothy personally.

with *entrephomenos*, a present active participle that indicates not simply “trained,” but “continual nourishment” in the words of faith and doctrine.⁴¹ To be trained in doctrine covers the categories of theological study and development but by itself would be incomplete. Paul calls Timothy to continual nourishment in personal godliness as well as sound doctrine. The two cannot be separated but character is always king. Al Mohler writes, “This is the leader’s responsibility—to deal with himself,” because “character is indispensable to credibility and credibility is essential to leadership.”⁴²

As Gordon Fee explains, this passage “makes it plain that Paul wants Timothy to function as a model (vv. 12, 15), both for godly living (v. 12) and for ministry (vv. 13–14)—all for the sake of his hearers.”⁴³ Like an athlete competing in the games, Timothy must “train himself for godliness,” set his hope on the “living God,” “set an example,” “devote himself to the reading of Scripture, exhortation, teaching,” and “keep a close watch” on himself and the teaching.⁴⁴ The twelve imperatives of the passage combined with athletic imagery and personal appeal forge an undeniable urgency for Timothy to take action.⁴⁵

Therefore, leadership failure must be proactively prevented, not simply hoped against. While Paul certainly commands Timothy to “teach” (v. 11) and to cultivate his “gift” (v. 14), he emphasizes a call to heightened, urgent, rigorous, personal training for his own godliness as if he were training for the Olympic games. In fact, the example

⁴¹*Entrephomenos* is a NT Hapax but well attested and found even in Plato. See Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 194.

⁴²Albert Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles for Leadership that Matters* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 1012), 80.

⁴³Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 102.

⁴⁴Paul refers to Timothy’s age and to the gift given him through prophecy (v. 14).

⁴⁵*Gymnazeiv* in v. 7 is an athletic metaphor calling for active, rigorous, disciplined, consecration to the goal of godliness. Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 251.

Timothy must set is not mainly in rhetoric or skill but in character, namely in “speech, conduct, love, faith, purity.”⁴⁶ Paul’s inclusion of Timothy’s competence in a passage so laced with calls to character reinforce that a pastor’s character and competence are not two separate categories but integrally and inextricably linked. Paul’s final statement in chapter 4 reinforces this conclusion, noting that Timothy must keep a “close watch” on both himself and the teaching, his personal piety and the public ministry (1 Tim 4.16).⁴⁷ Paul places character at the heart of pastoral vocation and also realizes that character and credibility can be, in Mohler’s words, “lost far easier than gained, much less restored.”⁴⁸

More gifted, more guarded. Just as with Solomon, the inextricable link of character and competence serve to show that external gifts can easily mask internal flaws. In fact, the more gifted a leader is (like Solomon), the greater the potential for “success” to override developing patterns of abuse, and thus, the more guarded he and his elders should be. Those charged with accountability can most easily excuse and overlook internal character flaws when external success soars. Nevertheless, Fairbairn writes, “It is of incalculable importance for the youthful minister that he establish for himself a character in these respects; a palpable failure in any one of them will be fatal to his success.”⁴⁹

In fact, James Hunter notes that “ninety-nine percent of leadership failures are

⁴⁶Marshall notes that the “concentration” and “stress” of the passage is Timothy’s personal example of godliness. I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (New York: T & T Clark, 1999), 557.

⁴⁷Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 210.

⁴⁸Mohler, *Conviction to Lead*, 80.

⁴⁹Patrick Fairbairn, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, Classic Commentary Library (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1874), 187.

failures of character.”⁵⁰ Despite this fact, most churches and seminaries focus on theological acumen and ministry abilities when examining ministers, but they usually neglect the deeper issues of character (except for a few perfunctory questions).⁵¹ Search teams, elders, boards, and denominational leaders must resolve not to be lulled by gifts of rhetoric, acumen, and charisma as if these will fix, balance, or counteract massive character deficits. After all, as Charles Bridges aptly says, “A minister’s life is the life of his ministry.”⁵² Long-time leadership coach Dave Kraft notes the same disturbing trend: “In many quarters, there seems to be a tendency to overlook a lack of character in one’s personal and private life in exchange for a high degree or success in one’s professional life...Most leaders focus too much on competence and too little on character.”⁵³ Current research reported by David Brooks similarly suggests that “professional success exists on the surface of life” but it emerges “out of interpersonal relationships which are much deeper and more important.”⁵⁴

Personal credibility. In their classic work on leadership, *The Leadership Challenge*, James Kouzes and Barry Posner concur. They cite “credibility” as the foundation of leadership. Repeatedly and routinely their research reveals the same

⁵⁰James C. Hunter, *The World’s Most Powerful Leadership Principle* (New York: Crown Business, 2004), 141.

⁵¹I experienced this myself when I served for five years as the head of the Ministerial committee for my presbytery in the EPC. I led a team of “ruling elders” and “teaching elders,” and it was our job to examine incoming and transferring ministers for a seven-state region. No matter how hard I pushed, we would never spend more than twenty or thirty minutes examining personal character and walk with Christ, but we might spend hours on small theological details. See also, Paul Tripp, *Dangerous Calling* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 107.

⁵²Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry with an Inquiry into the Causes of its Inefficiency* (New York: Robert Carter Brothers, 1856), 195.

⁵³Dave Kraft, *Leaders that Last* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 95-96.

⁵⁴David Brooks, “The Sandra Bullock Trade,” *New York Times*, March 29, 2010, A25.

important point: the primary attribute people look for in leadership is not a skill but a virtue. Kouzes and Posner write,

It's clear that if people anywhere are to willingly follow someone—whether it be into battle or into the boardroom, the front office or the front lines—they first want to assure themselves that the person is worthy of their trust. They want to know that the person is truthful, ethical, and principled. When people talk to us about the qualities they admire in leaders, they often use “integrity” and “character” as synonymous with honesty. No matter what the setting, everyone wants to be fully confident in their leaders, and to be fully confident they have to believe that their leaders are people of strong character and strong integrity.⁵⁵

Without the proactive character criteria, it is possible to build a growing, orthodox church or denomination. Strikingly, it is the Ephesian church that Jesus calls out in Revelation 2 as just such a church. Notice that Jesus has no problems with their good works, their endurance, or their doctrinal purity and guardianship.

I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. (Rev 2.2-4)

In the Ephesian church, good works are still being done, the teaching is solid, doctrine is guarded, suffering is endured but they lack deep love for Jesus. The church did not lose their theology, their mission work, or their morals but their love. In other words, the same process that occurs over time in leaders can also infect the entire church. The New Testament advises the opposite of the character neglect that most practice today. This is why Augustine could say, “Love God and do whatever you please,”⁵⁶ for the soul trained in love to God will do nothing to offend the One who is Beloved.

Spiritual relationships. Clearly, elder accountability and community provide

⁵⁵James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 27. This source came to my attention through Joshua Rice Patterson, “Leveraging the Multi-Site Church Approach as a Long-Term Church Planting Strategy at The Village Church in Dallas-Fort Worth” (D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014).

⁵⁶According to legend, though some attribute it to Martin Luther.

protection as well, but here, in only eleven verses, Paul uses twelve imperatives, all in second person singular, to focus Timothy on his own responsibility to pursue godliness and prevent disqualification.⁵⁷ Character forms primarily in communion with God and community with friends.⁵⁸ In fact, maintaining basic marital satisfaction makes one reasonably happy even in the midst of professional failures. Similarly, joining a regularly meeting group of friends offers the psychic equivalent of doubling one's income.⁵⁹

Pastors must perceive the easy-to-miss truth that the greatest threat to their ministry lurks not in hypocritical church people, not in the latest theological controversy, not in the demands of the call, but in the corners of their own hearts.⁶⁰ Paul knows that many urgent but unimportant things like, “silly myths” (v. 7), can distract a leader from the ultimate hope, glory, and supremacy of Jesus Christ. Therefore, he commands Timothy, “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching” (1 Tim 4.16). Often, the last person a pastor closely watches is himself. His church, his people, his family, and others all have needs, and it may feel selfish to focus on self. But Paul is not commanding the narcissistic self-indulgence of the culture, nor the self-loathing fault-finding of the religious. Rather, he frees the pastor to ask himself the hard questions about who he is really becoming, whether what he is reading and teaching in public (v. 11-13) has made its home in his own heart.⁶¹ Otherwise, the pastor becomes like the man always lecturing on gun safety who shoots himself in the foot or like the music teacher

⁵⁷The linear aspect of the imperatives demonstrate the necessity of daily, habitual attention to “these things.” Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 264.

⁵⁸David Murray, *Reset: Living a Grace-Paced Life in a Burnout Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 160-61.

⁵⁹David Brooks, “The Sandra Bullock Trade,” *The New York Times*, March 29, 2010, A25.

⁶⁰There is almost an echo here of God's words to Cain in Gen 4.7: “Sin is crouching at the door and its desire is to have you.”

⁶¹See the “Oxygen Mask Principle” on pp. 54-56 of this paper for further elaboration.

who fails to tune her own violin.⁶²

The last command of the passage, “persist,” demonstrates that such devotion will not come easily, quickly, or painlessly, but in the end will “save” not only Timothy but his “hearers” as well (v. 16).⁶³ Paul closes 1 Timothy with, “But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness” (1 Tim 6.11). Paul knew that, just as with Solomon, there were things that would turn his heart away from the Lord and things that would turn his heart toward the Lord. So, Paul concludes with “flee” and “pursue.” In the context of the love of money, Paul urges, “flee these things” and instead “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.”

Again, Charles Bridges offers time-tested wisdom that churches and its ministers must take to heart if current and new generations will be reached,

Many young Ministers have crippled their effectiveness, by a vain attempt to exercise the higher qualifications of their more favoured brethren instead of improving the more humble, but perhaps equally useful capabilities, which had been distributed to them.⁶⁴

Paul constantly testifies that character is more important than gifting, substance better than flash, awe of the Lord over awe of the crowds.⁶⁵ The Queen of Sheba was awed by Solomon even when Solomon was no longer awed with God. Devotion to Christ, passion

⁶²N. T. Wright, *The Pastoral Letters*, Paul for Everyone (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 52-53.

⁶³Two crucial assumptions underlie Paul’s instructions to Timothy and thus to all pastors: (1) Timothy is still in the middle of the sanctification process and thus cannot afford to see Himself as anything but a man in need of the same grace he preaches to others, and (2) that ultimately, the condition of Timothy’s own heart and life will somehow carry into those he is called to lead. Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, 188-89.

⁶⁴Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*, 195.

⁶⁵Paul not only teaches this principle but also sacrifices his own reputation to prove it. When first Apollos, and later the “super-apostles” gain acclaim for their mesmerizing speaking abilities in Corinth, Paul does not defend his abilities but rather announces his weaknesses. See 1 Cor 3 and 2 Cor 11-12, for just a few examples.

for His name, and godly character qualify Paul and others for leadership, not simply gifts.⁶⁶

Confrontation and Discipline of Elders in the New Testament: 1 Timothy 5.17-25

Many passages deal with the confrontation of sin and the discipline of believers in general (Matt 18.15-17, Gal 6.1-2, 1 Cor 5.1-11 to name a few), but only one passage in the entire Bible, 1 Timothy 5.17-25, deals specifically with the confrontation and discipline of elders in particular. Verse 20 is key: “As for those [elders] who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.”

Though the passage is brief and contains some noted historical and exegetical riddles, it nevertheless yields tremendous fruit for this topic. The passage can be broken down into three parts: Broad Context, Exegetical Difficulties, and Summary Application.

Broad Context within 1 Timothy

In context, this passage on elders falls into the larger unit of 1 Timothy 5.1-6.2, which brings practical application to four particular groups of people in the church in response to the false teaching rebuked in chapter 4: (1) those who are younger or older (1 Tim 5.1-2), (2) widows (1 Tim 5.3-16), (3) elders (1 Tim 5.17-25), and (4) masters and servants (1 Tim 6.1-2a). The unit holds together not just by addressing specific groups in the church but also by the theme of “honor” (Gk., *time*), which runs throughout 5.1-6.2a. In each section, Paul argues that true widows, good elders, and faithful masters are all to receive honor, which always includes but is not limited to financial compensation.⁶⁷

The smaller section on elders can be further broken into three parts: (1)

⁶⁶Of course, the priority of character does not to deny the importance of gifts and abilities as essential aspects of a leaders’ calling. Rather, it is to point out the emphasis the New Testament offers and to prevent being fooled by someone’s outer gifts without fully examining inner character.

⁶⁷Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 304.

honoring good elders, (2) disciplining problem elders, and (3) ordaining new elders.⁶⁸

Verse 19 marks the transition from good elders who deserve honor to unfaithful ones who may deserve a rebuke.⁶⁹ Finally, verse 22 transitions from unfaithful elders to new elders who deserve patience.⁷⁰

Though honoring and compensating good elders (v. 17-18) remains important, the purposes of this discussion will mainly focus on verses 19-25, especially 19-22, disciplining problem elders. Keeping the context clear brings Paul's meaning into sharper focus because it demonstrates that Paul does not simply offer disjointed thoughts of application in chapters 5-6; instead, this unit tells Timothy specifically how to rebuke the false teaching just described in chapter 4. For our purposes then, honoring good elders, disciplining problem elders, and ordaining new elders is not merely a matter of personal holiness for the elder but also for the corporate health of the church.

Exegetical Difficulties of the Passage

Virtually all scholars recognize that 1 Timothy 5.17-25 comes fraught with numerous questions and difficulties, which can be outlined those as follows: (1) Narrow context, related to what the passage is doing here after a section on the treatment of widows and why does it not follow chapter 3 which dealt with the precise qualifications

⁶⁸This outline roughly follows the flow of most commentators but probably most closely resembles the outline found in Philip G. Ryken, *1 Timothy*, Reformed Expository Series (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2007), 223. In addition, many churches or denominations do not use the term "ordain" since the word is not used of formal office in the New Testament. In this paper, however, "ordain" does not necessarily refer to a specific denominational view of ordination nor a specific ritual, but rather to the public recognition of those who are becoming elders in a particular congregation.

⁶⁹Stott, *Guard the Truth*, 138.

⁷⁰Though a few scholars argue that v. 22 does not represent new elders but rather the restoration of the repentant elder, Marshall shows decisively that the restoration of the penitent through the laying on of hands was a practice the church developed only centuries later while the two other instances of "laying hands" in the Pastoral Epistles were undoubtedly the ordination of Timothy (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1.6). Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 620-22. See also Stott, *Guard the Truth*, 140.

of elders? (2) The nature of the accusation in verse 19, which raises the questions, “what is a ‘charge’ and what sin(s) does Paul have in mind that would lead to the public rebuke of an elder?” (3) The nature of repentance, which proves itself through long-term fruit, not short-term tears. (4) Does the rebuke in “the presence of all” mean all elders or the whole church? Are the elders the court and the congregation the audience for the findings or did Paul really intend the congregation to be the court itself? (5) When does an elder confrontation go from private to public since this passage does not precisely say? (6) Personal admonitions to Timothy, which seem to interrupt the larger issues being presented and the entire body of elders being addressed.⁷¹

Narrow context. Why does Paul address elder discipline here, after a section on widows rather than in chapter three? Gordon Fee argues persuasively that the historical context and nature of the false teaching provide the necessary clue.⁷² As noted above, both the character and teaching of elders rebukes false teaching in chapter three. Paul exposes that teaching in detail in chapter four, and chapter five offers specific groups of people where the false teaching must be dealt with. Also noted above was the warning against internal wolves that attack the sheep, which came directly from Paul’s address to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20. Just as some widows are not “truly” widows (1 Tim 5.3) and should not be enrolled, some elders are not truly elders and should not be honored but must be rebuked publicly (1 Tim 5.19-20). In addition, some of the false teaching must reside with at least some of the elders. If true, that means that the character qualifications of chapter 3 and the false asceticism of chapter 4 both warrant the

⁷¹Though almost all commentators note several difficulties, Gordon Fee, has the clearest list. In addition, this list of five is not to say that these are all of the exegetical difficulties of the text, but these are the most important ones for the topic of pastoral disqualification. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 129.

⁷²Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 129.

public rebuke of chapter 5.⁷³

Nature of the “charge” in 1 Timothy 5.19. What does Paul mean by “charge” against an elder? Contrary to Marshall who claims that “nothing in the context indicates whether any particular sins are in mind,” there are some pointers in the text itself.⁷⁴ *Kategoria*, the word for ‘charge’ or ‘accusation’ only occurs one other time in the Pastoral Epistles, Titus 1.6, where Paul says elders should not be open to the ‘charge/accusation’ of debauchery or insubordination. In noun form, *kategoria* only occurs one other time in the New Testament, John 18.29, when Pilate asks for the specific “charge” against Jesus. Pilate did not merely seek rumors or complaints about Jesus but rather a formal accusation as a basis on which his trial would occur.

In its verb form, *kategoria* is a technical term for a formal court accusation (Mark 3.2, Matt 12.10, Luke 23.10, John 5.45, Acts 22.30). Moreover, *proskrimatos*, “prejudging” (v. 21) is a strictly legal term for “making up one’s mind before hearing the facts.”⁷⁵ The imperative, *diamarturomai* (“I charge”), also expresses a formal charge, often with the meaning of testifying under oath.⁷⁶ In fact, *diamarturomai* is a rather abrupt use of the first person singular verb and has the effect not only of a “charge” but a “solemn charge” under apostolic authority.⁷⁷ Lastly, one should note the presence of God, Jesus, and the elect angels as the heavenly court in verse 21 as well as the prospect of judgment in verse 24.

⁷³The laying of hands in v. 21 is almost certainly the ordination of new elders, not the restoration of fallen elders. For a summary, see Stott, *Guard the Truth*, 140.

⁷⁴Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 617.

⁷⁵Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 315.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 236.

Thus, the textual evidence points to Paul’s addressing something much more serious than gossip or failure to meet performance goals but formal charges being brought against an elder. Based on the same word use in Titus 1.6, wild behavior or inability to submit to authority could constitute charges.⁷⁸ In addition, succumbing to and spreading the false teaching characterized in chapter 4 similarly warrant official charges. Gordon Fee adds that these potential accusations should also be connected to the final charge in chapter 6, namely, pride, love of argument, jealousy, and avarice.⁷⁹ Finally, since Paul explicitly defined what warranted qualifications for elders (1 Tim 3.1-8 and Titus 1.5-9), rebellion against those same qualities would constitute disqualification as an elder, and thus deserve official charges. Paul makes the connection back to chapter 3 even more explicit when he forbids laying on of hands too quickly, the same qualification that an elder must not be a “recent convert” from 1 Timothy 3.6.

What often occurs regarding elders in churches centers around questions, rumors, personality problems, dissatisfaction with certain decisions, perceived failures, and personal issues. While there should certainly be ways to address these issues with both elders and congregants, such things do not warrant official “charges” against an elder and even if true, would not lead to the public rebuke of verse 20. Instead, this passage envisions a formal judicial procedure for investigating and judging the guilt or innocence of an elder’s persistent and unrepentant sin.

This distinction is far more than semantic or technical. Practically, this means that an elder could fail to “rule” well (5.17), lose the “honor” of income by Gospel ministry, and potentially still remain an active elder. At the very least, such an elder might disqualify himself from employment but not disqualify himself from eldership. In

⁷⁸Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 311-12.

⁷⁹Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 133.

other words, there can be grounds for a pastor's removal that relate to job qualifications, not moral qualifications. Churches should have separate policies and procedures for both situations.

Any policy regarding the formal disqualification of an elder must also include the safeguards Paul offers in verse 19. In order to deter gossip, rumors, personality differences, or malicious intent from driving an elder from leadership, Paul commands Timothy to refuse to even entertain a charge against an elder unless certain evidentiary criteria are met. He commands, "Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses" (5.19). Here, Paul offers both protection for the elder and process for the congregation. A charge or accusation should not even be entertained with only one witness, and even multiple witnesses only initiates the process. Of course, the charge could come from one initial witness and then be verified later by others.⁸⁰ The witnesses' claims must be investigated and the accused elder must be confronted. The command to impartiality (v. 21) means refusing to listen to gossip and slander on the one hand and committing to take legitimate accusations seriously on the other.

The passage outlines the broad nature of sin that needs to be rebuked but what about the frequency of or response to such sin? For example, if an elder attends a dinner, has too much to drink, yells insultingly at another guest, and two or three witnesses describe him as drunk and violent (violating qualifications of 1 Tim 3.3 as well as "wildness" and "debauchery" from Titus 1.6), does such behavior disqualify that man? The text answers, "possibly but not automatically."

The ESV translates *Tous hamartanontas* in verse 20, "those who persist in sin" because the present, active participle suggests ongoing sin versus some one-time past

⁸⁰Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 235.

sin.⁸¹ In addition, the adversative *de* (“but”) in verse 20, supported by the best text critical readings, makes clear the distinction between the elders merely accused by witnesses in verse 19 and those whose sin is proven, persistent, and without repentance.⁸²

Repentance proves itself through long-term fruit, not short-term tears.⁸³

The same persistence and unrepentance mark the main differences between David and Solomon or Peter and Judas. When Nathan confronted David, he repented (2 Sam 12.13, Ps 51) and though his sin had far-reaching consequences for the Kingdom, David did not persist in his sin. As far as the Bible reveals, Solomon never repented but persisted to the end with his many wives and even trying to kill Jeroboam (1 Kgs 11.40.) In addition, Judas and Peter both betrayed Jesus but Peter turned from his sin while Judas experienced remorse without repentance, leading him to despair, darkness, and death.⁸⁴

Who is the “all” before whom the rebuke of an elder takes place (v. 20)?

Does Paul intend Timothy to rebuke the fallen elder in the presence of “all” the elders or “all” the church? The ESV refuses to make the exegetical decision and translates, “the presence of all,” thus leaving the ambiguity which could refer to “all elders,” “all members,” or “all congregants.”⁸⁵ Most commentators, however, agree that Paul intends

⁸¹See translations and arguments by Wright, *Pastoral Letters*, 52-53; Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 615-17; and Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 311-14 for just a few examples.

⁸²Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 312-14.

⁸³Adapted from Tim Keller’s distinction between repentance and remorse in appendix 15

⁸⁴Another passage to consider in this light is 2 Cor 7.10-13, in which Paul notes the difference between worldly sorrow and godly sorrow.

⁸⁵The lack of exegetical decision-making is not intended as a criticism of the ESV. Instead, the ambiguity simply reflects the committee’s overall translation philosophy.

the entire church.⁸⁶ Note that *panton* (“all”) and *loipoi* (“the others”) are two different groups of people. If Paul meant for Timothy to only rebuke in the presence of “all the other elders,” he would have added *loipoi*, “the others,” to modify *panton* rather than as a separate category.⁸⁷ Therefore, “all” is the entire church body while “the rest” are the other elders who are to stand in fear.⁸⁸ “Publicly” (NIV) probably captures the best translation.

Private or public. Thus, Paul establishes the possibility of a public rebuke, but when does an elder confrontation go from private to public since the passage does not precisely say? Contextually, the problems in Ephesus were “advanced and public,” requiring an equally public confrontation.⁸⁹ Repentance, restitution, and restoration should widen to cover, at minimum, those affected by the sin.

The public nature of discipline as a last resort accords with the Old Testament requirements (Deut 19.15) and Jesus’ own description of church discipline in Matthew 18.⁹⁰ It begins with private confrontation, moves to confrontation by two or three, and then proceeds to rebuke in front of the church, “If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector” (Matt 18.17). John Stott wisely concurs that public rebuke cannot be a weapon but only a last resort to rescue a fallen brother. Therefore, the public rebuke only

⁸⁶Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentary, vol. 14 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 118.

⁸⁷Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 134.

⁸⁸Many pastors and theologians distinguish here to mean only church members rather than simply all attenders. This distinction a completely legitimate, and probably wise, distinction to make but not an exegetically definitive one. Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles* 314.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 313-14.

⁹⁰Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 235.

applies to “persistent sinners who did not respond to the private exhortation in initial stages of church discipline.”⁹¹

In summary, Paul’s criteria for an elder to be disqualified and publicly rebuked are, (1) at least two witnesses must agree that an elder-category sin was committed, meeting the evidentiary criteria, (2) a judicial process involving investigation and confirmation of the charged sin which includes the questioning of the accused elder, (3) a formal, judicial process which finds the elder to be “persistent” or continuing in the sin, and (4) the elder must be unrepentant in his sin (either denying the factual evidence or refusing to give up his pattern of sin) or unable to break the power and pattern of his sin.⁹²

If the scenario of the drunk elder is raised again, his sin could constitute disqualification but not necessarily. Assume that the multiple witnesses independently agree on the elder’s violence and drunkenness, and the elder confesses that their testimony is true. At this point, only verse 19, the verification of the charge has been established. From here, the elders must conduct a robust investigation to determine if this is a one-time issue or a pattern of continual, ongoing (even if hidden) sin. Yet, even if the investigation establishes a long-time pattern of sin, public rebuke would not yet be warranted. Only when the accused refuses to repent after repeated overtures does the public rebuke happen as a last resort, and even then, for the purpose of restoration (see 1 Tim 1.20, 5.25, and 1 Cor 5.1-11). However, lesser discipline may certainly apply and even a one-time act of drunkenness may violate a particular church’s terms of

⁹¹Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 618.

⁹²Repentance does not mean that the elder will never struggle again but that he is actively working in community to break the power of the sin in his life, honestly owning his failures, and demonstrating the ability to “bear fruit in keeping with repentance (Luke 3.8).”

employment, constituting termination.⁹³ Whatever action the church takes, even if forced to the final step of excommunication, the purpose is never punishment but rather restoration of the fallen person.⁹⁴

Personal admonitions to Timothy. Twice in this passage, Paul moves his instruction from elders corporately to Timothy personally, advising him to keep himself pure (v. 22) and to drink a little wine for his stomach instead of only drinking water (v. 23).⁹⁵ Verse 22 marks the turning point from disciplining problem elders (v. 19-21) with impartiality to ordaining new elders with caution (v. 22-25). Paul commands, “Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure” (v. 22).

Of course, the prescribed caution matches Paul’s instructions from chapter 3 that Timothy must not select elders who are “new converts” (3.6). Paul recognizes the temptation young pastors face to thrust any willing body into leadership roles, but he knows that such short-term gains disintegrate in the face of the long-term costs of making men elders without proper vetting or training.⁹⁶ Perhaps Alexander and Hymenaeus were two such men (1 Tim 1.20).⁹⁷ There is no way to know for sure, but at the very least,

⁹³For example: public admonition or suspension. See the appendix 1 for sample church policy on each category.

⁹⁴Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 312. Rebuke always aims to restore. Even “handing over souls to Satan” was not punishment, but teaching the offenders to learn not to blaspheme (1 Tim 1.20).

⁹⁵The personal charge to Timothy raises the obvious question, does charging Timothy (second person singular in v. 22) to make these judgments and be impartial imply that his authority is greater than that of a normal elder? It is an important question but beyond the scope of this particular project. However, it is important to note that most scholars do not believe anything like the modern bishopric is Paul’s reference here.

⁹⁶The desire to place leaders of unknown character becomes especially true if the potential leader is gifted and/or popular.

⁹⁷Certainly these men cannot be identified beyond this text, not even to the Alexander mentioned in Acts 19:33 and 2 Tim 4:4. However, they clearly received a public and even harsh rebuke

they must have been public leaders in the church whom Paul eventually had to discipline.

Later Paul will explain how this happens, namely that both worthiness and unworthiness often hide from the surface evidence. The sins of some are evident, easy to see and evaluate but the sins of others can often remain hidden or secret for long periods of time. In the same way, good works often remain hidden but will manifest themselves over time (1 Tim 5.24-25). Commentator Donald Guthrie writes,

Hasty action relies on first impressions, but these impressions are often deceptive. Unworthy men might be chosen, whose moral culpability lies deeper than the surface; and worthy men, whose good actions are not in the limelight, might easily be overlooked. The whole situation demands extreme caution.⁹⁸

Guthrie's analysis brings back the issues of character and reminds Christians that no matter how great the gifts, character will matter more over time in Christian leadership. Therefore, every church should have policies for time, training, and evaluation prior to public ordination.

The question then surrounds the personal admonition to Timothy. How could hasty ordination lead Timothy to take "part in the sins of others" (v. 22)? This could refer back to the "others" being disciplined. If so, then these instructions are similar to Galatians 6.1 where those restoring a brother can easily get caught in the same sin.⁹⁹ While that principle is true, this admonition most likely points to the sin that Timothy will partake in if he ordains unworthy elders due to impatience or lack of character evaluation. In essence, Paul turns from corporate to personal because the matter is personal for Timothy. He instructs Timothy that if he hastily ordains undeserving men,

("handed over to Satan"), which is in line with Paul's instructions in 1 Cor 5:5 and here in 1 Tim 5:20. For further discussion, see Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 78-79.

⁹⁸Ibid., 121.

⁹⁹As noted, some believe that v. 22 refers to the restoration of the fallen elder rather than the ordination of the new elder. In addition, Gordon Fee believes it refers to both the fallen and the new elder. See Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 131. The weight of evidence points to new elders, but whichever view one takes on that matter, the questions will be the same regarding how Timothy can partake in their sin.

they will not only cause scandal corporately to the church but also implicate Timothy personally in their sin. Of course, Paul does not say that Timothy must be perfect or any elder disqualification is Timothy's fault, but he does insist that caution, patience, and process will prevent many of the leadership failures before they begin.

Then, Paul commands Timothy to “keep” himself pure (v. 22b). The Greek word *tereo* (keep) refers not simply to a momentary action but to a perpetual state.¹⁰⁰ Thus, Paul cannot only mean to be pure in the selection and evaluation of new elder candidates alone. Rather, the command is more expansive, covering the necessity for purity in all his actions regarding elders—free from the love of money when compensation is determined (v. 17), generous to give even more than what is due (v. 18), unwilling to engage in unfounded gossip (v. 19), diligent to protect against false charges (v. 19) but refusing to allow a particular leader's gifting or popularity to prevent him from exercising discipline (v. 20). In that same vein, Timothy must reject his personal feelings for the same kind of impartiality that he would show if standing personally before God and all the heavenly host (v. 21).

From the command to purity, Paul moves directly to the second person singular admonition, which has long baffled commentators, “No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments” (1Tim 5.23). How can Paul turn from disciplining and ordaining an elder to drinking wine? What do the two things have in common? Indeed, John Stott says this verse “has no obvious connection” to what has gone before, but anyone who has ever handled these situations involving elder discipline knows the level of anxiety that arises and the

¹⁰⁰Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988) 13.32. Thus the word is used of Paul's being “kept” in custody (Acts 25.4) or the unity of the Holy Spirit's being “kept” in Eph 4.3. More importantly for this study in the Pastoral Epistles is the verb Paul uses to say “I have ‘kept’ the faith” (2 Tim 4.7).

resulting stomach trouble which a little wine can quell.¹⁰¹

Yet, Paul could have listed options other than wine for dealing with stress or he could have simply made drinking wine one suggestion among many. Instead, using the Greek imperative *hudopotei*. (“Stop drinking only water”), he makes it a command, not an option. Why the forcefulness, even if the wine might help? The answer must be found in both the narrow and broader context. The command for Timothy to add wine to his water-only diet flows directly from the command to purity. Rather than viewing them as two separate commandments, verse 23 should be seen as flowing from the call to purity and thus a deeper clarification of the kind of purity Paul intends.

The broader context verifies this conclusion and leads to the next logical question: what kind of purity does Paul intend by commanding wine drinking? Again, the broader context provides the answer. In 1 Timothy 4.1-5, Paul describes the teaching about false godliness, after which he urges Timothy to contrast the false godliness of rogue teachers with the true godliness of the Gospel (1 Tim 4.6-16). Strikingly, Timothy must be an example in, among other things, “purity” (1 Tim 4.12). These false teachers, “who forbid marriage and require abstinence from food which God created to be received with thanksgiving” (1 Tim 4.3) promote outward asceticism masquerading as inward purity. In context, then, after Paul commands purity (1 Tim 5.22), he immediately clarifies that he does not propose the kind of outward-only purity practiced by the false teachers, who claim abstention as the path to godliness. In fact, Timothy may have been practicing extreme asceticism, which would have led to his “frequent ailments.”¹⁰² Whether Timothy had been engaging in such discipline cannot be finally determined, but Paul does not want him to give even the impression that he only drinks water because

¹⁰¹Stott, *Guard the Truth*, 226-29.

¹⁰²Such extreme asceticism would also make sense of Paul’s admonition that “while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way” (1 Tim 4.8).

such a practice might give fuel to the false teachers' claims.

Therefore, Timothy must protect himself against the obvious sins of the irreligious and the self-deceiving sins of the religious. In essence, it seems Paul wants Timothy to use wine to confront legalism in Ephesus just as Paul had used circumcision to confront legalism in Galatia (Gal 2.1-5). Though Paul carefully limits Timothy's consumption to a "little" wine, Christian churches and organizations should heed this warning regarding what constitutes true holiness. By "requiring abstinence" (1 Tim 4.3) from God's good gift of alcohol, they risk the possibility made by the false teachers to elevate alcoholism above other sins, promote a deceptive view of holiness, encourage legalism, and run the risk of giving the perception that a leader is godly even if they are not.¹⁰³ This surface godliness creates a recipe for pride, shame, and/or leader failure.

Thus, 1 Timothy 5.19-25 accords with other discipline passages such as Matthew 18, Galatians 6, and 1 Corinthians 5, but it provides much more specific protections and much higher standards for elders who are accused of morally disqualifying sins.

Summary Application

To summarize 1 Timothy 5.19-25, (1) pastors must be honored and cared for, (2) sin must be confronted, (3) accusations must be supported by multiple witnesses, (4) it is not the occasional but the persistent sin that requires public action, (5) public rebuke should be preceded by personal confrontation and time, but when the confrontation is ineffective, and the sin persistent, the public rebuke must be carried out, (6) the purpose

¹⁰³As with all of God's gifts, the problem is not with the gift but with the use or abuse of the gift. The old Latin saying *Abusus usum non tollit* (Abuse does not negate proper use) applies exactly. For example, sex, speech, and power are gifts from God and can be abused in ways just as damaging as alcohol, but I know of no Christian institution that bans those things outright. Instead, they address the abuse of the practice through formal and informal channels. Alcohol should be no different. Also, teaching the error of necessary abstention is certainly not to say that such teachers are false teachers but that this aspect of their teaching is false.

of public rebuke is to restore the sinner and to instill a healthy fear of the Lord for all those witnessing it, (7) a person executing judgment must strive to be fair and pure in the process, (8) there is no substitute for caution and time.¹⁰⁴

Caution comes first. Whenever an elder is accused or criticized, caution must come first. Paul first protects the elders, requiring robust compensation (1 Tim 5.17-18), multiple sources of evidence for a charge, judicial investigation and procedure, and proof that the sin is persistent and unrepentant (1 Tim 5.19) before exercising full discipline and public rebuke (1 Tim 5.20). After all, John Calvin rightly says, “None are more exposed to slanders and insults than godly teachers, yet even when they do all their duties correctly and commit not even the smallest error, they never avoid a thousand criticisms.”¹⁰⁵ This necessary caution reminds the elders that leaders, by nature, are subject to scrutiny, criticism, and rumors.¹⁰⁶ However, though congregants often criticize pastors, a criticism is not the same as a charge.

Care to confront. On the other side of the coin, most pastors would love to pretend these problems do not exist and focus on studying, preaching, or whatever comes easiest, but Paul knows that cancer in the church does not just go away any more than cancer in the body.¹⁰⁷ Instead, as Ryken says, “Christians must care enough to confront.”¹⁰⁸ To avoid the responsibility of confrontation is not loving to the pastor nor to the congregation in need of faithful shepherds.

¹⁰⁴Adapted from the adept summary offered in Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 322.

¹⁰⁵John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 263.

¹⁰⁶Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 235.

¹⁰⁷Ryken, *1 Timothy*, 228.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 227.

Prevention is better than redemption. Churches can enhance the opportunity for early identification by taking several action steps now, such as: (1) use the informal and formal review processes to evaluate not only competence but also character, (2) require a minimum amount of time that a person must be a member of a church prior to becoming an elder, (3) offer elder training that sets the priority on character over gifting, (4) when examining a candidate for pastoral employment, get character references and ask him about his personal walk with Christ as much as his public ministry for Christ, (5) initiate spiritual conversations, not just work conversations on the elder board, (6) act early and gently when warning signs first appear, (7) recognize the difference between and have a formal policy in place beforehand for both an elder's performance failure and an elder's moral disqualification, (8) practice confession of sin together as a brotherhood of elders, (9) work to ensure that elders have intimate friendships where real life issues get discussed,¹⁰⁹ (10) put in requirements that pastors take at least four weeks of vacation and two weeks of spiritual retreat every year, and (11) note that a publicly rebuked elder cannot be considered repentant simply by confession, tears, and other outward signs.¹¹⁰ Restoration must be the goal, but time, testing, and fruit must be the means.¹¹¹

Accountability is good but authentic spiritual friendship is best. Accountability often means a relationship characterized by what one "has to be shared" while a

¹⁰⁹Not just an "accountability partner" who will easily be deceived

¹¹⁰ Many lay elders will balk at such things with comments like "I only get 2 weeks of vacation. Why should the pastor get that much?" First, it is possible that the elder should get that and would benefit deeply from it. Just because a person in organization A does not receive a certain benefit does not mean that another person in organization B should be denied that same benefit. Second, likely the lay elders do not understand the expectations and spiritual weight which falls upon a senior pastor's shoulders. In addition, there should be regular ways to check on the Senior Pastor's financial situation, generosity, and family.

¹¹¹An elder who has been so persistent in sin as to require a public rebuke probably needs a minimum of one year to even begin to determine whether there is true repentance. There are also some sins from which an elder may never again be considered "above reproach," such as sexual assault.

friendship is a relationship characterized by what one “longs to share.” When pastors isolate themselves from real relationships or begin to think such deep relationships impossible, they begin to deny their humanity and accept the road that will likely lead to much suffering and pain in the future.

Oxygen mask principle. Before every flight on a commercial airplane, the flight attendants give a safety briefing in which they instruct passengers in the event of an emergency to “put on your own mask before helping others.” The reason is that if the adult passes out from lack of oxygen, then he or she is no use to others. In the same way, pastors often get so busy helping those around them that they fail to place on the oxygen mask of grace over their own lives. Eventually, they suffocate because they have nothing more to give.

Communicate clearly and often. In response to the question of what leaders actually do, Albert Mohler responds that “one central duty stands out above all others—the leader communicates.”¹¹² Once it has been determined that the criteria have been met to offer the “rebuke in the presence of all,” decisions must be made about how much information can and should be shared. First, prior to providing any written or verbal communication, church leaders should consult Human Resources, legal counsel, personnel policies, and church by-laws to be sure that all actions are in accord with Scripture, stated policy, and the law.

Second, elders and senior staff need to decide early which things should be communicated to which groups and in which order and develop a written communication plan from which everyone involved is working. Generally, a cascading communication is recommended in quick succession.¹¹³ For instance, communication might begin with the

¹¹²Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead*, 91.

¹¹³See appendix 11 for sample communication plan.

larger group of elders, move to executive staff, then deacons, then community group leaders, members, and finally the entire church.¹¹⁴ Confidentiality must be stressed in each meeting, but leaders should know that information like this inevitably leaks, thus the need for the meetings of different groups to occur as close together as possible.¹¹⁵ Clearly, some information would not be helpful for the entire congregation to know but this is a public rebuke and generally leaders should aim at the highest level of disclosure possible. All communication should clearly state what steps are being taken to care for the pastor's family and any potential victims of his sin.

