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THE HIGH COST OF LEADERSHIP:
EQUIPPING LEADERS FOR LOSS

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THE HIGH COST OF LEADERSHIP:
EQUIPPING LEADERS FOR LOSS

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To my amazing wife, Shanna, who when I was about to lose it all, gave the ultimate demonstration of grace and love. You are a picture of Jesus to me. I dedicate this project to you and our four girls, all of whom I love only second to Jesus and far ahead of my ministry. May you always count the cost of following Christ and find it far outweighs anything.

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PREFACE

I would like to thank my incredibly courageous and encouraging wife, Shanna Lehr, for her support while I pursued this doctorate. It literally would not have been possible without her love and support. She is the one who has truly sacrificed, caring for our four small children while I was locked away in my office typing, reading a book while we relaxed together as a family. Without her holding things together as well as encouraging and spurring me on, this project would never have happened.

Second, I would like to thank our daughters, Ella, Ava, Janie, and Gracie. At times in this project we had to make sacrifices together as a family and, while you were not always been happy about those sacrifices, you have always been understanding. My youngest children wondered if I would be able to look into people's bodies once I was a doctor. While that will not be the case, Lord willing, this work will give each of you a greater look into my life when you are old enough to understand what I have written.

To the elders and congregation of Southbridge Fellowship, thank you. Thank you for guiding me in the decision to accept the challenge of completing this project. Thank you for supporting me throughout the study and work of completing this project and, more than anything, thank you for allowing God to use you to shape and mold me as a leader. I am grateful for your patience with me as I learn on the job how to be the kind of leader that God desires for me to be. You are truly a loving and gracious church that desires to see people even your pastor connected to Jesus for life change. Thank you Jason Tovey for always being willing to talk. Thank you Jon Cullen for always being

willing to listen. Thank you Allin Foulkrod for getting in my business when I needed help the most. Thank you Dave Lenhart for your encouragement. Thank you J. D. Hensarling for your continued friendship. Thank you Pritesh Garach for challenging my thinking and explaining to me what it means to get a degree.

I would also like to thank Dan Dumas, Trevor Joy, Rob Wilton, Beau Hughes, Jared Musgrove, Matthew Younger, Ronnie Parrott, and Adam Lancaster for being the best learning cohort around. Before Dan called to invite me to do this program, I was praying and looking for a group of men with whom to learn and grow. I was not wanting all the work or even the degree that came with this group, but I am grateful for each of you. Thank you for spurring me on to love my family, ministry, and, most of all, my Lord more. Keep the text messages flowing after this is all said and done.

My prayer is that God will use this project to better equip future leaders for the difficult and rewarding journey that God has laid out for them. I want also to thank each of the many future and experienced leader survey respondents who took the time to share and, Lord willing, impact the ministry leaders who will benefit from this project.

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May 2016

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to investigate the high cost of leadership through the losses a leader experiences in ministry in order to equip future leaders for loss.

Goals

This project was guided by two goals. The first goal was to assess the significant statistical findings between future ministry leaders and experienced ministry leaders regarding loss due to their leadership role. This goal was accomplished by administering a survey to both future ministry leaders (see appendix 1) and experienced ministry leaders (see appendix 2). This goal was completed after receiving and analyzing 51 surveys from future ministry leaders and 100 surveys from experienced ministry leaders. The results were analyzed to see themes in expectations versus experiences between the two groups.

The second goal of this project was to write material to equip future ministry leaders for loss in light of the findings from these surveys and, based on the teaching of the apostle Paul, to believers and leaders in Philippi regarding loss as a leader. For this portion of the project, I analyzed the views of both future and experienced leaders regarding their expectations and experiences regarding loss as well as exegeted the book

of Philippians, applying the truths taught there to future leaders as the primary audience. This goal was accomplished by integrating both the qualitative and quantitative statistical findings throughout the equipping material based on Paul's teaching on leadership loss in the book of Philippians.

This study found that many future ministry leaders enter ministry aware that there will be a cost and that the work will be difficult. A strong majority, approximately 83 percent, agreed or strongly agreed that their future ministry will be relatively difficult (see appendix 4). Both future and experienced ministry leaders affirm that God will or has primarily used their most difficult times in ministry to shape them the most.¹

However, it seems as if many enter ministry more confident when they know what they will be giving up. Fifty-three percent of future ministry leaders agree or strongly agree with the statement "I am entering the ministry fully aware of what I will be giving up."² I have determined that this is probably an unfair question. How can anyone be "fully" aware of what they will be giving up when one may not even be aware of all the idols currently occupying his or her heart? How can they be "fully" aware not knowing whether they will face persecution, illness, rejection, betrayal, or some other emotional distress? In contrast to what future leaders expected, 11 percent fewer experienced leaders say they agree or strongly agree with the statement "I entered ministry fully aware of what I would be giving up."³ Something must have happened that

¹Just over 87 percent of future ministry leaders agree or strongly agree with the statement, "I believe God will primarily use my most difficult times in ministry to shape me the most." Just under 82 percent of experienced ministry leaders agree or strongly agree with the statement, "God has primarily used my most difficult times in ministry to shape me the most."

²See question 15 in appendix 4.

³See question 15 in appendix 3.

showed their expectations and their actual experiences were not the same. When reviewing an open-ended question about loss in ministry both groups discussed the loss of relationships. The experienced leaders cited things like betrayal, having to fire friends, the difference of friendships, even with staff, because they were the boss (see appendix 3). When reviewing the same question for future ministry leaders about expectations rather than experiences some did anticipate a strain on relationships, but the answers were much more diverse. While strained relationships were mentioned, it was clear that even with these expectations, they could not know what the future would hold. One future ministry leader said it well when asked “What do you anticipate will be your greatest cost/loss as a ministry leader,” simply responding, “I’m afraid of the possibilities” (see appendix 4). These findings have been incorporated into chapters 2 through 5 to be used to equip future leaders for the high cost of leadership.

Context

There are staggering statistics all over the internet about pastors leaving the ministry every month, year, even every day. The most frequently cited statistic says that 1,500 to 1,700 pastors leave the ministry every month.⁴ The problem is that most of those

⁴This statistic is cited frequently on the internet but does not have a valid original source. The place that is often referenced is the Francis Schaffer Institute, which says this information came from two conferences in 2005 and 2006. Ed Stetzer’s article, “That Stat That Says Pastors Are All Miserable and Want to Quit (Part 1),” demonstrates why this is not true and not a trustworthy statistic. His reasons are as follows: first, it is from a convenience sample and is not representative of pastors in the U.S. and, second, the conference could have been for pastors with troubled marriages or ministries. These would skew the stats. See Ed Stetzer, “That Stat That Says Pastors Are All Miserable and Want to Quit (Part 1),” accessed November 29, 2015, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/october/that-stat-that-says-pastors-are-all-miserable-and-want-to-q.html>.

statistics are wrong.⁵ LifeWay Research did what has been called “a first-of-its-kind” study about pastors leaving the ministry. Scott McConnell, LifeWay Research vice president, says, “Pastors are not leaving the ministry in droves.”⁶ The findings of their study showed that only 1 percent of pastors abandon the pulpit each year.⁷ However, this does not mean that ministry is easy. Approximately 74 percent of experienced ministry leaders surveyed for this project agreed or strongly agreed that their ministry position is relatively difficult (see appendix 3).

I remember when my wife and I were planning to enter seminary in a city we had never lived without any real idea what ministry would be like. We planned a trip to the seminary I wanted to attend in Dallas, Texas. As recently engaged college students about to graduate, we did not have much money. I stayed with my friend, Shawn, who graduated a year earlier than us, and she stayed with some girls that he knew. Shawn also allowed us to borrow his car, which I accidentally illegally parked in a large, unfamiliar city. His car was promptly towed. That evening was quite an adventure that included our hitching a ride with a drug dealer and his seemingly intoxicated friend to the impound lot where I had to borrow \$4 from the aforementioned drug dealer to get my friend’s car back. By God’s grace, no one was injured, and my fiancé and I lived to tell the story, but the advice of our new seminary friends still rings true today. They shared with us that

⁵Lifeway research debunked most of these statistics here: “That Stat that Says Pastors are All Miserable and Want to Quit (Part1),” accessed November 29, 2015, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/october/that-stat-that-says-pastors-are-all-miserable-and-want-to-q.html>.

⁶“Despite Stresses, Few Pastors Give Up on Ministry,” accessed November 29, 2015, <http://www.lifewayresearch.com/2015/09/01/despite-stresses-few-pastors-give-up-on-ministry/>.