Third, churches must take the extra step to communicate about their communication with the disqualified pastor and his family. Before putting anything in writing, they should share it with the pastor and his spouse. Such communication should emphasize that church leaders are not seeking the family's permission but their feedback and cooperation.¹¹⁶ Their approval is not required but their input should be sought and more importantly, as they are reeling from the consequences of his sin, good shepherding requires elders not to add further shock and surprise. Failure to tell them exactly what will be said and when will further strain relationships and further endanger the potential success of restoration. Open communication will ensure that the family is included, loved (by not being blind-sided), and respected. It is important to document all

¹¹⁴Depending on the size and scope of the church, a public statement or media statement may be required and should be written prior, regardless of whether one thinks it will happen. In addition, churches should designate one and only one spokesperson to speak to entities outside the church.

¹¹⁵More time may be needed for consultation and decision making with elders and executive staff members, so more time can be provided here, especially since these groups should be the smallest and most trustworthy.

¹¹⁶In situations like this, timeliness is usually a priority, which often causes this step to be missed. However, such an oversight will likely lead to much greater time spent and trust broken in the long-run. It is better to simply something like "I know you are overwhelmed right now but we want to share this with you personally before we share it publicly. We have the meeting scheduled tomorrow at noon and so need your feedback by tomorrow at 9:00 am." Clear expectation regarding time gives the family the direction they need to take the next step.

conversations and follow up all verbal conversations with a written summary to all parties to minimize misinterpretation, guard against he said/she said arguments, and reduce strife.

Fourth, good communication must include biblical teaching, which in this case requires explanation of the difference between confession and repentance or what Paul calls “worldly grief” and “godly grief” (2 Cor 7.5-13). Confession is acknowledging or admitting a wrong. This may be because the person became convicted by the Spirit or because he was simply caught by man. But the Bible calls for repentance. Repentance is a change of heart allegiance that turns away from sin to God and evidences itself over time by bearing fruit in keeping with that repentance (Luke 3.8). Such distinctions help the church grow in knowledge and also understand that confession can be seen immediately but cannot be truly called repentance for some time after. Typically, the more grievous and long-term the person’s sin, the longer an oversight team needs to determine whether there is true repentance or only confession. Generally, it is wise, even if the Senior Pastor admits what he has done wrong, not to call it “repentance” until at least 12 months have passed since the public rebuke.

Fifth, churches should explain to the congregation the difference between forgiveness of sin and restoration to office. Since forgiveness is at the center of the Christian faith and message, a congregation will typically assume that such forgiveness means bringing the pastor back and conversely, that not bringing the pastor back (or planning to do so) means an unwillingness to truly forgive on the part of church leadership. Typically, congregants will say things like, “Aren’t we all sinners?” or “Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.” However, there are distinctions to be made between being a sinner and being an unrepentant sinner as well as a difference between meeting the standard for forgiveness and meeting the standard for church office.

Forgiveness means to choose to send away another’s offense, to choose not to hold a person’s sin against him. Restoration, however, is different. Restoration means to

re-establish the previous relationship of trust, authority, office, and/or proximity.

Examples typically help here. For instance, Richard Nixon was pardoned by Gerald Ford after his resignation. Nixon was forgiven the offense, but he was not restored to office as President. An additional example might be the parents who forgive their child's convicted killer in a courtroom. Such forgiveness demonstrates an amazing display of love, but it does not lead to the freeing of the killer. He is forgiven by the parents but not restored to free citizenship. Therefore, the disqualified pastor should ask for and receive forgiveness but restoration to office remains an entirely different matter.

Sixth, churches should teach the different types and possibilities of restoration. Since Christians distinguish between restoration to office and personal forgiveness, it can be helpful to talk about the categories of restoration. Generally, there are four:

1. Restoration to Fellowship—the sin is of a nature where the person must be suspended from certain benefits of the church such as coming to The Lord's Supper. In this case, restoration means, restored to full fellowship in the church.
2. Restoration to Membership—if the person is unrepentant, then the elders will at some point decide that the person is excommunicated or treated as a non-Christian and therefore a non-member of the church. In this case, restoration means, the sinner's repentance and evidence leads the church elders to declare him a Christian and ready to re-enter the membership rolls of the church. These restorations must take place before restoration to office (A church may legitimately determine that the pastor can never be restored to vocational ministry or office in any context).
3. Restoration to Vocational Ministry (or office) in the Current Church—If the elders believe that sufficient time has passed and sufficient evidence of repentance has happened, then the church may (though Paul cautions against all haste [1 Tim 5.23]), choose to restore him to elder or pastor in the church.
4. Restoration to Vocational Ministry (or office) outside the Current Church—This category is the same to the one above, offering the possibility of restoration to vocational ministry but removing the possibility of *restoration to ministry (office) in the same church*.

Seventh, based on these or similar categories, church leaders will find it helpful to decide early on what the restoration plan is unto. Churches should know up front if they hope to restore the Senior Pastor's spiritual and relational life only, restore

him to ministry in another context, restore to membership in the church, or restore him back to his current church in particular? Many churches want to adopt a “wait and see” approach but this generally leaves the pastor, his family, the staff, and the congregation in the turmoil of uncertainty for too long. Paul is clear that leaders must not be hasty in laying on hands (1 Tim 5.23) whether that is the first time or a restoration. Thus, even if the church intends to restore him to ministry in the current church, a long period of time must be required.¹¹⁷ Therefore, if there is no intention to ever bring the fallen pastor back regardless of process or time, everyone is served by stating that clearly up front.

Eighth, churches will need to decide what person(s) will take on the duties vacated and communicate those changes quickly and clearly. Clear intentions on preaching and decision-making are absolute musts, even if they are only on an “interim” basis. It can be tempting to bring in different guest preachers to provide high quality preaching and alleviate that burden from other staff, however what the congregation needs at that point more than excellent quality is faithful stability. A known commodity or small team of pastors willing to love confused and hurting people is preferred over a parade of big names.

Ninth, churches will often begin with a flurry of well-planned and well-crafted communication, which can be exhausting. Nevertheless, leaders must plan and commit to follow up early and often. The more updates that the staff and congregation receives, the better they will feel and the more equipped they will be to carry that information to others. Constant communication prevents information vacuums from forming and false rumors from spreading.¹¹⁸ Generally, these follow-up communications should include updates on the disqualified pastor and family (how are they doing, being cared for, are

¹¹⁷A minimum 1-5 years is suggested depending on the severity, depth, and length of the sin patterns.

¹¹⁸See appendix 14 for sample follow up letters to congregation, elders, and staff.

they in town, what to say if you see them, etc.), personal reflections from current leaders, next steps or general direction for the church, and ways to support and pray for the church.

Tenth, all communication should match the same general tone. Something like “transparent but hopeful” is recommended. This generally communicates that leaders are leveling with congregants rather than spinning the truth while still maintaining the future hopefulness the Gospel provides.

Care for the care-givers. A crisis of leadership failure places enormous strain on those who are left to care for the church during the crisis. This partly explains the often-perplexing personal instructions Paul offers Timothy (1 Tim 5.22-23). He must recognize that such times bring exhaustion, stress, fear, and increased susceptibility to temptation. Just as the church must develop an active restoration plan for the fallen pastor, it must also develop a care plan for those leading through crisis. Such a plan should account for the leaders’ spiritual, emotional, financial, physical, and family needs. Coaching, counseling, meals, money for vacation assistance, and additional time off are just some of the necessary ingredients.¹¹⁹ Because the crisis at hand tends to suck all available time and every available resource from the church, this application is probably the easiest to ignore. But Paul commands it, and failure to attend to those in the crucible will often lead to the future burnout of these leaders and the replication of another transition.

Preparing for and Managing through Crisis: Jesus in the Gospel of Luke

Jesus’ leadership prepared His followers to witness, experience, and excel through intense crises such as: personal criticism, opposition, rejection, the crucifixion,

¹¹⁹See appendices 20-22 for sample plans.

and their own future ministry. Strikingly, Jesus' practices have notable similarities to tested and accepted practices in contemporary leadership.¹²⁰

Jesus and Crisis Preparation

Leaders' lack of preparation often turns a crisis into a crucible. Even if the church does not experience undue transition of the senior leader, it will inevitably face numerous scenarios where both the flock and the name of Christ are at stake. In these situations, those caught by surprise are more likely to start on the defensive, make impulsive decisions, generate further chaos, or freeze in "analysis paralysis." Thus, the New Testament constantly warns Christians to be prepared with imperatives like, "Watch out" (Luke 12.15), "be on guard" (Luke 21.34), "fight the good fight" (1 Tim 6.12) "Keep a close watch on yourself" (1 Tim 4.16) and "Gird your loins" (1 Pet 1.13). Even more remarkably, Jesus prepares his disciples for the crisis of unanticipated leadership transition they will face in His crucifixion as well as for the church that will arise after his resurrection.

Though often under-emphasized, Jesus' followers faced an intense level of crisis. Believing Him to be the Messiah, they left everything to follow Him, expecting that He would gain a massive following and crush the Roman oppressors with divine, Exodus-like power.¹²¹ Instead, He came in humility, received initial interest from the crowds but ultimate rejection from Jewish leaders and eventual crucifixion by Rome. From the beginning of his Gospel, Luke anticipates the crisis of confrontation that will occur with the coming of Jesus as Israel's true Messiah, a crisis that was planned by Jesus (Luke 9.44, 51, 22.22) but unanticipated by His disciples.

¹²⁰All Scripture references in parenthesis in this section are from Luke unless otherwise noted.

¹²¹This point that the Messiah was expected to come as a conquering ruler is generally accepted but easily seen in Luke 9:46-56, 19:11, 22:24ff., 24:18-21, Acts 1:6.

Jesus and the Nature of Gospel Power

First, Jesus prepares his disciples to gladly accept the loss of worldly power as the nature of the Gospel rather than as a crisis. To speak of leadership is to speak of power and its exercise. Though “leadership,” “influence,” and “authority” are friendlier terms, Jesus followers must do business with the nature of power, and Luke 1 and 2 reveal that Jesus’ leadership will reverse the world’s typical power structures.¹²² Luke begins with the Lord’s self-revelation to a young peasant girl named Mary that the long-awaited Messiah will be her son, followed by Mary’s prophetic song (*Magnificat*). Standing in line with Hannah’s song (1 Sam 1-2), Mary prophesies that in the coming of Christ, traditional models of power and leadership will be overturned—the proud will be scattered, the mighty dethroned, and the rich emptied.¹²³ The exalted God stoops low and the lowly servant is exalted, revealing a world “fully controlled and determined by human powers but overturned by divine comedy.”¹²⁴

The subsequent birth narrative in chapter 2 continues these themes as Jesus steps into history in the most unlikely of ways. Centuries of prophecy claimed that Yahweh would return as King, and Jesus, in all His teaching and symbolic actions, claimed to be the fulfillment of these promises.¹²⁵ Luke’s birth narrative also claims Kingship for this newborn baby, yet His birth is not accompanied by any of the typically recognizable signs of such power. Jesus’ birth in poverty and obscurity are clearly contrasted with the pomp and privilege of Caesar Augustus (Luke 2.1). Caesar, the

¹²²Andy Crouch, *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013), 10.

¹²³Jerram Barrs, *Through His Eyes: God’s Perspective on Women in the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 248-49.

¹²⁴James Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 56.

¹²⁵N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress, 1996), 617-29.

emperor in his palace, makes decrees (2.1) while Jesus lies helplessly in a manger. Caesar sleeps on a golden bed under fine linens while Jesus is wrapped in strips of cloth and laid in a feeding trough (2.7). He is witnessed by shepherds rather than chronicled by historians (2.8-20). This kind of opening would be absolutely ridiculed except for the fact that Jesus and His Kingdom actually exceeded and outlasted Rome.

These reversal themes continue to play out through the entire Gospel of Luke as Jesus challenges the status quo and refuses to accept the limitations of current power structures. Rather than calling the prominent, Jesus begins by calling three fishermen, a tax collector (5.1-11), and even women (8.1-3), as disciples. He joins in table fellowship with Gentiles (15.1-2), ministers to the lowly, ignores the establishment (5.12ff.), continuously challenges the religious elite (6.1-11), commends a prostitute and a tax collector over Pharisees (7.36-50, 18.9-14), makes Samaritans into heroes (10.25-37), and leaves the crowds behind to dine with the despised Zacchaeus (19.1-10).

In each of these ‘reversals’ one sees overtones of the protection promised by God Himself in the Old Testament, but Jesus challenges the current paradigm by bringing His leadership not through military might but through sacrificial love, not through the mighty but through the broken, not seeking the healthy but the sick (5.31). It happens visibly and tangibly as the “physically weak, socially ostracized, and morally degraded find a new dignity and place in the community through relating to Jesus.”¹²⁶

By challenging the accepted paradigms of power and rejecting their limitations, Jesus prepares his followers for the crisis of Messianic rejection, which culminates in the crucifixion. The Roman world contained no greater tangible image of domination than the cross, yet, in the most stunning reversal of all, Jesus turns the ultimate symbol of defeat into the very instrument of his victory (Luke 24.46-49, Col

¹²⁶Stephen I. Wright, “Luke,” in *Theological Interpretation of the New Testament*, ed. Kevin Vanhoozer, Daniel Treier, and N. T. Wright (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), 54-55.

2.15). These early power challenges prepared them to endure Jesus' rejection and suffering and also trained them for the rejection and suffering they would soon face in their own ministries. Jesus taught them that Gospel power is not limited by earthly structures, that when rejected by the world, it "pleases God" to show his folly greater than the worldly wisdom, his weakness greater than worldly power so that no one can boast in His presence (1 Cor 1.21-31). Though the book of Acts is beyond the scope of this paper, consider just one clear example of the disciples application: when a lame man asked for healing, Peter says, "I have no silver or gold [worldly power] but what I do have I give to you [refusal to accept limitations of worldly power]. In the name of Jesus Christ, stand up and walk" (Acts 3.6). No matter how weak their position, the power of God is not limited or bound by worldly definitions. After all, they follow a King born in a barn, a Lord who lived in poverty, a Leader rejected by those he came to save, and a Messiah who conquered through crucifixion. Thus, He also prepares his followers today to be willing to forego worldly power and prestige rather than clinging to such power in fear. Leaders who embrace a "Gospel power dynamic" are much less likely to disqualify themselves.

Jesus as Anticipating Teacher

Crisis often leads to compromise, because it creates high-pressure situations with increased stakes. As leaders scramble under such pressure, they are tempted to betray their ethics or values in order to relieve the stress.¹²⁷ Chapter 3 will demonstrate how Jesus' leadership in this area matches recommended business leadership practices, specifically in the more recent Wells Fargo scandal.

A great leader knows that pressure and perhaps crisis will come, testing the

¹²⁷Chap. 3 of this work explains the abuse of the bonus system at Wells Fargo as a key example of such behavior.

ethical boundaries of his followers. As a result, leadership should be anticipatory rather than reactionary. Jesus does not wait for crisis to strike and then react; rather, his teaching in Luke 6 prepares the disciples for opposition before it comes so they are ready when it comes.¹²⁸

Jesus begins by instilling revolutionary Kingdom values, echoing Mary's prophecy in 1.46-56.¹²⁹ These lived values create internal culture, which Jesus uses to inoculate his followers against the coming storms. When disciples find themselves or their own followers poor, hungry, or weeping, they are not cursed but blessed (6.20-21). When they see the rich laughing and speaking well of other prophets, they should fear for "their ancestors did the same things to the false prophets" (6.24-26). Then Jesus explicitly anticipates the coming pressure and crisis, "Blessed are you when people hate you...and revile you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice...for so their fathers did to the prophets" (6.22-23). Luke later records that the apostles lived out these values explicitly after being reviled, "So they left the council *rejoicing* because they had been considered worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the *name*" (Acts 5.41).¹³⁰ Imagine the inoculating power today's pastors would possess if they embraced Jesus' value system, if they could remain aloof to fame and name instead of pursuing them?

Following the Kingdom values, Jesus accurately anticipates that opposition will arise through "enemies." Rather than crushing the enemies that rage against the Messiah, Jesus commands love (6.27-36). Loving enemies sounds impossible, but Jesus anticipates even the need for motivation, pointing them to the way God the Father loves

¹²⁸Again, largely limiting to chap. 6, which is Jesus' longest ethical teaching and comes as instructions to his disciples directly after calling them in Luke 6.12-16.

¹²⁹Joel Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 260-61.

¹³⁰Both passages use the same Greek verb, *chairō*. The apostle Peter would later encourage his people to "rejoice" at trials and suffering (1 Pet 1.6).

his own enemies, which has resulted in the disciples own salvation. Jesus requires only the same love they have already experienced and now imitate (6.35-36).

The sermon continues with one of the most (mis)quoted verses in Scripture, “Judge not, and you will not be judged” (6.37). By “judge not,” Jesus does not mean to refrain from ethical evaluation but to avoid a faultfinding, judgmental attitude which forgets grace.¹³¹ Though usually separated from its context, Jesus’ statement comes as direct application of how his followers are to love their enemies. Rather than calling for judgment, they are to withhold judgment as evidence of the same grace that has been “measured” to them (6.38). To make this point more explicit, the exact situation arises in real life when a Samaritan village refuses to receive them, spurring the forgetful disciples to ask for destroying fire instead of forgiving grace (9.51-56).¹³²

Jesus’ next point is that any tree produces fruit in kind and quality to its nature (6.43-45). A dead tree will not produce good fruit and neither can a spiritually dead person produce Gospel fruit. His point is clear, concise, and beautifully stated but not fully appreciated until seeing that this too anticipates the coming opposition. The tree analogy allows the disciples to withhold judgment because trees grow slowly lending patience to demonstrate their fruit or lack thereof.

His concluding illustration of a strong house able to withstand a coming flood reflects the ultimate in crisis preparation (6.46-49). Jesus reminds his listeners that everyone will not respond to him the same. Some will call him “Lord” but not obey. Some will hear his words but not follow them while others will “hear my words and do them” (6.47). In anticipation of future storms as well as The storm of judgment, Jesus prepares them to determine their response beforehand rather than reacting in the moment.

¹³¹Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 202-3.

¹³²Darrell Bock, *Luke Volume 2: 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 969-71.

For those who hear but don't heed, he warns that when the storm comes against their house, it will fall, and the "ruin of that house will be great" (6.49).

This kind of teaching continues throughout his ministry. For instance, Luke 12.1-13.21 is a unique section centered on "readiness for the coming crisis."¹³³ In this section, Jesus instructs his disciples how to be courageous in the face of opposition (12.1-7), how to acknowledge Christ in persecution (12.8-12), how to avoid the love of money (12.13-48) which makes men unfit for the Kingdom, and perhaps most importantly, Jesus' declaration that his coming will bring "fire on the earth" and "division rather than peace" (12.49-53). Jesus uses stark terms and vivid imagery to underscore the coming crisis and the need for radical preparation.¹³⁴

Jesus as Storyteller

As he began his ministry, Jesus turned these prophecies into stories in order to address the criticism and crisis of rejection.¹³⁵ In his first sermon, Jesus tells the story of Yahweh's return and includes himself as the fulfillment of that great story. Rather than leading to revival, the people ridicule Jesus' lineage and attempt to throw Him off a cliff. This rejection seems to be a crisis for any Messianic candidate but Jesus simply retells the story of God's people as faithless rejecters, noting that Elijah had to go outside of Israel to minister and Elisha healed Israel's enemy. Jesus claims to enter the story at exactly that place—like Elijah and Elisha before him, he is not received by his own people. Later, he will remind the religious that this has been their story from Cain killing

¹³³I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel according to Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 508-11.

¹³⁴In fact, Bock sees Luke 10.15-18.18 as one large chiasm with its center as the "rejection of Israel." Bock, *Luke*, 962-63.

¹³⁵Chap. 3 of this work shows the practice of identity-based storytelling to line up precisely with current "best practices" in the current field of crisis leadership.

Abel to the murder of Zechariah (Luke 11.48-51), that false prophets are praised, and true prophets are killed in Jerusalem (Luke 13.33). James Edwards concurs, “The rejection of Jesus repeats the rejection of God by Israel whose ultimate adversary was not Baal worship or foreign nations, but ‘my own people bent on turning from me’ (Hos 11.7).”¹³⁶

Jesus was, of course the ultimate storyteller who turned to his craft as the religious leaders turned on him. Consider many of his parables (stories) in light of preparing the disciples with a theology of persecution for the crisis of rejection. A story of a farmer spreading seed communicates that just as a sower’s seed lands on different soils and yields different results, so the Gospel message lands on different kinds of people, some who accept it while others reject it (Luke 8.4-8). Just as vinedressers sometimes have fruitless trees, so Israel has become a fruitless tree (Luke 13.6-9). Jesus also tells his hearers about a tiny seed, seemingly small and ineffective yet growing into a great tree, reminding them that today’s small start will become great. He tells of a party where the expected guests refuse the invitation while the unexpected are invited to join in the banquet (Luke 14.12-24).¹³⁷

As Jesus gets closer to Jerusalem and His impending death, the stories increase in intensity. In his final week, he tells the story of the “Wicked Tenants,” which recapitulates Israel’s entire history by imagining a vineyard owner who rents his land to tenants who consistently refuse each of the owner’s servants who come to plead for the owner’s due. Again, Jesus inserts Himself into the story, remarking that they finally reject and kill even the owner’s “beloved son” (20.13-15). Jesus tells his disciples, bewildered at the crisis of his rejection, story after story, normalizing their experience in

¹³⁶The reference to Hos 11.7 was made by the author, thus the quotations include the reference. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 142.

¹³⁷ Bock, *Luke*, 1266.

everyday terms.¹³⁸ What they are experiencing is no different than a farmer who plants, a tree failing to produce, a disappointed party host, or a despised landowner—this is the story of the faithful and Jesus makes it *their story*.

Jesus as Opportunity Maker

As a great crisis leader, Jesus knows that criticism is not only an event to be anticipated but also an opportunity to be captured. Great crisis leaders are able to show their followers the same world in a new way, so rather than simply seeing rejection (crisis), followers can begin to see an occasion for change. Some of Jesus' most powerful teaching came by taking advantage of opportunities provided by critics. For example, when the Pharisees question his lack of fasting, Jesus inserts himself into the story as the bridegroom (5.33-39). He affirms fasting as good yet ill-timed in certain situations. If they knew who He was, they would be like guests at a wedding, feasting and celebrating. Instead, their fasting exhibits their belief that the groom has not arrived, confirming their rejection of him as Messiah.

The religious leaders often criticized Jesus by branding Him a law-breaker, particularly with respect to Sabbath observance. On one such occasion, the scribes and Pharisees accused him of healing on the Sabbath, to which Jesus responded by placing the disabled man before them, asking whether Sabbath purpose was “to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it” (6.9), and then healing the man before their eyes. Jesus turned criticism into opportunity to show that his actions were both strictly lawful and in keeping with the full spirit of the law (6.6-11).

Later, Simon the Pharisee opposes Jesus for allowing a “woman of the city, a

¹³⁸It should be no surprise to see Stephen telling a similar story in Acts 7. Note the nearly identical ending of his speech in vv. 51-52: “As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered.”

sinner” to scandalously wash his feet (7.36-50). Jesus uses the opportunity to tell a story about a banker who lends money to two people who cannot pay him back. The lender forgives both parties, one for a regular-sized debt and another for an excessive debt. Jesus then prompts Simon with a question that can only be answered in a way to prove Jesus’ point, “Which of them will love him more” (7.42)? After Simon answers correctly, Jesus forgives the woman’s sins, taking the opportunity to show himself not just a clever teacher but also the forgiver of sins (7.48-50).

The most prominent example of Jesus turning opposition into opportunity comes in Luke 15 when his critics grumble that he dines with sinners (v. 2). Rather than walking away, he turned opposition into opportunity through three highly structured parables on the nature of God, demonstrating that when anyone possesses anything valuable and loses it, the only logical response is to search for it, find it, and rejoice over it.¹³⁹ How much more must the Father search for lost people. Jesus brilliantly undercuts the Pharisees by agreeing with them that these “sinners” are lost, with the subtle rejoinder that to call such people “lost” is to “imply that they belonged in the fold all along.”¹⁴⁰

Jesus as Real World Trainer

Luke 9.51 begins a major new section in Like’s Gospel as Jesus “sets his face” toward the cross and begins deeper discipleship training.¹⁴¹ As Jesus journeys to the cross, He calls His disciples to the way of the cross. Jesus has already taught about criticism and crisis but beginning in 9.51, he sends them into it, purposely providing real world training for all that has come before. The training begins immediately when Jesus

¹³⁹Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 568-69.

¹⁴⁰Timothy Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 205-206.

¹⁴¹Marshall, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 400-402.

sends them to a Samaritan village that summarily rejects Him. The Samaritan rejection prompts the disciples to call down fire from heaven as judgment, a direct violation of his previous teaching (6.37-38). They have failed their first test, prompting Jesus' rebuke (9.56). The word for "rebuke," *epitiman*, is severe, usually reserved for the rebuke of demons.¹⁴² The rebuke must be strong because it is antithetical to how they have been trained.

Jesus' real world training begins with training wheels—real authority and responsibility but the ability to fail with a safety net. They had freedom to call for fire, but Jesus prevented it from happening, leaving their failure in the realm of intention rather than incident. As Darrell Bock comments, "Rejection does not kill the promise; it resurrects it."¹⁴³ Despite their initial failure, Jesus provides more opportunities because great leaders understand that change is not an event but a process.

Chapter 10 begins with Jesus trusting and empowering his followers to imitate his ministry of word and deed but reminding them of the opposition that might come, "I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves" (10.3). Moreover, he provides explicit instructions about how to respond to those who receive them and those who do not (10.5-12). This time they return with joy, seeing that "even the demons are subject to us in your name" (10.17), inciting Jesus to join them in celebration. Still, ever aware of the fickle nature of crowds and criticism to come, Jesus reminds them not to make their ultimate joy subject to ministry success but to build their hearts around the fact that their "names are written in heaven" (10.20). As a leader anticipating the weight that any crisis brings, Jesus was not content to leave his leadership in the classroom but put it into supervised practice in the real world.

¹⁴²Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 298.

¹⁴³Bock, *Luke*, 972.

Jesus as Willing Model

Jesus does not simply tell his disciples what to do; He shows them, personally embodying everything His teaching has anticipated even as the full crisis of his rejection and death comes. Since a disciple will be like his Master (6.40), Jesus models the tough words he preaches. He taught that faithful prophets, sent from God, are rejected and killed in Jerusalem, and so instead of running from Jerusalem, he willingly “sets his face to go there” (9.51). He taught them to make up their minds to follow God’s will in the present moment so that when the future storm comes, they will not abandon his will. These words are easy to say, but difficult to follow, yet while praying in the garden in dread of the cross, He cries out to his Father, “not my will but yours be done” (22.42). He taught them to love their enemies, and while hanging on the cross He prays for those who curse Him, forgives His enemies (23.34), and takes on their judgment instead of pouring it out. The disciples have not merely learned; they have witnessed.

In conclusion, when the crisis came, Jesus had clearly prepared, not only himself but also his followers. Trusting himself to his Father (23.46), Jesus took on the ultimate symbol of condemnation and death and turned it into the ultimate symbol of redemption and life. Jesus transformed the cross, once the dreaded power of the enemy, into the means by which God made friends, once a picture of brutality, now a symbol of beauty, once worn as shame but today worn as jewelry. In Acts, Luke chronicles how the apostles, prepared so thoroughly by Jesus, navigated the internal and external crises that flooded into the early church with Christ-like confidence, trust, service, and love.

If today’s leaders would follow him, they must be willing to challenge the status quo even when opposed, tell the story of their organization adeptly in ways that normalize opposition and crisis, build in the values and actions required in crisis before the crisis occurs, use opposition as an opportunity to grow, empower other leaders to lead in supervised settings, provide second chances in failure, and ultimately be willing to sacrifice, serve, embody, and personally model the things they teach.

CHAPTER 3
EARLY IDENTIFICATION, AND MANAGEMENT
OF LEADER-INDUCED CRISIS

Leader-induced organizational crisis can usually be prevented or identified in the leader prior to the onset of the crisis by examining the areas of privilege, power, and pain in a leader's life. Privilege entitles, power warps, and pain isolates. When unanticipated transition does occur, creating organizational crisis, the growing field of crisis leadership provides a number of best practices and aligns with Jesus' own crisis leadership in remarkable ways.

Privilege Entitles: Moral Licensing

Jonah (1 Kgs 14; Jonah 1-4) and Elijah (1 Kgs 17-2 Kgs 2) both endure hardships, both sacrifice personally in the call of God, both enter great spiritual battles, and both see God do unthinkable miracles through them. Yet, after demonstrable sacrifice, action, and effort, both become bitter when God "fails" to give them what they think they are owed. Elijah feels abandoned and angry when God does not remove evil queen Jezebel (1 Kgs 19.1-18), while Jonah sulks self-righteously when God shows mercy to his enemies (Jonah 4.1-10). God gives both men the privilege of leadership but they turn it into the entitlement of self-aggrandizement. Both men end up being confronted by God while sitting under a tree, angry and suicidal. Jonah and Elijah, mighty warriors for God, quickly succumb to exhaustion, anger, suicidal thoughts, and self-righteousness because they have given so much, battled so hard, and sacrificed so deeply. Surely, they think, God must owe them a certain result, a certain comfort level, a certain leeway for self-pity—the leadership that was once their privilege became their burden. The same story

plays out again and again with successful leaders today.

Leaders have the privilege of leading. They shape, inspire, and influence great people for great causes. Leaders who accomplish remarkable things must make remarkable sacrifices. They must see things others do not see, make sacrifices others do not make, and invest themselves personally in ways others do not invest. As with Jonah and Elijah, massive efforts of self-giving can eventually lead to a sense of entitlement or being owed. Over time, hard-working leaders open a mental bank account and begin to deposit each extra effort, personal sacrifice, and late night. Those deposits add up quickly while the debits (the benefits that the leader receives) become more and more difficult to see.¹ When the mental account gets large and stress or exhaustion gets high, such a leader will feel justified in making withdrawals they have not been authorized to make. For instance, the leader might drink too much, begin an addiction to pornography, fudge reimbursements, steal money, flirt with attractive co-workers, revel in self-pity, engage in self-destructive or reckless behavior, etc. When such leaders engage in these behaviors, they believe they are merely drawing from their imaginary bank account and therefore feel justified in doing so (because they feel they are owed it for all their sacrifice and hard work). The justification of these immoral behaviors based on past good deeds (perceived or real) is called “moral licensing.”

Daniel Effron, along with several colleagues, has studied morality and the human tendency to condemn or “license” (excuse) immorality for decades. They note that licensing occurs when “observers reduce their condemnation of morally dubious behavior or the actor who committed it in light of the actor’s prior good deeds.”² After

¹Legitimate benefits such as compensation, honor, and influence.

²D. A. Effron and B. Monin, “Letting People Off the Hook: When Do Good Deeds Excuse Transgressions?” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 36 (2010): 1619. Subsequent footnotes will show other articles and studies that Effron conducted with more colleagues than listed here.

multiple studies and articles, the researchers identify at least three types of licensing, all of which pose extreme danger to leaders in general but to pastors in particular: licensing others, self-licensing, and licensing in response to threat.

Licensing Others

First, people tend to “other-license,” which is to excuse others from present misdeeds if they believe that past good deeds cancel out the transgressions, providing that the good deeds and the misdeeds occur in different domains. For example, someone who fought racism in the past yet engages unambiguously in racism in the present will not be forgiven but labeled a hypocrite (same domain sins), whereas someone who fought vigorously for civil rights might easily be forgiven marital infidelity (different domain sins).³ Thus, according to Effron and Monin, people tend to consider “not only the behavior but the moral track record of the one who performed it.”⁴ For pastors who have built long resumes of helping others, this means that past ministry success, counseling sessions, benevolence, personal shepherding, and the myriad other good deeds can create a bubble of immunity, preventing church leaders from confronting sinful behavior and even excusing it. Even when pastors are clearly spiraling downward, church leaders often continue to point to statistics like attendance, baptisms, and conversions to assure themselves that God’s blessing remains.⁵

One could further hypothesize that the longer a pastor has served, the more he

³Indeed, these are similar to the very examples the authors themselves chose. Martin Luther King, Jr., the scion of civil rights who undeniably cheated on his wife (different domain), and Eliot Spitzer who distinguished himself by fighting prostitution and sex trafficking but as governor hired prostitutes for himself (same domain). King remains an icon and a hero while Spitzer was largely labeled a hypocrite.

⁴Effron and Monin, “Letting People Off the Hook,” 1632.

⁵Responding to why they failed to do more, sooner with Mark Driscoll, one of the most repeated refrains from former Mars Hill elders was something like “We baptized over 1,000 people last year; we must be doing something right.”

has sacrificed, especially if he is the founding pastor, the more “other-licensing” tends to occur.⁶ Such “other-licensing” occurs through two mechanisms Effron and Monin call “moral credits” (see bank account analogy), which balance out moral debits as if on a ledger, and “moral credentials,” which re-construes ambiguous behavior, making it seem like no transgression at all. Thus, people who have experienced the hard work and sacrifice of a particular pastor will give that pastor the benefit of the doubt while any alternative explanation remains possible, and more significantly, will likely only “debit” their moral account, even when behavior is inarguably sinful.⁷

Self-Licensing

If it is easy for others to license present misdeeds because of past goodness, it is even easier to “self-license,” which is the second category in Effron’s research. He argues that people tend to “self-license,” or, excuse themselves for present misdeeds by pointing to past good deeds. Effron’s research demonstrates that “people feel more comfortable acting in ethically questionable ways when they can point to evidence that they have a virtuous character—the phenomenon termed moral licensing.”⁸ For instance, a person who voted for Barack Obama may feel immune to the criticism of racism (after all, how could a racist vote for a black man?) and thus feel morally licensed to approve of or tell a racially insensitive joke.⁹ If confronted about the joke, the person will likely fall

⁶Effron and Monin, “Letting People Off the Hook,” 1630.

⁷It should be noted again that the sins need to be “different domain” sins. For example, if an elder has been helped tremendously by the pastor’s marital counsel and inspired by his visionary leadership, that same pastor’s anger and bullying will likely be either quickly forgiven or simply chalked up to others being “too sensitive.” Ibid., 1630.

⁸D. A. Effron, “Making Mountains of Morality from Molehills of Virtue,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 40, no. 8 (2014): 974.

⁹A. M. Merritt, D. A. Effron, and B. Monin, “Moral Self-Licensing: When Being Good Frees Us to Be Bad,” *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 4 (2010): 345.

back on past credentials because of the threat to moral identity, which leads to the third type of licensing, heightened self-licensing when the moral identity appears to be threatened.¹⁰

While such behavior is a form of self-licensing, it is not merely excusing one's own bad deeds; rather, it is protecting one's moral identity when under attack. Or in some cases, can turn into using one's moral identity as a weapon against critics. In an article entitled "Making Mountains of Morality from Molehills of Virtue," the author demonstrates that the tendency to self-license increases significantly when a threat arises to challenge moral identity. Effron shows that when a threat, real or perceived, arises against those who desire or need moral credentials, it often leads "people to make an equivalently large mountain from both large and small molehills of virtue."¹¹ In addition, people whose moral identity is central to their self-concept (i.e., high moral-identifiers) "respond more defensively to moral identity threats" even as they point to past merits to excuse present iniquities.¹²

Licensing in Response to Threat

Almost every pastor would be considered a "high moral-identifier" since character remains at the heart of the pastoral vocation. Thus, when confronted, pastors who, at minimum, require the perception of high morality can be expected to respond defensively and to expect the benefit of the doubt, resulting in increased immunity to criticism and decreased accountability to change. Therefore, leaders should expect a successful (or formerly successful) pastor who needs high perceptions of moral identity

¹⁰"Falling back on past credentials" reminds the reader again of an imaginary, mental bank account that has racked up deposits.

¹¹Effron, "Making Mountains of Morality," 979.

¹²Ibid.

to respond to confrontation with defensiveness, a recounting of past good deeds, and/or manipulation to maintain that core identity.

Initially this strategy can work to preserve the pastor's position, but over time, it only worsens the condition. Effron points out, "When people need evidence of their morality, even molehills of virtue can seem like mountains of proof."¹³ Therefore, any church hoping to avoid these pitfalls should have a plurality of elders equipped to identify licensing attitudes and behaviors.¹⁴ Of course, once identified, elders must be able to shepherd their pastors through the minefields of moral-licensing. Without this understanding, elders will often see something disturbing but have no language or categories for what they are seeing. If the elders bring it up, the pastor will likely convince them, through recounting past deeds and other defensiveness, that their fears are largely unfounded.

Power Warps

If the privilege of leadership can lead to entitlement, then the power of leadership can lead to warping. Because many view pastors simply, as servants of God and people, the dynamic of power is regularly discounted or overlooked all together.¹⁵ In an article on pastors and power, Andy Crouch recounts what he calls a very common response to the question to senior pastors about how they handle the power that comes with their role: "Oh, power is not a problem at our church. We are all servant leaders

¹³Effron, "Making Mountains of Morality," 985.

¹⁴ The necessity of accountability to guard against "licensing" behavior would be true for virtually any organization, not just churches.

¹⁵Certainly, pastors should strive to be servants, but being a "servant" does not mean that power dynamics are absent.

here.”¹⁶ However, upon deeper examination, pastors (especially senior pastors) clearly wield considerable power.¹⁷ To summarize Peter Scazzero, pastors are usually men, vested with ordination, in charge of multiple staff, holders of advanced academic degrees, looked to for guidance on almost any issue, and widely thought to speak for God Himself. How could such a person not have power?¹⁸

The Power of Power

Power, according to Dacher, Gonzaga, and Ward may be defined as “the capacity to modify others’ states by resource and punishment-related actions.”¹⁹ However, Andy Crouch’s definition offers more simplicity as well as more comprehensiveness. He defines power or authority as the “capacity for meaningful action in the world.”²⁰

The first definition contains largely negative connotations around the very essence of power while Crouch’s definition remains open to the many possibilities of power, naming it neither good nor evil.²¹ Thus, part of the problem with power lies with former abuses that have led many to identify power itself as evil, and if power is always negative, nobody will be willing to admit they have it or want it. However, like money,

¹⁶Andy Crouch, “It’s Time to Talk about Power,” originally published in *Christianity Today* but subsequently published on his blog November 6, 2016, accessed November 3, 2017, http://andy-crouch.com/articles/its_time_to_talk_about_power.

¹⁷Peter Scazzero *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 239-68.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Gian Gonzaga, Keltner Dacher, and Daniel Ward, “Power in Mixed-Sex Stranger Interactions,” *Cognition and Emotion* 22, no. 8 (2008): 1556.

²⁰Andy Crouch, *Strong and Weak* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 132.