⁷“Reasons for Attrition Among Pastors: Quantitative Report,” *Pastor Protection Research Study*, accessed November 29, 2015, <http://www.lifewayresearch.com/files/2015/08/Reasons-for-Attrition-Among-Pastors-Quantitative-Report-Final1.pdf>.

when one decides to go all out for the Lord it is as if Satan paints a target on his or her back. No wonder after being baptized Jesus was immediately⁸ sent out into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan for forty days. Luke tells us this was not the end of his temptations by Satan but “when the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13).⁹ Those forty days were not the end of the temptations. Satan was looking for an opportune time, perhaps when Peter told him not to go to the cross or when he was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. Perhaps it was far more often than one could ever realize. After all, Jesus was tempted in every way just as we are (Heb 4:15). Satan is also looking for an opportune time to destroy ministry leaders. One survey respondent said,

It’s not usually just one person or one incident that leads a pastor to get out of ministry; it’s 1,000 different negative comments, emails, whispers, and Facebook messages over the course of years. It’s death by paper cut: at some point, you realize you’re bleeding out and you haven’t even noticed that you had a thousand little nicks. (see appendix 3)

Those who have stepped out in obedience to God’s call on their lives without any assurances of how things will end up know all to well that a life of faith is a life lived in the battle zone that Paul warns of in Ephesians 6:10-17. Jesus was serious when he warned that the enemy wants to steal, kill, and destroy us (John 10:10a). Sometimes that comes with a haymaker knock-out punch in some area of weakness, a chink in one’s armor. Sometimes it happens like the survey respondent said with a ton of little jabs that

⁸The NIV does not always translate the word for “immediately” as in Mark 1:10, but it does so in Mark 1:12 as “at once.” This is a significant word in Mark. James Brooks states that it is used 42 times to heighten dramatic tension. See James A. Brooks, *Mark*, The New American Commentary, vol. 23 (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 1991), 42, 44.

⁹Bock points out that Satan did not depart for long as Jesus’ confrontation with the demons resurfaces in vv. 4:31-44. See Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 130.

wear one down over time. Regardless, there is an enemy who may not seem present now, but who is waiting for an opportune time.

This threat of danger does not mean that one should not step out. John Piper, in his book *Risk Is Right: Better to Lose Your Life Than Waste It*, writes, “The early Christians gave their property and their lives for the sake of others because they knew that on the other side of death Jesus would be their great reward.”¹⁰ They were ready and willing to suffer loss here rather than waste their lives. The goal of the ministry leader is not comfort and convenience; it instead should be the result of walking by faith and, in the life of faith, there will be losses. Later in his book, Piper, commenting on Romans 8 where Paul asks if things like tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, or sword will separate us from the love of Christ, writes, “The reason these things will not separate us from the love of Christ is not that they don’t happen to people whom love Christ. They do.”¹¹ The point is that “in” those things we are more than conquerors.¹² The battle is real. For some it will mean persecution, for others conflict in the church, for others illness, for all the emotional stress of caring for lives one has no control over, and, for some, a thousand little paper cuts or jabs from the enemy. It is not something one merely reads about in a book, it is real.

While it is exciting to listen to a sermon or read a book that eloquently lays out the various elements of the armor of God or hear stories of others who have personally

¹⁰John Piper, *Risk Is Right: Better to Lose Your Life Than Waste It* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 15-16.

¹¹Ibid., 42.

¹²Ibid., 43.

experienced spiritual battle, there is nothing like stepping out by faith and feeling the full assault of the enemy. The real statistics do tell that while few are leaving the ministry, the ministry is tough and great losses are ahead for those who will travel down such a road. Eighty-four percent of pastors say they are on call twenty-four hours a day.¹³ One in three pastors who pastored in a previous church experienced a significant personal attack at their last church.¹⁴ Forty-eight percent of pastors agree that they often feel the demands of ministry are greater than they can handle.¹⁵ Fifty-four percent of pastors agree that the role of pastor is frequently overwhelming.¹⁶ “This is a brutal job,” McConnell writes in reference to pastors. “The problem isn’t that pastors are quitting—the problem is that pastors have a challenging work environment.”¹⁷ Ministry is difficult regardless of how many people quit. The LifeWay study suggests that it is less than 250 pastors who leave per month for reasons other than death or retirement.¹⁸

The statistics can never tell the countless stories of all that is lost in ministry. Few young people entering the ministry can be prepared for what it will cost them. Not only did my wife and I have almost no idea what seminary would be like, we had even less of an idea of what ministry would be like. God planted seeds of a dream in our hearts

¹³“Reasons for Attrition among Pastors,” 4.

¹⁴Ibid., 3.

¹⁵Ibid., 4.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷“Despite Stresses, Few Pastors Give Up on Ministry.”

¹⁸“Reasons for Attrition Among Pastors,” 7.

while I was finishing up my master studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. God gave us a vision to see a church that existed for the sake of our city. We wanted to see a church that had an impact far beyond the walls of the place we meet on Sunday mornings, that will change people for eternity. We had a dream of the Research Triangle area in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina becoming the city on a hill that Jesus spoke of in Matthew 5:14-16.

Little did we know that God's plan was not just going to change a city, but he was also going to change us. We got a glimpse of this before we even moved to Raleigh to plant a church. While we were finishing up our time in seminary, I interned at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas. My typical day consisted of what you would think an intern would do at a 20,000-person church—run errands, make phone calls, and do whatever needed to be done. However, as I was nearing the end of that internship, I had the opportunity to sit down with the Senior Pastor Jack Graham and talk in the church's restaurant. During that conversation, he asked me to preach. I left that meeting in the clouds. I could not believe that a lowly intern like me would get an opportunity to preach at this amazing church. I immediately called my wife and started to remind her of all the blessings in our lives. We had recently found out we were pregnant with our first child, I was graduating, and now I was being given the opportunity to preach. When I returned home that day, I checked our voicemail, and we had a message from the obstetrician. My wife is a nurse and had told me a week earlier that she had some labs drawn, but the doctor would not call unless something was wrong. Figuring that some "zytes" were off or something, I called my wife and told her the doctor had called with her lab results, but he did not say what they were on the message. I selectively

quoted a verse to her from Job 2: “Can we accept good from the Lord and not bad also?”

For the next couple of hours, neither my wife nor I were able to get in touch with the doctor. When he called back, I ran to the phone and just missed the call. I immediately tried to call back and there was no answer. Then I called my wife’s cell. She did not answer either. Now, I was frustrated they both knew what was going on, and I had no clue. I kept calling her, but no answer.

Eventually, she pulled up in front of our house, got out of her car, and came to the door. When I opened the door, her blue scrubs were a blur as she walked right past me. I followed her to the bedroom. I was not ready for what I saw next. When I turned the corner, I saw her on the floor collapsed and in tears. I rushed over got down on my knees, grabbed her by the shoulders, and began to ask “What’s wrong? What did the doctor say? Is it cancer? Did we lose the baby?” Then she responded through her tears, “My lab tests came back HIV positive.” “What? HIV positive? How is that possible? No!”

I could not believe it. Everything seemed so perfect. Our lives were going great. We were having a baby, planning to plant a church, graduating from seminary, God seemed to just keep opening doors for us and keep answering prayers and then, in one phone call, everything changed. In that one moment, it seemed as if everything was lost. Suddenly, I felt dirty. No one would want the HIV pastor visiting them in the hospital. How will we pay these bills? Will our baby have this disease? I called the doctor at home and asked him what to do. He instructed us to come in the next day to take some more tests. He told me that it was possible to deliver the baby by C-section without the baby being infected, but we would have to get on medication right away. I felt so dirty, like a

leper. I sat with my wife and listened to her say, “This is horrible. How can we pastor a church like this? We have to move somewhere that no one knows us.” I had no words for her. I was thinking some of the same things, but I said, “Our lives are not over.” I did not have the answers. Seminary had not prepared me for something like this. It felt like the ultimate loss.

However, I had been reading that day in James and remembered James 4:2, where God says that you do not have because you do not ask. I pounded my hand on the table and said, “God, we aren’t going to have this because we didn’t ask you to take it away. The next day we had one of our pastors come over and lay hands on us to pray for us before we went to see the doctor for more tests. The days after the test were some of the darkest days we had ever experienced together as a couple. The spiritual warfare was so thick and so dark we could feel it. I felt helpless as I lay next to my wife in bed, listening to her cry and feeling the bed shake. I felt helpless as I cried out to God Psalm 10:12: “Arise, LORD! Lift up your hand, O God. Do not forget the helpless.” The days were dark and difficult, but I remember one day we wanted to go somewhere that no one knew us, so we left town for lunch. As we drove, my wife turned the music down in the car and simply stated, “Satan will not get the victory in this. No matter what happens, Satan will not get the victory.” That was a turning point for us. We felt like we had lost all of our dreams, lost all of our plans, I even remember through tears telling that pastor who came to pray for us that I was not going to get to preach, not just at Prestonwood, but not anywhere, ever. I felt like Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:16, who was compelled to preach the gospel, and it all seemed like it had been taken away. I felt as if I had lost it before it had even started.

The same day that my wife declared that we would not let Satan get the victory, we received a call from the doctor ahead of schedule telling us that the new test came back and my wife was HIV negative. We were overjoyed but knew we needed more information. The next day we went into his office to see what had happened. He assured us that the first tests were not a false positive. He said they tested her blood three times and all three times it came back HIV positive. They even did what the doctor called the Western Blot HIV test, which he assured us was the gold standard of testing and it came back positive. When they tested the new samples and they came back negative, they did not know what to think. So, they went back and tested the first samples and this time, they too came back negative. All those blood samples had done was sat in a lab. I believe God gave my wife new blood. I believe God gave us a glimpse of the realization that there is absolutely nothing that he cannot do. He also showed us how quickly we can lose everything we hold dear on this earth. In fact, I believe it is God's plan that we lose many things in this life and that all of those losses ultimately lead to eternal gain.

While this story is unique to my wife and me, the spiritual battle is not unique; the loss associated with stepping out by faith is not unique. Many can testify to stepping out for God, only to then be diagnosed with cancer, lose a baby, be rejected by family, lose respect from people they care deeply about, face persecution, not to mention the daily anxiety they feel for all those they minister to. When one steps out, God does not give a promise that it will be easy, that there will be comfort or convenience; instead, pastors minister in a context of loss.

Since its inception in March of 2007 Southbridge Fellowship (SF) has been an outwardly-focused church that has grown quickly with a current average attendance of

approximately 750 people. Because of our quick growth and reputation in our community, new and existing church planters often come to us to seek advice about planting a church. While they often want to know the “how to’s” of planting, what they need to know is the about the losses which will inevitably occur. What they often do not realize is what all of that hard work will mean for them, their family, their friendships, their reputation, and, in some cases, their sanity. For me, a few years into starting the church, it almost meant losing my sanity. God graciously allowed me to start this church with the help of some great friends and godly families, but along the way I, like so many others, have experienced loss.

As a ministry leader, one’s life story intimately intersects with the ministry one does on a daily basis. The answer is not to learn how to compartmentalize one’s life, but instead how to face and even embrace the losses. In the context of speaking about how the leaders story must intersect with the organization’s story, Albert Mohler writes, “If the story is not worthy of your own life and the lives of others, leave and find a cause worthy of your service. If it is, the leader must recognize that the story is central.”¹⁹ My story, the story of our church, the story of the leaders surveyed for this project, and the story of everyone who will read this project are ultimately an extension of the Great Commission given by Jesus:

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matt 28:18-20)

¹⁹Albert Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead* (Grand Rapids: Bethany House Publishers, 2012), 39.

We see this commission begin to be lived out in the book of Acts as the early church begins and thus continues on to this day as we await Christ's return. This is the story into which we need to develop more leaders. This is a story worth giving one's life. This is a story for which it is worth losing it all.

Through this ministry project, I desire to inform leaders of the high cost of leadership by equipping them for loss. This equipping material will be derived from the book of Philippians. I believe the better-prepared ministry leaders are for the cost and loss involved in leadership, the more successful they will be in attacking the challenge of ministry leadership.

Rationale for the Project

The contextual concerns mentioned above serve to demonstrate the need for this project. The stats are overwhelming, but the spiritual battles are even more frightening. The pressures of ministry and the losses incurred by those who both leave the ministry daily and those who continue to fight demonstrate a need for a better understanding of the losses of leadership. Leaders must realize when they experience losses they are not isolated in their experiences. While the details of every person's story may be different, there are themes that can be seen. These themes are often attacks from the enemy devised to steal, kill, and destroy, but God is so good that he even uses Satan's diabolical plans for our good and his own glory (Rom 8:28). The greater understanding ministry leaders have of this truth, the more prepared they will be for Satan's attacks and the more excited they will be for the refining process that will help them know Christ and the power of his resurrection, even to the point of having fellowship with him in his suffering as they press on toward the goal to win the prize for which Christ has called

them heavenward (Phil 3:10-15). The more equipped ministry leaders are for this stewardship of ministry, the better chance they have to not only finish but finish and be counted as faithful.

Definition, Limitations, and Delimitations

The following definition of the word “loss” was used in this ministry project: a failure to keep, have, or get.²⁰ For the sake of this study, “loss” will be used in reference to a failure to keep things the leader may have at one time held dear but that are hindering the leader from knowing Christ more intimately. The focus of this project will be to examine loss as part of the sanctification process. Jesus is clear in his call to anyone who wants to follow him that the sacrifice is great: "Then he said to them all, 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it (Luke 9:23-24).'"

Loss is not just the sacrifice or willingness to sacrifice that is often associated with the initial call to follow Jesus, it is also a continual part of the sanctification process. In other words, following Jesus is about more than just an initial willingness to surrender everything to him. While surrender is required, loss is a continual part of following him. God’s plan for the ministry leader’s life includes loss. This loss is a failure to hang on to the things that hinder one from knowing Christ. What is lost could be a variety of elements in the life of the leader. This is why Paul says "whatever was to my profit" in Philippians 3:7. When he says “whatever” he is referring to the list of characteristics

²⁰“Loss,” *Dictionary.com*, accessed January 4, 2015, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/loss?s=t>.

mentioned in Philippians 3:4-6. He means that whatever was on his list and whatever could be on anyone else's list of things he or she considers profitable is now a loss for the sake of Christ. Some of the characteristics mentioned could be good or bad. For instance, when Paul talks about considering anything that was to his profit a loss for the sake of Christ in verse 7, he is referring back to being born a Hebrew of Hebrews. Certainly, there was nothing sinful about being born a Hebrew. What made this sinful was Paul's false confidence in the characteristics listed in Philippians 3:4-6, which included being a Hebrew of Hebrews. Being a Hebrew could be good, but when someone places trust in his or her ethnicity this good thing becomes sinful. God's sanctifying work in Paul's life caused him to consider his being a Hebrew of Hebrews a loss in comparison to knowing Christ Jesus, for whose sake he has lost all things. God desires for every leader to lose whatever hinders him or her from knowing Christ. I intend to demonstrate that any current loss is actually a great gain in eternity.²¹

There were two primary limitations of this project. The first was the number of survey responses I was able to collect. I collected 51 future leader survey responses and 100 experienced leader responses. This limitation was dictated both by the amount of time allowed for responses as well as being limited by my own contacts that helped me collect these responses. The second limitation of this project was the two-year period spent doing doctoral studies. The surveys could have been analyzed further. The Scripture passages mentioned in this project could have been explored further. Interviews could have been done with each survey participant. The time restraints have caused me to draw the conclusions found in this work.

²¹The apostle Paul argues this point persuasively in Phil 3:1-12.

This project has two primary delimitations. The first is that it does not cover everything there is to know about leadership. The focus of this project is to look specifically at the apostle Paul's teaching on leadership loss in the book of Philippians. This project also looks at the experiences of other ministry leaders in order to prepare future leaders for similar losses. Thus, this project will not cover everything a leader needs to know from every part of the Bible nor does it cover everything a leader should know from every ministry leader, but it does prepare future ministry leaders for the losses they will likely encounter.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this project consisted of two online surveys and an in-depth analysis of the book of Philippians. The success of this project was based on accomplishing two goals. The first goal was accomplished by assessing the expectations of future ministry leaders in comparison to the actual experiences of current experienced ministry leaders regarding their desired and current leadership roles. This was accomplished by collecting data from an online survey from 100 experienced ministry leaders or leaders who have been in ministry for at least ten years and 51 future ministry leaders who are training for ministry or at the beginning of their ministry roles.

The second goal was accomplished when the training material of chapters 2 through 5 were written incorporating the findings of future ministry leaders' expectations and experienced ministry leaders' experiences. Chapters 2 through 5 are a careful exegesis of the relevant passages of the book of Philippians designed with application in mind to prepare future ministry leaders for the losses they will likely encounter during their roles as leaders.

This training material has been developed based on the findings of the surveys of both future and experienced ministry leaders. The material demonstrates how God's call to specific biblical leaders required similar losses current ministry leaders experience. The material reveals what one often considers loss from this world's perspective will be the very treasure one is storing up in heaven—one's leadership losses are actually one's eternal gain.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL PLAN FOR LOSS IN MINISTRY

No One Can Have It All

All Christian leaders must ask themselves what they are willing to lose. Christians live in a day and age where they are constantly being told that they can have it all. They are led to believe they can be the perfect husband, super dad, great friend, wonderful ministry leader, have everyone like them, love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength, and accomplish great good for his kingdom all while losing nothing in the process. This belief is a lie. No one can have it all. This project is about loss. God's plan includes loss. Thoughtful, committed believers have to ask themselves what they are willing to lose? Every time someone says yes to one thing, he or she is saying no to others. Everyone will lose something. The great news is the Christian leader gets to choose what to lose. Ministry leaders should not be victims of others' plans for their lives. Ministry leaders are not passive spectators in the arena of their lives, watching as they stand helpless as relationships, egos, finances, dreams, family, reputation, and accomplishments are stolen from them. Ministry leaders get to choose what to lose.