²¹The first definition seems to fail in making a distinction between the essence or nature of power and its use, focusing even on its abuse by connoting manipulation, control, or self-gain in the definition.

sex, or any one of God's good gifts, power is not evil but it is dangerous. A biblical worldview serves to make necessary distinctions between abuse and proper use. In the biblical account, power is not a way to control other people but a gift of God that can be abused but can also be redeemed in the service of God and man. In fact, like all other good gifts, power can be used for great good or great harm. With money and sex, the dangers are widely known, acknowledged, and guarded against while many pastors in today's culture believe that by removing old symbols of power, they have removed power itself.²² So often, Crouch notes, "the ones most likely to be deceived are the ones with the most power."²³

Power Problems

Such denial and deception create the dangerous places where leaders live. Henry Adams once said, "Power is a sort of tumor that ends by killing the victim's sympathies."²⁴ Though writing 150 years ago, Adams comes shockingly close to the current findings around the new science of power. Dacher Keltner, a foremost researcher on the nature of power, first saw the similarities to those who acquired power to the brain trauma of "acquired sociopathy." He writes, "As my work on the abuses of power unfolded, I came to believe that experiences of power and privilege are like a form of brain damage, leading us to self-serving, impulsive behavior."²⁵

Consolidated power over a long period of time (1-9 years) creates surges of dopamine in the brain, replicating the same type of "high" that comes from cocaine use

²²Most contemporary churches have eschewed symbols or distinction and authority such as robes, suits, large pulpits, titles, etc.

²³Crouch, "It's Time to Talk about Power."

²⁴Jerry Useem, "Power Causes Brain Damage," *The Atlantic*, July/August 2017, 24-26.

²⁵Dacher Keltner, *Power Paradox: How We Gain and Lose Influence* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 117.

and often the same effects of impulsivity, unethical action, and delusional thoughts.²⁶ Power actually warps the brain to relocate a leader's inspiration to the self rather than toward others. This limitation toward self-inspiration eventually leads to powerful people scoring lower on overall inspiration than their less powerful counterparts.²⁷ Moreover, an analysis of several studies together demonstrates that the powerful are more likely to interrupt conversations, discount expert advice, exhibit poor perspective, and fail to recognize others' emotions.²⁸

Writing under the shocking but appropriate title, "Power Gets You High," Van Kleef, Oveis, Homan, and Keltner state,

Due to their preferential control over resources and relative independence from others, high-power individuals tend to experience fewer social constraints and more resource-rich environments compared to their lower power counterparts. The experience of independence and control can lead power-holders to adopt rather vainglorious self-concepts and to depreciate the powerless.²⁹

Similarly, other researchers note that the powerful take less interest in, and fail to empathize with, less powerful people even in their own organizations.³⁰ Even thirty years ago, Roy Porter researched and described the mind-warping power of power in his *Social History of Madness*:

²⁶Keltner, *Power Paradox*, 39-40.

²⁷Gerben Van Kleef et al., "Power Gets You High: The Powerful Are More Inspired by Themselves than by Others," *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 6, no. 4 (2015): 478.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid., 473.

³⁰Jeremy Hogeveen, Micheale Inzlicht, and Sukhvinder S. Obhi, "Power Changes How the Brain Responds to Others," *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 143, no. 2 (2014): 755-62. This may also explain the tendency of many megachurch pastors to claim that accountability and oversight of their ministry can only come from other "similar leaders" outside the organization. Some pastors use categories to prevent internal accountability as Mark Driscoll did when emphasizing the nature of the APEST model of church leadership. According to him, he was an apostle and apostles are the least understood and least distributed among church populations. Therefore, those within the church cannot truly understand him or his ministry, and they cannot be trusted to provide oversight.

The history of madness is the history of power. Because it imagines power, madness is both impotence and omnipotence. It requires power to control it. Threatening the normal structures of authority, insanity is engaged in an endless dialogue—a monomaniacal monologue sometimes—about power.³¹

Power Sickness

Other researchers such as Owen David and Jonathan Davidson have gone so far as to propose a new syndrome related to the warping effects of power be added to the next edition of the DSM, “Hubris Syndrome.” In an article published in the *Brain: A Journal of Neurology*, Owen and Davidson write,

‘Hubris Syndrome’ is a disorder of the possession of power, particularly power which has been associated with overwhelming success, held for a period of years and with minimal constraint on the leader. . . . We believe that extreme hubristic behavior is a syndrome, constituting a cluster of features (symptoms) evoked by a specific trigger (power), and usually remitting when power fades.³²

Unlike other personality disorders, “hubris syndrome” resists rigid definitions and boundaries, appears only after holding power over a period of time, and varies in intensity. These factors make it hard to identify or diagnose until conditions are full-blown.³³

³¹Roy Porter, *A Social History of Madness: The World through the Eyes of the Insane* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987), 39.

³²David Owen and Jonathan Davidson, “Hubris Syndrome: An Acquired Personality Disorder? A Study of US Presidents and UK Prime Ministers over the last 100 years,” *Brain: A Journal of Neurology*. (2009): 1397. The effects of the syndrome are not insignificant. If the authors are correct, Franklin Roosevelt sought to reorganize the Supreme Court. J. F. Kennedy suffered its effects during the Bay of Pigs fiasco as well as during his terrible performance when meeting with Khrushchev in Vienna 1961. Richard Nixon descended into hubris in his obsession to win reelection in 1972, leading him to tamper with Democratic headquarters. Similarly hubris syndrome helped G. W. Bush to invade Iraq, land on an aircraft carrier, and proclaim “Mission Accomplished,” even when no significant planning had been done for the aftermath of victory. In addition, Neville Chamberlain developed hubris syndrome in the summer of 1938, believed that he alone could bring peace to Europe, and following a meeting with Nazi officials, proclaimed victory: “peace for our time.” Margaret Thatcher, Douglas MacArthur, and Tony Blair are also diagnosed with hubris syndrome, leading to destructive decisions and leadership. Owen and Davidson note, “Hubris syndrome is a greater threat than conventional illness to the quality of their leadership and the proper government of our world,” “Hubris Syndrome,” 1404. Similarly, powerlessness is more destructive than we imagine. See also Keltner, *Power Paradox*, 27-66 for further confirmation of the effects of powerlessness.

³³Owen and Davidson, “Hubris Syndrome,” 1397-99.

However, Owen and Davidson argue that hubris syndrome “clusters” around three DSM IV identifiable personality disorders: Narcissistic, Antisocial, and Histrionic. Owen and Davidson offer a list of thirteen symptoms that such people display:

1. Propensity to see the world as a place of self-glorification
2. Predisposition to take actions to increase personal image
3. Disproportionate concern with image and presentation
4. Messianic zeal in speech
5. Over-identification with the organization he/she leads
6. Tendency to speak in the 3rd person or use the royal ‘we.’
7. Excessive or unwarranted confidence
8. Manifest contempt for others
9. Belief that they can only be held accountable by the higher courts of God or history, not by colleagues, advisors, or public opinion
10. Loss of contact with reality, progressive isolation
11. Restlessness, recklessness, impulsiveness
12. Tendency to allow their “broad vision” about the moral rectitude of a proposed course to override concerns, costs, practicality, or outcomes
13. Incompetence regarding nuts and bolts of policy and/or decisions³⁴

These symptoms are at the heart of what researcher Dacher Keltner calls the “Power Paradox.” Keltner argues that the “seductions of power induce us to lose the very skills that enabled us to gain power in the first place.” In other words, the very things that gave a leader credibility will eventually be lost once the credibility (power) is established and no longer needs to be pursued. Keltner writes, “when the powerful lose their focus on what others think of them—a myopia that readily accompanies power—they all too quickly act in impulsive ways that undermine the greater good, thus losing power.”³⁵ Again, according to Keltner, these abuses are everywhere: “Abuses of power occur in every corner of our social life—and lead to greedy eating, swearing, rudeness, lying,

³⁴These are the symptoms or characteristics noted by Owen and Davidson in their research on “Hubris Syndrome,” 1398.

³⁵Keltner, *Power Paradox*, 59.

sexual affairs, racial violence, unethical behavior, and arrogant driving.”³⁶ Often churches believe that pastors are servants and therefore not capable of such delusions, but experience shows that by adding vested authority from God Himself, pastors should be considered in danger of the same power delusions as any other influential or powerful leader.

Treatment options remain somewhat unknown but the research of Van Kleef, Oveis, Homan, Van der Lowe, and Keltner points to strong antidotes such as the ability to be laughed at, ability to listen to others, and most importantly, the “practice of devoted concern to the needs of individuals and not simply to the greater cause”³⁷ In addition, practicing (not simply believing) humility, generosity, and respect everyday have the potential to keep leaders using power for others rather than abusing power for self.³⁸ Dacher Keltner argues from his own findings, “Attending both to the plight of the powerless and to powerlessness’s causes is the most important step” toward overcoming the abusive tendencies of power.³⁹

Even a cursory glance at Jesus’ ministry shows the Lord of the universe willingly humbling Himself. He has set his face toward Jerusalem (the greater cause), yet stops to provide attention, healing, and listening to individuals all along the way. He disrobes and takes the position of a slave in order to wash the feet of His disciples (John 13). He is born poor (Luke 2:1-24), essentially homeless (Luke 9:58), enters Jerusalem for the final time on a borrowed donkey (Matt 21:1-3), has his last meal in a borrowed room (Matt 26:17-19), and goes to the cross only owning one piece of clothing (Matt

³⁶Keltner, *Power Paradox*, 9.

³⁷Gerben Van Kleef et al., “Power Gets You High,” 1405.

³⁸Keltner, *Power Paradox*, 160-64.

³⁹Ibid., 139.

27:35). Strikingly, one of Keltner's chief antidotes to the damage of power reads like a secular version of Philippians 2, "Stay focused on other people. Prioritize others' interests as much as your own. Bring the good in others to completion, and do not bring the bad in others to completions. Take delight in the delights of others, as they make a difference in the world."⁴⁰

The Gift of Power

Like any problem of this magnitude, it cannot be solved by simply avoiding the negative; rather, a positive view and use of power must fill the vacuum. The solution to the abuses of power is not the loss of power but the right use of it.

The nature of power itself is becoming more personally rewarding yet more fragile, which often means that successful leaders are tempted to believe their hold on authority is unassailable while in reality it is more fragile than ever. In the twenty-first century, power is granted more than grabbed. Keltner confirms, "We gain power by acting in ways that improve the lives of other people in our social networks."⁴¹

Obviously, granted power is fragile power. Part of power's fragility in the modern world is due to the aforementioned self-deception and loss of empathy that comes with a rise to power but power has also become more fragile in the wake of revolutions in mobility, information, and communication. The old Machiavellian stranglehold of power has been replaced by a democratic distribution of power at all levels.⁴²

Thus, enduring power comes from advancing the good of others and/or the common cause of good. Specifically, healthy leaders will maintain power and continue

⁴⁰Keltner, *Power Paradox*, 71.

⁴¹Ibid., 5.

⁴²Ibid.

to advance the mission through empathy, giving, gratitude, kindness, focus, calmness, asking great questions, telling stories that unite, and stirring others to collective action. Conversely signs of trouble include impulsivity, disrespect, isolation, exceptionalism, and diminished moral sentiments or empathy.⁴³

Andy Crouch agrees. He identifies the relationship between servanthood and power: “Power is not the opposite of servanthood. Rather, servanthood is the very purpose of power.”⁴⁴ To speak of power as a gift that can be used for good or greed means that the inherent dangers of power do not have to be avoided but can be discussed openly and honestly. Seeing power as a gift also means “we can be accountable for its proper use—to its Giver, and to one another.”⁴⁵ Crouch notes that even in John 13, the *locus classicus* of Jesus’ servant leadership, Jesus’ power is on full display: “Jesus is, John wants us to see, completely at home with power. What He is entirely indifferent to, indeed averse to, are the privilege, status, and prerequisites that preoccupy powerful people who have forgotten what power is for.”⁴⁶ Certainly any Christian leader or organization will need to wrestle with the tension between the need to lead boldly and the potential destructiveness of power, between gospel-ambition and gospel humility. Here, Keltner argues that the “Paradox of Power” provides the answer, “When we guard against the destructive effects of power and conversely, work to serve others, power and influence grows, and with it our capacity to lead toward the good.”⁴⁷ As it turns out, Keltner’s research serves only to affirm what Jesus practiced and the Bible taught all along. As Crouch summarizes, “Power’s right use is especially important for the flourishing of the vulnerable,” and

⁴³Keltner, *Power Paradox*, 69-136.

⁴⁴Crouch, “It’s Time to Talk about Power.”

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Keltner, *Paradox of Power*, 132.

therefore, “Christians must insist that power is a gift—the gift of a Giver who is the supreme model of power used to bless and serve. Power is not given to benefit those who hold it; it is given for the flourishing of individuals, peoples, and the cosmos itself.”⁴⁸

Jesus as Crisis Leader in the Gospel of Luke

With the breakdown of traditional barriers to power, prominence of social media, and the rapid spread of information, leaders can no longer isolate themselves or their organizations from scrutiny nor can negative news be contained “in-house,” making power both harder to exercise and harder to keep.⁴⁹ Former Minister of Trade and Industry for Venezuela, Naim Moises, puts it simply, “The decay of power is changing the world.”⁵⁰ These changes mean that understanding the dynamics of power as well as acquiring the ability to lead through crisis is more necessary than ever.

A diverse range of people often recognize and praise Jesus’ leadership but rarely does anyone focus specifically on his crisis leadership, an area on the rise in leadership studies today. In chapter 2, the examination of Jesus’ leadership in Luke noted the ways in which Jesus prepared for and led through crisis. Here, in chapter 3, a similar exploration will briefly explore how Jesus’ leadership aligns to modern best practices in the field of crisis leadership.

The field of crisis leadership is expanding and this section examines how

⁴⁸Crouch, “It’s Time to Talk about Power.”

⁴⁹Moises Naim, *The End of Power: Why Being in Charge Isn’t What It Used to Be* (New York: Basic Books, 2013), 54-59.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 2-9. As proof, Naim cites the facts that (1) sovereign states have quadrupled since the 1940s, in the wars fought around the world between 1950-1998; (2) the weaker side has prevailed 55 percent of the time, up from 12 percent a century earlier; (3) from 1977-2011, the number of countries ruled by dictators dropped from 89 to 22; (4) in 1992, a Fortune 500 CEO had a 36 percent chance of retaining his job for the next five years but that number dwindled to 25 percent just six years later; (5) large institutional churches are being outflanked by younger, more mobile movements such as in Brazil where charismatics have grown from 5 percent of the population in 1960, to 49 percent in 2006.

Jesus' own crisis leadership as (1) anticipating teacher, (2) story-teller, and (3) opportunity maker correspond consistently with current research.⁵¹

Anticipating Teacher

A great leader knows that pressure and perhaps crisis will come, testing the ethical boundaries of his followers. As a result, leadership should be anticipatory rather than reactionary. Chapter 2 of this paper demonstrated that Jesus does not wait for crisis to strike and then react; rather, his teaching in Luke 6 prepares those under his leadership for opposition well before it comes so they are ready when it comes. Jesus uses stark terms and vivid imagery to underscore the coming crisis and the need for radical preparation.

In the recent “fake accounts scandal” at Wells Fargo, the pressure of shareholder criticism at falling behind other banks led executives to violate stated company values as well as federal law. Branded as the “everyman bank,” Wells damaged employee morale and customer trust when investigations revealed that employees were pressured to create fake accounts to meet sales goals, customers were charged fees for fake accounts, employees were fired for reporting the deception, and executives ignored reports of fraud for at least four years before taking substantive action. All the while, CEO John Stumpf continued to claim under congressional testimony that the “culture is strong” and “based on ethics and doing what’s right.”⁵² Because the need to do the right thing in the face of severe pressure were never anticipated, they were also never instilled, leading to a massive crisis for the CEO, shareholders, employees, and the bank itself.

⁵¹These three headings are the same headings used in chap. 2 of this paper to categorize Jesus' crisis leadership.

⁵²Susan Ochs, “The Leadership Blind Spots at Wells Fargo,” *Harvard Business Review*, October 6, 2016, accessed November 1, 2016, <https://hbr.org/2016/10/the-leadership-blind-spots-at-wells-fargo>.

Story Teller

As he began his ministry, Jesus turned the great Old Testament prophecies into stories in order to address the criticism and crisis of rejection.⁵³ Jesus mirrors this exactly, beginning in his first recorded sermon (Luke 4.16-30) and continuing through the entire course of his earthly ministry.

Writing in the *Harvard Business Review*, Harry Hutson and Martha Johnson remark that a crisis leader must “create a lucid narrative to address confusion, bewilderment, and disorientation. A crisis leader must be a storyteller.”⁵⁴ Basing their conclusions on interviews with hundreds of leaders in diverse crises as well as on findings from neuroscientists, social psychologists, and PTSD therapists, Hutson and Johnson conclude that in crisis, the leader must become Storyteller in Chief, able to “describe what happened and project what will follow *while including himself in the drama*” (author’s italics).⁵⁵

Hutson and Johnson note that crisis disorients, leading followers to search for meaning that can only be found through story.⁵⁶ As the disciples witness Jesus rejected again and again, they certainly become disoriented, leading Jesus to retell their story, showing that they all stand in a long line of the faithless rejecting the faithful.⁵⁷ He tells them that story and He makes it *their* story.

⁵³Chap. 3 shows this practice of identity-based storytelling to line up precisely with current “best practices” examined in *Harvard Business Review*.

⁵⁴Harry Hutson and Martha Johnson, “To Recover from a Crisis, Retell Your Company’s Story,” *Harvard Business Review*, May 2, 2016, accessed October 30, 2016, <https://hbr.org/2016/05/to-recover-from-a-crisis-retell-your-companys-story>.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷The Bible portrays them confused at his predictions (Luke 18.34), uncertain about betrayal (Luke 23.23), arguing over greatness (Luke 22.24-30), and scattering before his cross (Luke 23.48-49). Thus, why John the Baptist asks whether they should “look for another” besides Jesus (Luke 7.18-23).

Opportunity Maker

Chapter 2 of this paper argued that Jesus viewed criticism, not only as an event to be anticipated, but also as an opportunity to be captured. Crisis leaders must be able to show their followers the same world in a new way, so rather than simply seeing rejection (crisis), they can see an occasion for change. Thus, much of Jesus' most powerful teaching came by taking advantage of opportunities provided by critics.

Mark Goulston, after studying how different companies responded to criticism and crisis, agrees: "Growth comes when a leader sees adversity as an opportunity to grow rather than a calamity to endure."⁵⁸ A leader under withering criticism faces the temptation to retreat and simply bear through rather than opening himself to the call to grow.

Jesus' response to critics captures this opportunity and teaches the disciples to avoid what Edwin Friedman calls a "failure of nerve"—a situation when a leader pushing for healthy change gets retreats in the face of sabotage, ambush, or betrayal.⁵⁹ Friedman notes that when a leader offers healthy, consistent, clear, convicted presence, the organizational system begins to adapt toward health:

The important thing to remember about the phenomenon of sabotage is that it is a systemic part of leadership—part and parcel of the leadership process. Another way of putting this is that a leader can never assume success because he or she has brought about a change. It is only after having first brought about a change and then subsequently enduring the resultant sabotage that the leader can feel truly successful.⁶⁰

In a nearly identical way, Jesus began a movement of change and was sabotaged on multiple fronts but continued to remain gracious but firm in his purpose and teach his disciples to do the same.

⁵⁸Mark Goulston, "High Pressure Leadership," *Harvard Business Review*, April 16, 2008, accessed November 4, 2016, <https://hbr.org/2008/04/highpressure-leadership>.

⁵⁹Edwin Friedman refers to this as "taking a stand." Edwin Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (New York: Seabury Books, 1999), 37.

⁶⁰Friedman, *Failure of Nerve*, 189.

Conclusion

Studies on privilege and power provide numerous troubling but identifiable behaviors and practices, which emerge and serve as warning signs of approaching leader failure or disqualification. Based on these findings, elder teams should work to keep their pastor grounded in reality, especially when the church is in a season of growth.⁶¹ In these times, it is much easier for a Senior Pastor to consolidate power, believe that any opposition is an opposition to the Lord's work, stop seeing and ministering to everyday people, hire more staff who will take him away from the congregation, and believe himself to be God's vessel for redemption.⁶²

⁶¹"Ensuring the Pastor is grounded" does not mean that elders should beat up on pastors to keep them humble but continue to ensure they have the space and freedom to do the things that will lead to the mindset of Philippians 2 rather than the delusion of Hubris Syndrome.

⁶²Of course, when an organization is growing, specialization will be required and the SP's role must change. He cannot spend all day counseling and meeting if he is expected to preach and cast vision. But he should be required to spend some time doing these things in order to remain grounded and humble. In addition, all Christians are intended to be God's vessels for redemption but on the dangerous side, it would mean that he believes himself to be an agent above others or that if his plans are opposed, that opposition is against God Himself.

CHAPTER 4

INTERVIEWS WITH CHURCHES WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED UNANTICIPATED LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

For this project, the researcher interviewed leadership teams from five churches who have experienced unanticipated transition of the Senior Pastor due to moral failure or disqualification within the past three years.¹ All churches interviewed are reformed in theology, complementarian, and maintain elder plurality in polity. Specific interview questions sought to learn whether there are discernable characteristics of a Senior Pastor who is near disqualification, what impact that transition had on the people, organization, and the mission of the church, what mistakes church leaders most often make in seasons of unanticipated transition, and what leadership character and competencies such transitions require.²

Though many churches use different designations for their top-ranked pastor, this paper uses the title “Senior Pastor.” In addition, for the purposes of this paper,

¹Every church interviewed had elders but most of the multi-site churches have a combination of local and executive elders. Regardless of the specific ecclesiology, the interviews were conducted with the leadership team who had the authority and ultimately made the decision to transition the Senior Pastor. Moreover, Moral failure is noted specifically because occasionally unanticipated leadership transitions happen due to health, changes in family circumstances, and other reasons not dealt with in this project.

²These questions were developed through experience, biblical study, and social science research. In addition, an expert panel was formed who reviewed the questions and made additions, corrections, and expansions which added to the robust nature of the research. Panel members included Gregg Allison; Professor of Christian Theology at The Southern Baptist Seminary; Josh Patterson, Lead Pastor of The Village Church in Dallas, TX; Kevin Peck, Lead Pastor of The Austin Stone Church in Austin, TX; and Jimmy Dodd, founder and executive director of PastorServe, a non-profit dedicated to the health and sustainability of pastors. A full list of research questions can be found in appendix 18.

“leadership team” will refer to the highest form of authority in the church, namely those elders who hold the authority to remove the Senior Pastor.³

The churches interviewed varied in size and revenue. Of the five churches, only Church 2 had a written policy on discipline or removal. Church 2 noted that having the policy in place aided them greatly in their process. Table 1 shows the general statistics (pre-transition) of the churches who participated in this research.

Table 1. About the churches interviewed.

	Church 1	Church 2	Church 3	Church 4	Church 5
Avg. Attendance	295	4069	12,500	889	3609
Annual Rev.	\$520,000	\$5.8M	\$29.5M	\$1.66M	\$9.19M
Had written policy on removal	No	Yes	No	No	No
Part of a denomination or network	Neither	Network	Network	Both	Both
Structural Leadership Model ⁴	Pillar	Cooperative	Franchise	Federation	Federation

³Certainly, terms around authority and ranking can sound more corporate-based than biblically-centered. However, my intention is simply to clarify that the teams interviewed were the teams who had, and ultimately exercised, their authority to publicly rebuke and remove their pastor according to 1 Tim 5.19-23. Many churches are purely “congregational” in government, meaning that the pastor can only be fired by a majority (or perhaps super-majority if stated specifically in by-laws) vote of the membership. This research was limited to churches governed by a plurality of elders.

⁴Brad House and Greg Allison have created a helpful spectrum of seven church models that exist in the Western church today. The spectrum is based on what they call the “locus of power,” which is “the authority and responsibility to establish vision, make decisions, and spend money. The spectrum moves from complete centralization on the left to strong d ecentralization on the right. Their spectrum looks as follows: Pillar → Gallery → Franchise → Federation → Cooperative → Collective → Network. They define these as *Pillar* (one church with a single service), *Gallery* (one church expanded to multiple services and/or venues), *Franchise* (one church cloned to multiple sites), *Federation* (one church contextualized in multiple locations), *Cooperative* (one church made up of multiple interdependent churches), *Collective* (collection of churches collaborating as one church), *Network* (individual churches joining together for a common goal and support). See Brad House and Greg Allison, *MultiChurch*:

Table 2 below offers an overview of the Senior Pastors who transitioned due to moral disqualification. Their average age at transition was 41.4 and their average tenure at transition was 10.5 years. All were pursuing or participating in significant external ministry, and 80 percent had advanced degrees. Also, 80 percent did not receive counseling and had no intimate friendships.

Table 2. About the pastors who transitioned.

	Church 1	Church 2	Church 3	Church 4	Church 5	Avg.
Age at Time of Transition	40	43	44	36	44	41.4
Tenure Prior to Removal	7	12	17	2.5	14	10.5
Received Regular Professional Counseling	No	Yes	No	No	No	N/A
Advanced Degree	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Pursued Significant External Ministry	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Had Intimate Friendships	No	Yes	No	No	No	N/A

The interview was intentionally divided into three portions: pre-transition, process of transition, and post-transition. Those categories were chosen because they

Exploring the Future of Multisite (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 47-76.

roughly correspond to the three research goals of this project. In addition, those three categories provide a large span of time, allow for telling the church’s full story, and create helpful comparisons of how the unanticipated transition affected each church from beginning to end.

A significant portion of the interviews covered the types of development opportunities, friendships, and accountability in which the Senior Pastor participated before transition, which table 3 shows in summary form.

Table 3. Senior Pastor’s development, relationships, and accountability.

	Church 1	Church 2	Church 3	Church 4	Church 5
Pastor received regular counseling	No	Yes	No	No	No
Pastor had attested and intimate friendships	No	Yes	No	No	No
Pastor had accountability outside the church	Yes	No	No	No	No
Pastor had access to personal and professional development ⁵	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pastor received consistent performance review	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

⁵Development mainly included self-directed budget money for counseling, coaching, conferences, etc.

While every pastor had access to personal and professional development, most of them did not use it (except for attending some conferences). More importantly, the data in table 2 strikingly reveals that four of the five disqualified pastors received no regular counseling, had no outside accountability group, and/or maintained no well-attested, intimate friendships. Church leaders consistently pointed to these deficits combined with the pressures of growing ministries as major factors in the pastor's spiral toward disqualification. In the case of the four pastors who received no counseling, three of those church's leaders expressed frustration at the many times their recommendations to go to counseling were unheeded.

God made all humans for relationships, and just as ignoring any of God's good designs will lead to difficulty; a life without friends creates isolation and greater opportunity for temptation. Pastors often find it difficult to create friendships in safety due to the nature of their role as a pastor/leader. Moreover, they also find the time requirement and emotional drain of counseling wars with the demands of leading a church. But regardless of the obstacles, intimate friendships, accountability, and emotional health are necessary for human flourishing and especially for the flourishing of a leader. It is the leadership team's responsibility to ensure their pastor has these important relationships and to account for any real or perceived deficits due to the pastor's time commitments in these areas.

Another significant area covered in the research interviews revolved around conflict among the leadership team and the pastor's commitments beyond their current church context. This section of questions also sought to discern what level of clarity churches and pastors had around the process and procedures for disqualification or removal. Table 4 summarizes these findings.

Table 4. Pre-transition conflict among Senior Pastor and leadership team.

	Church 1	Church 2	Church 3	Church 4	Church 5
Pastor was confronted prior to period leading to transition	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pastor participated in significant external ministry	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Conflict on elder team was present in year prior to transition	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pastor understood church policy for discipline and removal	No	Yes	No	No	No
Pastor had major ministry setbacks in 18 months prior to transition	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

The first question in table 4 asked whether the leadership team had confronted the Senior Pastor prior to the confrontation that led to transition. Dramatically, all five churches answered yes. In addition, all five churches expressed a great love for the Senior Pastor and sadness that their early attempts at repentance were not completely fruitful. Based on these answers, the church leadership teams did not make rushed decisions, nor did the removals seem personality-driven.

The second question centered on the Senior Pastor pursuing and/or performing significant external ministries such as conference speaking, personal websites, writing books, leading networks, and/or consulting. Just as with the question on prior

confrontation, all five churches answered “yes.” Many of these external opportunities began small but grew into time-consuming and temptation-inducing ministries.

All five churches registered deep objections to these external ministries and noted the following problems they experienced: (1) external ministries seemed to skew the Senior Pastor away from the church and away from time for spiritual and personal growth as a man and a pastor, (2) external opportunities create high-level temptation to power, notoriety, and/or money, which outpace the pastor’s character development, (3) the external ministry was often done in isolation, e.g., the pastor travels alone to speak at a conference, (4) it was often not clear how the external ministry being pursued lined up with the church’s mission and/or the pastor’s particular calling, (5) participating in external ministry where pastors are not personally incarnated among those receiving their ministries can skew reality.

They gave the following examples of this skewed reality, (a) pastors are tempted to exaggerate personal successes in places or venues where they cannot be personally known, (b) pastors are tempted to avoid or neglect the problems in their actual flocks by escaping to external ministry, (c) pastors typically experience greater praise and feelings of success in external ministry which creates a gravitational pull on their hearts and mental imaginings of easier possibilities for service.

Church leaders expressed regret for not creating greater accountability and boundaries for this type of ministry. They offered the following recommendations for shepherding pastors with such possibilities, (1) do a full compensation study to be sure that pastors are being paid fairly and do not need to chase outside money just to provide for their family, including but not limited to a review of the pastor’s budget, spending, giving, and needs to move beyond “generous compensation” to “loving accountability,” (2) discuss what kinds of ministry the pastor truly has a heart for, not just what will bring the greatest notoriety or income, (3) set time limits on outside work such as, (a) limited to three hours per week and specifically tracked/reported, (b) external ministry has to be

done with specifically requested time off, (c) the church allots two additional weeks per year for the pastor to engage external ministry, (d) set benchmarks that must be met prior to engaging in external ministry, (e) have a legally binding IP agreement in writing with the spouse copied on all correspondence and documents, (f) review that agreement yearly with compensation, (g) require the pastor to take another elder or young leader with him when he travels, (h) appoint a small team that will oversee and authorize any requests external to current church ministry.⁶

The final three questions summarized in table 4 reflect the conflict that occurred within the leadership team. Churches 1, 3, 4, and 5 were all consistent on these particular questions in that the Senior Pastor had no understanding of what a discipline process would look like, churches reported significant conflict among leaders, and the Senior Pastor experienced significant ministry setbacks in the 18 months prior to transition. Church 2 proved to be the exception, and these exceptions may be part of the reason that church 2 seemed to have the healthiest transition and easiest recovery from loss of the Senior Pastor.⁷

One of the key questions in the interviews asked participants: “Prior to the transition, do you remember the Senior Pastor displaying any of the following behaviors circumstances, or attitudes?”⁸ No participant selected “Other,” which means there were 30 behaviors, attitudes, and/or circumstances from which to choose. The table below demonstrates the total number of positive selections witnessed in the Senior Pastor prior

⁶One church noted that they had an “iron-clad” IP agreement but that they assumed the pastor shared those documents with his spouse. Upon investigation, it seemed that he had misled his wife, and those elders spent dozens of extra hours trying to clear up the agreements from the spouse’s point of view.

⁷Leadership model/Structure also contributed and can be seen in table 1.

⁸These items can be found in appendix 18 and were chosen by a combination of personal experience, biblical research, scientific research on power and privilege presented in chap. 3, and the assembled expert panel’s wisdom. In each interview, the interviewer made clear that selection of any character, behavior, and/or attitude constituted a pattern, not just isolated incidents.

to transition as well as the number of those positive responses that were said to have arisen or increased significantly in the 18 months prior to transition.

Table 5. How many of the 30 identified behaviors, attitudes, and/or circumstances were exhibited by the pastor prior to transition.

	Church 1	Church 2	Church 3	Church 4	Church 5	Avg.
No. of Total Positive responses	24	16	16	24	25	21
No. that arose or increased significantly in the 12-18 months prior to transition	10	11	10	13	11	11

Most of the thirty listed characteristics would be considered sinful (e.g., greed, lack of generosity) while others would be adverse circumstances (e.g., death in the family), and others could simply be warning signs (e.g., exhaustion).⁹ It is also important to note that while anyone can commit sins like these in isolated fashion, the interviewees were clear that any sinful behaviors selected did not represent isolated incidents but patterns of behavior over long periods of time. None of the fallen pastors received fewer than 16 of 30 and the average score was 21. The second column reveals even more pertinent data, with each pastor receiving positive responses on 10-13 of the characteristics. These scores show that church leaders perceived a high number of

⁹One possible objection to this line of questioning is whether hindsight might be inaccurate. Certainly, that is always possible but in the case of this research, each of the five churches was able to produce written documentation of almost all of these responses prior to disqualification.

character issues and/or warning signs in the Senior Pastor’s life, and that many of them arose or got worse in the 18 months prior to transition.

If there were such obvious problems and issues, what kept leadership teams from acting earlier? Some of the reasons and answers to that question may be revealed in table 6 below.

Table 6. How the Senior Pastor’s giftedness, power, and perceived success affected church leaders willingness to act.

	Church 1	Church 2	Church 3	Church 4	Church 5
The giftedness/charisma of Senior Pastor made leaders more reticent to confront or challenge character issues earlier.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
Church leaders were more reticent to confront Pastor due to his power/position.	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The leaders of the church would have confronted the Pastor earlier if not for fear of consequences for the Pastor and/or the church	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Agree

Questions 1 and 2 from table 6 indicate striking agreement. When given a standard Likert scale and the statement, “The giftedness/charisma of the Senior Pastor made leaders more reticent to confront or challenge character issues earlier,” all five churches answered “strongly agree.” In addition, when asked their reaction to the statement, “Church leaders were more reticent to confront the Senior Pastor due to his power/position of the Senior Pastor,” all five churches answered either “agree” or “strongly agree.”

The level of agreement here demonstrates the veracity of many lessons learned in chapter 3 on moral licensing and power. The more gifted or “successful” a leader is, the more temptation he will face and the more temptation leaders will face to excuse, hide, or mitigate issues of character. Therefore, when a church or ministry has an intoxicating leader and success seems to be growing rapidly, there must be heightened awareness on both sides of the temptations faced and problems posed. In fact, what often seemed to develop in these churches is a form of co-idolatry, a toxic intersection of a pastor’s desire for outward success and the elders’ love of being close to a well-known, powerful person or perhaps the elders’ fear to fail and disappoint the evangelical world. Such things cannot simply be called “issues,” “dysfunction,” or any other euphemism. Instead, they need proper names, like “wickedness,” “cowardice,” and “idolatry.” When things are biblically named, they compel biblical responses.

The second section of the research interview focused on the process itself, that is the season of time from church leaders receiving disqualifying accusations to the point in time they decided to remove the pastor and communicate it to the congregation. These questions centered around how the church made decisions, whether it sought outside counsel, severance agreements, and how it cared for the pastor and his family through the transition. Table 7 visually summarizes these findings and provides some guidelines for churches that find themselves in the trauma of unanticipated leadership transition.

Table 7. How churches handled the process and pastor.

	Church 1	Church 2	Church 3	Church 4	Church 5
Church sought formal outside help for process and/or Restoration	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Church conducted additional investigation ¹⁰	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Severance Length ¹¹	6 months	15 months	30 months	3 months	14 months
Church offered a restoration plan for the Pastor	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Church offered a care plan for Pastor's family	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

As table 7 shows, only two churches utilized an outside organization to assist them in the process.¹² Churches 2, 3, and 4 all expressed frustration regarding the uncertainty of the process and their lack of experience to navigate the kinds of decisions

¹⁰Typically, this investigation included professional search of personal devices and emails and/or forensic accounting.

¹¹Severance amounts were roughly one month of pay for every year of service.

¹²See appendix 19 for recommended organizations specifically equipped to come along side churches in crisis.

made necessary by the pastoral disqualification. Moreover, these three churches did not engage external organizations despite the fact that all of them are part of robust networks and/or denominations. They all expressed wanting help but not knowing where to turn beyond individual counselors who could work with pastors and their families. This desire for help combined with these particular church's membership in robust denominations/networks suggest that though pastoral discipline and disqualification remains relatively common, networks and denominations are woefully under-equipped to come alongside struggling churches in their most difficult moments of crisis. Not only is there a need for more organizations to arise that know how to help churches navigate crisis, there is a need for networks and denominations to bring specific focus to the prevention of and management through such crises.¹³

Three of the five churches conducted additional investigations during the process due to evidentiary needs surrounding the accusations. In the cases of churches 2 and 3, such investigation was not needed because there was either confession from the pastor and/or widespread corroboration of the accusations' veracity. The interviewees from all five churches said that their pastor, when caught or confronted, lied, manipulated, denied, and/or attempted to mitigate the accusations against him. If church leaders receive accusations according to 1 Timothy 5.19-21, they should be prepared to be lied to or to only be told the minimum amount of truth necessary. Thus, churches need to investigate charges and be prepared to interview witnesses, search devices, review bank statements, pour over old reimbursement requests, and review email accounts.

There are two key steps church leaders can take immediately, regardless of current circumstances. First, they should review ownership of staff electronic devices

¹³Also, these organizations need to be able to pastor pastors and work specifically toward the prevention side of disqualification.

such as phones and laptops. When owned by the church, not the individual, devices can be searched at the church's request. Second, they should review the administrator controls for email, social media, and other digital tools. While a pastor may need to be an administrator, the church should have the ability to freeze those controls at any time, lock out any staff member, and search any correspondence.

Questions 3-5 in table 7 recapitulate attempted care for the fired pastor and his family. While church 3 looks like an anomaly in terms of care plans, in reality, the church wanted to put those in place but the large severance, the broken relationship between leaders, and the church's split made such long-term care nearly impossible.

The other four churches all offered various degrees of financial, spiritual, and emotional resources to move the pastor toward redemption and the family into care.

The final section of the interview concentrated on post-process, namely the effects of the pastor's unanticipated transition on the church. Table 8 summarizes changes that occurred to church structure and vision while table 9 focuses on the impact of the transition on giving, attendance, and FTE's.¹⁴

As shown in table 8, three of the five churches interviewed changed their structures or leadership models as a result. For instance, church 1 moved from a hierarchical model to team teaching and leadership. For church 1, that meant splitting the preaching between two main speakers and transitioning from four tiers of reporting to only two. Church 5 decided to expand its board of executive elders from three to seven and change its philosophy from a managing board to a governing board. Church 5 also decided to create a larger and more inclusive staff leadership team.

¹⁴FTE is a standard human resources abbreviation for "Full Time Equivalent." It allows an "apples to apples" comparison that can otherwise get skewed by part-time employees. For example, if an organization has six employees but only two are full time and the other four each work ten hours per week, then that organization does not have six FTE's but three (two full-time plus one additional 40 hour work week or Full Time Equivalent which comes from totaling four 10 hour weeks from the part-time employees.

Table 8. Changes to the church post-process.

	Church 1	Church 2	Church 3	Church 4	Church 5
SP Transition led to a change in church structure	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
SP transition led to a change in church mission and vision	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
SP was Restored, not restored, or Returned to ministry without being restored ¹⁵	Not restored	Not restored	Returned, not restored	Not restored	Returned, not restored

Regardless of whether significant changes happened as a result of the Senior Pastor’s transition, all five church leadership teams said that the transition forced them to re-ask basic questions with each other before the Lord. Multi-site churches wrestled over the question of remaining one church or breaking into independent churches and every church asked what structural realities would have served as better guards against pastoral disqualification. Even when changes were not made, staff and leaders found the exercise of prayer and collaboration around foundational questions to be life-giving and church-unifying.

In addition, interviews showed that churches that experience this level of trauma cannot avoid these questions, and if they try, it will not suppress the questions; it will create a vacuum of answers. People will naturally ask things such as, “Do you think

¹⁵Accurate as of the time of publication.

we will stay multi-site?,” “Pastor John was so passionate about justice ministry, do you think we will continue those passions?,” “We have always been pushed to plant new churches, I’ll bet we do not do that anymore,” etc.

A “Best Practice” for a church in this situation is to move through the communication and pastoral necessities of the crisis (typically 6-20 weeks), after which leaders need to call people to a special season of prayer/fasting, gather various constituencies in the church, and begin to ask good questions and listen to the answers. Such listening sessions provide opportunities to pastor wounded people, correct misinformed narratives, get to know the congregation, and acquire feedback across the spectrum of church attenders.

Four of the five churches changed their vision as a result of the Senior Pastor’s transition. For example, one church with a multi-site model had cast a vision for moving sites to independence but needed to reconsider post-process and ultimately decided their vision would remain as one church. Another church rewrote their entire vision and mission statements and created a brand-new strategic plan for the church. Because the change was more dramatic, that church waited longer and moved slower, and created a vision that built firmly on the previous one, which led to a healthier model of change.

Though questions must be asked and some changes must be implemented, one clear caution to churches who experience leadership trauma is: change must be the result of an organic process of discerning the Lord’s will together, not simply a reaction against the faults and sin of the former pastor. Many churches in this situation will make drastic DNA level changes to the church in an attempt to prevent repetition of the past or even atone for the sins of the past, but the circumstances of the past are never good decision drivers for the future.

For example, a church that gets burned by a high-level communicator and visionary may begin to feel that, not just the gifted pastor but the gifts themselves were ungodly. Subsequently, they react by suddenly hiring a shepherding counselor to replace

the fallen man. No matter how godly the new pastor or how well-intentioned the leadership team, the drastic swing of the pendulum will almost certainly lead to much more pain and membership loss. Every church has a core DNA or a “personality”¹⁶ that gets more deeply embedded in proportion to the church’s age and the Senior Pastor’s tenure. Therefore, the necessary changes should be in accord with the church’s DNA (some might call it the church’s “soul”) and not in reaction against it.

The final question in table 8 has to do with the fallen pastor’s restoration potential. Chapter 2 discussed the fact that churches need to distinguish clearly between forgiveness of the sinner and restoration of the office. Forgiveness is required but restoration is not. Categories of restoration may be delineated as follows,

1. Restoration to Fellowship—the sin is of a nature where the person must be suspended from certain benefits of the church such as coming to The Lord’s Supper. In this case, restoration means, restored to full fellowship in the church.
2. Restoration to Membership—if the person is unrepentant, then the elders will at some point decide that the person is excommunicated or treated as a non-Christian and therefore a non-member of the church. In this case, restoration means, the sinner’s repentance and evidence leads the church elders to declare him a Christian and ready to re-enter the membership rolls of the church. These restorations must take place before restoration to office (A church may legitimately determine that the pastor can never be restored to vocational ministry or office in any context).
3. Restoration to Vocational Ministry (or office) in the Current Church—If the elders believe that sufficient time has passed and sufficient evidence of repentance has happened, then the church may (though Paul cautions against all haste [1 Tim 5.23]), choose to restore him to elder or pastor in the church.
4. Restoration to Vocational Ministry (or office) outside the Current Church—This category is the same to the one above, offering the possibility of restoration to vocational ministry but removing the possibility of *restoration to ministry (office) in the same church*.¹⁷

¹⁶See Philip Douglass, *What is Your Church’s Personality: Discovering and Developing the Ministry Style of Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008).

¹⁷Of course, these categories could be worded differently or even parsed into more categories. The important thing is that the elders decide on and name the various categories. With these categories in mind, churches must decide early on what the restoration plan is unto. Do the elders hope to restore his

Every church expressed satisfaction in the attempts they made toward restoration with the Senior Pastor but none of them felt that they could call the restoration “successful.” The question offered three possible answers: “Restored” (Church publicly affirmed restoration of pastor to ministry), “Not Restored” (church does not believe pastor is qualified and he is not pursuing church ministry), and “Returned but not Restored” (church believes pastor still disqualified but he returned in a different context despite their objections). In churches 1, 2, and 4 the leadership team did not restore the pastor, nor did he return to ministry, as of the time of this writing. In churches 3 and 5, the pastor returned to ministry despite the outright objections of the elders. These poor results in combination with the elder team’s expressed frustration at the pastor’s general unwillingness to submit to discipline demonstrate just how difficult a successful restoration process truly is.

Churches also found restoration difficult because simultaneous to the very emotional and time-draining attempts at such restoration, the church was usually enduring a season of intensified need, reduced giving, reduced attendance, and staff turnover.¹⁸ Table 9 exhibits the declines in these areas that each of the 5 churches experienced through the transition.¹⁹

Any one of these items by itself will strain a church deeply, and all of them combined together can lead to the exhaustion of the leaders who are attempting to

spiritual and relational life only, restore him to ministry in another context, restore to membership in the church, or restore him back to your church in particular? Many churches want to adopt a “wait and see” approach but this generally leaves the pastor, his family, the staff, and the congregation in the turmoil of uncertainty for too long. Paul is clear that churches must not be hasty in laying on of hands (1 Tim 5.23) whether that is the first time or a restoration. Thus, even if elders intend to restore him to ministry in the same church, a long period of time must be required. Therefore, if there is no intention to ever bring the fallen pastor back regardless of process or time, state that clearly up front.

¹⁸Attendance, revenue, and staff are obviously interrelated. Drops in attendance lead to drops in revenue, which lead to the need for fewer staff and/or the inability to afford the same staff levels.

¹⁹The statistics in table 8 were taken 12-18 months post-transition.

shepherd the church through very difficult circumstances. Every church leader interviewed articulated that multiple leaders experienced significant levels of exhaustion over the course of the process.²⁰

Table 9. Decline in revenue,²¹ attendance, and FTE's through post-transition.²²

	Church 1	Church 2	Church 3	Church 4	Church 5	Avg.
Attendance	-27.1%	0%	-60.2%	-20.0%	-9.7%	-23.4%
Revenue	-13.5%	-1%	-64.1%	-6.4%	-7.0%	-18.4%
FTE's	0%	-12%	N/A ²³	-30.3%	-5.5%	-12%

On average, the churches interviewed experienced an average attendance loss of 23.4 percent, giving decline of 18.4 percent, and staff reduction of 12 percent. While all of the churches experienced loss of revenue, staff, and attendance, church 3 experienced the loss much more deeply than the rest.²⁴ Of the five churches interviewed,

²⁰Staff and elder fatigue must be accounted for. See appendices #20-22 for a sample refreshment plan for pastors and elders.

²¹Church leaders in this situation should get immediate and competent financial analysis of their current financial situation. These at minimum would include: current cash position, monthly fixed expenses, potential cuts that could offset a likely income reduction, real-time giving trends, and potential donor meetings.

²²Numbers represent decline from just prior to transition to 1-2 years post-transition

²³Because this church ended its multi-site model, it is impossible to say how many FTE's it had after transition. This number was left out of the average calculation.

²⁴The interviews demonstrated that the reduction in staff was the result of a combination of factors: less revenue to pay for staff, drops in attendance that necessitated fewer staff, and change in

church 3 had both the most high profile Senior Pastor and the most centralized multi-site model of leadership. Church 2 had the most de-centralized model, the least amount of dependence on the personality and preaching of the Senior Pastor, and it experienced the smallest declines by far. Though not conclusive, the data intimates that churches who have leadership and preaching structures which rely on team approaches or more decentralized models of leadership will experience pastoral disqualification much less intensely. This conclusion is somewhat obvious, in that the more dependent any organization depends on the personality or leadership of one individual, the more loss that organization will experience when that leader is removed.²⁵

The final question of the interview asked, “What regrets, if any, are held by the leadership group? If you had to do it again, what would you do differently?” A few key points emerged,

1. “We should have spread the load of care over many elders or counselors.” One church shared that they made one elder the “care elder” for the fallen pastor and his family and that this amount of care and communication nearly “broke” that elder. While there usually needs to be a point person, when it comes to spiritually and/or emotionally taxing situations, there should be many competent care-givers.
2. “We did not communicate enough info and did not update communication to the congregation, which led to vacuums of speculation.” One church lamented a “very weak” letter to the congregation and wished they had outlined the accusations more specifically and then followed that up with continual communication to the congregation.
3. “We should have acted earlier.” These elders lamented allowing the pastor to exhibit morally disqualifying sin for long periods of time before acting. Acting earlier could have potentially changed the outcome and it certainly would have made the transition much easier. As noted in the research above, all of the fallen pastors displayed arising or increasing problems in the 18 months prior to their transition. These early warning signs should not be overreacted against but they also should not

church structure or vision which eliminated certain positions deemed no longer necessary.

²⁵For an in-depth treatment of church leadership models see Brad House and Greg Allison, *MultiChurch: Exploring the Future of Multisite* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017).

be ignored. When signs are early, elders have an opportunity to surround their brother, shepherd his heart, and possibly prevent disqualification.

4. “We should have publicly reprimanded him earlier.” This church had a long history of confronting this pastor with personal and leadership sin, after which there would often be confession but not repentance. The elders communicated that for this pastor, public adoration is like a ‘drug,’ and they believed that combatting that with the earlier, less severe discipline of a public rebuke could have changed the future.
5. “We wish we had a grievance policy in place for receiving accusations and an understood process for investigating and acting.” Four of the churches said that though they knew their responsibilities from Scripture, they had very little guidance in how they could act and respond. Churches should adopt a clear grievance policy.
6. “We should have created tighter communication between campuses.” This church, a multi-site model, was more affected at one campus than others and allowed that campus to “bleed out” while the rest of the church moved on more quickly. They wished they had brought more “central” resources around this campus and asked more leaders from other campuses to come in and bear some of the leadership burden.
7. “We should have had one elder appointed as an ‘elder advocate’ for the pastor and his family. This would have allowed us to communicate with and care for them without things getting personal and/or lost in translation.”
8. “We should have built benchmarks into the severance plan,” meaning that future payments would be conditional on pre-determined progress in the plan.
9. “We would have required more humble service with zero notoriety in the restoration plan.” This church put a lot of resources toward counseling, coaching, travel, and family expenses for their pastor but they wished they had also required a high level of practical service of real people who did not know or admire the pastor.
10. “We hired a 3rd party to help us create and manage the plan, which was helpful, but we should have been much more directive with them, the plan itself, and the creation of the restoration team.” This church noted that the 3rd party organization was very good but that nothing could substitute for their long-term knowledge of the pastor, their church, and the needed restoration team. They expressed reservations about two of the proposed members of the restoration team (men from outside the church who were friends of the fallen pastor) but eventually acquiesced in the face of “expert claims” from the 3rd party organization. According to the elders and eventually the 3rd party who appointed them, those two men became the most difficult to deal with, the most antagonistic to the process, and the only two in a team of twelve to disagree with the final recommendations.

Conclusion of Church Research

Churches and pastors neglect issues of character at their own peril because a *pastor's character shapes the church*. As Paul charges Timothy: “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Tim 4.16). Unfortunately, it’s much easier to keep watch on the teaching than one’s own life, and many churches assume that to have right doctrine will automatically lead to a righteous life. Believing that orthodoxy automatically creates orthopraxy is just as deadly as assuming the opposite, but if that were true, then the Pharisees would have been commended by Jesus. In truth, the two go together but they cannot be isolated; both are needed to “save *both* yourself and your hearers”

As the research in this chapter demonstrates, gifting, potential for acclaim, and success can easily distract pastors and churches, causing the slow turn of the heart, step by step, choice by choice toward disqualification. Strikingly, Paul reminds us, “But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified” (1 Cor 9.27). Paul recognized the grave potential of preaching good doctrine to others but losing the race himself. If Paul could say that, how much more must every elder heed these words? Such admonitions should not be construed as legalism nor should they be considered license for elders to prosecute every flaw in their pastors. Rather, each admonition is an invitation to humility, an invitation to live openly before other godly men, an invitation to seek mentoring and counseling, an invitation to spiritual friendships that exceed simple “accountability,” an invitation to the very abundant life that Jesus Himself offers; and it is an invitation that every elder must accept.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Unanticipated leadership transition creates massive upheaval in any organization, but especially in the church where, leadership is predicated upon personal integrity and kept by trust. Any leader must be a person of competence but in the church he must also be a person of character. Again and again, the Bible teaches that character is king, and the church ignores these warnings at her own peril. Pastors need competency and spiritual gifting but without character that matches or exceeds professional talent, these remarkable gifts will devolve into personal aggrandizement, abuse of the church, and/or dishonoring of the name of Jesus Christ. Subsequently, when the curtain is torn away, revealing the beloved pastor as a mere mortal, trust erodes quickly and upheaval ensues. Unfortunately, most churches and organizations are completely unprepared to engage these questions and events, especially if they have been lulled into a false sense of security through past success.

Church leaders have the incredibly important job of shepherding both the congregation and the senior pastor. Too often, the pastor's outward success becomes the primary target of oversight and measurement while his internal character development and personal walk with Jesus gets neglected. The cost and care for losing or removing senior leaders is enormously taxing on both economic and human resources. The need beckons especially loudly in the church where financial resources are more limited, public relations skills less adroit, and consequences have higher-stakes, moving beyond the organizational and into the eternal. This project has been an attempt to bring attention to and solutions for the neglect of pastoral character that so often leads to moral

disqualification for the pastor and chaos for the congregation.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to determine the warning signs of unanticipated leadership transition in the church and develop a plan to prevent, lead through, and redeem such situations. Based on the number of pastoral disqualifications experienced across the country in just the last few years, the American church needs to pay heavy attention toward the theme of this project. Thus, I believe that churches need this and many other works that will focus on offering the kind of care and oversight of pastors, which will prevent moral failure, as well as the development of leadership acumen, which will allow churches to shepherd congregations well when such failure occurs.

Having affirmed the great need of a work such as this, if I could do it again, I would reduce the scope of the project and confine the purpose to prevention. While having a purpose that spanned the entire story of pastoral disqualification (from warning signs to rebuilding after departure) allowed for greater breadth, it also created far too much research to effectively communicate all the necessary components along the way.

I think that future churches and I would be better served if this had been three separate projects, one on prevention, one on crisis leadership, and another on restoration. These three projects could then be followed with a white paper, which would draw the conclusions and strengths of all three projects together. A work like that could provide much greater depth of research in each area and offer a full synopsis that churches could use for quick reference. Still, I hope that this work might provide a great deal of introductory insights that many future researchers will take and develop into more in-depth studies that will prove helpful to many churches in the future.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Three specific goals were developed to drive the effectiveness of the project. The first

goal sought to identify the early warning signs of pastoral disqualification or burnout. Of the three goals, I believe this one was most important and deserved the most attention. As the old adage says, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” Thus, this goal merited the most attention, but it is also most neglected in churches because no matter how important something is, if it does not feel urgent, it will usually get pushed aside for less important things. Still, I am proud of the work that came from this project, and I believe that if churches adopt some of the tools and recommendations offered here, many disqualifications can be prevented. However, while I believe many will be prevented, it is also the hardest to measure. Who can say what would have happened or what changes truly led to what outcomes? Correlations may present themselves but firm conclusions can be difficult to draw in any truly empirical way.

The second goal was to create a crisis roadmap for organizations or churches that do enter unanticipated leader transition. The roadmap was built from data gathered from the aforementioned interviews as well as biblical exegesis focused on Jesus as a crisis leader. The project created many helpful tools for churches in crisis such as major questions to be anticipated, communication plans, care plans, FAQ samples, major leadership regrets, and crisis leadership principles. I think these resources provide major assets for churches in crisis, especially churches that do not have the finances or personal connections to attain outside assistance.

Though the resources are extremely helpful, I found that each church’s story of pastoral failure was so personal and each congregation so contextual that a single roadmap would be impossible.¹ Such a “one-size-fits-all” roadmap could give the impression that the church will get through the crisis by checking off all the correct leadership principles versus passionately seeking the Lord and lovingly pastoring people.

¹See Appendix 26 for a road map that includes consolidated recommendations for the entirety of the process

I certainly believe that churches should utilize the resources offered here but there is no substitute for shepherds who know their sheep and point them continually to the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

The third goal acknowledges that few attempts at pastoral restoration are actually successful and seeks to develop a model that churches can use for both personal and corporate restoration when an unanticipated leadership transition does occur. When I began the project, I knew how hard actual restoration work was because I dealt with it many times in my previous pastorate and I was in the middle of leading The Journey through Darrin Patrick's restoration process. However, I found that it was even more difficult than I had previously imagined. Not only did the restoration process at The Journey become increasingly frustrating, all the churches I researched and interviewed failed to successfully restore their former pastors. There are almost no successful restorations (where both the church and the pastor are in concert) in the American evangelical church.² I did locate two successful stories, though I could not include them in this project due to anonymity. However, even these were fraught with difficulty and took years to fully complete.

Strengths of the Project

This project exhibited numerous strengths. First, though there are many commentaries on the Pastoral Epistles, there seems to be very little work focused on 1 Timothy 5.19-25 as it relates to handling accusations against pastors. Second, chapter 2 provides both exegesis and practical recommendations for how churches should handle accusations, investigate them, and communicate through them. Third, chapter 3 offers insight and recommendations on the nature of power and moral licensing, two areas often

²For instance, none of the examples mentioned on pp. 10-11 or in chap. 4 of this project became restoration success stories as of the time of this writing

neglected in churches. In addition, the research in chapter 4 provides a plethora of information that will direct churches on prevention, crisis leading, and post-process restoration. Finally, the greatest strength of the project is potentially in the appendices where resources can be hand-picked to assist in whatever is needed by a church or pastor in the moment.

Weaknesses of the Project

The project has several weaknesses. First, as noted above, I think the scope was too broad, and churches would be better served by spreading this work over three separate projects. Second, the research is extremely helpful but it is mostly qualitative in nature and focused on only five churches. I would love to supplement the current research with a quantitative project, which would survey a large, statistically significant sample size of churches. A broader, quantitative research project would allow for more empirical conclusions. Third, the research focused on experiences from the perspective of church leadership. The topic needs an expansion of research in three key areas: the experience of the congregation, the experience of the fallen pastor, and a control group of pastors who have succeeded in long-term ministry. If these insights could be gleaned and combined with the current project, I believe churches could have transformative information at their fingertips. Last, the personal nature of pastoral disqualification combined with the unique personality of every church that experiences unanticipated leadership transition made designing a restoration plan to fit all difficult. There are clear principles to which every church should adhere and common questions, which every church should answer but it is those particular answers in those particular circumstances that must drive restoration plan.

What I Would Do Differently

As mentioned above, I would limit the scope to prevention rather than trying to

cover the large breadth of pastoral disqualification and restoration. In addition, I wish I could have gotten greater commitment from more churches to conduct research interviews. There were a few churches that declined after initially agreeing, and I completely understand their wounded souls and time commitments. However, more churches, more leaders, and more data would provide greater insight into the signs leading to and difficulties resulting from pastoral disqualification.

Theological Reflections

The work of this project together with my own personal situation leading a church in the midst of unanticipated leadership transition forced me to think deeply about the kinds of leaders that Jesus calls and uses. At what point are we all simply broken vessels who exhibit God's great grace and at what point does that brokenness disqualify us from office? How can members of Christ's church experience such redemptive ministry from a pastor who is personally rebelling against the very God he proclaims? While tomes could be written on such questions, clearly one of the answers must be true repentance in the context of community.

A project like this also causes us to reflect on the nature of grace itself. Of all faiths, we believe in radical, unconditional, miraculous, and transformative grace. Because we have such a powerful view of God's grace, when the power of grace collides with pastoral failure, it tests our theology and can sometimes split the church. If God's grace can cover any sin, how does it apply to pastoral disqualification? If God's grace is so powerful, how can a man who so beautifully preaches grace not experience its transformative power? If a pastor cannot be restored to office, does grace then have limits to its power? These questions are beyond the scope of this project but suffice to say that Christians who use grace as a cheap cover-up for wickedness have misunderstood what grace is all about. Yes, there is always forgiveness and grace for any who will repent but that is not the same thing as guaranteeing a restoration to office,

which requires a different test.

Another theological reflection I considered was how often we use good and right things as false securities, a biblical talisman to guard against disasters. Many churches I know and most of the ones interviewed always assumed that their theology and ecclesiology would save them and prevent anything really serious, such as pastoral failure, from occurring. Surely, that is something that only happens in independent, Arminian churches that do not have a plurality of elders, right? While those things are biblical and must be pursued, it turns out that there is a difference between theology stated and theology practiced; there is a difference between having multiple elders in a room and forming a spiritual brotherhood of men walking together with Jesus for the sake of shepherding his church; it turns out that even as reformed theologians, we have usually not taken our view of total depravity personally enough. It turns out that we are creatures, humans made in God's image and no matter how gifted or adored, we are subject to that nature and the laws of God's universe. It turns out that we need rest, play, deep friendships, laughter, purpose, hope, forgiveness, and relational safety or we will wither and die like a plant without water.

Last, I often asked, why do evangelicals, in particular, seem to gravitate toward charismatic personalities and rapid growth even when they become abusive? Why do evangelicals force restoration back onto fallen pastors so quickly? Is the American church's understanding of grace and pastoral character so shallow that we would wound future congregations as well as the pastor himself in order to taste the gifts again? It seems to me when I examine my own life and the lives of most Christians around me, we are far more en-culturated as Americans than we are as Christians. The American value system gets built into us almost hourly while Jesus' value system gets hurled at us a couple times per week. Our practice of the presence of God and of Christian community must change.

Personal Reflection

Obviously, this topic and project is very personal for me. March 2016-April 2017, the year following our founding pastor's removal, was probably the worst and hardest year of my life. Working again through the stories of our church as well as hearing the stories of the churches interviewed retriggered six years of memories and painful abuses. Many times, my heart ached as I saw the damage done at The Journey and the pain in the lives of those affected by pastoral disqualification. Each interview not only took time but also took deep emotional reserves. Hearing the hurt of pastors and elders and their desire for help created emotional upheaval at times.

A project like this stirs the heart in positive and negative ways. One of the battles I have had to fight throughout this season is my own arrogance, my anger at Darrin and other pastors, and my often unwillingness to believe that I am capable of similar actions. I have been struck over and over again with Paul's admonition to Timothy to publicly rebuke a fallen pastor "so that the rest may stand in fear" (1 Tim 5.20). There are many times over the past two years where feelings of superiority rather than godly fear gripped my heart. It pushed me at every point and at every level to examine and reexamine my own heart, life, and character.

As I shared my work and research with other pastors, my cohort, and friends, I heard over and over how significant this work could be and how needed it was in the larger church. One of the enticing temptations surrounding this work was even more pride. At one point I sensed a need for repentance and Spirit-dependence, which caused me to scribble down the following prayer that I could pray each time I sat down to work on my project:

Father, I pray that this project would bring humility rather than pride, possibility rather than defeat, and health rather than atrophy. Lord, make this project a great benefit to hundreds of churches and thousands of pastors but don't let it miss its mark in me. Let it prevent and redeem hundreds of broken situations but don't let it crush me. Please, don't let it bring me arrogance, my family burden, or your

Kingdom embarrassment.

I wrote the prayer to reorient my heart and plead with the Lord to guard my life.

One of the things I most wrestled with was God's goodness and justice. Watching some pastors unrepentantly abuse power, steal money, lie, cheat, commit adultery while they reveled in the recognition of their godliness from the masses juxtaposed with other godly, faithful pastors who had their souls crushed, their livelihoods stripped from them, and their ministries undone—these cases led to many Psalm 73 moments for me. The Psalmist looks around at all the injustice and records, "I saw the prosperity of the wicked...they say, 'How can God know'...they increase in riches...so all in vain have I kept my hands clean" (Ps 73.2-15). Thankfully, the Psalmist took me again and again to worship, "I went into the sanctuary of God; there I discerned their end" (Ps 72.17).

While I experienced the hardest season of life, it was also filled with the most learning, growth, and personal transformation of any season of life. As we all know, suffering and pressure often produce the kinds of growth and glory the Lord desires. Additionally, this work reignited my heart to serve our church as it was hurting and increased my desire to serve the broader church, as I saw the problem in numerous other congregations.

Conclusion

Pastoral disqualification in the church is not new but can be guarded against when character and relationship to Jesus take precedence over skills and statistics. Scripture teaches leaders and churches to guard diligently against such failures yet realistically reminds that such failures will occur. With the rise of social media, pastoral failures among large, influential churches have filled the headlines of evangelical publications. While pastoral failure is not new, today's "celebrity Christian culture" is new, making such failures much more public and far more discrediting to the gospel. Whether or not

these popular preachers have intentionally sought notoriety, the speed of communication, the prevalence of social media, and nearly unlimited access to content have created a historically unique environment. With the stakes higher than ever, God calls the church to even greater vigilance, preparation, and training, on both the prevention and redemption side.

Usually, by the time full pastoral failure strikes, the church is often caught unaware, without any process for healing, and doomed to purely reactive leadership. If churches were equipped instead to proactively care for their pastors and identify early warning signs, many failures could be prevented before they occur. At least, the church could be inoculated against many common strains of disqualification. Likewise, if churches knew how to respond when they do occur, more restorations would be successful and damage to both pastor and church could be minimized. This project has been an attempt to create conversation around and solutions toward these ends.

APPENDIX 1

POTENTIAL POLICY FOR DISCIPLINE AND REMOVAL

11.1.6 REMOVAL (Same Language Used for Campus Pastors and Elders)

Any Central Elder may be removed from the office of Central Elder for valid cause.¹ The Central Elder body will determine the specific procedure for removal of a Central Elder. This procedure may be altered, amended, repealed or restated by a resolution of the Central Elders.

A written notice of the proposed removal of any Central Elder shall be given to such Central Elder at least ten (10) days prior to the meeting at which an action to effectuate such removal is to be taken to ensure that the Central Elder is given a reasonable opportunity to defend himself. The Central Elder shall have the opportunity to answer the charges in the presence of his accusers, but shall not be present during the discussion and vote on his removal. Such removal shall take place only upon and after a passing vote of the Central Elders.

WHISTLEBLOWER POLICY

17.1 Purpose

The Church requires all of its Elders, Officers, employees, and volunteers to observe high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities. As representatives of the Church, individuals must practice honesty and integrity in fulfilling their responsibilities and comply with all applicable laws and regulations. Therefore, if an Elder, Officer, employee, or volunteer of the Church reasonably believes that the Church, by and through its Elders, Officers, employees, or volunteers, or entities with whom the Church has a business relationship, is in violation of applicable law or regulation, or any policy or procedure of the Church, then that individual shall file a written complaint with either his or her Church supervisor or the Central Elder board. This policy is intended to encourage and enable employees and others to raise serious concerns within the Church.

17.2 Procedure

It is the responsibility of all of the Church's Elders, Officers, employees, and volunteers to comply with all applicable laws and regulations, as well as all policies and procedures of the Church and to report violations or suspected violations.

¹ This policy includes relevant sections from The Village Church who graciously agree to let me use their material. They had the most thorough policy of any church contacted.

If an Elder, Officer, employee, or volunteer of the Church reasonably believes that any policy, practice, or activity of the Church is in violation of any applicable law, regulation, policy, or procedure of the Church, then the Elder, Officer, employee, or volunteer should share their questions, concerns, or complaints with someone who may be able to address them properly. If the concerns are not addressed, the reporting individual should make a formal complaint as outlined herein.

17.2.2 ACTING IN GOOD FAITH

Anyone filing a complaint concerning a violation or suspected violation of any applicable law, regulation, policy, or procedure of the Church must be acting in good faith and have reasonable grounds for believing the information disclosed indicates a violation of the applicable law, regulation, policy, or procedure of the Church. Any allegations that prove not to be substantiated and which prove to have been made maliciously or knowingly to be false will be viewed as a serious disciplinary offense.

17.2.3 REPORTING VIOLATIONS.

In most cases, an employee or volunteer's supervisor is in the best position to address an area of concern. However, if the reporting individual is not comfortable speaking with his or her supervisor, or the reporting individual is not satisfied with his or her supervisor's response, the reporting individual is encouraged to speak with a Central Elder. Central Elders are required to report suspected violations directly to the entire Central board.

17.2.5 EVIDENCE

Although the reporting individual is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, the reporting individual needs to demonstrate that there are reasonable grounds for concern on his or her part and that these concerns are best handled through this procedure.

17.2.6 INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINT

After receipt of the complaint, the Central Elder to whom the complaint was made shall provide the complaint to the entire Central Elder board. The Central Elders shall then determine whether an investigation is appropriate and the form that it should take. Concerns may be resolved through the initial inquiry by agreed action without the need for further investigation. The entire Central Elder board shall receive a report on each complaint and a follow-up report on action taken.

17.2.7 HANDLING OF REPORTED VIOLATIONS

The Central Elder to whom the complaint was made shall notify the reporting individual and acknowledge receipt of the reported violation within seven (7) days. All reports will be promptly investigated and appropriate corrective action will be taken if warranted.

17.3.3 HARASSMENT OR VICTIMIZATION

Harassment or victimization of the reporting individual for providing information in accordance with this policy by anyone affiliated with the Church will not be tolerated. In addition, the provision of such information shall not in any way influence, positively or negatively, the carrying out of routine disciplinary procedures by management as stated in the Church's employment policies.

17.3.4 MALICIOUS ALLEGATIONS

The Central Elder board recognizes that intentionally untruthful, malicious, erroneous, or harassing allegations could be damaging to the mission, integrity, and morale of the Church or the reputation of the accused individual. Such allegations may result in disciplinary action, including but not limited to termination of employment and/or revocation of Church membership.

APPENDIX 2

CHURCH ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE TO DETERMINE LEVEL OF DANGER OR CONCERN

Instructions: To be filled out by church leadership team, though also possible to be used as a pastoral self-assessment.¹ For each question, use the following scoring scale unless otherwise directed. Place the score (0-5) for each question beside the question number. When finished, add up the total score and refer to the legend at the bottom.

- 5—Strongly Agree
- 4—Agree
- 3—Agree Somewhat
- 2—Disagree Somewhat
- 1—Disagree
- 0—Disagree Strongly

1. The Pastor is extremely gifted and charismatic
2. Our ministry/church is growing rapidly
3. Outsiders look to our church/ministry as a model
4. The Pastor has made deep personal sacrifices for the sake of this church
5. The Pastor seems unaware that he is a person of influence and power
6. The Pastor almost never participates in everyday tasks, e.g. praying for people in need, throwing away his trash after a meal, etc.
7. The Pastor opposes viewpoints different than his own
8. Outsiders look to our church/ministry for wisdom, direction, or advice
9. The Pastor has no intentional mentoring relationships with an older pastor
10. Our reputation is better than our reality
11. The pastor is engaged in opportunities that are external to our church/ministry.

¹This assessment fulfills the first goal of this project, namely to identify early warning signs before disqualification occurs.

- a. If score on 11 was 0, 1, or 2, answer: the pastor is pursuing external ministry
 - b. If the score on 11 or 11a was a 3, 4, or 5, answer: the church has no written contract for how income from external ministries is allotted?
12. The pastor engages in prof. counseling. Score as follows, Constantly (0 pts), Regularly (1), Occasionally (2), Few Sessions (3), Only in the past (4), Never (5)
 13. The pastor does not receive a formal, documented review at least once/year
 14. Church leaders do not have a close relationship with the pastor's wife and family
 15. The pastor has no well-attested, intimate, and personal friendships
 16. Church Leaders do not understand the criteria for disciplining pastors
 17. There is unresolved conflict on the leadership team
 18. People outside the leadership team have raised serious concerns about the pastor's character, life, and/or qualifications in the past 24 months.
 19. The ministry would fail if the Senior Pastor made an unanticipated transition
 20. Review the following list of behaviors circumstances, or attitudes.² If you know the pastor to demonstrate patterns (not occasional experiences) of one of the 30 characteristics listed here, score each positive response a 2.

- ___-Entitlement
- ___-Greed
- ___-Decreased Generosity
- ___-Anger
- ___-Self-Pity
- ___-Impulsivity
- ___-Increasingly critical of others
- ___-Pointing to past successes or good deeds to justify present problems
- ___-Deception/Manipulation
- ___-Seemingly manufactured vulnerability (tears on command, carefully chosen heartfelt anecdotes of personal failure, etc.)
- ___-Reduced Inspiration or Vision
- ___-Bullying
- ___-Loss of self-control
- ___-Inability to be laughed at
- ___-Loss of previous Zeal and Passion for Jesus, people, and ministry
- ___-Overindulgence with exercise, food, alcohol, and/or drug. If yes, which one(s)?
- ___-Pornography/adultery
- ___-Isolation or Hiding
- ___-Refusal to listen or accept advice

²This list was created by a combination of personal experience, biblical research, scientific research on power and privilege presented in chap 3, and the assembled expert panel's wisdom.

- _____ -Refusal to attend or avoidance of certain meetings
- _____ -Extremely Weak Spiritual Life/Practices
- _____ -Avoidance of Accountability
- _____ -Significant Defensiveness or Blame-shifting
- _____ -Exhaustion
- _____ -Unexplainable but recurring physical maladies
- _____ -Significant increase in Social Media presence and/or self-aggrandizing posts
- _____ -Unwarranted Accumulation of Debt
- _____ -Unnecessarily quarrelsome
- _____ -Marriage or Family Problems
- _____ -Significant death, loss, or trauma

For each of these characteristics which you scored a ‘2,’ answer whether the characteristic arose or increased significantly in the past 18 months. If so, add 2 additional points for each one that has arisen more recently.

Add the total score and refer to the chart below. Regardless of the score, use the questions as leadership issues to be addressed by the leadership team or with the pastor.

Score	DEFCON ³ Threat Level	Elder Concern
0-49	DEFCON 5	Extremely Low
50-74	DEFCON 4	Probing for and Pastoring Through any Issues Identified in Assessment
75-109	DEFCON 3	There is likely still time but take Action immediately
110-149	DEFCON 2	Extremely High Concern and Immediate Action.
150-220	DEFCON 1	Highly likely that formal action will be necessary. Take Immediate Action.

Other Helpful Pastoral Assessments:

https://www.emotionallyhealthy.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/ehs_assessment013.pdf

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2014/december-online-only/painful-lessons-of-mars-hill.html>

³DEFCON is a military term that stands for Defense Readiness Condition with a 5 being the least severe and a 1 being nuclear launch.

APPENDIX 3

SAMPLE GRIEVANCE POLICY

What is the grievance Policy?¹

The grievance policy gives elders of any campus a clear procedure for raising concerns with the actions of the Leadership Council, the Executive Team, or any member of the Full Council of Elders.

Spirit of the Policy

Such a policy is not necessary until there is disagreement or tension within the body. Therefore it is important for us all to consider the spirit of the policy to maintain unity (1 Pet. 3:8, 1 Cor. 1:10), pursue reconciliation (Heb. 12:13, Eph. 4:32) and to bear with one another (Col 3:13) as long as we are able.

If we approach disagreements in such a spirit it ought to lead to greater unity in the end. This policy intends to provide room for discourse and consideration in the event of future tensions.

Disagreement verses a Charge

It should be noted that this policy covers only those concerns that would be categorized as disagreements rather than disqualifying sin on the part of an elder or the council. Such charges require an investigation and are governed by the constitution.

Informal

The intent of this policy is to give elders a formal procedure to share concerns but should in no way undermine the relational connections we have as elders. All members of the Leadership Council will adhere to an “Open Door Policy” in relation to any member of the FCE.² Ideally most concerns will be noted and addressed through this informal process. If however, an elder is not satisfied with the response and feels convicted to escalate the concern, they may do so through the formal process outlined below.

¹This sample comes from Sojourn Community Church in Louisville, KY and was graciously provided by Executive Pastor, Brad House. Certainly, other churches would need to rework a policy to their own structures and polity but this policy should be simple for any “elder-governed” churches to adapt for their own purposes. Most importantly, the document does a fantastic job of distinguishing between “disagreements and charges,” “formal vs. informal” confrontation, and different “levels” of grievance.

²Sojourn is a multi-site church with elders who are local to each location. FCE stands for “Full Council of Elders,” all elders across all locations.

If the concern were with another elder, it is expected that the basic plan of reconciliation found in Matthew 18 would be used as a guide before entering into a formal process. Additional, it is encouraged that elders discuss their concerns with their campus pastor, (when appropriate,) to seek guidance on how to proceed.

Formal

Level 1: Concern: Communicate a formal concern with the Leadership Council. The purpose of formalizing a concern is to insure all members of the Leadership Council have been made aware of the concern in question. This should be done only after informal efforts have been made to find resolution to the concern without creating division among the full council of elders. A formal concern can be brought to any member of the leadership council. Formalization of a concern requires that the concerned party put in writing their concern, which will be distributed to the members of the Leadership Council.

Level 2: Challenge: Request a Response from the Leadership Council.

If the concerned party is not satisfied with merely informing the Leadership Council they may request a formal response. The Leadership council will establish a committee to draft a formal response to the concerned party on behalf of the Leadership Council. This response is intended for the concerned party by may be shared with the FCE in level 3 below if the concerned party is not satisfied.

Level 3: Censure: Request a “Confidence Vote”.

Step 1: The concerned party makes a request for a Confidence Vote.

Step 2: The LC will post the written concern and the formal response from the LC.

Step 3: The FCE will vote to formally hear the concerns. A 33% vote to hear the concerns will trigger a hearing. The LC may choose to call a hearing even if the vote does not reach 33%.

Step 4: If the FCE votes to hear the concern, a hearing will be called for the concern to be discussed and the Leadership Council to respond. In the event that an investigative committee is warranted, both the LC and the concerned party will approve the committee. (In the case of an impasse on the makeup of the committee, each party will choose two representatives.)

Step 5: The FCE will vote to “affirm” or “no confidence” the board action or Elder.

A vote of affirmation gives the LC the option to continue with the action or reconsider at its own prerogative.

A vote of “no confidence” will require the LC to revise the decision/action and present it to the FCE for affirmation. In the case of a “no confidence” vote related to an elder it will be understood as revocation of the elders “affirmation of calling” requiring him to step down from the office of elder. This should be understood as different than disqualification. His calling may be reaffirmed through the governing elder process at the time he chooses to restart the process.

Level 4: Charge: Formal charge of disqualification or misconduct by the board. Formal charges of disqualification or misconduct will be governed by the constitution of Sojourn Community Church.

APPENDIX 4

WISDOM FOR STRUCTURING A PASTORAL TERMINATION LETTER FROM CHURCH LEADERSHIP TO CONGREGATION

1. Determine who will receive letter.

- Dear ABC Church Members
- Dear ABC Family and Friends

2. Begin letter with an appropriate passage of scripture or quote. For example:

Author Glenn Stanton wrote, “We serve a God who created our humanity, weeps at the fall of our humanity, became our humanity, and is redeeming our humanity. Redemption is an on-going process in all of our lives.”