God started to reveal the lessons of loss to me in the early days of our starting a church in Raleigh. At that time, I was working a ridiculous number of hours a week. I rarely, if ever, take a day off. My wife and I had two very young daughters. I believed that my work was all for the glory of God. I already knew the lesson that if a leader does

not want to get anyone upset in a church, he or she should do nothing. Anytime a leader does something there is someone who will be upset. At the time, we were making some decisions at church that we believed were vital for us to move forward not only to grow, but also to develop as a young church. However, not everyone was excited about those decisions.

About that same time, my family and several of our relatives had rented a beach house to spend Labor Day weekend together. My wife and I drove three hours with our 4-month-old and almost two-year-old daughters. We arrived before the rest of the family. We decided to try to steal some time before the others arrived. My wife wanted to go on a run. I knew I had some work to do, and our daughters needed some rest, so we put our girls down for a nap. As soon as my wife left to go on her run, I locked myself in a bathroom and began to have a conversation on the phone with a woman who was “concerned” about how things were going at our church. I paced around in the bathroom as I talked to this woman for about twenty minutes. Then, suddenly, my wife ran in yelling, “Scott, Ella is not here!” Ella was our almost two-year-old daughter. My wife had come back from her run to find the front door of the house wide opened and our daughter gone.

When I look back on this moment I wonder what I was really concerned about. Why was I working so many hours? Why, when I finally took some time off, was I not willing to actually take time off? What was I afraid to lose? What was I trying to accomplish? What was I willing to lose? In the process, would I lose my family?

Immediately, without a word to the woman on the other line, I threw the phone down, and Shanna and I both began to search frantically for our daughter. We ran out the

front door onto the busy street it faced. There was no sign of our daughter. Thoughts were racing through my head—“Did someone watch us unload the car and sneak in to take her? Did she just leave?” We did not know, but we knew she was gone. I was panicking. My wife ran down the busy street yelling, “Ella! Ella!” I looked toward the beach and ran between the houses that were very close together. As I approached the beach, I saw what looked like a little girl about Ella’s age walking up to a family sitting under an umbrella. I ran toward them yelling, “Ella! Ella!” By the time I was close enough to see that it was not Ella, I was on the sand. I looked down the beach and all I could was a sea of people. At that moment, I was convinced that we were going to be the next family on the news who lost our child. We had run past all of the vacation houses yelling her name. Other people had come out to help us search for her. As I turned to run back toward the house we had rented, this little girl came walking from behind some tall grass on the backside of the beach. All she was wearing was a diaper and she was carrying her pink silky blanket with her hands by her mouth. It was my daughter. She said, “I just want to see the beach.” I ran to her and embraced her. I thought I had lost her. I did not know how she got to the beach and I did not care. I just knew that she was in my arms. As I held her, I realized that her mom still did not know that I had found our little girl. My wife wept for 30 minutes after she realized we had our daughter back.

That story has become a metaphor for me in my ministry. Am I willing to lose my family to build a church? Will I lose my daughter for the sake of an upset church member? The woman I was speaking to that day got over that issue. She did leave our church a couple years later over something else, however. What was I willing to lose in the process? Am I willing to neglect my responsibilities as a father to make others happy?

Am I willing to lose my family for the sake of a job? Will I lose a church member for the sake of my daughter? We cannot have it all. Loss is a part of life. It is also a part of ministry. It is God's plan.

This project is not about choosing family over ministry. It is not about choosing people over tasks. It is not about the need for a vacation. This project is designed to equip every ministry leader to be willing to lose. Everyone will lose something. That is actually God's plan. The key is losing the right things and not the wrong things because the notion that one can have it all is a lie.

Loss Is Life for the Leader

The loss experienced in a ministry leader's life is no accident. Loss is part of God's plan. While a large crowd followed him, Jesus, in Luke 14, turned to them and said, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26b-27). He then proceeds to give two analogies about counting the cost. The first is about how foolish it would be to begin building a tower only to realize one did not have enough money to finish. If one were to do this, surely one would be ridiculed. The second analogy has to do with a king calculating his chances of winning a war against an army twice the size of his own. In both situations, the point is that one should count the cost. Jesus then makes this bold statement: "In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33). He is not even talking about leadership yet, only how to be a follower.

Everyone is called to count the cost. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his classic book *The Cost of Discipleship* writes, “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. It may be a death like the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow him, or it may be a death like Luther’s who had to leave the monastery and go into the world.”¹ What if Jesus was serious when he said, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34). Notice he did not say the super committed, the varsity Christians, or even the ministry leaders. He says if “anyone.” He did not merely mean anyone in that crowd, he meant anyone throughout all of history who would follow him. The problem is that in our modern American version of Christianity we have recreated Jesus to fit our image. David Platt, in his book *Radical*, states,

A nice, middle-class, American Jesus. A Jesus who doesn’t mind materialism and who would never call us to give away everything we have. A Jesus who would not expect us to forsake our closest relationships so that he receives all our affection. A Jesus who is fine with nominal devotion that does not infringe on our comforts, because, after all, he loves us just the way we are. A Jesus who wants us to be balanced, who wants us to avoid dangerous extremes, and who, for that matter, wants us to avoid danger altogether. A Jesus who brings us comfort and prosperity as we live our Christian spin on the American dream.²

One major problem when we create our own Jesus is that he is not the Jesus of the Bible. At the end of one’s life it will be a great shock when the Jesus of the Bible says to those who do have created their own Jesus to depart from him for he never knew them. One may respond with all the things done in the name of this made up Jesus much like the religious people in Matthew 7:

¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 89.

²David Platt, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith From the American Dream* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2010), 13.

Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?” Then I will tell them plainly, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!” (Matt 7:21-23)

Did Jesus actually mean what he said in the Bible? If so, then the loss is great and the cost of not taking his words seriously is even greater. This is not only true for Jesus initial call to follow, but it is a continual part of the sanctification process. It is God’s plan to remove everything in the leaders life that hinders the leader from knowing Jesus Christ.

The Bible makes it clear the standards are high for leaders. James says, “Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly” (Jas 3:1). The author of Hebrews warns, “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.” (Heb 13:17). Notice while it may be nice to hear people should submit to their leaders’ authority it is the leader who will one day have to give an account for his or her leadership. This verse does not mention the lofty qualifications for leaders listed in Acts 6:1-6; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9; and 1 Peter 5:1-4.

In an age of Christian celebrities who are hallowed like movie stars, who promote the validity of their ministry by making the right lists of growth and size, and who promote their number of twitter followers, the call to die to self seems foreign. So, the call to experience loss as part of leadership seems even more foreign. However, the same God who calls a follower to die to self will cause leaders to consider everything a loss in comparison to knowing Christ.

Losing the Right Things

In my research for this project, I discovered that of all the future leaders surveyed, approximately 78 percent said that they fully expect to lose something as a result of their future ministry.³ Interestingly, only 39 percent of experienced leaders surveyed said that they agreed that they entered the ministry expecting to lose something as a result of their ministry.⁴ This is a significant difference. Perhaps the experienced ministry leaders surveyed did not receive the same training that the future ministry leaders surveyed received. Perhaps the losses for the experienced leaders were so great it caused them to reflect and realize that they could have never anticipated them. Whether anticipated or not the reality is that God does use ministry experiences in ways that result in loss. Almost 62 percent of experienced ministry leaders agreed or strongly agreed that they had lost something due to a good ministry decision they made as a leader.⁵ One respondent to the experienced ministry leader survey shared that his greatest loss as a ministry leader was “strain on my marriage in which divorce was considered.”⁶ How could one have known such a loss could be so close to reality?

Another respondent said that the most difficult thing he had experienced was the “feeling of abandonment and the difficulty of over and again realizing that I am

³Based on their response to the statement “I fully expect to lose something as a result of my future ministry.” Close to 45 percent said they agreed with the statement while 32.65 percent said they *strongly* agreed with the statement.

⁴See question 16 in appendix 3.

⁵See question 21 in appendix 3.

⁶See response 39 to question 22 in appendix 3.

inadequate to save anyone.”⁷ The survey can measure tangible losses and, even to an extent, inquire about emotional losses. The problem with a survey is that it cannot reveal the secret motives of the heart. It does not show how many young men enter ministry in pursuit of their dad’s approval. It does not show how many fantasize about fame. It does not tell us whether one’s ambitions are godly or fleshly. It does not reveal whether one thinks he can serve both God and money, can deny himself and fulfill all of his selfish desires. The heart is deceitful above all things (Jer 17:9). Only God truly knows the heart. We do not even know all of our own motives. This unhealthy mix of godly and ungodly motives, godly and ungodly ambitions, set the ministry leader up for expectations that he can have it all.