3. Share the big news in the first full paragraph. Don’t make the reader hunt for the real purpose of the letter. Expound upon the news in the following body of the letter. For example:

I am writing to let you know that on Thursday, January 14th Pastor Brad was arrested for a DUI (Driving Under the Influence of alcohol). Sadly, this was Brad’s second DUI over the six months, and as a result, he has been released from his position as Lead Pastor at ABC Church. Of course we are all surprised and saddened by this event but I want to assure you that Brad has put himself under the umbrella of the elders where he is receiving pastoral care. Brad has agreed to immediately enter into a recovery process.

4. Dedicate a full paragraph explaining that this was not a knee jerk reaction to an isolated incident. If there has been a process of care over a period of time, address this in the letter. Example:

The elders have been deeply engaged with Brad’s addiction to alcohol for the past six months. Following Brad’s first DUI, the elders provided a support structure for Brad which included daily AA meetings, counseling, weekly personal appointments with members of the leadership team and weekly check-ins with Brad’s wife Lisa.

5. If possible, remind the church of one tangible way in which the dismissed pastor blessed the congregation. For example:

We will be forever grateful for Pastor Brad's faithful preaching of the gospel. We have all been privileged to sit under the teaching of man who consistently proclaimed gospel truth. We are praying that Brad will now take to heart the very gospel he so faithfully proclaimed.

- 6. Address who is going to be stepping up on staff to cover the role(s) of the terminated pastor. This is a wonderful opportunity to affirm the staff. If an interim pastor is going to be brought in, explain the process and a timeline. For example:**

For the next several months, Pastors John and Steve will be sharing the preaching responsibilities. Be assured that you are in capable hands. This is a wonderful church with great pastors, staff, and congregation.

- 7. Encourage the congregation to pray for the dismissed pastor and his/her family. For example:**

Please pray for Brad and his family during this time and don't stop loving and reaching out to him. Please pray the Lord to drive Brad deeper into the truths of his kindness, mercy and grace.

- 8. Use this opportunity to ask for prayer for the entire pastoral staff. For example:**

One of the things this underlines is that pastors are people too and we have need for constant prayer. Will you please recommit yourself to not only praying daily for Brad but for all of our pastoral staff. We would encourage you to use the PastorServe 'Pray for Your Pastor' prayer plan. You can receive a daily text with a specific prayer by texting the word 'pastor' to 74574.

- 9. Express that you want for each member of the congregation what the leadership is now doing for the terminated pastor. If the terminated pastor carried secrets, encourage the church to disclose their secrets. For example:**

We as your elders want for Pastor Brad what we want for each of you – to listen and obey the Lord and be transformed into his image day by day. To be sure, repentance is both progressive and painful. We pray that this painful situation will encourage every member of our church family to disclose and deal with the secrets that reside in the darkest places of our hearts.

- 10. Where can the church go with questions? Website? Are they free to contact the elders? Will phone numbers, e-mails be provided in the letter?**

- 11. Close with a word of encouragement from scripture that gives hope, even in a dark place. Example:**

We wholeheartedly believe that Romans 8:28. The Lord will use this for Brad's ultimate good and the Lord's ultimate glory. We would ask you to pray to that end.

12. Who is the letter from? Is it from the elder team, executive pastor, staff, lead pastor (if someone other than lead pastor was dismissed)? We recommend the letter coming from a team (elders, board, staff) rather than an individual.

13. Include a gentle reminder to the congregation to continue to love Brad.

Example:

Remember, if you were Brad's friend before his dismissal, continue to be his friend after his dismissal. He and his family need your friendship and support now more than ever.

14. Read Pastors are People Too by Jimmy Dodd and Larry Magnuson (David Cook, 2016). This book provides practical guidelines regarding how to effectively love and support our pastoral staff. Concluding thoughts:

When a beloved pastor is dismissed, there are commonly four very different waves of emotion that sweep over a congregation. Many people will exhibit a combination of the emotions. Be aware that the church leadership needs to be prepared to address each of these emotional reactions.

- Difficulty letting go of the dismissed pastor. This may be accompanied by illogical thought such as – “It's no big deal. Let's just get over it.”
- Irrational sympathy or hostility for the dismissed pastor.
- Suspicion toward leaders who dismissed the pastor. Some will blame dismissal on staff or elders / deacons for not resolving problem in another manner.
- Questioning personal faith or one's faith in the church.

Furthermore, do not be too quick to announce a replacement or a search process to find a new pastor. Resentment and backlash toward a newly called pastor, taking the place of the dismissed pastor, can make your next pastor an unintentional interim.

APPENDIX 5

THE JOURNEY BOARD OF ELDERS LETTER TO THE CONGREGATION AFTER DISQUALIFICATION OF FOUNDING PASTOR

Dear (Fill in Name),

Grievously, we need to share with you some very troubling news.¹ In recent weeks, substantive allegations of pastoral misconduct arose against Pastor Darrin Patrick and were eventually confirmed. This required that the Board of elders place Pastor Darrin on immediate paid leave and begin a formal process of deeper investigation.² The findings of this investigation and further confession from Pastor Darrin, combined with deep historical patterns of sin, led us to the heart-breaking decision to remove Pastor Darrin from office at The Journey and require him to step down from all internal and external leadership positions. We did not arrive at this decision lightly but rather agonizingly, with deep consternation for our brother, after many hours with Darrin and his wife Amie, praying diligently together, seeking professional counsel and outside assistance, and reflecting over a long and repeated pattern³ of breaking trust with other leaders.

The initial and now confirmed accusations were not of adultery but did violate the high standard for elders in marriage through inappropriate meetings, conversations, and phone calls with two women. (I Tim. 3.2). Additionally, the Board has been engaged for several years now in uncovering and confronting other deep sin patterns in Darrin that do not reflect the biblical qualifications for an elder, such as

- abandonment of genuine biblical community (Titus 1.8)
- refusal of personal accountability (failure to be a fellow elder, I Pt. 5.1)
- lack of self-control (I Tim. 3.2)
- manipulation and lying (Titus 1.8)
- domineering over those in his charge (I Pt. 5.3)
- misuse of power/authority (I Pt. 5.3)

¹Public letter sent on April 12, 2016

²Often, it is necessary to recount the ‘process,’ not just the final decision. In other words, the church should be able to demonstrate that Matt 18 and 1 Tim 5 are being followed and there is no rush to judgment.

³It is important to note that the pastor’s sin is not just a momentary slip-up, but a longstanding pattern that has been previously confronted but not changed.

- a history of building his identity through ministry and media platforms (necessity to be “sober-minded” in I Tim. 3.2 and avoid selfish gain in I Pt. 5.2)⁴

These patterns and lack of turning away⁵ from these sins reveal that Darrin has not been pursuing a personal walk with Jesus in a manner that reflects his pastoral calling and position as an elder in the church (I Peter 5.1-5, I Tim. 3.1-7, Titus 1.3-8).

As part of our spiritual community and in our role as elders, we have experienced and confronted these issues regularly and intentionally over the past few years. Each time, these confrontations have been followed by initial confession with short-term changes but quickly receded into unfulfilled promises, reversion to old patterns, and broken trust with pastors/elders. Though we all stumble in many ways, those called to teaching and preaching carry the weighty responsibility of setting an example of a Christ honoring lifestyle with the consequence of stricter judgment (James 3:1).

From the very beginning of this process, the Board of elders has sought diligently to love Darrin, remind him of the Gospel, put a care team in place for his family, make immediate plans for the church, and bring in outside help. We have involved Amie, his counselor, outside pastors, and we have partnered with PastorServe (an organization that specializes in assisting pastors and churches in similar situations). Darrin is willingly placing himself under this care, and with these resources in place, we are extremely hopeful in our God who is powerful to bring redemption and grace from the midst of brokenness.

Many of you have experienced the power of the Gospel in profound ways through Darrin’s gifts in this church, especially his preaching. We have all been privileged to sit under the teaching of a man who consistently and powerfully proclaimed gospel truth. Without Darrin’s vision, passion and desire for mission, the Journey would not exist. God has used him in profound ways for which we are forever grateful. We highly esteem and appreciate Darrin’s gifts and the labor he has exerted over the years and are praying that Darrin will now take to heart the very gospel he so faithfully proclaimed. We hope you will join us in praying for Darrin and his family, asking the Lord to sustain and guide them and drive them deeper into the heart of God’s grace.⁶

While this may come as shocking and difficult news, we believe our church is in faithful, wise, capable and loving hands with our local Lead Pastors and lay-elder teams. Additionally, we have asked Pastor Jeremy Bedenbaugh (who was already serving as a Journey-wide Lead Pastor) to handle and coordinate the preaching calendar while continuing to work with and direct our Local Lead Pastors. From the pulpit, you can expect to hear from Pastor Curtis Gilbert and Pastor Bedenbaugh along with a similar rotation from local lead pastors.⁷ At Tower Grove, Tim Holley has been effectively

⁴The Journey elders believed it was necessary to offer Scriptural texts to further teach elder requirements and so that the congregation could search the Scriptures themselves

⁵The church must distinguish between sins, patterns of sin, and patterns of unrepentant sin.

⁶It is good and right to honor the fallen pastor and his family in any way that is honestly possible as well as to reassure people that the fruit they experienced from his ministry is real.

⁷Give clear communication about what congregants can expect as the church moves forward.

servicing and now will formally be named as the Interim Lead Pastor. We have faithful and dedicated elder-teams, staff, and volunteer leaders who are deeply grieved but also unified in continuing to give themselves to Gospel ministry here at The Journey. Please commit to prayer for them and patience with them as they seek to shepherd and lead our church through this season.

Finally, we as your elders want for Darrin what we want for ourselves and each of you – to listen to and obey the Lord and be transformed into his image (2 Cor. 3.18). We pray that this painful situation will encourage every member of our church family, not to pride, arrogance, or judgmentalism but rather to disclose and deal with the secrets that reside in the darkest places of our hearts (Gal. 6.1).

Because of the scope and ramifications of this decision and the biblical injunction regarding charges against elders from I Tim. 5.19-21: *“Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality,”* we are planning to address this situation publicly in our worship services on April 16/17, host upcoming gatherings (TBD), and offer future updates through The City.⁸ In the meantime please direct any questions to your elders and/or Lead Pastors.

Though this process has been and continues to be extremely difficult and painful, we love Darrin deeply and have committed to a long-term plan of personal restoration for him and devoted care for his family. The love and discipline we are extending to Darrin during this season is the same kind of care we would want to receive personally and offer to any of you in similar circumstances. There are certainly many unknowns but we are humbly submitting to and trusting Jesus to shepherd and care for the Patrick family and The Journey as we depend upon Him every moment. Ultimately, our faith in Jesus Christ and His Gospel gives us tremendous hope for renewed health and spiritual vitality for Darrin, the good of God's church, and the glory of Jesus Christ. Therefore, as the Bible teaches us, our hope is not in a leader but in the Lord:

*The Lord is the strength of his people;
he is the saving refuge of his anointed....
Be their shepherd and carry them forever. –Psalm 28.8-9*

Respectfully and Hopefully,

Board of Elders:⁹
Journey Lead Pastors:
West County Journey Elders:
Tower Grove Elders:
Hanley Road Elders:
South County Elders:

⁸The City is a communication and community building platform for churches

⁹Because The Journey had absolute elder unity (not always the case) in their decision, they felt it necessary and symbolic to list every elder's name. Actual names have been deleted for anonymity.

From Darrin:¹⁰

Journey Family,

Being a part of The Journey these last 15 years has been one of the greatest joys of our lives. We have loved being used by God with you to bring the gospel to our great city, and have loved seeing the faithful work of God in so many of your lives. We are confident that God will continue to use The Journey in amazing ways. I am utterly horrified by the depth of my sin and devastated by the terrible effects of it on myself, my family and so many others, including all of you. I am so deeply and terribly sorry for the pain that my sin is causing you, as well as the broken trust that my sin has clearly produced. In short, I am a completely devastated man, utterly broken by my sin and in need of deep healing. The way that the Journey elders have demonstrated their desire to see me restored to Jesus, as well as their love for me, Amie and our family is nothing short of miraculous and beyond gracious.

They have put together a thoroughly comprehensive restoration plan for myself and our family, and we have great hope for God's healing, restoration and reconciliation through this process. We are profoundly grateful for the elders' care in this, and are completely committed to every aspect of the plan that is in place. Journey, you are in good hands with your elders. Please know that Amie and I are completely committed to our marriage as well as the well-being of our children and family. We earnestly desire your prayers for us in this terribly painful but hopeful season. We are desperately clinging to God's promise that He loves us completely in spite of our sin, delights in us when we are at our weakest, and that He is, indeed, the restorer and healer of all brokenness.

¹⁰If possible, it is extremely helpful for the congregation to hear directly from the transitioning Pastor in writing along with the letter from church leadership.

APPENDIX 6

HOW NOT TO WRITE A LETTER OF PASTORAL DISQUALIFICATION

“I resigned from my position at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church today due to ongoing marital issues.¹ As many of you know, I returned from a trip a few months back and discovered that my wife was having an affair.² Heartbroken and devastated, I informed our church leadership and requested a sabbatical to focus exclusively on my marriage and family. As her affair continued, we separated. Sadly and embarrassingly, I subsequently sought comfort in a friend and developed an inappropriate relationship myself. Last week I was approached by our church leaders and they asked me about my own affair.³ I admitted to it and it was decided that the best course of action would be for me to resign. Both my wife and I are heartbroken over our actions and we ask you to pray for us and our family that God would give us the grace we need to weather this heart-wrenching storm. We are amazingly grateful for the team of men and women who are committed to walking this difficult path with us. Please pray for the healing of deep wounds and we kindly ask that you respect our privacy.”

¹Released by Tullian Tchividjian to the Washington Post on June 20, 2015. The purpose of reprinting this letter is not to further embarrass Tullian or his church but to demonstrate the painful effects of poor communication around a pastoral disqualification. This letter went not to his former flock but to the world via The Post, a further evidence of where his attention was turned. Rather than a statement coming from the fallen pastor, who will almost certainly never be in the mental and emotional state necessary to write such a letter, the statement should come from the church and hopefully include an approved statement from the fallen pastor at the end.

²The letter immediately blames the spouse. Rather than taking responsibility for the affair, he creates a reason for it, rooted in another person. In addition, his wife is not a public figure or ordained minister, which means that her sin, whether true or not, should not be publicly displayed.

³Later revelations proved multiple affairs. A church letter to this affect should have clearly stated that an affair was uncovered and that the church is in the midst of an ongoing investigation to determine what, if any, other issues need to be addressed.

APPENDIX 7

DISCUSSING PASTORAL DISQUALIFICATION WITH LAY LEADERS USING THE PUBLIC LETTER WITH ANNOTATED INSTRUCTIONS

- Address Leaders/Congregation.¹ Note the tone and name the reality of difficulty and awkwardness. “We know it is difficult to receive a request for an emergency meeting like this. We wouldn’t ask if it wasn’t of the utmost importance.”
- Reiterate that we have some very important but troubling news
- Start with the news—don’t ramble on forever. Get straight to it:

Grievously, we need to share with you some very troubling news. In recent weeks, substantive allegations of pastoral misconduct arose against Pastor Darrin Patrick and were eventually confirmed. This required that the Board of elders place Pastor Darrin on immediate paid leave and begin a formal process of deeper investigation. The findings of this investigation and further confession from Pastor Darrin, combined with deep historical patterns of sin, led us to the heart-breaking decision to remove Pastor Darrin from office at The Journey and require him to step down from all internal and external leadership positions. We did not arrive at this decision lightly but rather agonizingly, with deep consternation for our brother, after many hours with Darrin and his wife Amie, praying diligently together, seeking professional counsel and outside assistance, and reflecting over a long and repeated pattern of breaking trust with other leaders.

- Let the news settle in a bit. Everyone will be internally racing so give it a moment of silence.
- Name the reality again—“I understand that for most of you this is new and hard to hear in a setting like this
- Prepare them to hear more of the story, “I’m going to tell you some of the context for how we got to this point.”
- Affirm that we are telling you this, not for the sake of gossip but b/c we want to be absolutely truthful with no spin, no questions about “what really happened.”
- Note that trust broken repeatedly over time with LPs, elders, and other leaders

¹The Journey used this document to lead lay leaders through the decision-making process and prepare for the future. The Journey has 6 geographically separate sites and needed to host meetings simultaneously for key leaders. This document was used by each Campus Pastor and elder team to walk these leaders through the situation. Each pastor used the public letter and with these annotated instructions around it, and then followed up with further pastoral instruction and expectations.

- was a big factor
- Show the biblical warrant expressed in the following:

The initial and now confirmed accusations were not of adultery but did violate the high standard for elders in marriage through inappropriate meetings, conversations, and phone calls with two women. (I Tim. 3.2). Additionally, the Board has been engaged for several years now in uncovering and confronting other deep sin patterns in Darrin that do not reflect the biblical qualifications for an elder, such as

- abandonment of genuine biblical community (Titus 1.8)
- refusal of personal accountability (failure to be a fellow elder from I Pt. 5.1)
- lack of self-control (I Tim. 3.2)
- manipulation and lying (Titus 1.8)
- domineering over those in his charge (I Pt. 5.3)
- misuse of power/authority (I Pt. 5.3)
- a history of building his identity through ministry and media platforms (necessity to be “sober-minded” in I Tim. 3.2 and avoid selfish gain in I Pt. 5.2)

These patterns and lack of turning away from these sins reveal that Darrin has not been pursuing a personal walk with Jesus in a manner that reflects his pastoral calling and position as an elder in the church (I Peter 5.1-5, I Tim. 3.1-7, Titus 1.3-8).

- Let them know that these are longstanding issues that have been confronted time and again

As part of our spiritual community and in our role as elders, we have experienced and confronted these issues regularly and intentionally over the past few years. Each time, these confrontations have been followed by initial confession with short-term changes but quickly receded into unfulfilled promises, reversion to old patterns, and broken trust with pastors/elders. Though we all stumble in many ways, those called to teaching and preaching carry the weighty responsibility of setting an example of a Christ honoring lifestyle with the consequence of stricter judgment (James 3:1).

- People are wondering, what does this mean personally for Darrin and family. Say, “I know many of you are wondering about the Patricks and what steps are being taken for them....”

From the very beginning of this process, the Board of elders has sought diligently to love Darrin, remind him of the Gospel, put a care team in place for his family, make immediate plans for the church, and bring in outside help. We have involved Amie, his counselor, outside pastors, and we have partnered with PastorServe (an organization that specializes in assisting pastors and churches in similar situations). Darrin is willingly placing himself under this care, and with these resources in place, we are extremely hopeful in our God who is powerful to bring redemption and grace from the midst of brokenness.

- Affirm that Darrin realizes he needs help and that, though painful, it is the right decision
- Darrin and Amie are in agreement on the accuracy of the letter

Darrin is willingly placing himself under this care, and with these resources in place, we

are extremely hopeful in our God who is powerful to bring redemption and grace from the midst of brokenness.

- Affirm the reality of Darrin's ministry (personal is best), e.g. "I came to this church because of the powerful Gospel preaching and challenging vision from Darrin."

Many of you have experienced the power of the Gospel in profound ways through Darrin's gifts in this church, especially his preaching. We have all been privileged to sit under the teaching of a man who consistently and powerfully proclaimed gospel truth. Without Darrin's vision, passion and desire for mission, the Journey would not exist. God has used him in profound ways for which we are forever grateful. We highly esteem and appreciate Darrin's gifts and the labor he has exerted over the years and are praying that Darrin will now take to heart the very gospel he so faithfully proclaimed. We hope you will join us in praying for Darrin and his family, asking the Lord to sustain and guide them and drive them deeper into the heart of God's grace.

- The power of the Gospel is not invalidated b/c of Darrin's sin. In fact, it shows just how powerful the Gospel is, that God works through broken people.
- Pivot to current reality in the church. People want to know who is leading, who is my pastor, how is the staff, is this a unified decision, who will be preaching, etc.
- Make this current to the local church/campus: "Here at TG, Tim Holley has been leading us for months and we want to be sure you know that he is in this role on an interim basis going forward"

While this may come as shocking and difficult news, we believe our church is in faithful, wise, capable and loving hands with our local Lead Pastors and lay-elder teams. Additionally, we have asked Pastor Jeremy Bedenbaugh (who was already serving as a Journey-wide Lead Pastor) to handle and coordinate the preaching calendar while continuing to work with and direct our Local Lead Pastors. At Tower Grove, Tim Holley has been effectively serving and now will formally be named as the Interim Lead Pastor. We have faithful and dedicated elder-teams, staff, and volunteer leaders who are deeply grieved but also unified in continuing to give themselves to Gospel ministry here at The Journey. Please commit to prayer for them and patience with them as they seek to shepherd and lead our church through this season.

- Admonish everyone to examine their hearts rather than point fingers. Reiterate that this is a time for mourning and self-examination.

Finally, we as your elders want for Darrin what we want for ourselves and each of you – to listen to and obey the Lord and be transformed into his image (2 Cor. 3.18). We pray that this painful situation will encourage every member of our church family, not to pride, arrogance, or judgmentalism but rather to disclose and deal with the secrets that reside in the darkest places of our hearts (Gal. 6.1).

- Explain that "we want to do everything in our power to keep you fully informed each step of the way"
- Explain that we are following the Bible in our process. Read I Tim. 5.19-21
- Explain that, other than the public part, this is formal church discipline that every member agrees to. This is formal church discipline. Purpose of Discipline is not

to shame, embarrass, or punish but to:

1. Maintain the honor and glory of Christ
2. Restore the Sinner
3. Remove offense from the church

Because of the scope and ramifications of this decision and the biblical injunction regarding charges against elders from I Tim. 5.19-21: *“Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality,”* we are planning to address this situation publicly in our worship services on April 16/17, host upcoming gatherings (TBD), and offer future updates through The City. In the meantime please direct any questions to your elders and/or Lead Pastors.

- End with love for Darrin, his family and Gospel hope
- Possibly use the ship/storm/captain analogy?
- Remind everyone that we are in the hands of an all-powerful and gracious God
- Acknowledge that we know this is messy, but the Gospel was never about comfort and doing the easy thing. Invite them to the same continued commitment to the church in which you are walking

Though this process has been and continues to be extremely difficult and painful, we love Darrin deeply and have committed to a long-term plan of personal restoration for him and devoted care for his family. The love and discipline we are extending to Darrin during this season is the same kind of care we would want to receive personally and offer to any of you in similar circumstances. There are certainly many unknowns but we are humbly submitting to and trusting Jesus to shepherd and care for the Patrick family and The Journey as we depend upon Him every moment. Ultimately, our faith in Jesus Christ and His Gospel gives us tremendous hope for renewed health and spiritual vitality for Darrin, the good of God's church, and the glory of Jesus Christ. Therefore, as the Bible teaches us, our hope is not in a leader but in the Lord:

- Use Scripture to pastor people as much as possible. This is an example

*The Lord is the strength of his people;
he is the saving refuge of his anointed....
Be their shepherd and carry them forever. –Psalm 28.8-9*

- Are you planning to answer all questions or break into smaller groups like at the staff meeting?
- Answer any practical questions—synagogue, Mid-County, staff, budget, next meetings, upcoming worship services
- Invite our members to be part of this process. Provide a vision of hope that while this is a terrible season, it can also be a powerfully pivotal one. We have the opportunity to repent personally, offer forgiveness, depend on Jesus, etc.
- Communicate upcoming events

TRAIN THE LEADERS:

What to do if someone asks you about Pastor Darrin Prior to Congregational Letter:

1. Thank them for their concern.
2. Pastor Darrin is currently taking some time off and we expect to communicate that to the full congregation early next week. Do not allow speculation or gossip
3. Any further questions directed to Lead Pastors or elders

After Congregational Letter:

1. Thank them for their concern/love
2. Share the letter if they have not read it
3. Confirm that while it is impossible to provide every detail in situations like this, the information shared is the level truth, that we have shared everything we intend to share as an act of wisdom, leadership, and honor. There is no further story or hidden agenda. Remind them that we have a Gospel obligation to dispel rumors and honor everyone involved in the situation.
4. Remind them that Darrin is our brother and ask them to pray for the Patricks and our church
5. Direct any further questions to LP or elders

Preparing Ourselves to shepherd our congregation:

How this news is received by an individual will be influence by their sense of:

1. Who Darrin is... (Hero ----- Villain)
2. How serious the offense is (“Not a big deal” ----- “Unforgivable Sin”)
3. How fitting the discipline is (“He confessed. It’s over.” ----- “1-and-done”)
4. How this effects the church (Best thing that’s ever happened ---- Apocalypse)
5. How powerful the Gospel is (Total Power to heal-----Traditional Morality)

First 72 Hours of hearing the news:

- 48 hours - Shock – disbelief. Crisis period begins. Usually lasts for 2-3 weeks.
- In the first 48 hours – there will be crazy things said. There will be extreme anger and emotion.
- In the first three days – few church members will think properly. Anger will begin to subside after day three.
- Expect people to work through the stages of crisis / grief: anger, disbelief, sympathy, rage, etc.
- People will hear the news at different times which means that people throughout the church will be at different stages in the process for the first two to three weeks. The clock will start at different times for different people. People will enter into the crisis at different times. Some insensitive people may offend others. These types of conversations can lead to broken relationships. There must be sensitivity and awareness.
- Expect there to be both irrational sympathy AND antipathy toward both Darrin

- and church leadership
- Some may question personal faith or one's faith in the church.

Timeline and Communication Plan Going Forward:

1. Process has been happening since early March
2. Hours of meetings, prayer, and consultation
3. 14 hours of meetings on 4/6 with Lead Pastors, Board, PastorServe, and the Patricks
4. Meeting with staff on 4/7
5. Additional meeting with Board and Darrin on 4/8
6. Meeting with all volunteer leaders on 4/10-11
7. Invitation to member meeting goes out on 4/11
8. All Journey member meeting at TG on 4/12 at 7pm
9. Worship service devoted to this on 4/16-17
10. Working on scheduling upcoming forums (at least 3) for elders to meet with and hear from the congregation
11. Working on a prayer and fasting plan to invite our entire church into
12. Vision Meetings and April 24 MC preview service will be cancelled
13. Bedenbaugh will take charge of preaching schedule

Commitments:

- 1. We will remain unified and not let Satan use this to divide us**
- 2. We want to see this as an opportunity to tell the truth and love our church well, that it might be a turning point of trust in our church**
- 3. All of our communication and interactions will be transparent (be honest) but hopeful (the power of the gospel is real)**

APPENDIX 8

HANDLING MEDIA REQUESTS

Depending on the size of the church and the community in which it resides, a pastoral disqualification can create a public stir and desire for media attention. It is important that everyone knows what to say or do in such situations.

1. Write and approve a Media Plan. In the plan, be sure to designate the person(s) who would be allowed to speak to the media. For Example:
 - There is no need to release this information to the media. If they call us, Jeremy Bedenbaugh will respond by sharing a statement.
 - Jeremy is The Journey spokesperson. Employees should direct all inquiries to Jeremy. No one else should speak to the media.
 - Jeremy will share the prepared statement, politely decline to take any questions at this time, and thank them for calling.
2. Write and approve a Media Statement. Keep in mind that those outside the church will receive this information. Therefore, keep it as brief and as impersonal as possible. Be sure to point to our ultimate hope in God. For Example:

In recent weeks, allegations of pastoral misconduct regarding Pastor Darrin Patrick were made and confirmed. The accusations were not of adultery nor financial in nature, but his behavior violates the high standard for a pastor/elder outlined in Scripture. This has led to the heartbreaking decision to remove Pastor Darrin from his leadership role at The Journey.

Darrin has willingly placed himself under the care of the elders, and they are seeking to diligently love Darrin, remind him of the Gospel, put a care team in place for his family, and make immediate plans for the church.

With these resources in place, we are extremely hopeful in our God who is powerful to bring redemption and grace from the midst of brokenness.

3. Give explicit instructions to staff and other leaders regarding how to respond if approached by those outside the church. For Example:

In the course of your work, or when you are at church, people may ask you questions about this situation. We ask you to handle it with discretion and professionalism.

If you are questioned:

- a. Thank them for their concern.
- b. You may share the statement that will be provided to you. (The same statement that will be sent to the congregation.)
- c. Ask them to pray that God will bring good from this situation.

If they continue to ask questions, or feel they need to speak to someone, please direct them to Jeremy Bedenbaugh.

4. Write a slightly more detailed “Brief Statement” that can be shared with others who ask about the situation. For example:

Brief Statement:

In recent weeks, allegations of pastoral misconduct regarding Pastor Darrin Patrick were made and confirmed. These actions, combined with a historical pattern of sin, led to the heartbreaking decision to remove Pastor Darrin from his role at The Journey and require him to step down from all internal and external leadership positions.

The accusations were not of adultery, but his behavior violates the high standard for a pastor/elder. In the last few years the elders have experienced and confronted issues regularly and intentionally with Darrin. This reveals that he has not been pursuing a personal walk with Jesus in a manner that reflects his pastoral calling and position as an elder in the church (I Peter 5:1-5, I Tim. 3:1-7). Though we all stumble in many ways, those called to teaching and preaching carry the weighty responsibility of setting an example of a Christ honoring lifestyle with the consequence of stricter judgment (James 3:1).

We agonized over this decision, and from the very beginning of this process, the elders have sought diligently to love Darrin, remind him of the Gospel, put a care team in place for his family, and make immediate plans for the church. Darrin has willingly placed himself under this care.

With these resources in place, we are extremely hopeful in our God who is powerful to bring redemption and grace from the midst of brokenness. Ultimately, our faith in Jesus Christ and His Gospel gives us tremendous hope for renewed health and spiritual vitality for Darrin, the good of God's church, and the glory of Jesus Christ. Therefore, as the Bible teaches us, our hope is not in a leader but in the Lord:

*The Lord is the strength of his people;
he is the saving refuge of his anointed....
Be their shepherd and carry them forever. –Psalm 28:8-9*

APPENDIX 9

HELPING LEADERS CARE FOR THE CONGREGATION IN THE CRISIS OF PASTORAL DISQUALIFICATION

In the midst of crisis, the need to shepherd¹ the congregation can be easily neglected. At First Church,² teams gathered and developed this resource to train our key leaders to be able to evaluate their own emotions, care for our people, and answer FAQ.

Our desire is to honor Christ as we seek to love one another well, assuming the best and providing grace amidst the various ways we will grieve together. In a situation like this, we can never anticipate how individuals will respond or what this will stir up in their stories. We wanted to provide some information to help equip you as you provide care for and minister to your brothers and sisters in the church.

Caring for Yourself

In order to care well for others, we must seek care for ourselves! Tension and anxiety are common to experience in the midst of unforeseen events, such as this. Taking the time to calm yourself and ensuring that your needs are being met may make it easier to sleep, concentrate and have energy as you care for those within your midst. Here are some suggestions to consider in the coming weeks:

- Identify 2-3 people who you know you can seek when you need prayer or a space to process what this situation is like for you. Be on guard not to let these conversations descend into gossip or fear.
- Make space to pray, meditate, and breathe. Distractions abound at times like this so it is helpful to use the Psalms in prayer, both to *express* our emotions to God and for God to *impress* Himself to us.
- Prioritize caring for your body through exercise, nourishing yourself with good food and getting adequate sleep.

¹The larger a church is, the more difficult the communication becomes. In the case of The Journey, there are six separate sites and about 6,000 attenders. The sheer size and numbers led the church to develop a very extensive document to train staff and lay leaders to care for themselves, care for others, and be able to provide timely and accurate communication to those seeking to understand.

²Obviously a created name.

- Establish times within your home/life that are focused on play and connection where you commit to resting from discussing this situation or other stressful circumstances you are facing right now.
- Listen to music, spend time outside, be active, make art, etc.
- Practice Mindfulness: What is this situation stirring up in you? What emotional capacity do you have right now? Are you in a place to sit with someone amidst their fear/anxiety/anger? Do you sense a desire to minimize? Are you sensing a desire to pull away? How are you experiencing God?
- Resist the urge to be solely a Care-Provider or Leader, and find ways to be a Care-Receiver.
- Attend corporate worship

It would be wise to expect to be hit with different emotions at different times in the coming weeks and to have times of feeling tired or weary. Unfortunately, we also know that Satan would like to tempt us, and for us to feel isolated and as if we are alone. Please know that our heart is that you would receive care, and experience that you are one part of a greater Body. If there is anything the leaders or staff can do to care for you as you care for those around you, we ask that you please invite us into that.

Caring for Others—Understanding Others

During the first 72 hours of hearing the news, there will be shock and disbelief. The crisis period usually lasts for 2-3 weeks. In the first 48 hours there will be crazy things said. There will be extreme anger and emotion. In the first three days few church members will think properly. Anger will begin to subside after day three.

Expect people to work through the stages of crisis/grief, which Kubler-Ross identifies as: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. People will hear the news at different times which means that people throughout the church will be at different stages in the process for the first two to three weeks. People will enter the crisis at different times, so the timeline will look different for different people. Some insensitive people may offend others. These types of conversations can lead to broken relationships. There must be sensitivity and awareness.

Expect there to be both irrational sympathy AND antipathy toward both Pastor Joe and church leadership. Some may question their personal faith or their faith in the church.

Preparing ourselves to shepherd our congregation:³

How this news is received by an individual will be influenced by where they fall on the following spectra of topics. The extremes are listed below. Everyone falls somewhere within each spectrum and that will impact their response.

1. How do I perceive Joe? (I'm here b/c of Joe --- I'm here in spite of him)
2. How serious are the offenses? (Not a big deal ----- Unforgivable Sin)

³Understand that in any situation like this, people will react on a spectrum that is largely determined by their previous views of the pastor, the church, and the power of the Gospel. It is helpful to identify these spectrums, name them early, and utilize them in conversations.

3. How fitting is the discipline? (He confessed, it's over ----- 1 Strike, You're Out)
4. How does this affect church? (Best thing that's ever ----- Worst thing ever)
5. How powerful is the Gospel? (Total power to heal ----- People don't change)

Communicating with Others

As we communicate with others, we need to be clear on what happened and how the church is responding. Following is a brief explanation of church discipline, recap of the situation and a description of our response.

Church Discipline⁴

The purpose of church discipline is to maintain the honor and glory of Christ, restore the sinner and remove offense from the church. Our ultimate goal is health, spiritual vitality, and restoration for Pastor Joe, the care of God's church, and the glory of Christ.

Recap of the Situation⁵

1. Accusations of Disqualifying Sin

The Board received accusations of disqualifying sins against Pastor Joe. These accusations fall into the Scriptural categories of:

- Marital Fidelity – not adultery, but inappropriate interactions with 2 women
 - *Scriptural Reference: Timothy 3:2*
- Accountability to Fellow Elders – unwillingness to submit to other Elders
 - *Scriptural Reference: 1 Peter 5: 1*
- Piety: Self Control – lack of devotion to the Spiritual Disciplines
 - *Scriptural Reference: Titus 1:8*
- Humility - a domineering misuse of authority
 - *Scriptural Reference: 1 Peter 5:3*
- Credibility - repeated instances of broken trust
 - *Scriptural Reference: Titus 1:7*

2. Confessions of Disqualifying Sin

Pastor Joe subsequently confessed to the Board that he is guilty of these disqualifying sins and evidence was presented that substantiated the accusations.

Scriptural Reference: 1 Timothy 5:19

3. Removal from Office(s)

The Board has removed Pastor Joe from his position as Lead Pastor due to the

⁴Many church attenders and even members have no concept of Church Discipline or how it works. They will need to be shepherded by having the appropriate Scriptures explained and ingrained.

⁵Once the decision has been made about what level of information to communicate, continually use those same points and Scripture references in every communication that follows.

disqualifying nature of these sins.
Scriptural Reference: 1 Timothy 5:20

4. Repentance and Restoration

The Board, along with Pastor Joe, and an outside agency are pursuing a process of Godly Repentance and biblical Restoration (unto God, his family, and fellowship in the church; but not unto professional ministry at this time).

Scriptural Reference: Galatians 6:1

Responding to those within the church

It is helpful, in times like these, to understand how God designed the brain to work. In times of perceived and real crisis, our brains go into survival mode and our instincts are to fight, flight or freeze. In “survival mode,” we can not access the parts of our brain that facilitate emotion regulation, clear thinking, etc.. The amazing thing is that God designed our “fight, flight, or freeze” moments to be disarmed by three things: glucose, oxygen (the kind we obtain through deep breathing), and relationship/connection. Listening, providing empathy, being ‘with’ and inviting someone to experience “I am not alone, someone hears me, someone knows what this is like for me,” disarms our fear response and allows us to access the upper brain.

In the coming weeks, facilitating connection will be a major way we can care for our church family as we walk through this unexpected season. Some people may need to discuss their experience, while others may benefit from just spending time with someone they feel close to and accepted by, without needing to talk.

Initial Ways to Respond When Someone from the Church asks about Pastor Joe

- Thank them for their concern/love.
- Share the letter if they have not read it.
- Confirm that while it is impossible to provide every detail in situations like this, the information shared is the level truth, that we have shared everything we intend to share as an act of wisdom, leadership, and honor. There is no further story or hidden agenda. Remind them that we have a Gospel obligation to dispel rumors and honor everyone involved in the situation (cf. Ephesians 4:25-32; 1 Peter 2:1).
- Remind them that Pastor Joe is our brother and ask them to pray for the family.
- Remind them that our board and elders are our leaders and ask them to pray for them and our church.
- Direct any further questions to their Lead Pastor (LP) or elders.

Good Things to Do When Giving Support

- Find an uninterrupted time and place to be together if the individual would like to talk.
- Make eye contact, have open body language.
- Ask clarifying questions, summarize what you heard to be sure you understand.
- Acknowledge that this type of stress can take time to resolve.
- Be free of expectations or judgments; times of crisis cause a myriad of reactions, try not to be distracted by behavior or how individuals express themselves and seek to understand their underlying experience.

- Be aware of your capacity for emotional discomfort, anger, tears, etc..
- Don't rush to fill silence. Sometimes space is needed to gather thoughts and feelings.

Things That Interfere with Giving Support

- Rushing to tell someone that he/she or the situation will be okay.
- Discussing your own experiences without listening to the other person's story.
- Giving advice.
- Stopping the person from talking about what is bothering them.

Reasons Why People May Avoid Community or Support

- Not knowing what they need.
- Not wanting to burden or disappoint others.
- Wanting to avoid thinking or feeling about the situation.
- Doubting it will be helpful to share or that they will be understood.

Depending on your role and the people in your circles of care, think through ways you can facilitate individual and group check ins. For example, a community group leader may check in with individuals via the phone to see how they are doing, in addition to making space when their groups are together for individuals to share. This is the type of situation that people will feel differently about at different times, so be sure to seek connection at various times in the coming weeks and expect that at times individuals will need more care, and at other times they will need less care and feel more at peace with the situation.

Responding to Children

It is wise for us to consider how to intentionally care for and protect our children as we walk through this season. From when our children are in the womb, they can sense when their caregivers experience anxiety and stress, and they then experience stress as a result. Our children can't necessarily put words to their feelings of stress, anxiety, or fear, but we can often get clues via their behavior that they are experiencing these feelings.

Here are some ideas to keep in mind:

- The best thing you can do for your child, is make sure that you are receiving the care you need. We cannot be available, attuned parents when we are dysregulated or distracted.
- If you are married, prioritize caring for your marriage amidst this season; children feel and are greatly impacted by marital distress.
- When our children are anxious or feel disconnected from us they are likely to have more behavioral issues; try to see past the behavior to the need your child is communicating (Ie: they need your time/attention).
- If your child does seem to be picking up on some anxiety, expect that your child may resist more at nap time, bed time, being dropped off at school and at other times of separation from you. As much as possible, try to be emotionally and relationally available for an extra snuggle, hug, a few more minutes, etc.. Your calm, responsive and reassuring presence is the answer to your child's anxiety. Try building a bridge of

connection over the separation. At drops off, bedtime, naps, etc, remind them of when you will see them again and create excitement for your reunion.

- There are great resources available to help us communicate the hope we have in Jesus and His gospel to our children in age and developmentally appropriate ways. Three resources we commend to you are: *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, *The Big Picture Story Bible*, and *The Biggest Story: How The Snake Crusher Brings Us Back To The Garden*. While these are children’s bibles, they are not just for children. They paint a picture in words and illustrations that help us to see the beautiful redemptive narrative that is unfolded in Scripture- God’s love for us and pursuit of us, even in our sin and rebellion. Jesus is our only hope for salvation and the forgiveness of our sins, and these story bibles help make this clear and point us to Him.

How can I protect my child(ren) in this season?

- Be mindful of the presence you are bringing into your home (verbally and nonverbally).
- Limit conversation about the situation while they are around.
- Seek care from other adults and not from your child.
- If a child offers a hug or other care to make you “feel better”, thank them and gently remind them that it is “My job to care for you.”

What should I tell my child(ren) about this situation?⁶

After having had time to emotionally process this situation and receive care, parents should begin to discuss how, if and what to inform their child(ren). Each parent, or couple, should decide together what they feel is appropriate based off of the proximity of their family to the Pastor’s, as well as the age of their children. We should not assume that our children need to be told, especially if they are young and will not notice the Pastor’s absence. It will be important for a child to be told a concise narrative, that can be reiterated gently and repeatedly as the child seeks to understand and ask questions. In these times, how a parent shares the story and responds to questions will be important and indicative to how a child makes sense of the story. We must protect our children from bearing the weight of our grief, sadness and uncertainty. Below is a brief example of how you could narrate the story:

“Pastor Joe will no longer be a pastor at First Church. Pastor Joe has made some choices that did not honor himself, his family, the church and the Lord. We are very sad about this, but we are also hopeful that this will bring healing to his heart and his family. The church has leaders who are making sure that his family is taken care of. One thing we can do as a family is to pray for the pastor and his family because we know that God loves them very much. This is a reminder for us that we all need Jesus and his grace. Pastor Joe has a Savior and so do we.”

What if my child(ren) are older (pre-adolescent/adolescent)?

⁶Any traumatic event requires special attention to children. A pastoral disqualification can be very confusing or even faith-shaking to children and teenagers, so significant time and resources must be devoted to helping parents grasp the situation in an age-appropriate manner.

We want to create space for our teens to bring their questions to us, and “hold” their feelings of anger, sadness, disbelief, or unfairness. We don’t need to correct them in these moments, we need to be caring and curious listeners, reflecting what we see and empathizing with what we hear. It’s ok to not have all the answers! Below is a brief example of how you could narrate the story:

“In scripture, it is clear that Pastors are held to a high standard, to lead the church in what is good and right. Pastors are charged with shepherding the church in wisdom and in truth. A pastor is called to live a life that reflects God, and there have been some times when Pastor Joe was not loving people well and reflecting God to them. Because of this, Pastor Joe has been asked to step down as a pastor at First Church so that he could have some time to experience more deeply the mercy and grace of God, so that he might be restored. We call this church discipline. Discipline is not punishment because we know that Christ has taken our punishment on the cross. Discipline is all about us being rescued from the sin that entangles us and being restored to relationship with God and our neighbors.”

What if I can tell my child(ren) is experiencing anxiety?

If your child is experiencing anxiety, the best thing you can do is to be present. Depending on their age, you may consider acknowledging your child’s nerves, but especially with a child age seven and under cognitive discussions of anxiety aren’t necessary. It would be more beneficial to lead your child to a calm state by being with them, offering them a snack or playing a game that involves deep breathing (Blow bubbles with a bubble wand or chewing gum, Blow paper wads or cotton balls across the table, Tell a story where the child helps you imitate a character who is taking deep breath). If the anxiety persists, you may consider planning a handful of rest days, where activities are canceled, media is limited, and the child can stay home near their parents. If you decide to pursue these types of rest days, make sure you as the parent are able to be emotionally and relationally available to your child.

Responding to those outside of the church

Because of Pastor Joe’s public platform and because of First Church’s public image, this information will go public. This will result in questions and comments from those skeptical and/or hostile to Christianity. Their preconceived ideas about pastors, the church and Christianity will come out in conversations.

While the temptation might be to be embarrassed or shy away from these conversations, we encourage you instead to press into these conversations. We will actually have an opportunity with people we might otherwise never have been able to engage.

We will have an opportunity to tell people:

- Christianity doesn’t revolve around the person of Joe, but the person of Jesus.
- Yes there are earthly consequences of sin, but because of the gospel, there are not eternal consequences of sin. Use the opportunity to talk to people about grace and forgiveness.
- Our hope was not in the man, Joe; our hope is in the man, Jesus. Use the opportunity to turn conversations to Jesus and the gospel.

How You Can Pray⁷

Pray for Pastor Joe and his family - *Psalm 19: 7-14*

That they will sense God as Father caring for them.
That the restorative power of the Gospel will heal their hearts.
That God will multiply his grace and peace towards them.

Pray that God would heal our church - *2 Corinthians 1:3-5; Jude 1:22*

That He would comfort those who are mourning.
That He would enable us to be merciful to those who doubt.
That He would encourage those whose faith is shaken.

Pray for the leadership of our church - *Colossians 1:15-20; James 4:10*

That we would follow Jesus as the leader of our church.
That He would enable us to lead in humility.
That God would grant us wisdom and discernment.

Pray for the purity of our church - *Psalm 139:23-24; 1 John 1:8-9; Revelation 3:19-20*

That the Lord will convict us of our secret sins and show us the beauty of His ways.
That the Lord will convict us of our known sins and graciously lead us to honesty, confession, forgiveness, and cleansing.
That the Lord will give us a holy zeal to repent and return to Christ, lest we become objects of his lovingly-painful discipline.

Pray for the unity of our church - *2 Corinthians 5:16-19; Colossians 3:1-3; 1 Peter 2:9-12; 1 Corinthians 12:25-26*

That as we are reconciled to God and would seek reconciliation with one another.
That we would be unified in our identity in Christ.
That we would have a posture of empathy, care, and humility towards one another.
That our leadership and our congregation would be unified as we move forward.

Pray for the Lord to guide and protect us - *Ephesians 6:13-18; Genesis 50:20; Deuteronomy 3:22*

That the Lord will protect us from the evil one who seeks only to steal, kill and destroy.
That what the enemy meant for harm will ultimately be for our good.
That our confidence will not be in ourselves but in the Lord who fights for us.

Pray that the Name of Jesus be exalted - *John 12:32; Luke 11:2; Psalm 96:1-6; Habakkuk 2:14*

That the Lord will be lifted up through this situation.
That people in our city will come to know Christ.
That the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.

You may also find it helpful to pray the Psalms

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of

⁷A crisis like pastoral disqualification requires a lot of information and communication but it is also an opportunity and an invitation for the church to gather and pray. Providing specific categories and Scriptures are important.

sinner, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. Psalm 1:1-2

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. Psalm 19:7-8

The Lord sits enthroned over the flood. The Lord is enthroned as king forever; The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace. Psalm 29:10

Who is like the Lord our God, Who is enthroned on high, Who humbles himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth? He raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap. Psalm 113:5

Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his. Psalm 100:3

For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations. Psalm 100:5

Morning by morning Lord you will hear my voice. I will lay my requests before you and wait with expectations. Psalm 5:3

But I trust in you, O Lord; You are my God and my times are in your hands. Ps. 31:14

When I'm afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I Trust, I will not be afraid. Psalm 56:3

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared. Psalm 130:3-4

I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard by cry. Psalm 40:1

I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies. Psalm 18:3

Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me! Take up buckler and shield and rise for my help! Draw the spear and javelin against my pursuers! Say to my soul, "I am your salvation!" Psalm 35:1-3

How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house...Psalm 36:7-8

I have stilled and quieted my soul; O Israel, put your hope in the Lord both now and for evermore. Psalm 131:2-3

If you would like to send encouragement to The Pastor's Family: PastorJoe@firstchurch.org⁸

⁸Because such situations can cause public humiliation (especially for the spouse and children who are usually more victim), it is advisable to set up a way for the fallen pastor and his family to receive encouragement. The Journey set up a separate email address for this purpose to which only the church administrator had access. The Journey filtered out any problematic messages and forwarded 10

Frequently Asked Questions--These are questions that we believe people may ask, NOT necessarily the questions they should ask. Sadly, difficult situations like this often invite both appropriate questions and strange speculation. We do not expect you to initiate conversations about any of these questions, but want you to be prepared to address any appropriate questions that arise.⁹

Q- You said Joe confessed. What is the difference between confession and repentance?

Confession is a necessary part of repentance. Confession is acknowledging one's sin, but there is more to the process of repentance. This acknowledgement needs to be accompanied by a turning away from the particular sin(s) to embrace Jesus, which bears itself out in fruit over long periods of time.

In 2 Corinthians 7, Paul offers a distinction between "godly grief" and "worldly grief." Godly grief mourns the offense of one's sin before God and the church. Worldly grief mourns the temporal consequences of one's sin, but not necessarily the sin itself.

In light of Joe's characteristic unrepentance in these matters, the Board willingly receives Joe's confession, but remains certain that he needs a long season away from the pressures and temptations of ministry to engage his heart in godly grief and full repentance.

Q- Why did the church membership not know about these "long-term historical patterns of sin?" Why did you let them go on so long?¹⁰

We are searching our hearts and walking back through history, reflecting on conversations we had and opportunities we may have missed. We are asking the Lord to reveal any instances of cowardice or fear that we may have operated in. Our commitment is, and always has been, to follow God's word.

We have sought to approach Joe according to the guidance provided by Scripture itself (Matthew 18: 15-17; Galatians 6:1; 1 Timothy 5:19-21). In light of this, we have sought to move slowly, thoughtfully, and graciously.

In Matthew 18, especially, Jesus shows concern for the sinner's repentance and that the number of people involved remain as small as necessary for producing repentance. Jesus' words in Matthew 18 draw upon Deuteronomy 19, a passage where Moses lays out the procedure for judging criminal cases. This emphasizes the serious responsibility to substantiate the claims being made.

In 1 Timothy 5:19-21, which directly speaks to bringing a charge against an elder, there is an additional emphasis on being careful and certain that the accusations are

encouragements per week to the Patrick family.

⁹It is vitally important to anticipate as many questions as possible that people may ask. A document like this provides answers to those questions for leaders and in turn, they are equipped to provide the same answers to others.

¹⁰In the case of Darrin Patrick and The Journey, the elders noted in the public letter, long patterns of historical sin, leading to the obvious question of "Why then are you just now acting?"

substantiated and not based on any “prejudging” or “partiality” (v21). Galatians 6:1 has called us to pursue this entire process with “a spirit of gentleness.”

In light of the guidance of Scripture and wisdom from the Holy Spirit, our constant aim has been for Joe’s repentance and health. There have been intentional steps along this long process to increase systems of accountability.

Also, we want to clarify that the inappropriate interactions with these women were only *recently* (within the past month) revealed.

Lastly, 1 Timothy 5:24-25 (the key passage on confronting the sin of elders) says, “The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden.”

In other words, both good works and sins can remain hidden for a long time. We simply cannot know the deep matters/motives of a person’s heart until they, circumstances, or the Lord reveals them. That is why Paul tells us to be impartial when we judge elders. We must gather evidence from multiple witnesses and follow the trail of that evidence to its necessary conclusion (whether that implicates or vindicates the elder in question). In this case, as we deeply investigated the accusations, the Lord brought many other (and older) sin patterns to light. We believe the Lord was not allowing these sins to “remain hidden” any longer and we acted accordingly.

Q- We’ve all sinned and Jesus tells us to “Let him who is without sin cast the 1st stone.” You are sinners, why are you casting stones?

Abbreviated Version

This passage is referring to a non or new Christian, not a church leader who is judged more strictly (James 3, 1 Tim 5). Also, Jesus tells her to “go and sin no more.” After confession and belief comes a demonstrable evidence of “walking in His ways.”

Detailed Version

In the specific story of the woman caught in adultery, Jesus was dealing with Jewish leaders who were trying to trap him into rejecting God’s law as revealed in the Old Testament. In responding to these men with “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her,” Jesus rejects their critical, self-righteous attitude *without* rejecting God’s law. But Jesus also responds to the woman, saying, “go, and from now on sin no more.” Jesus’ expects that the experience of forgiveness will lead to the pursuit of holiness in a person’s life. Additionally, the Jewish leaders wanted to cast stones to kill the woman, not redeem her. We are taking these actions for the purpose of asking Jesus to redeem Joe, not to harm him.

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus *regulates*, without *rejecting*, judgment (Matthew 7:1-5). He does not say that we are never to judge, but rather that we are *not* to judge in a spirit of self-righteousness and hypocrisy. In fact, we are precisely told to judge, that is, correct the sin in our brother, by taking the log out of our own eye.

In addition, Scripture clearly teaches that *elders*, church leaders, are judged more strictly (*cf.* James 3:1) as those who will give an account to God for the manner in which they shepherded the church in their care (*cf.* Hebrews 3:17; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

Q- Is everything Joe taught meaningless now? We just had a series on marriage? Is he a false teacher?

As we have expressed in our letter to the congregation, we are thankful for the gifts that the Lord has given to Pastor Joe. No preacher or teacher is without error, however, we are confident that Joe has preached and taught the gospel faithfully throughout his time as Lead Pastor of First Church. This church discipline does not invalidate the blessings that many of us have received sitting under Joe's preaching and teaching. Joe is not, nor ever has been, a false teacher trying to lead people away from the Lord, but a broken man who is in desperate need of the same gospel he has proclaimed.

Q- The punishment seems harsh. Why so harsh? Why public?

First, it is important to distinguish between punishment and discipline. Punishment, by definition, means the infliction or imposition of a penalty as retribution for an offense, whereas discipline is the practice of training people to obey rules or a code of behavior, using punishment to correct disobedience. Within the context of Scripture, we see that biblical discipline does not just have as its end goal the punishing of sin (although there are consequences for our sin), but the restoration of the sinner to fellowship with God and the church. As one author says, the correction of sin is not a retributive action, but a remedial one meant to help the individual Christian and congregation grow in godliness.

The purpose of discipline is not humiliation, the purpose is to follow God's word. 1 Timothy 5:19-20 provides guidance on handling an elder's sin: *Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.*

Alexander Strauch, pastor and author of *biblical Eldership*, comments on v20: "Paul specifically requires the guilty elder to be rebuked in 'the presence of all.' This means public exposure before the entire congregation, not just the council of elders. The major point is that an elder's sin must be publicly exposed, not hidden or swept under the carpet. A spiritual leader's sin must be treated with great concern because it has grave ramifications; it can lead more people astray and can cause the unbelieving world to mock God, the church, and the gospel. If the world sees that local churches take sin seriously, especially in the discipline of sinful leaders, then it will believe that Christians mean what they preach. Furthermore, only when the discipline of an erring church leader is made public is there any chance of controlling one of the most divisive forces in a church: rumor mongering, gossip, and misinformation."

Q- Is there any chance Pastor Joe will ever return to ministry at First Church?

While we believe that there is some point in the future where Joe could be restored to ministry, we have no plans for that to be at the First Church; for the sake of the Glory of God, the peace of the church, and the good of Joe and his family. As we said in the letter, Joe had been building his identity upon ministry platforms. In order to allow for complete healing, we need to remove those platforms so that he can rely wholly on the Lord. Jesus loves Joe more than He loves Joe's ministry and He is doing everything necessary to pursue his heart.

Q- Is it possible to restore a pastor to ministry that has disqualified himself? What would that look like?

Ultimately the answer is yes, but the process of restoration must be done over an extended period of time. The priority for the fallen pastor's restoration should be with the Lord, with his family, with his church (as a member), and then a possible restoration to ministry may be considered. Again, this should only be considered after an extended

period of time.

Even considering restoration of a fallen pastor to some position of ministry leadership assumes that there is true repentance. Hating the consequences of sin and true repentance can look the same at first, so we must allow time to ensure there is true repentance. There is no manual on what the right amount of time is, but again, we must resist the temptation to return someone to a position of ministry leadership too quickly. True repentance can only be seen over an extended period of time.

In considering restoration to ministry, rebuilding trust among other leaders and pastors is a crucial component as well. As John Piper says, “Forgiveness comes quickly, expensively, and immediately, on repentance. But trust doesn't, cannot.” For a fallen pastor to be restored to ministry, he must have the trust of the other leaders (elders, pastors, staff) and the congregation they will be a part of leading. This process of rebuilding trust will take time.

A fallen pastor should not insert themselves too quickly into another ministry. Doing so would indicate that they don't fathom the reality of what has happened to them and others as a result of their sin(s). A fallen pastor should seek employment outside of the church, while humbly receiving the discipline and ministry of the church.

While we believe that there is some point in the future where Joe could be restored to ministry, we have no plans for that to be at First Church.

Restoration of a fallen pastor is an area that we must rely on the whole counsel of Scripture as our guide. The following references are informative, but not definitive.

- James 3:1; 1 Tim. 5:20
- 2 Cor. 13; 2 Cor. 2:5-11; John 18:15-19, 25-27; John 21:15-19; 1 Pet. 5:1
-

Q- How much is the severance? Why do we have to pay for that when he did wrong?

All severance agreements come with a binding confidentiality clause because these are personnel matters of salary. We are being both generous to the family as well as conscientious of church resources. Of course, we do not “owe” someone severance but as Jesus followers, we don't operate on what is owed but on grace. As the founder and pastor of our church for the last 14 years and with a desire to love and support their entire family in a time of trauma, we offer appropriate financial help.

Q- How are Wife and the children being cared for specifically?¹¹

We are providing finances, counseling, and a care team. They may need other things as time goes by and we have invited them to let us know those needs.

Q- Who decides what elders are elected to the board?

¹¹Naturally, the congregation will want to be ensured that the pastor's family is receiving anything they need in such a difficult time.

The pastors and elders nominate local elders and, after a period of testing (them attending and taking on work), the Board approves.

Q- What did the “deeper investigation” entail?

The board utilized PastorServe, had lengthy conversations with Joe’s personal counselor (after receiving signed clearance), and held many meetings with Joe and/or his wife. In addition, there have been interviews with the parties involved and a professional forensic specialist has searched all of Joe’s electronic devices.

Q- What kind of contact will the elders have with Joe through this process?

We hope to have regular contact and are asking our partners for recommendations as to what is helpful. We have not had the opportunity to fully define that yet.

Q- Who will be our preacher?

Right now Jeremy Bedenbaugh and Curtis Gilbert will be handling a lot of the preaching along with local lead pastors in similar rhythms to the past.

Q- Will Joe ever be given an opportunity to publically address the church?

We are certainly open to that in the future, depending on how the restoration proceeds.

Q- Is Joe still a member of the church?

Yes. Joe is a member under the care and discipline of the church.

Q- How are we doing financially? What plans do you have regarding spending/giving?¹²

We have always taken the stewardship of the resources God provides through his people very seriously. While we cannot fully anticipate the financial impact at this time, we have been closely watching spending and giving, and we will continue to do so. Through the generosity of God’s people we have been able to build reserves in our budget for times like this.

Q- What does it mean that Joe broke trust with other leaders?

The pattern of confession, short-term change, and regression repeated itself with key leaders, elders, and pastors in the church. The latest time was a large set of confrontations that resulted in Joe’s confession before all the elders in August of 2015. This was seen as a final moment where all the elders agreed to trust that Joe would engage and be accountable. Then we have recent circumstances.

Q- How are we caring for these 2 women?¹³

¹²Among the big questions to anticipate, finances are close to the top of the list.

¹³One of the first questions people will ask is how the fallen pastor’s family is being cared for, but if there were any victims of the pastor’s sin, the congregation will rightly want to know how those victims are being protected and shepherded.

Though we cannot share personal details, please know that we are doing everything in our power to maintain their anonymity, and to pastorally care for these women.

Q. How can I share this information without gossiping?

To begin, gossiping begins in the heart (Luke 6:45, Proverbs 4:23). Therefore, you should begin by asking the Lord to reveal your motives for sharing this information. It should not be motivated by pride, or have as its goal to mock or insult (Psalm 40:15). If this is your motivation, you should repent before sharing the information. Secondly, you should only communicate the shared information as has been shared with you. Please do not speculate, add or reduce the information.

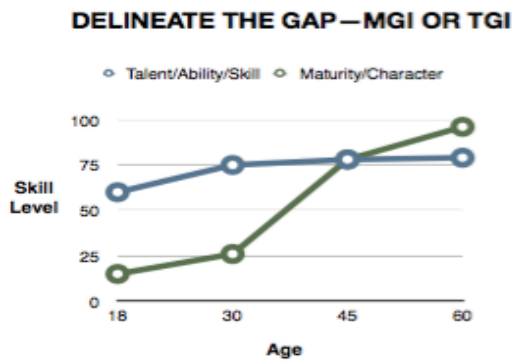
Local Church Contacts¹⁴

If you or others you are caring for have additional questions or need further help processing this information, please contact your local lead pastor or elders.

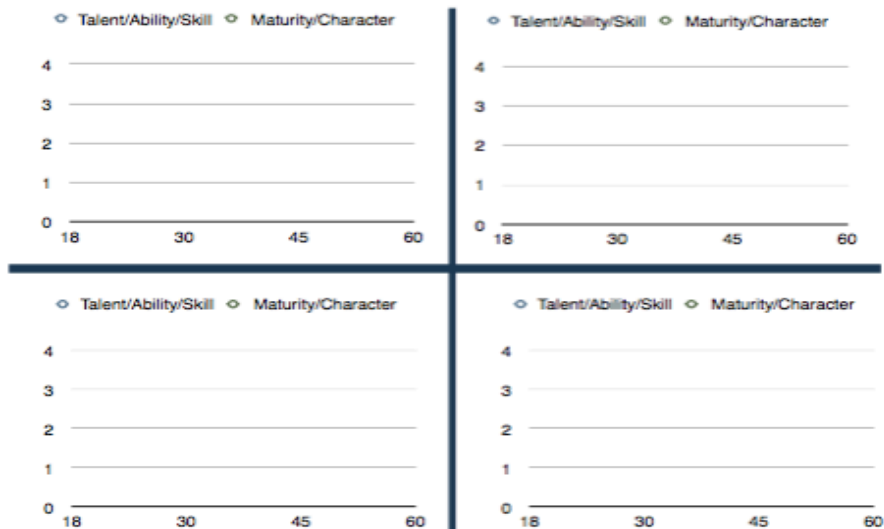
¹⁴Communication should offer contact information for all elders or leaders who can speak to the situation. In the original, every elder and their contact info was listed. That list has been left off here.

APPENDIX 10
 DELINEATE THE GAP

Tools for analyzing character¹



Practice



¹This tool can be used to graph where a pastor's talent is versus where his character is.

APPENDIX 11

SAMPLE COMMUNICATION PLAN

Stakeholder Group ¹	Date	Timing	Format ²	Person Responsible ³	Communication Sensitivity
Our Wives ⁴	March 25	Evening	Pray/discuss	All Exec Elders	Full Details
Pastor ⁵	March 25	Afternoon	In Person Mtg	Tim	Full Details
Lead Pastors	March 25	Morning	In Person Mtg	Jeremy and Josiah	Full minus financials
Care Team	March 26	Morning	Phone Calls	Stephen	Only what wife Desires
Elders	March 25	Morning	Email inviting to mtg	All Exec Elders	Full
Key Advisors	March 27	Morning	Phone Call	Josiah	High Level
Senior Staff	March 27	Afternoon	Email inviting to meeting	Jeremy	Nearly Full Detail, no financials

Most churches have multiple constituencies, and depending on the nature of the pastor's transition or offense, more or less information will be required for different groups. Confidentiality must be stressed in every communication but because groups contain overlap and because such news travels fast, it will be important to communicate quickly and effectively. The best way to ensure such communication is to build agreed groups, timetables, and formats to sync all communication that is happening. It will usually be necessary to organize the communication into phases—who needs to know immediately and who needs to know later. In addition, not every church will have this many groups.

²Depending on the group, initial communication may only be an invitation to a meeting.

³A point person should always be designated so that communication does not get dropped.

⁴In Complementarian churches, both the need to communicate with and care for elders' wives can easily get neglected. Identify them as a stakeholder group early on, decide what information is appropriate for them, and act accordingly. More importantly, the wives need to be prepared for the toll the next 6-8 weeks will take on their husbands and families.

⁵The temptation will be to communicate only to the fallen pastor. However, this is unwise because he will be in great crisis and unlikely to be able to interpret or relay info accurately or

Phase 2 Communication⁶

Stakeholder Group	Date	Timing	Format	Person Responsible	Communication Sensitivity
Impacted Staff					
All Staff					
Deacons					
CG Leaders					
A29					
Partner Orgs					

Phase 3 Communication

Stakeholder Group	Date	Timing	Format	Person Responsible	Communication Sensitivity
Key Vols					
Key Donors ⁷					
Members					
Public					
New Hires ⁸					

appropriately. If the family is angry with church leadership (likely), then use a point person or care team from whom the spouse will agree to receive communication. **Important:** Document all conversations and follow up all verbal conversations with a written summary to all parties to minimize misinterpretation.

⁶ Communication probably needs to be broken into phases depending on the number of groups

⁷ Situations like this almost always impact giving. Do not neglect this group. Instead sit down with key givers, explain the situation, and assure them that you are doing everything possible to faithfully follow the Lord, lead the church, and care for the family. Then ask them for their continued support.

⁸ At this time, The Journey had offered and received acceptances from 2 people but they had not yet transitioned onto staff. It was important to call them, share high level details and give them the opportunity to reconsider. Strikingly, neither hesitated to reconfirm their commitment and at the time of this writing still serve faithfully on staff.

APPENDIX 12

COMMUNICATING TO STAFF

To Staff: Recently, the Board received some non-adultery, non-embezzlement related character accusations about Pastor Darrin.¹ The Board has taken these very seriously and has spent copious amounts of time working through this with him. While Darrin has not disqualified himself permanently from ministry, there are patterns of brokenness in his life, and he has been placed on temporary paid leave. We are still working through many details, but we anticipate Darrin will be out of formal ministry for many months while we seek the Lord's healing and restoration. As these things have emerged, the Board has sought diligently to love Darrin, remind him of the Gospel, make immediate plans for the church, and bring in outside help. We have involved Amie, his counselor, and PastorServe (an organization that assists churches and pastors in situations like these).

As we share this information with our community, people may ask you questions. We ask you to handle it with discretion and professionalism. Please don't initiate conversations about this topic, but if you are questioned:

- Thank them for their concern.
- You may share the statement that will be sent to the congregation.
- Please ask them to pray that God will bring good from this situation.

If they continue to ask questions or feel then need to speak to someone, please direct them to Jeremy B. (insert name and contact info of designated person). At First Church,² we often say that we are a church for flawed and imperfect people. That is just as true for pastors and leaders as for anyone, and we know that we serve a great God who enters into our brokenness in order to save, redeem, and heal us.

Our ultimate goal is health, spiritual vitality, and restoration for Darrin, the care of God's church, and the glory of Christ. We know that God will bring good from this and I have already felt and seen Jesus at work, and I know he will be faithful to you too as you process, live, and work through these challenges.

¹It is important to script out communication to staff and other leaders. This is the scripted communication Jeremy Bedenbaugh shared with The Journey Staff. This particular appendix contains what was verbally shared. The following appendix provides the printed handout given to all staff. In the case of abrupt pastoral transition, most congregants will immediately wonder about or even assume adultery or financial impropriety. If such is not the case, it is important to name that immediately even if further details cannot be shared.

²Continually remind staff and leaders of the church's identity and mission, and keep Jesus and His Gospel at the beginning and end of all communication

APPENDIX 13

STAFF HANDOUT UPON REVEALING THE NEWS ABOUT PASTORAL DISQUALIFICATION

This is formal church discipline. ¹ Purpose of Discipline:

1. Maintain the honor and glory of Christ
2. Restore the Sinner
3. Remove offense from the church

Our ultimate goal is health, spiritual vitality, and restoration for Darrin, the care of God's church, and the glory of Christ.

As we share this information with our church and community, people may ask you questions. We ask you to handle it with discretion and professionalism. Remember that we are Gospel people who want to honor Christ by squashing rumors, innuendo, and false speculation. Please don't initiate conversations about this topic, but if you are questioned:

Timeline and Communication Plan Going Forward:²

1. Process has been happening since early March
2. Hours of meetings, prayer, and consultation
3. 14 hours of meetings on 4/6 with Lead Pastors, Board, PastorServe, and the Patricks
4. Meeting with staff on 4/7
5. Meeting with all volunteer leaders on 4/10-11
6. Church-wide communication goes out on 4/12
7. Worship service devoted to this on 4/16-17
8. Working on scheduling upcoming forums (at least 3) for elders to meet with and hear from the congregation
9. Working on a prayer and fasting plan to invite our entire church into
10. Vision Meetings and April 24 MC preview service will be cancelled

¹Certain information was only shared verbally but this handout was provided in order to ensure that everyone on staff understood what had happened and how to respond.

²It's important to keep staff updated on the timeline for communication

11. Bedenbaugh will take charge of working through and updating the preaching schedule

What to do if someone asks you about Pastor Darrin Prior to Congregational Letter:

- Thank them for their concern.
- Pastor Darrin is currently taking some time off and we expect to communicate that to the full congregation early next week.
- Any further questions directed to Lead Pastors or elders

After Congregational Letter:

- Thank them for their concern/love
- Share the letter if they have not read it
- Confirm that while it is impossible to provide every detail in situations like this, the information shared is the level truth, that we have shared everything we intend to share as an act of wisdom, leadership, and honor. There is no further story or hidden agenda. Remind them that we have a Gospel obligation to dispel rumors and honor everyone involved in the situation.
- Please ask them to pray for the Patricks and our church
- Direct any further questions to LP or elders

Confidentiality: Information like this is a burden but you wouldn't be on staff if we didn't think you capable of carrying it.

There will be immediate employment consequences for anyone posting information on social media or sharing this information inappropriately. Create space for emotion and grief. There are proper and improper venues for this. With your pastors and elders, feel free to yell, cuss, and cry. That is a proper venue for your emotions. With members of the congregation, demonstrating empathy and emotion is of course appropriate but not anger, coarse language, personal commentary, or anything that would be demeaning to the Patricks or church leadership.

If married, you should definitely share this information with your spouse so that you may process. We do not want this type of event to be a wedge between any couple. However, explain to him/her that this is highly confidential and the information is not to be shared with anyone else no matter how trustworthy. **Do not contact the Patricks now. There will be time for that very soon.**

Preparing Ourselves to shepherd our congregation:

First 72 Hours of hearing the news:

- 48 hours - Shock – disbelief. Crisis period begins. Usually lasts for 2-3 weeks.
- In the first 48 hours – there will be crazy things said. There will be extreme anger and emotion.
- In the first three days – few church members will think properly. Anger will begin to subside after day three.

- Expect people to work through stages of crisis/grief: anger, disbelief, sympathy, rage, etc.
- People will hear the news at different times which means that people throughout the church will be at different stages in the process for the first two to three weeks. The clock will start at different times for different people. People will enter into the crisis at different times. Some insensitive people may offend others. These types of conversations can lead to broken relationships. There must be sensitivity and awareness.
- Expect there to be irrational sympathy AND antipathy toward Darrin and church leadership
- Some may question personal faith or one's faith in the church.

Commitments:

- **We will remain unified and not let Satan use this to divide us**
- **We want to see this as an opportunity to tell the truth and love our church well, that it might be a turning point of trust in our church**
- **All of our communication and interactions will be transparent (be honest) but hopeful (the power of the gospel is real)**

*To you, O Lord, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me,
lest, if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit.
Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy, when I cry to you for help,
The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped;
The Lord is the strength of his people; Oh, save your people and bless your heritage!
Be their shepherd and carry them forever. (Psalm 28, portions)*

APPENDIX 14

ELDER LETTER UPDATE

Elders,¹

“How good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity (Psalm 133.1).” We are so encouraged by the faithfulness, unity, and love that you men have shown to each of us personally but more importantly to each other and our church. Day after day, we are hearing people in our church talk about the integrity and joy that you men have in shepherding God’s church. Many of you have already done this, but we would love to have you share via this email further stories of God’s work in the midst of the storm.

We would like to call an all-elder meeting for **Tuesday, May 3 at 7.30pm** (Location TBD) so that we can pray together and discuss any new information that we receive. Please make plans to attend if at all possible. One of the things we will need to talk about is some recently uncovered information...² We communicated this immediately to the Lead Pastors but they might not have had the opportunity to share that information with you yet.

We had the PastorServe team come in Tuesday and Wednesday of this week to both do 1 on 1 counseling meetings with staff and to lead us in worship and teaching. They did an outstanding job and we plan to have them record some of the teaching to post for our congregation soon. We are all encouraging our people to keep processing this with you and other leaders so thank you for shepherding our people in this way.

Also, it seems that the Major Paper in Town has decided to do a story about our church. The reporter on the story reached out to us, and after consulting with members of our church who work in media and a communication expert, we decided that Jeremy should sit down with the reporter and share some thoughts. We certainly do not want any further media attention but they were going to write a story with or without us and we believe that by giving some time to them we have the opportunity to shape at least some of the story with the Gospel. The interview was wide-ranging (there were bigger questions about Christians and culture, media platforms, etc.) but Jeremy did not share any details that are outside of what we have said publicly.

¹After a long, hard round of initial meetings and communication, fatigue will begin to set in and it becomes easy for communication to drop off. People tend to fill these communication vacuums with their own musings and narratives. Therefore, it is important to communicate regularly in writing to elders, staff, and congregation. The following letters are samples of what The Journey used. Each one attempts to model our overall philosophy of “transparent (we are not covering up a story) AND hopeful” (Jesus and His Gospel are our hope).

²Redacted for confidentiality

Finally, the Lead Pastors feel strongly that we need to call our people to a season of prayer and fasting. Pastor Scott worked to reserve the Hall for us on **May 11th**, so that after a day of fasting, we can all meet together to pray and listen to the Lord. We are incredibly excited to gather with our brothers and sisters in this way. We will be announcing this event this weekend and sharing additional details in the coming weeks.

It continues to be an honor to serve alongside this group of men. Thank you for all you do. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact one of us.

Blessings,
Pastor Jeremy on behalf of The Board of Elders

Elder Sample 2

Elders,

Thank you for continuing to walk together and lead our church with shepherding hearts. Personally, I have been meditating on I Corinthians 4 regarding our ministry in the church. People look at us as elders and regard us in all sorts of various ways and with multi-layered expectations but Paul exhorts us to see ourselves as 2 things: servants of Jesus and stewards of His mysteries (v. 1). A lot of things may be expected of us (fairly and unfairly) in this season but 2 things are required, that we honor Jesus by serving our people and that we faithfully live out and expound the Gospel as it has been revealed. In my own childish entitlements, I have been rebuked and strangely encouraged that I am called as a servant. I am not an owner but a steward. I am not owed; I am owned. Therefore, this is not my/our battle but the Lord's and He fights His battles well (Ex. 14.14). I pray that we will be "found trustworthy (v. 2)" and freed to walk forward with hearts full of Jesus' love, confident that He is the righteous Judge (v. 3-5).

Logistically, we wanted to update you on a few things that have happened since we last met. First, thank you for providing feedback through your Lead Pastors regarding the big picture questions we are asking together. On May 24, the Board and Lead Pastors met for 6 hours and had open and honest discussion around all of these topics. The purpose of that meeting was not to make any big decisions but to simply let everyone be heard and make sure we get all the issues on the table. We have continued to personally process these questions and will soon offer some ways for all of us to come back together and seek unity and clarity together.

Second, as you know, over the last 2 months PastorServe has worked with us to develop a 12-month, Gospel-centered healing plan for Darrin and his family and the board and lead pastors unanimously approved that plan on Wednesday morning. We have high hopes for this process and think this gives Darrin and our church the best chance for true healing. That plan is attached for your review.

Darrin and his family recently returned from some time together out of town and are committed to engaging in this plan. Please pray that God would grant repentance to Darrin and healing for his family. Our desires are that one day he is able to stand unashamedly reconciled to Jesus as his first love, and that our church will continue to be a beacon of Jesus' hope to thousands of people everywhere.

Third, the investigation into Darrin's electronic devices and finances are still ongoing.

We expect to get the report on hard drives next week. There were some missing documents and statements on the financial side and those are currently being retrieved, meaning that we will probably be another 3 weeks or so before those findings are available.

Lastly, this weekend we are sending [this](#) congregational update via The City to our people because we feel that we need to remain transparent, continue to communicate actively, and offer them the most up-to-date information on Darrin, his family, and our church.

Thank you again for all you have and are doing to love and lead our congregation through this season. Seeing and serving with you men has been an immense privilege in my life. I am confident that the clear love that you have for Jesus, the desire to share that love with our people, and the ways you challenge each other corporately and me personally to walk more passionately with Christ will lead us to levels of health and joy that we have never before experienced. For, “We are fools for Christ’s sake....we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled we bless; when persecuted we endure; when slandered, we entreat (I Cor. 4.10-13).” We can do that because we are servants and stewards of the Living God.

Blessings,

Pastor Jeremy on behalf of the Board and Lead Pastors.

Staff Update Email

All,

It was great to be with all of you on Wednesday as we engaged with PastorServe and their practical teaching. I hope you got the chance to meet with someone from their team 1 on 1 as I did yesterday and found it very fruitful.

I also wanted to give you all a quick update on a few things. Over the last 2 months PastorServe has worked with us to develop a 12-month healing plan for Darrin and his family and the board and lead pastors approved that plan on Wednesday morning. We have high hopes for this time and think this gives Darrin and our church the best chance for Gospel-centered healing.

I also have a sense right now that many of you as a staff feel that we are in somewhat of a holding pattern or maybe there isn't enough direction? This is somewhat intentional because we want to create space to process, listen for the Spirit's voice, and engage in this season of prayer and fasting. In times like this, there can be a lot of pressure to make big decisions quickly and move fast. As tempting as this is, we need to remember that hurry will not help us when it comes to spiritual healing and direction. So, for the first half of the summer, we will continue our pause and listen to the Lord. During the 2nd half of the summer, we will meditate on the greatness of Jesus in our sermon series and continue having conversations that allow us to discern how the Lord is particularly working in the life of our church right now. I would love to hear from any/all of you about how you see God working/leading right now. Then, in the fall we hope to see our prayer for unity and clarity culminate in rearticulating and recommitting once again to the Gospel mission and vision God has given our church in order to move forward united.