Maybe most ministry leaders realize that one cannot be both company CEO and at every soccer game. Perhaps ministry leaders know that one cannot purchase every gadget one desires and maintain financial freedom. However, ministry leaders often enter the ministry unwittingly thinking that they can have both their ungodly and godly desires. They might believe that God will give them both their fleshly and godly pursuits. Some even maintain the belief that somehow it would be best for them if God granted success with both their godly and ungodly ambitions. The reality is that no one can have it all. Every follower of Jesus Christ must come to the realization that the pursuit of having it all is a vain pursuit. It is not God’s plan that one can have it all. It is God’s plan that every leader will suffer loss.

The apostle Paul was a man who suffered great loss due to his role as a leader in Christ’s church. The cornerstone passage that gives us his theology of loss is Philippians

⁷See response 82 to question 25 in appendix 3.

3:1-11, where he reveals the transformation of his own thinking from counting the wrong things as a gain to counting everything a loss except the one thing that God desires to give every ministry leader, himself. Paul's teaching in Philippians on loss does not start in Philippians 3; it starts in Philippians 1 when God began a good work in the lives of the Philippian believers.

Loss in Philippians

The letter in the book of Philippians was written as a result of a man who nearly lost his life bringing a financial gift and news about the church at Philippi to the apostle Paul. That man, Epaphroditus, went to Paul with a gift (Phil 4:18) and to minister to Paul (2:25).⁸ At the very foundation of the book is a man who was willing to lose his life in order to fulfill the ministry that God had laid before him:

But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. (Phil 2:25-27)

Apparently, in his reporting to Paul, he also shared the progress and problems that were happening in the church at Philippi.⁹ Paul writes this church, which may have been his favorite of all the churches,¹⁰ to thank them for their gift and give them instructions on how to move forward in their growth as followers of Christ and leaders in the Christian community. John Sailhamer states that

⁸Homer A. Kent, Jr., *Philippians*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1978), 98.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Frank Thielman, *Philippians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 18.

Paul wrote this letter to the church in Philippi, with specific issues in mind. His primary concern was that they not veer away from the genuineness and sincerity of their faith. There were forces at work within the church that threatened to do just that, and Paul goes to great lengths in this letter to persuade the church and its leaders not to follow them. He leads them by encouragement and example. He stresses throughout that they have done well in the faith up until this point, but as in his own ministry, the greatest tests lay ahead. The key to the direction they should take lies primarily in the example of Christ (2:1-18), but also in Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-30), Paul himself (3:1-21), and their own past acts of faithfulness (4:10-20).¹¹

Paul receives this gift from a leader who was willing to risk his very life to fulfill his mission, and he then writes to a group of people so they will not lose their mission, but very well may lose their lives. He uses examples of leaders like himself and, most importantly, Jesus Christ who were willing to lose so that they could gain. The Philippians were much like many future leaders are today—they started well, were genuine in their pursuits, but they faced great dangers ahead. Some of those dangers were even living among them. They had some past success, but their greatest test lay in the future. Paul writes this book to equip the church of Philippi for those dangers just as I am writing this project to equip future leaders for the losses they will encounter.

The Gospel of Loss

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.³ I thank my God every time I remember you.⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Phil 1:1-6)

¹¹John H. Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 550.

Paul is writing to the saints or Christians and their leaders in Philippi.¹² After his initial greetings to them, Paul says his reason for praying with joy for them is because of their partnership in the gospel. For Paul, it all starts with the gospel. His love for the Philippians and his joy in his prayers for them is rooted in the gospel. The majority of evangelical Christians claim to love the gospel, but few truly want much to do with the gospel. Instead, many choose to select elements of the gospel that feed their comforts and security while ignoring the call for sacrifice and submission. Carson illustrates this well when he asks for only three dollars worth of gospel:

I would like to buy about three dollars worth of the gospel, please. Not too much—just enough to make me happy, but not so much that I get addicted. I don't want so much gospel that I really learn to hate covetousness and lust. I certainly don't want so much that I start to love my enemies, cherish self-denial, and contemplate missionary service in some alien culture. I want ecstasy, not repentance; I want transcendence, not transformation. I would like to be cherished by some nice, forgiving, broad-minded people, but I myself don't want to love those from different races—especially if they smell. I would like enough gospel to make my family secure and my children well behaved, but not so much that I find my ambitions redirected or my giving too greatly enlarged. I would like about three dollars worth of gospel, please.¹³

The gospel sounds great when we talk about what one receives. One receives first and foremost Christ Jesus himself, but one also receives forgiveness of sin, the Holy Spirit, a new identity, and eternal life, just to name some of what the believer receives at the point of salvation. However, what are the implications of the gospel? Does it not lead one to love one's enemies, give generously, and sacrifice extravagantly? Most only want a portion of the gospel, maybe more than three dollars worth, but certainly not so much

¹²Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary*, 550.

¹³D. A. Carson, *Basics for Believers: An Exposition of Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 12-13.

that it actually means a loss of comfort and convenience. Certainly, one does not truly think that this surrendering of one's life to the rulership of another when one bows his or her knee before the King of Kings and Lord of Lords will result in a change of one's own lifestyle in any way. While longing for the forgiveness that flows from the blood of Jesus, one cannot expect that he or she may have to forgive those who have caused him or her great pain. Of course, the gospel would not include a denial of one's previous dreams and ambitions. Of course, most will only want enough gospel to be given a glamorous ministry position, not some obscure location with few converts. Of course, the location will not mean being far from children or parents. Most would like just enough of the gospel to improve their lives, receive what is offered to them, and not lose anything in the process. So, do most ministry leaders falsely believe they can "have it all"?

Gospel Partnership

Paul writes in Philippians 1:4 that he prayed with joy for the saints and the leaders in Philippi. His joy is based on his partnership with the Philippians in the gospel, not just a portion of the gospel, not just his favorite aspects of the gospel. This partnership that Paul refers to is not driven by his personal agenda or his "soapbox" issue that he refers to as the gospel; it is driven by a similar goal to see the gospel spread.

The word that is translated "partnership" in verse 5 is the Greek word *koinonia*, which is where we get the word "fellowship." When most Christians think of the word "fellowship" they think of spending some sort of relational time with other Christians. However, Carson points out that in the first century the term often had

commercial overtones.¹⁴ In the New Testament, the word is often tied to financial matters (Rom 15:26).¹⁵ Carson goes on to say that the heart of true fellowship goes beyond punch and cookies after Sunday school and is self-sacrificing conformity to a shared vision.¹⁶ For Paul and the Philippians, that self-sacrificing conformity is for the sake of the gospel. The Philippians have fellowshipped with Paul through prayer, financial sacrifice, and through upholding the gospel. They had a shared vision that began with the gospel. The gospel, while freely given, by implication of the repentance required to receive it would mean great loss for all who would accept it.¹⁷ “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses it for my sake will save it” (Luke 9:24).

Loss Begins

In verse 6 of Paul’s opening words to the Philippians, Paul goes on to express his confidence in God who had begun a work in them. That work which Paul is referring to was their salvation.¹⁸ This was the first step of faith for these believers, but it surely

¹⁴Carson, *Basics for Believers*, 16.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Much of my thinking about how fellowship or partnership is used in Phil 1 is indebted to Carson.

¹⁸Ralph P. Martin, commenting on Phil 1:6, writes, “The beginning of the work of God in the lives of the Philippians, hinted at in the phrase ‘from the first day’ (verse 5), calls forth an expression of the apostles confidence. *He which hath begun a good work in you* is an undoubted reference to God whose redeeming grace in the gospel originated the church. Paul makes no personal claim to be the human founder of the church as he does at Corinth (1 Cor 3:10), but even there he is careful to insist that the only true foundation is Christ Himself (1 Cor 3:11).” Martin goes on to say that it is possible to take “a good work” as an allusion to the participation that the Philippians had shown by their financial participation. He shares how Lightfoot uses 2 Cor 8:6 to make this argument, but he concludes, as do I, that Paul may be looking beyond that act of generosity to the work of grace in their lives that gave them the impulse to partner with him in the gospel, namely, their salvation. See Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 61.

was not intended to be the last. For every believer, the first step is an admission of failure. Every Christian is by nature an admitted failure. The first step in embracing loss is admitting that one does not measure up to God's standards. The first step in understanding the gospel is admitting one's sin. For all sin and fall short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). There is none righteous, not even one (Rom 3:10).

Before anyone can trust Jesus Christ to be his or her Savior, one must first acknowledge a need to be saved. One does not require saving unless something is wrong. A rescue team is not called every time someone sets sail. A rescue team is called in when things go bad and the storm starts to rage. There is a way that seems right to people, but in the end it leads to death (Prov 14:12). Every Christian begins his or her faith journey by acknowledging a need to be rescued. Every person has started life and things have gone wrong. Everyone has sinned. When one realizes that the way one has been traveling leads to death, the best option is to get on a new path, to turn from the path one is traveling and seek to be rescued. The very first step is to acknowledge that the way one is traveling is wrong. This is why Jesus came preaching a message of repentance (Matt 4:17). The life one was living was wrong. That means admitting failure. That is where the work of Christ in one's life begins. That is where it began for the Philippians.