The shared document here is an overview of the summer sermon series which will be

about focusing and meditating on the glory and beauty of Jesus through his 8 "I AM" statements in the Gospel of John, every week displaying who Jesus is and how He meets our most personal needs and universal desires. We are calling it "Behold" based on 2 Cor. 3.18 and the desire to be transformed into the image of the one we Behold.

We would love any feedback you have as well as your hopes and dreams for our people as they engage this series. This is an internal doc, rough draft and has not been edited so no need to make comments on grammar/sent structure. Blessings,

Jeremy

Staff Update Letter on Finances

Hello staff,

Over the past several months, we have had several conversations about some of the financial difficulties we are facing as a church. Our desire is to equip you with accurate information, update you on current realities, and have you join us in prayer as we push into the final 2 weeks of the calendar year (mid-point of fiscal year).

Over the past few months we have talked about giving and generosity with our church and have approached some of our most generous donors to talk about the financial need that exists. That financial need includes some one-time expenses that we must meet but also a need to raise the level of giving and financial commitment among all of our givers and attenders. The first group of people that we talked with about this need was our elders. Collectively they committed to increase the level of their giving by 21%! In addition to this we have received almost \$330,000 in response to our Quiet Campaign of fundraising that targeted our top donors.

During the fall we transitioned away from The City to Planning Center as our donor database and online giving platform. The targeted communication was very successful in that we lost only a small number of donors and as of today we have 430 donors with recurring gifts set up. When we began the transition from The City we had only 370. Keep in mind that not all of the recurring gifts represent new donors but it is good to see donors commit by automating their giving.

During the Next series, there was a specific sermon encouraging our people to take the next step in generosity and giving. Since that sermon was delivered we have had 87 of our people give for the first time, which is 45% more first-time donors that we had during the same period last year.

These all are cause for celebration and we should be encouraged that our faithful members and attenders have responded as we have asked and God has led. However, as we shared at the September staff meeting, the Board approved a budget this year that included more expense than revenue for the first time in The Journey's history, meaning that we still have a significant shortfall. We are continuing to pray that God will move the hearts of His people to help us close the gap, and we want to invite you to join us in those prayers. Consider using Philippians 4.4-20 as a guide and specifically pray that:

- All of us would rejoice as we experience the presence of Jesus in new and powerful ways as we depend on Him like never before (4.4)
- The Lord would free us from anxiety as we are drawn to Him in prayer (4.6-7)

- Difficulties would not be our primary focus but the beauty and faithfulness of Christ (4.8-9)
- We would all find ultimate contentment and spiritual power in Christ (4.12-13)
- Our congregation would be moved to “share in our trouble,” becoming more generous, supplying needs, and glorifying God our Father (4.14-20)

Lastly, the Board has approved a small Christmas bonus for each staff member. Given our financial need, the bonus will not be as much as in years past but our leaders recognize your hard work this year and wanted to acknowledge each of you with a small amount added to your December payroll. Your supervisor will communicate with you specifically next week regarding the amount of the bonus. Thanks again for all you do! Grace and Peace,

Jeremy Bedenbaugh, Lead Pastor
Brent Theis, Controller

Congregational Letter 1

“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.” -2 Cor. 4.16-17

Dear Church Family,

I believe that through The Journey, God is currently writing a story of a church that does “not lose heart” in affliction, knowing that the present pain shapes us for future glory. Paul, who experienced a lot of leadership brokenness in the Corinthian church, invites us to see a painful present as incomparable to God’s glorious future. This season is light and momentary but God’s future for us is an “eternal weight of glory.” Rather than run from the storm, we sail through, clinging to one another and to Jesus, knowing that it is this very moment that is fitting us for our future joy.

Our staff spent Wednesday morning together this week worshipping and being taught from the PastorServe team. They encouraged us (and I you) not to minimize your feelings in the present but to continue to process past and current hurts in healthy ways with staff, elders, deacons, C-groups, and other leaders, to acknowledge any bitterness but not to live there, knowing that the forgiveness of Jesus on the cross gives us the ability to truly forgive, heal, and walk forward.

By way of update, we are continuing to work with PastorServe and Darrin on a comprehensive plan for his personal repentance and reconnection to Jesus and family. We plan to finalize that in the next two weeks and can give you more information then. We will continue to surround them with care, encouragement, and ongoing resources for the season ahead.

Also, it seems that the St. Louis Post-Dispatch has decided to do a story about our church. The reporter on the story reached out to us, and after consulting with members of our church who work in media and a communication expert, we decided that I should sit down with the reporter and share some thoughts. We certainly do not want any further media attention but they were going to write a story with or without us and we believe that by giving some time to them, we have the opportunity to shape at least some of the

story with the Gospel.

Personally, I have been encouraged not to lose heart by your response. I see our church praying like never before. Women and men are examining their hearts and lives, asking the Lord to “search and know” them, revealing any hidden sin. Some C-groups are reporting Spirit-led confession and repentance, which has led to experiencing the deep grace of Jesus. People who were on the fringes are committing to engage, serve and support the church. Married couples are abandoning pretense and hiding to find true intimacy. Many have told me of opportunities this has presented to share the Gospel with friends, family, and neighbors. Even more are searching the Scriptures passionately for encouragement and direction. So thank you for the love and support you have poured out on us as leaders but most of all for seeing this as an opportunity to “fix our eyes on Jesus, the Founder and Perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12.2).”

All of the elders and Lead Pastors believe this is a key moment for our church to engage with each other and with God Himself in new and profound ways. So we want to call our entire congregation to a season of prayer and Fasting. In Scripture and in history, God often uses prayer and fasting in powerful ways to shape His people individually and corporately. biblically, we fast to

- To reveal and mourn sin, overcoming its enslaving power (Jonah 3.5-8, 1 Cor. 6.12)
- To learn to “live” on the Word of God (Duet. 8.3)
- To prepare and find strength for the hard work of obedience (Neh. 1.3-4)
- To seek justice from God for the oppressed and marginalized (Is. 58.6-8)
- To develop a deep and abiding hunger for Jesus (Matt. 9.14-15)
- To corporately seek direction from the Lord at pivotal times (Acts 13.1-4, 14.23)

We will have our first day of fasting, followed by a church-wide prayer gathering on Wednesday, May 11. Having fasted together all day, we will gather at The Pageant (best space that was big enough to host us) at 7pm. We are praying that this will be a time where God will pour out His Spirit on old and young, men and women, the high and the low (Joel 2.28-29), and prepare and guide our church for His mission (Acts 13.1-4).

Though grieving the circumstances that brought us to this present moment, we are excited about the work God is doing and will do to prepare us for His “eternal weight of glory.”

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Jeremy on behalf of the Board of Elders and Lead Pastors

Congregational Letter 2

“And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment.” -Phil. 1.9

Dear Church Family,

Right now, we see God at work in amazing ways at all of our churches. Even as we experience this time of transition, God is answering the prayer above in you, our members and attenders. I have seen again and again your faithfulness to continue to love

and serve one another and be the church everywhere you go.

We want to keep humbling ourselves and asking God to continue His work in and through us. Beginning this Wednesday, we will enter into a season of prayer and fasting as we seek the Lord for unity, clarity, and purity. Elders, staff, and community groups will be fasting from food throughout the day, then meeting at 7pm at the Pageant (in the Delmar Loop) for a corporate time of prayer. We encourage all of our members and attenders to do the same if you are able*.

Throughout the Bible and church history, God's people have set aside time to deny themselves and seek His presence, help, and guidance. By fixing our eyes on Jesus, prayer and fasting help us remove the non-essentials from our lives and remind us of the provision and protection we have in our God, that we really do live on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord (Deut. 8.3).

We're excited to walk through this time together as one church body unifying under Jesus and seeking his direction for our church.

Grace & Peace,
Pastor Jeremy

*If you are unable to fast from food for the entire day, we encourage to fast a meal or follow God's leading as to how you can participate.

**We will continue to post resources at thejourney.org/fasting throughout this time.

Congregational Letter #3

Dear Church Family,

We are so grateful for the deep concern, prayer, and support you have showered on us during the season following Darrin's removal. It is a "fiery trial," yet we are sensing a significant undergirding by God's gracious grace. Your honesty, love, and encouragement have meant the world.

In the coming months, we are committed to pursuing the Lord's will with patience, listening to the Spirit, listening to one another, and taking careful steps forward. We are currently in a powerful season of fasting and prayer in order to intentionally seek purity, unity, and clarity (click [here](#) for fasting and scripture guide). Overall, we have been amazed to see the Holy Spirit at work in our church creating unity rather than strife, self-examination rather than anger, transparency rather than hiding, and trust rather than suspicion.

In our desire to be as open and transparent as possible I have a few updates regarding Darrin and his family and how God has directed us as a church to date. First, after 2 months of prayer, many meetings and discussions our elders have approved a highly customized, Gospel-centered, 12 month plan for Darrin's (and his family's) healing as well as our church's forward movement in Gospel ministry - all with the intended purpose of bringing glory to God. PastorServe (click [here](#) to find out more about this organization), the appointed care team (pastors, friends, counselors), and The Journey elders will lead the way. I urge you to watch the 40-minute teaching video (embedded below) that the Founder of PastorServe, Jimmy Dodd, offered our staff a few weeks ago. It will help you understand factors that lead to a pastor's fall, how restoration

happens, the steps forward for Darrin, what true repentance really looks like, how to process your own questions or feelings around Darrin's removal, and provide encouragement about God's future work.

Second, Darrin and his family recently returned from some time together out of town and are committed to engaging in this plan. Please pray that God would continue to grant repentance to Darrin and healing for his family. Our desires are that one day he is able to stand unashamedly reconciled to Jesus as his first love, and The Journey will continue to be a beacon of Jesus' hope to thousands of people everywhere.

Third, within our church, I want to make sure you know what to expect as we walk forward through this season. In times like this, there can be a lot of pressure to make big decisions quickly and move fast. As tempting as this is, we need to remember that hurry will not help us when it comes to spiritual healing and direction. So, for the first half of the summer, we will continue our pause and listen to the Lord. Through church-wide prayer and fasting we are waiting on the Lord (Psalm 25.5), and seeking His presence and direction. During the 2nd half of the summer, we will meditate on the greatness of Jesus in our sermon series and continue having conversations that allow us to discern how the Lord is particularly working in the life of our church right now. We want to hear from every person who considers himself or herself part of The Journey and will offer various ways to do that. Then, in the fall we hope to see our prayer for unity and clarity culminate in rearticulating and recommitting once again to the Gospel mission and vision God has given our church in order to move forward united.

Finally, I am excited to share with you the upcoming summer sermon series. Collectively, The Journey Lead Pastors and I developed a focus we believe is Spirit-led. For 8 weeks the "I AM" statements (I am the bread of life," "I am the Good Shepherd," etc.) made by Jesus in the Gospel of John, will be highlighted displaying who Jesus is and how He meets our most personal needs and universal desires. We are calling it "Behold" based on 2 Cor. 3.18: *"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."* May we all be transformed into the image of the one we Behold!

Thank you for walking steadfast alongside one another and us. We believe God is doing amazing things in this trial and we do not want to miss them - we remain expectant that He will do great and mighty acts.

Grace and peace to you,
Jeremy Bedenbaugh, Lead Pastor
jbedenbaugh@thejourney.org

APPENDIX 15

KELLER’S DISTINCTION BETWEEN
REMORSE AND REPENTANCE

Seek to get clear about the distinctions between repentance and remorse or “religious repentance.” All of the above speaks to principles and practice of *repentance*, but, in far more cases than not, *remorse for sin* [or “religious repentance”, Tim Keller] is in play.

REMORSE	REPENTANCE
Short-lived	Long-term
Involves emotions	Involves emotion and will
Distressed by the consequences	Distraught by actions
Makes vague resolutions	Makes specific restitution
Wants public attention	Humbly accepts obscurity
Desires immediate return to positions of ministry/authority	Recognizes need to rebuild trust over time
Makes external displays of contrition	Displays internal development and change
Finds fault in how he is treated in the process of discipline	Exhibits submissions to the humbling process of discipline
Hesitates to follow counsel in relation to reconciliation/restitution	Initiates action toward restoring broken relationships and making restitution

Remorse/Religious Repentance is Selfish

“In religion [remorse] we are sorry for sin only because of its consequences for us. Sin will bring us punishment—and we want to avoid that, so we repent. The gospel tells us that as Christians sin can’t ultimately bring us into condemnation (Rom. 8:1). Its heinousness is therefore what it does to God: it displeases and dishonors him. Thus in religion [remorse], repentance is self-centered; the gospel makes it God-centered. In religion we are mainly sorry for the consequences of sin, but in the gospel we are sorry for the sin.

Remorse/Religious Repentance is Self-Righteous

Furthermore, religious repentance is self-righteous. Repentance can easily turn into an attempt to “atone” for one’s sin—a form of self-flagellation, in which we convince God (and ourselves) that we are so truly miserable and regretful that we deserve to be forgiven. In the gospel, however, we know that Jesus suffered for our sin. We do not have to make ourselves suffer to merit God’s forgiveness. We simply receive the forgiveness earned by Christ. God forgives us because he is “just” (1 John 1:9). That is a remarkable statement. It would be unjust of God to ever deny us forgiveness, because Jesus earned our acceptance! In religion, in works righteousness, we try to earn our forgiveness with our repentance. In the gospel we simply receive it.

Remorse/Religious Repentance is Bitter All the Way Down

Last, religious repentance is bitter all the way down. In religion our only hope is to live a life good enough to require God to bless us. Every instance of sin and repentance is therefore traumatic, unnatural, and horribly threatening. Only under great duress do religious individuals admit they have sinned, because their only hope is their moral goodness. In the gospel the knowledge of our acceptance in Christ makes it easier to admit that we are flawed, because we know we won't be cast off if we confess the true depths of our sinfulness. Our hope is in Christ's righteousness, not our own, so it is not as traumatic to admit our weaknesses and lapses. Whereas in religion we repent less and less often, the more we feel accepted and loved in the gospel, the more and more we will be repenting. Although there is some bitterness in any repentance, in the gospel there is ultimately a sweetness. This creates a radical new dynamic for personal growth. The more we see our own flaws and sins, the more precious, electrifying, and amazing God's grace appears to us. The more aware we are of God's grace and our acceptance in Christ, the more able we are to drop our denials and self-defenses and admit the true dimensions of our sin. The sin underlying all other sins is a lack of joy in Christ.

APPENDIX 16

PREPARING STAFF TO RECEIVE SENIOR PASTOR'S CONFESSION IN PERSON

PREPARING STAFF FOR MEETING¹

Overview of the Afternoon by Bedenbaugh and Brief Prayer to open—I met with Darrin last week to hear personal confession. I wasn't sure what to expect; but when someone asked me how it went, and what was it like? One of the words that came to mind was "complicated."

- Some may be excited ("We haven't seen him in a year, what might the Lord have done?"); some may be nervous ("I don't want to be drawn in or deceived again."); some of you may be angry at what he did and what he hid.
- Some of us have been deeply affected by Darrin personally; some of us saw him from a distance and were mainly affected indirectly; some of us joined staff in the last year and have little or no personal context of some of the sin Darrin will be confessing today. But we are all one staff now, so it's good for us to steward this together.
- Some of you may be feeling a lot of different things, others one big thing, and some of you not much.
- You may feel that the Lord has prepared you, and that you are leaning on him as you wait for today; or you honestly might not be able to see what the Lord is doing today.

Wanted to remind us of a few things as we prepare to hear Darrin's confession:

- This meeting is for you—Darrin will probably grow from it (which is good), and I believe it is a good step for us to take as a church. But the main reason we are here today is that Darrin sinned against some of you specifically and personally, and he sinned against almost all of you corporately in his leadership. It is good and right that you should hear his confession of those sins.

¹In any restoration process, one hopes that the fallen pastor will demonstrate repentance and then be willing to come and make open confession to all who have been harmed. In this case, Darrin came and confessed personally to the entire Journey staff. Such a moment can be very emotional and therefore, people need to be prepared for these moments. In addition, there were other staff members who had never even met Darrin and those circumstances needed to be accounted for as well.

- We want you to process this with someone, sometime soon. But if you feel unable to do it here today with your teams, you don't have to stay. If you decide to leave after Darrin speaks, please let your supervisor know. This is only so that we can follow up and care for you; we will not be controlling or rushing your processing, just want to support you.
- Confession is part of a process that takes time. You don't have to decide how to respond today. Verbal confession is part of reconciliation and it can be a sign of repentance, but it is not the same as either. Dr. Diane Langberg is a very wise woman who has been working with churches in similar situations, and she stresses the importance of Jesus as the “embodied word.”
- Words like the ones we will hear today can bring relief, or anxiety, but God has so ordered things that we can receive Darrin's words today without knowing for sure how they will be walked out in his relationship with us. This is part of the reason we are not asking you to respond directly to him today.
- If you would like to meet with Darrin 1-on-1 later (with or without another leader present (male or female)), we can help you schedule that.
- If today brings anything up that you would like help facing, we want to help. Please let me, your supervisor, an elder, or a pastor know and we can help make a plan for how you can walk through that without being alone in it. Amy and others are here from Karis House, and would also be happy to set up a session or more to process with you.
- How you react to what Darrin says today may surprise you.
 - Since Darrin's removal last spring, some of us haven't had time to space to think much about our relationship with him, his absence, or what happened under his leadership. You may find that you are “picking up” where you left off last spring in ways you don't expect.
 - Sometimes, without them or us meaning for it to happen, male spiritual leaders end up occupying Father-like space in our lives. So some of us may find that Darrin had access to deep things in our story that we didn't mean for him to have.
 - Or you may find that you don't feel as much as you expected to. That's ok too.
- You can trust the Lord to care for you, your leaders, and Darrin today as God's sons and daughters. It will be normal for Darrin to feel uncomfortable today. If you find yourself feeling uncomfortable for him, or fixating on what he is feeling, please know that it's normal for you to experience that, but that today you don't need to see that as a calling to lessen his discomfort. If you feel gracious, you can be gracious. If you love him, you can pray for him and feel what you feel. But ultimately the Lord is shepherding him today, which means that you don't have to. You can be a fellow sheep.
- After Darrin speaks, we will be gathering in the cafeteria for lunch with your teams. Your team leads will have questions to help guide that time. Amy, Kristy, Rachel, Diane, and myself will be available to your teams or to any of you individually when we get to the cafeteria or even on the way, to help you process this.

Questions. Prayer in ones or twos as people feel most comfortable.

For Team Leads:

- Group processing follows the same rules, generally, as other discussions. Some people will talk first and often, while others will spend most of the time listening and processing internally and not speaking. At some point it may be appropriate to express curiosity at what the quieter members are thinking or feeling:
“_____, we haven’t heard from you yet, and I’m curious what you are thinking. Would you like to share anything?”
- If you would like help navigating the discussion, feel free to call a 10 minute break and come find another leader, elder, or Karis House person and ask for help.

Questions to help guide discussion:

- What’s it like to be here discussing this with this team today?
- What are three words that describe how you feel right now?
- What memories are coming up related to what you heard from Darrin today?
- How, if at all, do you find yourself wanting to respond to Darrin after hearing his confession?
- What question do you wish you could ask Darrin?
- How can this team support you as your process this in the weeks to come?

APPENDIX 17

WHY CHURCHES WOUND THEIR PASTORS

A renowned Reformed pastor,¹ great preacher, visionary leader, and tender man endured such criticism from his church that he almost despaired. He told one of his confidants, “After 12 years as a pastor, I had to put a wall between myself and my people so I wouldn’t have to quit the ministry.”

“Jack” was another esteemed pastor. An excellent preacher with sterling organizational skills, he fostered healthy church growth and led numerous citywide ministries. When he retired, the leaders of the pastoral search team visited me. We spent an hour getting to know each other, then their presentation began. Before long, I felt compelled to interrupt, “Please don’t tell me your goal is to find a senior pastor who’s more of a shepherd than Jack.” Faces fell.

“How did you know?” I replied: “Jack is friendly and socially adept, but clearly not as sociable as you are—we just spent an hour talking about our families. Jack is always busy preaching, teaching, and leading. Your church has 1,500 people, so you know he can’t know *everyone*. But you’re sad he doesn’t really know all 60 elders. Since you admire him, you long to know him and hope you *will* know your next pastor. But no one is equally gifted at everything, and everyone’s time is limited. Therefore, if this search led to a man bent on shepherding, he would inevitably be less devoted to preaching or leadership. But after 20 years with Jack, the church expects and needs a senior pastor who preaches and leads with excellence. If you want a consummate preacher, teacher, *and* shepherd, you want the perfect pastor.” In short, the committee loved Jack, but they also thought, *We need to fix his weakness*. They forgot that everyone has weaknesses.

‘WE NEED TO FIX HIM’

My work often leads to sustained conversations with elders, un-ordained leaders,

¹Daniel Doriani, “Why Do Churches Would Their Pastors,” The Gospel Coalition, May 23, 2017, accessed January 20, 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-do-churches-wound-their-pastors/>. The article is extremely helpful in helping churches and pastors understand the wounding that comes from criticism and reasons (valid and invalid) for such criticism. His note that the O.T. offers 3 roles—prophet, priest, and king—and that very few people had 2 offices and nobody had 3, except Jesus! Most only had one. Those categories can help pastors, elders, and congregations more fully appreciate the particular gifting and calling of their pastor(s) without expecting him to fill all the roles at once.

and pastors of large, complex churches. With rare exceptions, churches are quite vocal about the flaws of their pastors, whether newly installed or long faithful. Good churches wish it were different, but they tend to think all will be well if the pastor improves, and they take better care of him.

At first, churches are eager to care for new pastors, especially senior pastors. They want to ensure that he has time for his family, that he doesn't work too hard, that he joins a gym or a club. They want to treat him well—certainly better than the last pastor, who finished his tenure visibly exhausted. This intention is typically more enthusiastic than resolute, for the tone changes a few years into the pastor's tenure.

The main problem is almost always criticism and opposition. Every pastor who effectively leads an influential church will face opposition. Heroes like Anselm, Chrysostom, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, and Edwards tasted fierce resistance, even hostility. Because they enacted essential reforms and addressed burning theological debates, confrontation was inevitable.

Anyone with great skill and influence becomes a target. Similarly, a rapidly growing church will rouse opposition from its community, as neighbors protest increased traffic, and nearby pastors—possibly motivated by jealousy—imagine they detect heterodoxy. These troubles are inevitable but manageable. The principal challenge lies within the pastor's own church.

FIVE CAUSES OF CRITICISM

This spring, I spoke to a group of large-church pastors, staff members, and elders. During a Q&A, an elder asked, "What is the single greatest problem facing pastors today?" I replied, "The greatest problem is internal opposition from subversive co-leaders and self-appointed critics within the church." The pastors released a collective groan of recognition and assent.

First, a pastor may face full-blown antagonists who will lie, deceive, and manipulate to destroy him and control the church.

Second, a pastor must negotiate with talented, successful, and therefore opinionated people who love him but believe he's dead wrong about a critical issue.

Third, a pastor pays for the errors of his subordinates. If a staff member commits a major sin, the senior pastor properly faces questions: Did he fail to address a nascent problem? But catastrophes can be unforeseeable.

Fourth, a pastor sees problems that appear to invite, even demand, reform. Most people resist change. Further, those committed to the existing order will be inclined to resist proposals for a new system. New pastors know it is wise to delay changes, if possible, to build trust while making non-controversial improvements. Bold changes arrive later. Machiavelli said there is nothing more difficult in leadership than creating a new order. Everyone who's done well under the old system is an enemy, and those who *may* do well in the new order will be lukewarm allies. Machiavelli is needlessly pessimistic, since a manifestly flawed order always attracts reformers, and there is a minority that simply likes change. Nonetheless, pastors do court opposition when they initiate change. But I want to focus on criticism directed at a pastor's genuine flaws.

Finally, every senior pastor *deserves* criticism for two reasons. Above all, every pastor is

a sinner. Pastors sin both in their private lives and in their work. When thwarted, they become harsh or angry. When self-discipline wanes, they prepare inadequately to preach, lead, or shepherd.

Further, no pastor has all the skills to lead well. To be sure, certain pastors lack self-discipline and essential abilities. But let's focus on pastors with character, skill, and a capacity for work. Even they are criticized for their inadequacies, often fiercely and shamelessly, by their own people.

For example, senior pastors with great skill as preachers and leaders suffer criticism for deficient people skills. Some pastors *are* awkward or aloof. But even friendly, perceptive pastors hear this criticism. Why? Highly gifted preachers and leaders probably are *less* adept with people. Who excels at everything? Beyond that, senior pastors must push through demanding schedules. That can make them seem abrupt. Everyone is finite. Faithful pastors face demands on their time, so they cannot socialize freely. This is unavoidable, yet it offends. Yes, the ideal pastor will be equally *adept* at (1) preaching and teaching, (2) casting vision and leading, (3) and counseling and mentoring. But no human *excels* at every task.

Consider that God ordained three ongoing offices for Israel: prophet, priest, and king. None but Jesus held all three offices. Few had even two: Melchizedek was priest and king, Moses was a prophet and kingly leader, and David was king and prophet, at least informally, through his psalms. Even if we add a few more dual-role leaders, almost no one had two offices and no one but Jesus had all three.

The implication is clear: No church should expect its pastor(s) to excel in the prophetic, kingly, and priestly aspects of godly leadership. No one is equally gifted and passionate about the prophetic (teaching and preaching), the kingly (leading and organizing), and the priestly (shepherding and prayer). Even if a pastor were capable in every area, he'll find one exhilarating, the other exhausting.

BETTER WAY

Why does the church freely, cruelly criticize its pastors for falling short of perfection? Why do we forget that Jesus alone is perfect, that Jesus alone redeems? To demand perfect skill, holiness, and ever-effective labor from anyone is akin to idolatry. Grace-centered churches must know this. But churches idolize their pastors one day and savage them the next. Americans can't bear disappointment in silence, and all too often, we behave more like Americans than disciples.

The author of Hebrews names a better way: "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. . . . Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls. . . . Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you" (Heb. 13:7, 17).

APPENDIX 18

RESEARCH PROFILE AND QUESTIONS

Informed Consent with Low Risk Profile:

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to glean the aggregate experience of multiple churches that have experienced pastoral transition due to moral failure/disqualification.

This study hopes (1) to identify common early warning signs of personal/moral failure, disqualification, or burnout in pastors, (2) to create a crisis roadmap for organizations and churches walking into or through unanticipated leader transition, and (3) to develop a template that churches can use to develop a restoration plan for a fallen pastor/leader, including common mistakes as well as common successes.

This research is being conducted by Jeremy Bedenbaugh for purposes of dissertation research in the area of unanticipated leadership transition in the church. In this research, you will be asked to answer questions related to your knowledge and involvement regarding the unanticipated pastoral transition experience in your church. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this interview, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- I agree to participate
 I do not agree to participate

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

BASIC CHURCH INFORMATION:

Church Name:

Transitioned SP Name:

Age of SP at time of hiring and at time of transition:

Length of Tenure as SP:

Previous background and education of SP:

SP's ministry outside of local church if any (e.g. conferences, writing, church-planting, consulting, etc.)? If yes, was their oversight, accountability, and/or policies for financial remuneration in place? Describe.

Was the SP participating in professional counseling? If yes, was the spouse involved? What was the frequency? Who requested the counseling?

Date of SP removal or resignation:

When was your church founded?

Was your SP the founder of the church?

How long did your Senior Pastor serve before his transition?

Before the transition, did the church have a formal, written policy in place for what constitutes removal and how such removal should be done?

Was the SP removed or did he resign? If he resigned was it a forced resignation?

Was there a formal and documented annual review process for the SP (Peck)? If yes, how long was it in place and who conducted the review?

Does the church have a sabbatical policy? If yes, what is the basic policy and did the SP ever take a sabbatical?

Please describe the ecclesiology or authority structure of your church, i.e. what group or persons has the authority to discipline or remove the SP? Is there any stated policy or procedure for receiving accusations against and/or disciplining the SP?

The leadership team was aware of the process for correcting the SP

SD D DS AS A SA

Age and tenure of individuals in leadership team at time of transition?

Is your church connected to any denominations or networks? If yes, did those denominations or networks provide any assistance during or after the transition? Describe.

Prior To Transition:

Prior to transition, please provide the following church statistics:

Is Church Multi-site?
Weekly Attendance Average:
Number of Staff (FTE's)
Annual Budget in US Dollars:
Overall, our church is financially healthy:

SD D DS AS A SA

Did the SP have close friendships to which the board¹ could attest and confirm? If so, were those friendships inside the congregation, outside the congregation, or both?

Was the SP involved in any formal or informal group outside the church for the purposes of Community, Accountability, and/or Personal Growth?

What avenues related to personal and professional growth did the church provide to the SP? In which of those avenues did the SP participate?

Was there any personal conflict on the leadership team in the year prior to transition? If yes, describe.

Prior to the transition, were there any significant setbacks regarding the SP's personal ministry (e.g. failing to gain support for a particular proposal or initiative, poor performance review, etc.)?

Prior to the transition, what processes, if any, were in place to review, give oversight, and/or provide accountability to the SP? If yes, Please describe how often those processes were executed.

Prior to the process that lead to the SP's transition, were there any previous periods of conflict and/or discipline with the SP? If so, please describe.

Prior to the transition, were there other groups or individuals outside the formal leadership team who brought significant concerns about the SP's character, life, qualifications, and/or ability to lead? If yes, who were they (not actual names but position or connection to the SP/church) and what did they report? How was their report handled with the SP?

Prior to the transition, do you remember the SP displaying any of the following behaviors circumstances, or attitudes:²

- Entitlement
 - Greed
 - Decreased Generosity
 - Anger
 - Self-Pity
 - Impulsivity
 - Increasingly critical of others
 - Pointing to past successes or good deeds to justify present problems
 - Deception/Manipulation
-

¹ See definitions from chapter 1 but the "Board" or Board of elders is defined as the highest team of authority in a particular church. Usually, a multisite church will have a team of "board" or "executive" elders. Other churches may not be familiar with this term or structure.

²These characteristics were chosen by a combination of personal experience, biblical research, scientific research on power and privilege presented in chapter 3, and the assembled expert panel's wisdom.

- Seemingly manufactured vulnerability (tears on command, carefully chosen heartfelt anecdotes of personal failure, etc.)
- Reduced Inspiration or Vision
- Bullying
- Loss of self-control
- Inability to be laughed at
- Loss of previous Zeal and Passion for Jesus, people, and ministry
- Overindulgence with exercise, food, alcohol, and/or drug. If yes, which one(s)?
- Pornography/adultery
- Isolation or Hiding
- Refusal to listen or accept advice
- Refusal to attend or avoidance of certain meetings
- Extremely Weak Spiritual Life/Practices
- Avoidance of Accountability
- Significant Defensiveness or Blame-shifting
- Exhaustion
- Unexplainable but recurring physical maladies
- Significant increase in Social Media presence and/or self-aggrandizing posts
- Unwarranted Accumulation of Debt
- Unnecessarily quarrelsome
- Marriage or Family Problems
- Significant death, loss, or trauma
- Other: Please list.

For any you checked, please describe how long these attitudes, circumstances, or behaviors were experienced?

5+ years 3-5 years 1-3 years 1 or less

The giftedness/charisma of the SP made leaders more reticent to confront or challenge character issues earlier.

SD D DS AS A SA

Church leaders were more reticent to confront the SP due to his power/position of the SP.

SD D DS AS A SA

The leaders of the church would have confronted the SP earlier if not for fear of consequences for the SP and/or the church

SD D DS AS A SA

Was a psychological assessment made before or after, and if so what psychological disorders/pathologies came to light?

Process Questions

Was any new information discovered in the process? Were any of the behaviors/attitudes left unchecked above revealed to be present through the process?

What issue or issue(s) prompted the beginning of the process?

How was the process initiated?

If there were verifiable accusations, what steps or processes were engaged to investigate these accusations?

Who led the process?

How long did the process last?

Did the process include any specific means of investigation such as forensic accounting, professional searches of personal computers/devices, personal interviews, phone records, etc.

The leadership team agreed on what behavior would constitute removal (Peck)

SD D DS AS A SA

Did you formally engage any outside consulting group (e.g., denomination, PastorServe, TinMan) to assist with the process, removal, or transition?

Did the church have any prior plan or protocol in place for the possibility of unanticipated transition?

After, Did you hire/appoint an Interim, move to team leadership, or immediately hire from the outside?

Was there consideration of sabbatical, suspension, or an alternate form of discipline in lieu of disqualification/termination? If so, what?

Post-Process Questions

Post transition, please provide the following church statistics:

- Is Church Multi-site?
- Weekly Attendance Average:
- Number of Staff (FTE's)
- Annual Budget:
- The current financial health of our church is very healthy:

SD D DS AS A SA

At the time of this interview, how long has it been since the formal announcement of transition?

What biblical passages did the church use to shepherd the church during this time?

Did the communication process or information shared differ between constituent groups, e.g. leaders, staff, members, attenders, public? If so, explain.

Did the church provide any resources to the congregation during this period? If so,

please describe.

In the immediate aftermath, how did the church replace the preaching and other ministry led by the SP?

Did the church develop or offer any type of care or restoration plan after the transition, e.g. severance, counseling, coaching, etc.? If yes, how long was the plan and did the SP engage and/or complete the plan? Please describe.

If yes above, how would you assess the success or failure of the restoration plan?

Did the church offer other impacted parties any compensation or care afterward? If yes, please explain.

How did the church leadership communicate with and to the SP's spouse during and after the process?

Was the SP's spouse and/or children specifically addressed by a care plan following the removal? If yes, describe.

Did the SP's spouse or children remain involved in the church in any way after the transition of the SP?

Did the SP's transition lead to significant changes in the vision, mission, philosophy, leadership structure, and/or culture of the church?

Regrets, if any, held by the leadership group? If you had to do it again, what would you do differently?

APPENDIX 19

ORGANIZATIONS THAT SPECIALIZE IN ASSISTING CHURCHES IN CRISIS

Jeremy Bedenbaugh—Author of this project and Senior Pastor of The Journey Church in St. Louis, MO. Jeremy is available for consulting and coaching.

Email: jbedenbaugh@thejourney.org
Phone: 636-541-4728

PastorServe—We serve pastors by providing coaching, crisis support and consulting. When pastors are healthy and thriving in their private (backstage) lives and their public (front stage) lives, the Church has a much better chance of being the beacon of hope God created Her to be. This perspective excites us and serves to keep us laser focused on our reason for existence as an organization!¹

Website: <http://pastorserve.net>
Email: info@pastorserve.org

Address: PastorServe
PO Box 27123
Shawnee Mission, KS 66225-7123

Phone: 877-918-4746

TIN MAN MINISTRIES—**WE EXIST TO HELP YOU GET YOUR HEART BACK.**

Many people live life alone, trapped in the prison of their own intellect, morality, and self-will. Despite being hard-wired for intimate relationships, our fear and shame keep us detached from our own hearts and therefore detached from the ones we love. We learn to cope with life by utilizing any form of escape. This is not living fully; this is barely surviving.

Tin Man exists to change this for anyone who wants more. No matter your situation, we are here to guide you one step at a time on the journey home: home to the God who made you, home to the gifts He gave you, home to your family, home to your passion, and home to your calling.

¹Taken directly from the PastorServe website, www.pastorserve.net.

By investing deeply in the lives of all people through 1 on 1 mentoring, education, training, and consulting, we hope to help you live and lead with whole-hearted passion and integrity. Tin Man helps you get your heart back.²

Website: <https://www.tinmanministries.org>

Contact: Contact Forms Through Website

Red Buffalo— Red Buffalo is a coaching and consulting firm for rare leaders and organizations. Our goal is to work with the one percent, the exceptional leaders, and make them better.

Our goal is to work with leaders who want to be game-changers and who want to change the world by advancing the kingdom through multiplication. We'll do this by serving as an elite coaching and consulting team for the organizations that really get it and that want to increase their influence.

Red Buffalo consultants will strategically engage in a transformational review of your organization with the express purpose of advancing it in faithfulness, effectiveness, scaling and multiplying. The three-stage strategy moves from investigation to innovation to implementation in order to provide fresh insight and game changing direction.

Website: <http://redbuffalo.co>

Contact: admin@redbuffalo.co

Sage Hill Counseling—Sage Hill Counseling is a community of independent practitioners committed to helping people live fully.

Website: <http://sagehillcounseling.com>

Contact: [\(615\) 499-5453](tel:(615)499-5453)

SonScape Ministries—For over three decades, our weeklong, guided retreats have helped thousands of pastors, missionaries, para-church leaders, along with their spouses, to balance the demands of life, family, and ministry while rekindling their passion for Christ and His church.

Website: <http://sonscaperetreats.org>

Contact: **Email:** info@sonscape.org

Phone: 888.766.7227

Mailing Address: SonScape Retreats,
PO Box 700, Divide, CO 80814

²Taken directly from Tin Man Website, www.tinmanministries.org.

APPENDIX 20

PASTOR'S FAMILY SPIRITUAL REFRESHMENT PLAN

Introduction to the Spiritual Refreshment Plan:

We are committed to caring for the families of pastors as well as pastors. After significant life disruption the spouse and children are profoundly affected. Paul wrote to his friend Philemon and said, "Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ." (Phm 1:20.) The word "refresh" comes from the Greek word, *anapauō*, which means, "to cause or permit one to cease from any movement or labor in order to recover and collect his strength." This is a season where the family needs intentional refreshment. Our Lord offered this invitation to his followers, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." (Mat 11:28.) Another way to translate this is, "Come to me... and I will refresh you."

The Pastor's family is locked on a rollercoaster ride of negative emotion: sadness, anger, confusion, sense of betrayal, isolation, humiliation, doubt, shame, and loss. When Jesus announced his mission from Isaiah 51 He promised to bind up the broken hearted, give a garland of joy for ashes, rebuild into oaks of righteousness, and eventually establish them as His instruments of rebuilding others. We are His instruments in this cycle of Gospel restoration.

We believe that the Pastor's family needs attention, care and refreshment in the Lord. After the prophet Elijah contended with the prophets of Baal another huge conflict followed. Jezebel the Queen made death threats on the prophet's life. Elijah fled to the mountain of God where God visited him, spoke to him, and encouraged him. (1 Kings 19:1-18)

The following Spiritual Refreshment Plan for the Pastor's family is designed with the following goals in mind:

Goals:

- To refresh spouse's and the children's hearts in Christ, and for their relationship with him to be deepened, enriched, and rooted in his grace for them.
- For spouse and the children to have a renewed sense of God's love for them, and find their security in his goodness and grace toward them.

- For Wife to have both Individual and Marriage Counseling to process the loss, bring things to light, work through difficulties, address areas where repentance and reconciliation are needed and find wholeness in Christ.
- For Wife and the children to have a safe place to go to process the events that have occurred and questions that have been raised in their souls about God, ministry, family, the church, and their call.
- For Wife to have time with her children to help them process the loss, move toward security in Christ, and grow in forgiveness and relational restoration.
- For Wife to have ongoing care throughout this year since the need for encouragement will continue as new challenges surface, reflection occurs, and a different sense of call is explored.
- For Wife and the children to have time and space to work through changes in existing relationships and pursue new community and an organic support system.