The beginning of the Christian life is an admission of failure. The reason this is so hard for many people is that to admit failure means a loss. It is a loss of the current situation they are in, a loss of social position, career, relationships, and often a loss of comfort. It is a loss of life as one currently knows it, but that is exactly what Jesus said was necessary. In Matthew 16, after telling his disciples that he must be killed, rebuking

Peter for disagreeing, and while telling them the cost of discipleship, Jesus says, “For whoever, wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?” (vv. 25-26).

The beginning of the church of Philippi recorded in Acts 16 is a story of loss. About ten years before the book of Philippians was written Paul had desired to go to Asia, but the Holy Spirit had stopped him and his team from going there. Then, in a dream, Paul saw a man from Macedonia calling them to come to him. This reminds me of when my wife and I were seeking God’s leading in starting a new church. I thought that perhaps we were supposed to go out west. We were open to anywhere. Well, anywhere that did not include living by family. However, my brother-in-law kept telling me about the area where he had started a business in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. I was sure if God were calling us to something it would not be near family. However, God used my brother-in-law about ten years ago to call us to one of the few places I did not think we would end up. Paul followed the Lord’s leading through this Macedonian man (see Acts 16:6-10).

On one Sabbath Paul went to a river outside the city gate where he found a group of women. He, along with Silas and Luke, began to speak with these women. One of the women listening was a businesswoman named Lydia. The Bible says that God opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message (16:14). This radical turning from one’s current way of life to a new way of life is always a work that starts in the heart. This is the beginning Paul is referring to in Philippians 1:6. To say God opened her heart is a

way of saying that she turned to Jesus Christ for salvation.¹⁹ John Polhill states, “As always with divine grace, it was God’s Spirit moving in her heart that led to faith.”²⁰ One cannot merely count the cost and come to the logical conclusion that turning to Jesus is the best option. While this is true, the reality is that God teaches throughout the Scriptures that salvation is a work of God and that he has to do that work in one’s heart. Lydia, while successful in her business, from everything we know, had to realize her need for salvation, her utter failure before God, before she could turn to Jesus as her Savior.

The text goes on to say that she was baptized (16:15). Baptism is symbolic of the loss of an old way of life. Paul says to the Roman believers “Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that. Just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Rom 6:3-4). It is based on this verse that many pastors say “Buried with Christ in baptism and raised to walk in newness of life” when baptizing new believers. Baptism is a symbol of loss. It is a symbol of the loss of an old way of life. The first step in that loss is to admit failure. What one has been doing and the path that has been taken is wrong. In order for a new thing, a better thing to happen, one has to be rescued, one has to turn down a new path because the one he or she is on leads to death. Whoever wants to save one’s life will

¹⁹Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 534. Bock writes, “This is yet another way to describe that she has come to faith, a point made clear in verse 15 when she and her house are baptized (Acts 10:48; 16:33). God creates the initiative to faith from within” (*ibid.*).

²⁰John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 1992), 349.

lose it. Lydia the first believer in Philippi did what was needed to lose her life in order to save it.²¹

After their encounter with Lydia, one reads that Paul and his team are being harassed by a demon-possessed slave girl (16:16-18). Luke does not state clearly that the slave girl was converted, but one can assume that her life made a dramatic turn for the better, which hopefully included turning to Jesus Christ and undergoing a genuine heart transformation like Lydia. She clearly realizes Paul was preaching was how to be saved (Acts 16:17). If what happens here is merely a woman who cleans up her life, she will end up worse than she was before (see Matt 12:43-45). Luke does not tell us much about this woman; instead, he focuses in on what happens next with Paul and Silas after that encounter.

After the slave girl was freed from her evil spirit and her owners realized the financial loss they would suffer, they had Paul and Silas arrested, severely flogged, and thrown in jail. After losing their physical freedom, being humiliated as they were, stripped and beaten and then thrown in jail, Paul and Silas were in prison praying and singing hymns. They had lost their freedom to minister, they had lost apparently their clothes, and they are fastened into stocks. How can one who has suffered and lost so much be singing hymns? It is almost as if these men knew the power of loss. They knew

²¹Commentators speculate concerning Lydia. Richard Longenecker, for example, writes, “Some commentators have suggested that the real name of this ‘Lydia lady’ was either Eudia or Syntyche (Phil 4:2) and that the other was the wife of the converted jailer. Other commentators think that Paul had Lydia in mind when he referred to a ‘loyal yokefellow’ (Phil 4:3), and even a few suppose that Paul married Lydia. But all this is mere conjecture. All we really know from the text is that Lydia, together with the members of her household, responded to the gospel and opened their house to Paul and his colleagues. Soon, it seems, her home became the center for Christian outreach and worship in Philippi (cf. 16:40).” Richard N. Longenecker, *Acts*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1981), 461.

that leaders will suffer loss. God strips away everything that hinders us from knowing Christ better. How else can someone who has suffered so much, be singing hymns?

That night around midnight while all the other prisoners were listening to Paul and Silas sing, a violent earthquake shook the prison and the doors of the prison flew open while the chains of every prisoner fell off. The jailer, having possibly dozed off from hearing the sweet sounds of Paul and Silas's singing, drew his sword and was about to take his own life. In this time, jailers were personally responsible for their prisoners in such a way that if they escaped they could be executed (cf. Acts 12:19).²² Bock writes that the jailer "decide[d] that it [would] be better for him to take his own life, since his fear of his superiors [was] great."²³

Just as the jailer is about to kill himself Paul stops him and assures him that miraculously all, not just Paul and Silas, of the prisoners have remained even though the doors are opened and their chains are loosed. The jailer then asks the question that every person should be asking himself or herself, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). Paul tells him to believe on the rescuer, the one who calls everyone to lose their life if they want to save it. Call on the Lord Jesus. He tells him to admit his failure before God. He tells him to turn his back on life as he knows it. Surely, Paul would have given further explanation than is in Acts 16.²⁴ Perhaps he would share, as he does with the Romans, that one must confess with one's mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in one's heart that

²²Polhill, *Acts*, 355.

²³Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 541.

²⁴Ibid., 542.

God raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 10:9). Perhaps he told the entire story of Jesus living the sinless life that no one has ever lived and dying the death on the cross that everyone deserves to die. He most likely explained how, since everyone has sinned, everyone is in need of a savior and to trust that savior means turning from the way that seems right to man to follow the gift of God, which is Christ Jesus.

Once the jailer understood, he too turned his life over to Jesus Christ, and, like Lydia (Acts 16:15), he and his whole household were baptized (Acts 16:33). Thus, the church at Philippi was started by a group of admitted failures who were willing to suffer loss in order to be saved. This is what Paul is referring to when he speaks of God beginning a good work in the life of the Philippians.²⁵

Benefits of Loss

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God” (Phil 1:9-11). The word for “discern” in verse 10 (*δοκιμάζειν*) means to decide what is best. This means to have a special ability regarding perception that assists one to make decisions concerning what is best in difficult situations.²⁶ This kind of discernment is not about whether to cheat on

²⁵For another easy to read background to Phil 1, read Matt Chandler and Jared Wilson, *To Live is Christ to Dies is Gain* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2013), 17-29.

²⁶Gerald F. Hawthorne explains the various options for interpretation when translating the two words *δοκιμάζειν*, which may mean either “to test or examine” or “to prove by testing” as one would assay metals or test the genuineness of coins or “to be superior.” Since distinguishing between things that differ greatly is easy, Hawthorne argues that the word here requires special powers of perception and must mean to decide with confidence things that are best. Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 43 (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1983), 27-28. Moises Silva, in his note on v. 10,

one's spouse or taxes or even about whether to tell a white lie. This kind of discernment is for the kind of decision one has to make when the best option is not always clear. The discernment that Paul is praying about here is deciding between two different ministry opportunities and not knowing which one will have the greatest impact. This is the kind of decision one is faced with when one has to decide if helping someone in need is simply enabling that person. What Paul is praying for these believers is that they would have the discernment to know what is best. This kind of discernment is incredibly valuable in the life of a ministry leader.

The point of this prayer though is not discernment for discernment's sake; it is discernment so that the Philippians would grow in love and knowledge. It is interesting that the object of neither this love nor this knowledge is stated. "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight" (Phil 1:9). What kind of love? Is it love for God? Is it love for lost people? Is it love for other believers? Paul does not say, but in light of the context of Philippians, Paul probably means that the Philippians would love one another given his stress on unity throughout the book (see 2:1-4; 4:2-3). The content of knowledge is probably spiritual knowledge.²⁷ After describing ways believers have been tripped up with false spiritual knowledge (Gal 5:7; 1 Cor 5:1-13), Frank Thielman summarizes what Paul means by the phrase "discern what is best":

Paul's prayer is that the Philippians will avoid both traps by having the spiritual knowledge and moral insight necessary for choosing what is best, for continuing, in

writes that ““approve what is best”” is doubtless the correct idea here (cf. Rom 2:18), though one must note that these terms were common in Hellenistic times, particularly in Stoic circles.” Moises Silva, *Philippians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 57-58.

²⁷Thielman, *Philippians*, 41.

other words, to consider all things as loss in comparison with “the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:8). His hope is that they, his best-loved congregation, will not be led astray by soundings into the treacherous waters that have nearly shipwrecked the faith of others.²⁸

The hope for future ministry leaders is that they will learn the lessons of loss that Paul presents here as beneficial and the lessons of loss that so many who have gone before them have learned and that these lessons will help them to discern the benefits of loss in leadership. Often it is those losses that lead the leader and those they lead to knowing Christ. For me, when for those few moments I thought I had lost my own daughter, I quickly realized that making someone at my church happy was not worth that loss. However, as a ministry leader, I have to ask myself what losses are actually beneficial. One survey respondent truly grasped this concept when, concerning the hurt experienced by people leaving his church, “The gain has far outweighed the cost.”²⁹ Another respondent described how he had become more like Jesus because he [had] stripped things away.³⁰ It is as if the losses or things that were being stripped away were actually beneficial for the work that God had begun in this leader at the point of salvation.

Sometimes those benefits do not seem like blessings in the moment, but in hindsight one can see how God was pruning away certain things in one’s life as part of his completing the work he began. That is the benefit of loss. In his book *Rescuing Ambition*, author Dave Harvey has a chapter on failure. Throughout this chapter, Harvey

²⁸Thielman, *Philippians*, 41.

²⁹See response 54 to question 22 in appendix 3.

³⁰See response 7 to question 23 in appendix 3.

weaves in the story of David Brainerd. Brainerd was a missionary to the Delaware Indians that God used greatly. However, that was not his dream. Brainerd was born into a religious family but then orphaned at the age of 14. At 21, he trusted Jesus Christ as his savior. His dream or, as Harvey calls it, his “ambition” was for pastoral ministry. This dream is why he enrolled at Yale. He was doing well at the top of his class at Yale when he made a seemingly small and flippant mistake. He insulted one of his professors. He demonstrated more zeal than knowledge and more passion than discernment. He said to Chauncey Whittelsey that he “has no more grace than a chair.” Even though he was about to graduate at the head of his class, Brainerd was expelled.³¹ This was the death of Brainerd’s dream because one could not become a pastor in Connecticut without a university degree. Harvey defines failure as ambition denied for a better future.³² That sounds nice in a book, but in real life, while one is living in an experience, failure feels a lot like loss. Sometimes it is the loss of a child, a job, money, reputation, or, in the case of Brainerd, a dream.

I have to imagine that in that moment, Brainerd was not thinking that his loss of a dream was for a better future. Brainerd’s story can be told in such a way that it looks as if God did redirect him for a better future. Jonathan Edwards put Brainerd’s diaries in print, and they were more widely read than any of Edwards other works.³³ Harvey points out that countless missionaries, including Henry Martyn, William Carey, Robert Murray McCheyne, and Jim Elliot, were all inspired to go to the mission field after reading

³¹Dave Harvey, *Rescuing Ambition* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 141-53.

³²Ibid., 140.

³³Harvey, *Rescuing Ambition*, 141.

Brainerd's story.³⁴ It should be pointed out that revival broke out amongst the Indians where Brainerd ministered, but Edwards tells of how Brainerd was feeling about a year into his ministry:

As to my success here I cannot say much as yet: the Indians seem generally kind, and well-disposed towards me, and are mostly very attentive to my instructions, and seem willing to be taught further. Two or three, I hope, are under some convictions: but there seems to be little of the special workings of the divine Spirit among them yet; which gives me many a heart-sinking hour. Sometimes I hope, God has abundant blessings in store for them and me; but at other times, I am so overwhelmed with distress that I cannot see how his dealings with me are consistent with covenant love and faithfulness; and I say, "Surely his tender mercies are clean gone forever." But however, I see, I needed all this chastisement already: "It is good for me" that I have endured these trials, and have hitherto little or no apparent success.³⁵

Who in their right mind says that a lack of success is good for them? It is the person who realizes that leadership loss can be one of the greatest gifts God gives. It is a gift few would ever ask for. However, it is a gift that can grow one in love and knowledge to be able to discern what is best, realizing that everything is a loss in comparison to knowing Christ Jesus as Lord. After asking how one can make a statement like Brainerd's—"It is good for me' that I have endured these trials, and have little or no apparent success"—Harvey insightfully writes, "In the shadow of failure we find humbling grace. We learn that we're limited. We discover that God is more interested in

³⁴Harvey, *Rescuing Ambition*, 141. Harvey writes that "the Yale University editors of the works of Jonathan Edwards note that his *Life of David Brainerd* 'was a major impetus and inspiration to the domestic and foreign missionary movement of the late eighteenth and through the nineteenth century'" (ibid., 222).

³⁵Ibid., 152. See also Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1995), 2:435.

who we're becoming than in what we're achieving. We find our definition not in our failures or successes but in Christ.”³⁶

Harvey's statement sounds a lot like the gospel. It sounds a lot like God not only beginning a work, but also being faithful to complete that work. It almost sounds like God was answering Paul's prayer for the Philippians in the life of David Brainerd. I pray that God will answer that prayer in the life of every ministry leader who will read this project. The prayer is to help ministry leaders see the benefit of loss. So, that means the goal is not to be a celebrity or to have ones church make the largest or fastest growing list, but it is to see God complete the work he began and has promised to complete until one's death or Jesus' return. This is a new goal for many future ministry leaders.

A Lifetime of Loss

The work that God does is not just something he begins, but it is the work over a lifetime. As Paul said, “Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil 1:6). The beginning of God's work in a leader's life involves loss. The work does not end there. In Philippians 1:6, Paul refers to the work God began and says God will be faithful to carry that work on until the day of Christ Jesus. The work God begins at salvation is not finished until Jesus comes back or at death. As long as one is alive, God is still completing the work he began. This work continues to involve loss.

This work of stripping away and testing one's faith is one that God will do throughout one's life. Just think of the life of Abraham. He willingly turns his back on his

³⁶Harvey, *Rescuing Ambition*, 152.

idolatrous background (Josh 24:2) and steps out to follow the living God in Genesis 12. He leaves with a promise of a land, seed, and blessing. One can read about his life from Genesis 12 through Genesis 22, and it seems God is continually testing his faith. When God tests his faith regarding the land he typically does well. When God tests his faith concerning the seed, he seems to struggle. In Genesis 16, Abraham, then still named Abram, fails by trying to help God out and sleeps with his wife's maid servant Hagar. However, after twenty-five years of waiting, God gives Abraham a son (Gen 21) named Isaac. Genesis 22 happens fifteen to twenty years later.³⁷ Genesis 22 relates that God tested Abraham and asked him to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering. Abraham does not know this is a test. The narrator states that it is a test so that one can know God is not promoting child sacrifice. This is a test, only a test. For Abraham this was his life and it seemed like the greatest possible loss he could face. However, what God was doing was continuing to refine Abraham, continuing to grow his faith. God was testing Abraham in an area close to his heart. It would be easy for Abraham to think "I have put in my time. I have trusted you for the last 40 years. I stepped out not knowing where I was going. I should retire and wait for my name to be inducted into the hall of faith, which actually happens in Hebrews 11:8-19." However, Abraham continued to trust God passing faith tests now that he had failed earlier (see Gen 16). God was not done with Abraham. As long as someone who God began a good work in is still alive, God will continue to work

³⁷This estimate is based on Isaac's ability to carry the wood for the sacrifice up the mountain and have a mature conversation with his father about the sacrifice (Gen 22:6-8).

in him or her. God will continue to teach one the lessons of loss. One survey respondent wrote that “ministry has forced me to be dependent in ways that I didn’t know were possible. Also, getting a front row seat to life change is a constant reminder that God is active and powerful. This gives me great confidence in Him.”³⁸ The language of forced dependence is interesting. Do not read past that language as a nice Christian cliché. One is forced to depend on God when one realizes that one is powerless, but this respondent is saying that they now have a greater confidence in the one with the power to complete the change he has begun.

The Philippian church started while Paul was in jail. It seems only appropriate that he would write them a letter while he is in jail. That is what Paul goes on to tell them in verses 12-20 of chapter one. He writes these words with a joy reminiscent of a guy who has just been flogged and is singing hymns like we saw ten years earlier in Acts 16. This time he shares why he is able to rejoice while in jail. Even now, while he has experienced the loss of his freedom and loss of comfort that so many cling to, Paul rejoices because the gospel is going forward. As he awaits trial before the emperor,³⁹ he encourages the Philippians with the following: “Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel” (Phil 1:12).

Loss is a byproduct of living for the sake of the gospel. Paul writes in verse 13 that “it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.” God has been going even further outside the jail and Paul knows

³⁸See response 12 to question 23 in appendix 3.