Overview of Recommended Refreshment Plan:

If the Pastor's family is not given an opportunity to receive care from the Lord and others, they will most certainly experience profound and lasting negative effects that can reverberate through generations. Children often appear less affected or seem to adjust more quickly than adults in trauma. They are often like an iceberg, where only a small percentage of the pain and distortion is seen above water. Unaddressed, these issues will damage their relationships with God and others.

Faith, hope, and love are the abiding characteristics of Gospel life (I Cor. 13:13). They are inseparably interconnected and trauma assaults all three. Faith is based on a track record of reliability. God calls us to trust based on his demonstrated faithfulness (Heb. 11:1; I Thess. 5:24). When we experience betrayal, we question our interpretation of our past and our faith is assaulted. In the disruption and powerlessness of trauma we also become afraid to hope. Following disappointment, hope seems risky, even foolish. Without the stability of faith from a reliable past and hope in a secure future, how will we ever find the security to love well in the present? Refreshment in the Lord is not a luxury.

We recommend that Wife, and if necessary, the kids receive ongoing care for the next 12 months. Care will seek to strengthen faith, renew hope, and energize for love. The care will be more intense at the beginning, and then lessen in frequency toward the end.

The following recommendations are based on general needs. **It is strongly recommended that wife be consulted and the plan adjusted with her input.**

Pastor's Family Spiritual Refreshment Plan:

Wife's Assessment and Input

For a variety of reasons, not the least of which is that all feels out of control and beyond her influence, we need her input and buy in. Ideally this needs to be done face to face. The quality of the relational connection is every bit as important as the content of the

plan. Also, the wife needs to be checked on and consulted throughout the process by the Restoration Team. Her mentor (see below) needs to be consulted as well.

Mentoring Sessions

Wife needs mentoring by a Titus 2:3-5 type older and seasoned pastor's wife. The mentor must be able to weep and eventually rejoice with her. She must be able to give strong encouragement without enabling and exhortation without crushing. Selection will be made in consultation with Wife.

The mentoring sessions are intended to provide the following:

- A safe place to deal with emotions resulting from Pastor's behaviors and the departure.
- A place to deal with questions and doubts raised by the recent events at The Journey.
- A safe place to discuss personal issues that the Lord is bringing into the light, especially areas of forgiveness, temptation or past mistakes.
- An opportunity to consider the future, to set goals and to begin to put action steps in place.

Here is a recommended schedule for the mentoring sessions:

- May – August: weekly for 13 weeks
- September – December: every other week for 7 sessions
- January – April: 1x a month for 4 sessions

Counseling Sessions

In addition to the Marriage Counseling mentioned in Pastor's plan, Wife will receive counseling sessions with a TBA counselor. These sessions will be especially helpful to go deeper into any issues that have been raised in the Mentoring Sessions. We recommend arranging this care in careful coordination with Spouse given the other demands on her time (family, mentoring, Sonscape and Chick-fil-A retreats). With Spouse's consent, a release should be signed so the mentor may consult with her counselor.

A suggested counseling schedule is:

- 12 Sessions of weekly care (3 months)
- 8 Sessions 2x per month (4 months)
- 3 Sessions 1x per month (3 months)

Children's Assessment and Counseling Sessions

The children will each be assessed by a child / adolescent counselor and counseling offered as needed. This process consists of observation time, and Q. & A. with the parents and the older children. Normally this is around a four-hour process involving the whole family. The counseling work with the adolescents would be direct. Help for the younger children would be through the parents. It is best for the same counseling group to

work with the entire family system. Karis Kids is available within the Journey family for consultation and possible implementation.

SonScape and Chick-fil-A WinShape Retreats

Pastor and Spouse will spend a week at SonScape Retreats in Colorado. They will also attend an intensive at the Chick-fil-A WinShape Conference Center near Atlanta.

Reading

Spouse will select books to read from the list of books below.

Spouse will share with her Mentor how the books she selected impacted her heart, life, marriage, and relationship with God, etc.

Recommended Reading List

- Ed Welch, Running Scared: Fear, Worry and the God of Rest
- CCEF, Loss Curriculum (one on one with an individual)
- Carolyn Custis James, When Life and Belief's Collide
- Ed Welch, When People Are Big and God is Small
- Elyse Fitzpatrick, A Steadfast Heart: Experiencing God's Comfort in Life's Storms
- Dan Allender, The Healing Path and Study Guide
- Jimmy Dodd, Survive or Thrive: Six Relationships Every Pastor Needs
- Paul Miller, A Praying Life
- Ken Sande, Resolving Everyday Conflict
- Arthur Bennett, The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions
- Henri J Nouwen, The Wounded Healer

Appendix:

SonScape Retreats is a small group spiritual retreat with personalized pastoral counseling for pastors, missionaries and their spouses. It is a week-long experience of exhaling the fatigue and staleness of life and breathing deeply of the Spirit of God. Sonscape is a place to rest, receive, and renew in the beauty of the Rocky Mountains. For more information: www.sonscape.org

WinShape Retreat offers a variety of customized, Christian marriage retreat programs for couples, each uniquely designed to meet your needs. Their experienced communicators include licensed psychologists and counselors, ministry leadership, relationship experts, and trained experiential learning and teambuilding staff. They will personally consult with you to choose a retreat program that is right for you. www.winshape.org

APPENDIX 21

LEAD PASTORS SPIRITUAL REFRESHMENT PLAN

Introduction to the Spiritual Refreshment Plan:

We recognize the need that pastors have to be spiritually refreshed and cared for after long periods of conflict in the church. Paul wrote to his friend Philemon and said, “Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ.” (Phm 1:20.) The word “refresh” comes from the Greek word, *anapauō*, which means, “to cause or permit one to cease from any movement or labor in order to recover and collect his strength.” All of us need refreshing in Christ from time to time. Our Lord knew this and offered this invitation to his followers, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” (Mat 11:28.) Another way to translate this is, “Come to me... and I will refresh you.”

The Pastors at First Church have taken the brunt of the conflict that has resulted from Pastor Joe’s departure. They are on the front lines every day dealing with church members, leaders, their own families, their friends and acquaintances beyond the church, and non-Christians outside the church. Each day there are new challenges. The required energy and love for each situation can begin to take a toll. As a result, it is normal for pastors to experience burnout, doubts, questions, anger, depression, anxiety and grief.

Much of the pressure that the Lead Pastors have experienced at First Church, actually has a long history due to Joe’s leadership style and character issues. There are the normal everyday challenges of being a pastor in a growing church. There is pressure that is put on the pastor’s family and spiritual life. But there has also been a level of anxiety, anger and confusion, that have been brewing for months and even years at First Church due to negative interactions with Joe.

We believe that the Pastors of First Church need attention, care and refreshment in the Lord. After the prophet Elijah contended with the prophets of Baal another huge conflict followed. Jezebel the Queen made death threats on the prophet’s life. The license led to the mountain of God where God visited him, spoke to him, and encouraged him. (1 Kings 19:1-18)

Goals:

- To refresh each pastor’s heart in Christ, and for their relationship with him to be deepened, enriched, and rooted in his grace for them.

- For each pastor to have a renewed sense of God’s love for them, and find their security in his goodness and grace toward them.
- For each pastor to have time with his wife to shore up their marriage, bring things to light, work through difficulties and find wholeness together in Christ.
- To have time with their family to build and deepen the bonds of love.
- To have a safe place to go to process the events that have occurred and questions that have been raised in their souls about God, ministry, family, the church, and their call.
- To have a safe place to go to process negative feelings, attitudes and beliefs that have resulted from Darrin’s behavior and the conflict at The Journey.
- To have ongoing care throughout this year as the need for encouragement will continue as new challenges surface, and time to reflect occurs.
- To draw closer to the other Lead Pastors and develop a deep person’s of community, mission and vision together in the Lord.

Overview of Recommended Refreshment Plan:

In the midst of the crisis, all of the Lead Pastors have been in full tilt, action mode. They have been dealing with members of the church, members of the staff, the other Pastors, and their own families at a fever pitch. Leading up to the announcement of Joe’s removal, each pastor had to maintain a strict level of confidentiality, thereby creating much internal stress and other feelings such as anxiety, dread, and anger leading up to the announcement. One result of all this is, that the Lead Pastors have not had adequate time to process everything that has been going on. They have been the caregivers, but they have not received much care. Jesus said, “Freely you have received, freely give.” (Matt 10:8) All the Pastors will need some time to “receive”, because they have given out at an extreme rate. If they are not given an opportunity to receive care from the Lord and others, they will most certainly experience the negative effects of burnout, exhaustion, doubts, and even possibly their own moral failings.

We recommend that each Pastor receives ongoing care for the next 12 months. The care would be more intense at the beginning, and then lessen in frequency toward the end.

Lead Pastors Spiritual Refreshment Plan:

Coaching Sessions

Each Lead Pastor will receive one-on-one coaching sessions with a member of the PastorServe team.

The coaching sessions are intended to provide the following

- a safe place to deal with emotions resulting from Joe’s behaviors and departure.
- a place to deal with theological questions and doubts that have been raised by the recent events.
- A safe place to discuss personal issues that the Lord is bringing into the light, especially areas of temptation or past mistakes.

- An opportunity to consider the future. To set goals and to begin to put action steps in place.

Here is a recommended schedule for the coaching sessions for each Lead Pastor:

- April – May: weekly
- June – August: 2x a month
- Sept – March: 1x a month

Counseling Sessions

Each Lead Pastor will receive at least one and up to six counseling sessions with Rick Pierce, who is a trained counselor on the PastorServe staff. These sessions will be especially helpful to go deeper into any issues that have been raised in the Coaching Sessions.

Lead Pastor / Elders Retreat

PastorServe staff would lead a retreat day with the Elders including all Pastors and bard members. There will be time for interaction and discussion, teambuilding, worship, prayer, and biblical teaching on dealing with negative feelings and grief.

SonScape Retreat

Each Lead Pastor and his wife will spend a week at SonScape Retreats in Colorado for an intensive time away to build into his marriage with the guidance of trained faculty.

Call Assessment

Each Pastor will go through a 3 to 5 hour Call Assessment with one of the PastorServe staff. This is an opportunity for the pastor to reflect on God's call on his life, his gifts and weaknesses, and how his call will manifest itself in the coming months and years.

Fun Day Trip to Kansas City

The Pastors and their wives, travel to Kansas City on June 27 and 28. They arrive at noon for lunch on the Country Club Plaza. In the afternoon they go to the Escape Room in Lee's Summit, Missouri, for some "teambuilding time and fun together. They eat dinner together at Joe's Kansas City Bar-B-Que, and then attend the Kansas City Royals versus the St. Louis Cardinals baseball game at Kauffman Stadium. They spend the night at the Hyatt Place in Overland Park, eat breakfast and return home to St. Louis.

Family Vacation

PastorServe recommends that each Pastor take their family on a vacation before the end of the summer. It is crucial for the pastor to get away with his wife and children and be completely removed from the demands and stress of The Church. During this time of upheaval, it would be tempting to not take a vacation. But the families of the Lead Pastors need time together more than ever. The church should do everything they can to provide inexpensive lodging and even some additional money to make the vacations possible for each of the Lead Pastors.

APPENDIX 22

ELDER ENCOURAGEMENT PLAN

Goals:

- To encourage each Elder in Christ, and for their relationship with him to be deepened, enriched, and rooted in his grace.
- For each Elder to have a renewed sense of God's love for them, and find their security in his goodness and grace toward them.
- For each Elder to have time with his wife to enrich their marriage, bring things to light, process challenges and find wholeness together in Christ.
- To have time with their family to build and deepen the bonds of love.
- To have a safe place to go to process the events that have occurred and questions that have been raised in their souls about God, ministry, family, the church, pastors and their role in leadership.
- To have a safe place to go to process negative feelings, attitudes and beliefs that have resulted from Darrin's behavior and the conflict at The Journey.
- To draw closer to the other Elders and the Lead Pastors at The Journey, and develop deeper community, mission and vision together in the Lord.

Overview of the Elders Encouragement Plan:

In the midst of the crisis at church, the Elders have been putting in long hours at while working at their own full-time jobs. They have been interacting with multiple parties, each Elder had to maintain a strict level of confidentiality, thereby creating much internal stress and other feelings such as anxiety, dread, and anger.

One result of all this is, that the Elders have not had adequate time to process everything that has been going on. If they are not given an opportunity to receive care from the Lord and others, they will most likely experience the negative effects of burnout, exhaustion, doubts, and even possibly, their own moral failings.

PastorServe recommends that each Elder takes time to pursue a relationship with Christ and receive care for their souls.

Elders Encouragement Plan:

Daily Reading and Worship

One of the greatest sources of encouragement is the Bible. Paul says, “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” (Romans 15:4)

PastorServe recommends that each Elder commits to a daily reading plan of the Bible accompanied with a time of prayer. We recommend that you set aside at least 30 minutes a day for a period of 40 days. There are several reading plans available through mobile apps or online. You might try using an ancient approach called Lectio Divina as a way of drawing near to God and listening to him through the Scriptures.

Coaching Sessions

Each Elder will receive a minimum of 2, one-on-one coaching sessions with a member of the PastorServe team. There will be the option of having an additional 4 coaching sessions if needed. These sessions will occur in person.

The coaching sessions are intended to provide the following

- A safe place to deal with emotions resulting from Joe’s behaviors and departure.
- A place to deal with theological questions and doubts that have been raised by recent events at the church.
- A safe place to discuss personal issues that the Lord is bringing into the light, especially areas of temptation or past mistakes.
- An opportunity to consider the future. To set goals and to begin to put action steps in place.

Counseling Sessions

Each Elder may receive up to six counseling sessions with Rick Pierce, who is a trained counselor on the PastorServe staff or a PastorServe recommended St. Louis based counselor. These sessions will be especially helpful to go deeper into any issues that have been raised in the Coaching Sessions. These sessions can also be attended by the wife of the Elder as an opportunity to enhance and strengthen their marriage.

Lead Pastor and Elders Retreat

PastorServe staff will lead a two-day (one night) retreat with the Lead Pastors and Elders of The Journey. There will be time for interaction and discussion, team building, worship, prayer, and biblical teaching on dealing with negative feelings and grief.

Family Vacation

PastorServe recommends that each Elder take their family on a vacation before the end of the summer. It is crucial for the Elder to get away with his wife and children and be completely removed from the demands and stress of the church and their business. During this time of upheaval, it would be tempting to not take a vacation. But the families of the Elders need time together more than ever. The Elders should schedule the summer so that they can cover for each other at The Journey as they take some needed time off

with their families. PastorServe can assist in arranging a getaway to The WhiteStone Inn, a four star bed and breakfast located outside of Knoxville TN.

APPENDIX 23

POTENTIAL FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

Project Title: Quiet Fundraising Campaign		
Charter: Non-publicly raise \$1,000,000 from Elders/Pastors and dedicated attenders to pay for unexpected 1) serious maintenance needs across campuses, and 2) our commitment for pastoral restoration.		
Business Case	Problem Statement	Kairos Team
<p>Raising capital at this time in the life of the church is sensitive and the need for additional operating dollars is now. Recently the 2015-16 fiscal shortfall of the church was presented to all attendees and the church responded eliminating the shortfall. In November the sermon series and year-end push will challenge the church-at-large to give further. Hence, approaching the church-at-large is not desirable at this time. Our church has many leaders and faithful Christ followers that are deemed dedicated to the mission and vision of The church. Prayerfully approaching the dedicated Journey members/attenders in private meetings to share the needs and ask for financial support may provide the money needed to cover the current expenses and the major maintenance projects.</p>	<p>The Church is providing a severance salary and counseling support to Pastor and family. Major maintenance improvements on various campuses (i.e., tuck pointing school, Kids rooms, etc.) are needed for the safety of attendees as well as to reduce the possibility of failure, creating greater expense in the future. These items were unexpected and The Journey is using the current operating budget allotments and cash reserves to meet these existing commitments. The 2016-17 budget is at \$8.7 million (which includes a \$676,636 cut) and the revenue projected is below that amount at \$8.2 million. Our cash reserve is 65% of best financial practice putting the mission and ministry at risk. With the exception of 3 critical staff positions there is a hiring freeze as well as a salary freeze for existing staff.</p>	<p>1) Jeremy B 2) Josiah C 3) Tim Y 4) Stephen R 5) Jeremy I 6) Tim H 7) Jeff F 8) Rusty M 9) Curtis G 10) Scott H 11) Janet C, 12) Michelle B 13) Megan B</p>
Scope	Goals and Objectives	Timeline

<p>IN Scope</p> <p>1) Top 100 donors by private invitation from pastors/elders</p> <p>2) Involve the prayer team for prayer</p> <p>OUT of Scope</p> <p>1) Top 300 active members/attenders across all campuses by group</p> <p>2) Campus service announcements or requests</p> <p>3) Letters of solicitation</p> <p>4) The City announcements or solicitations, etc</p>	<p>1) Create and train a Kairos (Greek: right or opportune moment) team to meet with high-capacity people, share the church's story, and ask for greater financial commitment so The church may advance our mission.</p> <p>2) Raise \$1,000,000 by December</p>	<p>September 1-21 Planning</p> <p>September 21 - October 5 Board approval and training</p> <p>October 6 - Nov 23 Launch 1:1's meetings</p>
Project Risks	Constraints and Dependencies	Miscellaneous

APPENDIX 24

SENIOR PASTOR 360 REVIEW FORM

360 Review: Key Staff Performance Assessment¹

Feedback Request

Thank you so much for the gift of your time and support to the ministries of The Journey Church! Because of your important role on our ministry team, we would like to ask you to assist us in The Journey Staff Performance Assessment process, by providing specific feedback regarding the performance of the staff member named below. Regular review of our goals, results and performance is important to us, and we appreciate being able to incorporate your unique perspective.

To ensure the most authentic feedback possible, your participation is anonymous. We will be collecting feedback from multiple sources and will pass on to our staff only commonly repeated themes. Thank you for your role in this key process. Please feel free to call me directly with any questions or concerns.

Employee Information

Feedback Recipient:

Position:

Supervisor:

Ministry Area:

Relationship to Feedback Recipient: Co-worker, Supervisor, or Direct Report

Questions

1. What is going well under this individual's leadership?
2. What is not going well under this individual's leadership?
3. What is missing under this individual's leadership?

¹These are the questions that are used for 360 interviews for The Journey Senior Pastor. Results are anonymously aggregated and used in formal review and feedback.

4. Please provide any additional information that might help in assessing this employee:

Competency Rating

Please indicate the rating that corresponds to your assessment of how well the staff member demonstrates the dimension noted. Please do not rate areas that are not applicable to the individual's role.

Scoring Key:

5= Exceptional

4= Exceeds Expectations

3= Meets Expectations

2= Needs Development

1= Unacceptable

Leadership & Decision Making

Questions:

- Effectively casts vision and direction
- His/her leadership effectively builds trust
- Creates enthusiasm and sense of team
- Intentionally follows up on directions/feedback
- Handles conflict appropriately
- Collaborates well with others
- Works well with diverse personalities
- Uses good judgment when analyzing problems
- Encourages others' ideas and opinions
- Demonstrates ability to compromise

Comments:

Shepherding, Development, & Care

Questions:

- Values people over policy. When interacting with him/her I feel valued & cared for
- Effectively equips and develops teams for the work of ministry
- Intentionally develops new leaders
- Is generally familiar with my individual job performance
- Provides effective coaching and feedback for growth
- I feel personally empowered by this individual to perform my job duties and responsibilities

Comments:

Integrity

Questions:

- Pursues learning and individual growth

- Demonstrates transparency, both personally and professionally
- Is a careful steward of kingdom resources
- Models a commitment to pursuing personal holiness

Comments:

Quality of Work

Questions:

- Is an expert in his/her area of work/ministry
- Plans, prioritizes and implements well
- Follows up on tasks in a timely manner
- This individual's availability meets my expectations and needs
- Anticipates what needs to be done
- Is a self starter/shows initiative
- Is available and responsive to requests

Comments:

Communication

Questions:

- Comfortable, clear and concise when communicating
- Uses vocabulary that can be understood by individuals of different comprehension levels
- Presents ideas in a well organized manner
- Communicates appropriately during stressful situations/times
- Listens actively without interrupting
- Communicates constructive feedback to staff/lay leaders

Comments:

Preaching

Questions:

- The preaching points are clearly rooted in the text and squared with the whole teaching of scripture
- The central theme is an illustration of Christ - the message is clearly all about Jesus
- When preaching, the preacher avoids moralizing or psychologizing, and distinguishes these from the gospel
- When preaching, the preacher exudes a balance of warmth, love and humility but, also force, power and authority
- When preaching, the visual presentations follow the message and enhances comprehension
- The preacher's sermons encourage and challenge believers toward maturity in Christ and demonstrate to unbelievers the power of the Gospel
- The sermons acknowledge or address varied audiences (most specifically non-believers)
- The application of the sermons are sufficient and relevant

Comments:

APPENDIX 25

OVERVIEW OF PURPOSES AND PROCESSES OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Not everything displeasing to God is a ground for church discipline.¹ Offenses which require discipline are three kinds: Heresy, which consists of holding beliefs, doctrines, or practices contrary to the Scriptures and condemned in the subordinate standards; Immorality; and Contempt for the established order of the church.

Definition of “Contempt:” Contempt is willful conduct done in deliberate disrespect of a court of the church, the constitutional documents of the church, or the officers of the church acting in their official capacities.

Definition of “Heresy:” Heresy is the expressed or implied denial of one or more of the essential doctrines of Christianity, openly taught and obstinately maintained.

Definition of “Immorality:” Immorality is conduct inconsistent with the biblical standards for conduct, including but not limited to bickering, brawling, debauchery, drunkenness, gossiping, hatred, idolatry, impurity, slander, and sexual immorality such as adultery, fornication, homosexual practice, and bestiality. The terms “bickering” and “gossiping” as used are intended to deal with those acts that are disruptive to the peace and unity of the church.

Purpose of Discipline:

1. Maintain the honor and glory of Christ
2. Restore the Sinner
3. Remove offense from the church

Disciplinary sanctions which may be administered by church elders are admonition, suspension, removal from church office, and excommunication. When a milder sanction fails to reclaim the offender, it may become the duty of the elders to proceed to the administration of a more severe sanction.

Definition of Admonition

Admonition is the formal reproof of an offender by church elders, warning of his guilt and danger, and encouraging him to be more careful and watchful in the future.

Definition of Suspension

¹Some of this appendix adapted from the Book of Discipline from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church which can be found in full at www.epc.org.

Suspension is the temporary exclusion of church members from the sacraments and/or from other church ministries or activities. With respect to church officers, suspension may include the exclusion of the officer from office and the sacraments. It may be either definite or indefinite as to its duration. Suspension should generally be indefinite in its duration, continuing until the person suspended gives such evidence of repentance as may warrant its repeal. The good of the offender and/or the church may require that the offender be suspended for a definite length of time, even though he confesses his sin and gives evidence of repentance.

Definition of Removal from Office

Removal from office is the sanction by which the offender's ordination and election are set aside, and the offender is removed from all church offices without excommunication. Removal from office may or may not be accompanied by the administration of other sanctions.

Definition of Excommunication

Excommunication is the removal of an offender from the membership and fellowship of the church. Excommunication shall be administered only in cases of offenses aggravated by a continuing refusal to repent. The purpose of this sanction is to reclaim the offender, to deliver the church from the disgrace and injury of his offense, and to motivate the church with fear by the example of his discipline.

IMPORTANT AND KEY BIBLICAL PASSAGES

Matthew 18.15-19: **15** "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. **16** But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. **17** If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. **18** Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed[f] in heaven. **19** Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. **20** For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

Galatians 6.1-2: Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. **2** Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

I Tim 5.19-23: **19** Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. **20** As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. **21** In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. **22** Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure. **23** (No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.) **24** The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. **25** So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden.

Actions for Discipline

An action for discipline begins:

- A. By a Person or Persons: When a person files a written charge with the Board of Elders
- B. By a Group of Elders or the Board of Elders: When the group having pastoral oversight determines that a charge is in order and there is a strong presumption of the guilt of the accused.

Preliminary Investigation of a Charge by a Person or Persons after written notice:

- A. The elders should make an initial written response within 7 days.
- B. The elders should begin a preliminary investigation (or appoint a sub-group to investigate) to determine whether there are sufficient grounds for an official trial.
- C. After the preliminary investigation is concluded, the elders will make a determination in writing whether or not there is a strong presumption of the guilt of the accused.

Proceedings When a Determination of a Strong Presumption of Guilt Exists:

In the event of a determination of a strong presumption of the guilt of the accused, the elders (or appointed sub-group) should appoint a date for a formal hearing and set the date and means for the proceedings.

APPENDIX 26

CONSOLIDATED LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PREVENTION, MANAGEMENT, AND RESTORATION

Focus on Prevention. Elder teams should work to keep their pastor grounded in reality, especially when the church is in a season of growth. In these times, it is much easier for a SP to consolidate power, believe that any opposition is an opposition to the Lord's work, stop seeing and ministering to everyday people, hire more staff who will take him away from the congregation, and believe himself to be God's vessel for redemption.

Gifting. The more gifted a leader is (like Solomon), the greater the potential for "success" to override developing patterns of abuse, and thus, the more guarded he and his elders should be. Those charged with accountability can most easily excuse and overlook internal character flaws when external success soars.

Marriage and Friends. Evaluate the pastor's marriage and friendships. Maintaining basic marital satisfaction makes one reasonably happy even in the midst of professional failures. Similarly, joining a regularly meeting group of friends offers the psychic equivalent of doubling one's income.

Churches can enhance preventative measures by taking several action steps now:

1. Use the informal and formal review processes to evaluate not only competence but also character
2. Require a minimum amount of time that a person must be a member of a church prior to becoming an elder
3. Offer elder training that sets the priority on character over gifting,
4. When examining a candidate for pastoral employment, get character references and ask him about his personal walk with Christ as much as his public ministry for Christ,
5. Initiate spiritual conversations, not just work conversations on the elder board,
6. Act early and gently when warning signs first appear
7. Recognize the difference between and have a formal policy in place beforehand for both an elder's performance disqualification and elder's moral disqualification
8. Practice confession of sin together as a brotherhood of elders

9. Work to ensure that elders have intimate friendships where real life issues get discussed
10. Put in requirements that pastors take at least 4 weeks of vacation and 2 weeks of spiritual retreat every year
11. Note that a publicly rebuked elder cannot be considered repentant simply by confession, tears, and other outward signs. Restoration must be the goal but time, testing, and fruit must be the means.
12. Accountability is good but authentic spiritual friendship is best. Accountability often means a relationship characterized by what one 'has to be shared' while a friendship is a relationship characterized by what one 'longs to share.' When SP's isolate themselves from real relationships or begin to thing such deep relationships impossible, they begin to deny their humanity and accept the road that will likely lead to much suffering and pain in the future.
13. Help Pastors obey the **Oxygen mask principle**. Before every flight on a commercial airplane, the flight attendant gives a safety briefing in which he/she instructs passengers in the event of an emergency to "put on your own mask before helping others." The reason is: if the adult passes out from lack of oxygen, then he/she is no use to those around them. In the same way, pastors often get so busy helping those around them that they fail to place on the oxygen mask of grace over their own lives. Eventually, they suffocate because they have nothing more to give.

Summary of 1 Timothy 5.19-25:

1. Pastors must be honored and cared for
2. Sin must be confronted
3. Accusations must be supported by multiple witnesses.
4. It is not the occasional but the persistent sin that requires public action.
5. Public rebuke should be preceded by personal confrontation and time, but when the confrontation is ineffective, and the sin persistent, the public rebuke must be carried out.
6. The purpose of public rebuke is to restore the sinner and to instill a healthy fear of the Lord for all those witnessing it.
7. A person executing judgment must strive to be fair and pure in the process.
8. There is no substitute for caution and time.

Communication During Crisis:

First, decisions must be made about how much information can and should be shared.

First, prior to providing any written or verbal communication, be sure to consult Human Resources, legal counsel, personnel policies, and church by-laws to be sure that all actions are in accord with Scripture, stated policy, and the law.

Second, decide early which things should be communicated to which groups and in which order and develop a written communication plan from which everyone involved is working. Generally, a cascading communication is recommended in quick succession. For instance, you might begin with the larger group of elders, move to executive staff, then deacons, then community group leaders, members, and finally the entire church. Confidentiality must be stressed in each meeting, but everyone should know that information like this inevitably leaks, thus the need for the meetings of different groups to occur as close together as possible. Use all communication to clearly state the steps being taken to care for the pastor's family and any potential victims.

Third, communicate about your communication with the disqualified pastor and his family. Before putting anything in writing, be sure to share it with the pastor and his spouse. Be clear that church leaders are not seeking their permission but their feedback and blessing. Their approval is not required but their input should be sought and more importantly, as they are reeling from the consequences of his sin, good shepherding requires us not to add further shock and surprise. Failure to tell them exactly what will be said and when will further strain relationships and further endanger the potential success of restoration. This will ensure that the family is included, loved (by not being blind-sided), and respected. Do everything possible to build transparency and trust. It is important to Document all conversations and follow up all verbal conversations with a written summary to all parties to minimize misinterpretation, 'he said/she said, and strife.

Fourth, teach on the difference between confession and repentance or what

Paul calls “worldly grief” and “godly grief (2 Cor 7).” Confession is acknowledging or admitting a wrong. But the Bible calls for repentance. Repentance is a change of heart allegiance that turns away from sin to God and evidences itself over time by bearing fruit in keeping with that repentance (Luke 3.8). Such distinctions help the church grow in knowledge and also understand that confession can be seen immediately but cannot be truly called repentance for some time after. Typically, the more grievous and long-term the person’s sin, the longer an oversight team needs to determine whether there is true repentance or only confession.

Fifth, explain to the congregation the difference between forgiveness of sin and restoration to office. Since forgiveness is at the center of the Christian faith and message, a congregation will typically assume that such forgiveness means bringing the pastor back and conversely, that not bringing the pastor back (or planning to do so) means an unwillingness to truly forgive on the part of church leadership. Typically, congregants will say things like, “aren’t we all sinners” or “let him who is without sin cast the first stone.” However, there are distinctions to be made between being a sinner and an unrepentant sinner as well as a difference between meeting the standard for forgiveness and meeting the standard for church office.

Forgiveness means to choose to send away another’s offense, to choose not to hold a person’s sin against them. Restoration, however, is different. Restoration means to re-establish the previous relationship of trust, authority, office, and/or proximity. Examples typically help here. For instance, Richard Nixon was pardoned by Gerald Ford after his resignation. He was forgiven the offense but he was not restored to office as President. An additional example might be the parents who forgive their child’s convicted killer in a courtroom. Such forgiveness demonstrates an amazing display of love but it does not lead to the freeing of the killer. He is forgiven by the parents but not restored to free citizenship. Therefore, the disqualified pastor should ask for and receive forgiveness but restoration to office remains an entirely different matter.

Fifth, explain the different types and possibilities of restoration. Since Christians distinguish between restoration to office and personal forgiveness, it can be helpful to talk about the categories of restoration. Generally, there are four:

- **Restoration to Fellowship**—the sin is of a nature where the person must be suspended from certain benefits of the church such as coming to The Lord’s Supper. In this case, restoration means, restored to full fellowship in the church.
- **Restoration to Membership**—if the person is unrepentant, then the elders will at some point decide that the person is excommunicated or treated as a non-Christian and therefore a non-member of the church. In this case, restoration means, the sinner’s repentance and evidence leads the church elders to declare him a Christian and ready to re-enter the membership rolls of the church. These restorations must take place before restoration to office.¹
- **Restoration to Vocational Ministry (Office) in the Current Church**—If the elders believe that sufficient time has passed and sufficient evidence of repentance has happened, then the church may (though Paul cautions against all haste [1 Tim 5.23]), choose to restore him to elder or pastor in the church.
- **Restoration to Vocational Ministry outside the Current Church**—This category is the same to the one above, offering the possibility of restoration to ministry but removing the possibility of *restoration to ministry (office) in the same church*.

Sixth, decide early on what the restoration plan is unto. Do you hope to restore his spiritual and relational life only, restore him to ministry in another context, restore to membership in the church, or restore him back to your church in particular? Many churches want to adopt a “wait and see” approach but this generally leaves the pastor, his family, the staff, and the congregation in the turmoil of uncertainty for too long. Paul is clear that we must not be hasty in laying on of hands (1 Tim 5.23) whether that is the first time or a restoration. Thus, even if you intend to restore him to ministry in your church,

¹In many cases, the church may determine that the elder is permanently disqualified, for example if a pastor is convicted of rape or sexual assault, that would warrant a permanent disqualification.

a long period of time must be required.² Therefore, if there is no intention to ever bring the fallen pastor back regardless of process or time, state that clearly to the congregation up front.

Seventh, decide what person(s) will take on the duties vacated and communicate those changes quickly and clearly. Clear intentions on preaching and decision-making are absolute musts, even if they are only on an “interim” basis. It can be tempting to bring in different guest preachers to provide high quality preaching and alleviate that burden from other staff, however what the congregation needs at that point more than excellent quality is faithful stability.

Eighth, follow up early and often. The more that the staff and congregation receives updates, the better they will feel and the more equipped they will be to carry that information to others. Constant communication prevents information vacuums from forming and false rumors from spreading. Generally, these follow-up communications should include updates on the disqualified pastor and family (how are they doing, being cared for, are they in town, what to say if you see them, etc.), personal reflections from current leaders, next steps or general direction for the church, and ways to support and pray for the church.

Ninth, set a general tone for all communication. Something like “transparent but hopeful” is recommended. This generally communicates that leaders are leveling with congregants rather than spinning the truth while still maintaining the future hopefulness the Gospel provides.

Care for the care-givers. A crisis of leadership failure places enormous strain on those who are left to care for the church during the crisis. This partly explains the

²A minimum 1-5 years is suggested depending on the severity, depth, and length of the sin patterns.

often-perplexing personal instructions Paul offers Timothy (1 Tim 5.22-23). He must recognize that such times bring exhaustion, stress, fear, and increased susceptibility to temptation. Such a plan should account for the leaders' spiritual, emotional, financial, physical, and family needs. Coaching, counseling, meals, money for vacation assistance, and additional time off are just some of the necessary ingredients. But Paul commands it, and failure to attend to those in the crucible will often lead to future burnout of these leaders and the replication of another transition.

APPENDIX 27

ELDER CHARACTER AND CALLING EVALUATION

Calling¹

Personal Calling to Jesus (Likert Scale for statements)

1. My love of God's Word is growing.
2. I am consistently reading God's Word for personal devotion to Jesus.
3. I am regularly and specifically communing with God in prayer.
4. I am regularly and specifically repenting of sin and fighting for faith.
5. I am regularly praying for and sharing the gospel of Christ with the lost.

Communal Calling to the church family (Likert Scale for statements)

6. I have fulfilled my commitment as a partner of The Austin Stone in personal devotion.
7. I have fulfilled my commitment to tithe my income to the Austin Stone.
8. I have fulfilled my commitment to participate in communion.
9. I have fulfilled my commitment to engage the lost personally, locally and globally.
10. I have fulfilled my commitment to not gossip and to pursue unity.
11. I have fulfilled my commitment to service and engagement in biblical community.

Leadership Calling to the office of elder (Likert Scale for statements)

12. I have discipled specific men in formal settings in the last 12 months.
13. I have grown in my skill in teaching sound doctrine.
14. I believe to the point of conviction the theological convictions of The Austin Stone.
15. I have meaningfully participated in elder dialogue and development of our theological positions.

¹Provided by the Austin Stone Church.

16. I have grown in my precision and accuracy in doctrine.
17. I regularly pray, by name, for the members of The Austin Stone.
18. I have regularly counseled people through sin and/or crisis.
19. I have been faithful to identify and resolve conflicts amongst believers.
20. I have intentionally taught and corrected doctrine to particular people in our church.
21. I have regularly prayed for and visited the sick.
22. I have regularly had a diverse set of partners and unbelievers in my home.

Culture

23. I am committed to pursuing a plurality of leadership by communicating my ministry discussions as cases appropriately on The City.
24. I am committed to pursuing a plurality of leadership by making decision as a team rather than as an individual.
25. I am committed to pursuing a plurality of leadership by taking initiative in ministry rather than waiting to be given something to do.
26. I feel just as responsible for this body as any other elder, staff or leader.
27. I demonstrate my ownership for this body consistent with my level of belief of my ownership.
28. I understand who the lead among equals is on the elder team(s) I serve on.
29. I have submitted well to God's appointed leader of my team(s) this year.
30. I have submitted well to other elder teams that I am not a part of this year.
31. I trust other elder teams and other elders.
32. I can confidently say that I often seek feedback.
33. I can confidently say that I often admit to my mistakes.
34. I can confidently say that I often defer credit and give credit where credit is due.
35. I make pursuing accountability with other elders a priority.
36. I show strong and lasting support of leadership decisions made by my team.
37. I am known to be a man who people trust.
38. I am known to have a heart of generosity and disposition of trust.
39. I have responsibly reviewed information shared with me on The City, including cases, data and reports.

General Practice

The following commitments represent general expectations that enable unity.

40. I have faithfully given 5-10 hours a week to serving this body in the way my team needs me to serve.
41. I am available to my team and this body in more than spirit.
42. I am considered faithful and dependable to attend elder meetings on my campus

- team.
43. I am considered faithful and dependable to attend elder meetings on my functional team(s).
 44. Eldership is my first priority beyond my responsibility toward Jesus and family.
 45. My time has reflected by priorities this year.
 46. I have been a faithful shepherd this year.
 47. I have been regularly present and visible at Sunday Services.
 48. I have been regularly present and visible at campus events.
 49. I am seen by a group of people as a father figure.

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING AN APPROACH FOR
UNANTICIPATED LEADERSHIP
TRANSITION IN THE CHURCH

Jeremy Elton Bedenbaugh, DMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Shane W. Parker

The purpose of this project was to develop an approach to unanticipated leadership transition in the church. Chapter 1 demonstrates that unanticipated transition of a senior leader creates massive upheaval in any organization, but especially in the church where leadership is predicated upon personal integrity. Chapter 1 also describes the history and context of The Journey Church.

Chapter 2 focuses on early warning signs of and leadership acumen needed when pastoral disqualification occurs. The chapter demonstrates the principles necessary to guard against moral failure through Solomon's story and the Pastoral Epistles.

Chapter 3 studies "Moral Licensing," which shows a pastor's potential propensity to use past good deeds to justify present bad. In addition, the chapter wrestles with the nature of power, the right use of which leads to flourishing.

Chapter 4 summarizes interviews with five churches that experienced unanticipated leadership transition. It offers lessons learned, ways to guard against disqualification, potential fallout from transition, and early warning signs.

Chapter 5 finishes the project with personal reflections related to my own journey leading through pastoral disqualification as well as theological clarifications.

VITA

Jeremy Elton Bedenbaugh

EDUCATIONAL

B.A., The College of Charleston, 2001, magna cum laude

M.Div., Covenant Theological Seminary, 2005, magna cum laude

D.Min., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018, summa cum laude

MINISTERIAL

Pastoral Intern, Island Community Church, Charleston, SC, 2002-2003

Associate Pastor, Greentree Community Church, 2005-2012

Ministerial Committee Chairman EPC, Mid-America Presbytery, 2009-2013

Lead Campus Pastor, The Journey Tower Grove, 2012-2015

Senior Pastor, The Journey, 2015-