³⁹Carson points out that Paul is probably in this situation because he appealed to the emperor in Acts 26. Carson, *Basics for Believers*, 22.

it: “Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly” (Phil 1:14).

The Freedom of Losing Life

In verse 19, Paul speaks of a confidence in his deliverance. Regardless of what one knows looking back at this text, how could Paul have possibly known he was going to be delivered? Did Jesus visit him in jail and tell him? Did he have a really strong hunch? No. When Paul talks about deliverance here, he is not talking about being released from prison. Deliverance in this context means his ultimate vindication whether in life or in death.⁴⁰ Paul is so consumed with Christ, that anything that happens to him here is not ultimately a loss. He expresses this most clearly in what is perhaps the most famous verse from the book of Philippians: “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil 1:21). What Paul is saying is that his all-consuming reason for existence is Jesus. That is why he ends his prayer in verses 9-11 with “to the glory of God.” That is not just a good way to end a prayer with the phrase “in Jesus name, Amen” as if it were a formula. Paul meant everything was for the glory of God, whether in this life or in death. That is why he could sing hymns while in jail. That is why ten years later he could rejoice while in jail again because the gospel was advancing. It was almost as if he had the ability to forget everything because of his all consuming passion for Jesus. That is why he could say for me to live is Christ.

⁴⁰Carson, *Basics for Believers*, 28.

When I was a youth pastor I remember teaching this verse by handing out some cards to the students that read, “For me to live is _____, and to die is _____. ” I asked them to fill in the blanks. The idea was that they would fill in the first blank with what was most important to them—for me to live is “what people think of me”; for me to live is “my boyfriend”; for me to live is “my grades”; for me to live is “my car.” The way one fills in that first blank space is determined by what is most important in one’s life. While most Christians would like to say that it is Christ, one need only check one’s checkbook and calendar to find the answer. One need only ask oneself where one’s mind wanders to when one lays in bed at night. What consumes one’s thoughts, actions, and affections? Is it Christ? How one fills in that first blank will determine how one fills in the second blank. If the first blank space is filled in with anything other than Christ, then the second blank cannot possibly read that to die is gain.

To die has to be loss if the first blank contains anything temporary. That is not freedom, that is bondage to creation. That is also known as idolatry. If there is any item, person, place, or thing that has been created in one’s first blank space (to live), then the second line has to read to die is loss. Most people think of death as loss and that is fitting because for most people it means the end of a hobby, the end of a dream, the end of some temporary pursuit, but for Paul the end of this life meant ultimate union with Christ, which is freedom.

The end of this life for Paul was gain because it was fulfillment. To say that to live was Christ meant ministry,⁴¹ but not like those he mentioned earlier who did

⁴¹Carson, commenting on Paul’s statement “to live is Christ,” suggests that “‘surely’ means that for Paul to keep on living here means ministry, Christ-centered ministry, Christ-empowered ministry, Christ’s presence in his ministry.” Carson, *Basics for Believers*, 29.

ministry, and most likely faithful gospel ministry, but did it with wrong motives. For Paul, his longing was that Christ be known not merely so that he could use Christ so he could be known. Every ministry leader should pause and ask him or herself: “Am I losing my life for Christ or am I using Christ for my life?”

Paul’s longing was that Christ be glorified, not that he use his ministry so he could be glorified. His longing was that the gospel be advanced, not that he use the gospel so that his own agenda could be advanced. His passion was for the fame of Jesus’ name, not to use the fame of Jesus’ name to spread his own name. His passion was to spread the love of Christ, not to use Christ’s love to get love from the people he ministered to. For him, to live was truly Christ. Each ministry leader must take an honest look at his or her heart and ask whether, for them, to live *is* Christ. It is easy to mix motives of selfish ambition with a genuine love for Jesus and think the best about one’s self, when in reality one is deceived. “Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit” (Ps 32:2). Is to live truly Christ or is it some mixture of Jesus and self?

When one looks at the life of Paul it is as if when he wrote Romans 6:3-4 about being buried with Christ in baptism and raised to walk in a new way of life, he meant it. He writes from jail that for him to live is Christ and to die is gain. It is not just *what* he wrote, it was *how* he lived. It is almost as if he had been crucified with Christ, and it was no longer he who lived but Christ living in him (Gal 2:20). It is like his life was no longer about him; his life was actually about Christ. When one looks at Paul’s relationship with Christ it seems so different from what is typically observed in the relationship most Americans have with Jesus. It is not that Jesus is part of his life so that

Paul can get something from him. The power of Paul's faith does not show itself by financial prosperity or a more meaningful life. Instead, it is as if that is flipped around and Paul's joy comes in a blatant disregard for what he gets out of this life. That is freedom. How different loss must be for the person whose primary concern on this earth is Christ.

One sees a similar relationship with God in the life of David. David was a guy who had his own faults. Like Paul, he was human and therefore not perfect. But David was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam 13:14; 16:7). David was not a perfect husband or father, but for him to live was to live his life for God. In one of his passionate Psalms, while fleeing to the dessert as his son Absalom was trying to steal his throne, David writes, "O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water" (Ps 63:1). He does not say what would naturally be said in a dry and weary land where there is no water, namely, "I want a drink." He does not say what one might expect in light of his life circumstances in this dry and weary land as he flees while his son tries to overtake his throne: "God, I wish I could get a second chance with Absalom." He does not say in a dry and weary land "I wish I had the comforts of my palace." He does not say in a dry and weary land "Please restore my kingship." Many future ministry leaders will lose their positions and relationships, but in the crucible of pain they will find Christ. David says, "In a dry and weary land when everything around me dictates I should want something else, I want you. When I am faced with loss that from every human perspective should make me look toward selfish gain, I want you." When one reaches this point, one has reached a point of ultimate freedom. One is no longer a victim, a martyr to circumstances,

but a victor because in the greatest losses of life one gains a deeper intimacy with Christ, and this intimacy is freedom.

The truth that freedom is found in losing is not only true for people who are recorded in the Bible, but it is still true today. A Romanian Pastor named Josef Tson who was persecuted because of his desire to live for Christ describes how he found freedom because of loss:

During an early interrogation I had told an officer who was threatening to kill me, “Sir, let me explain how I see this issue. Your supreme weapon is killing. My supreme weapon is dying. Here is how it works. You know that my sermons on tape have spread all over the country. If you kill me, those sermons will be sprinkled with my blood. Everyone will know I died for my preaching. And everyone who has a tape will pick it up and say, I’d better listen again to what this man preached, because he really meant it; he sealed it with his life. So, sir, my sermons will speak ten times louder than before. I will actually rejoice in this supreme victory if you kill me.” After I said this, the interrogator sent me home. Another officer who was interrogating a pastor friend of mine told him, “We know that Mr. Tson would love to be a martyr, but we are not that foolish to fulfill his wish.” I stopped to consider the meaning of that statement. I remembered how for many years, I had been afraid of dying. I had kept a low profile. Because I wanted badly to live, I had wasted my life in inactivity. But now that I had placed my life on the altar and decided I was ready to die for the Gospel, they were telling me they would not kill me! I could go wherever I wanted in the country and preach whatever I wanted, knowing I was safe. As long as I tried to save my life, I was losing it. Now that I was willing to lose it, I found it.⁴²

Loss is hard when people spend their lives trying to grab hold of things they cannot keep. The goal is not to become so apathetic about everything in this life that one does not care if he or she experiences loss. The goal is what Paul prays in verses 9 through 11, namely that the Philippians would grow in love and knowledge to the point that their love for Christ was so superior and their ability to discern what is best so good that nothing compared to Christ—not comfort, not health, not wealth, not degrees, not

⁴²David Platt, *Secret Church*, accessed February 4, 2016, http://www.radical.net/files/uploads/SC12_TS4_Web.pdf 9-10.

accomplishment, not fame, not approval, not ambition, not advancement in status, nothing compared to the love of Christ, thus they were willing to lose anything and everything else even life itself.

Real freedom came for Pastor Tson when he was willing to lose his life because then, for him, to truly live was Christ. He was now living for the sake of the gospel, not just enough of the gospel to make him happy or comfortable, but the gospel that completely transformed his life. He was no longer frozen by fear, no longer wasting his life playing it safe. Once he was willing to lose everything, then he had found everything that was worth losing it for. It was Jesus who said, “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it” (Luke 9:24).

Conduct Worthy of Heaven

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have. (Phil 1:27–30)

Verses 27 through 30 are one long sentence in Greek that contain only one main verb, *πολιτεύεσθε* (“conduct”).⁴³ After everything that has already been stated in Philippians 1, Paul commands the Philippians and their leaders to conduct themselves in a way that is worthy of the gospel that they have accepted. What exactly does it mean to conduct oneself in a way that is worthy of the gospel? Bible commentator Gerald Hawthorne writes, “This means among other things, that they will be good citizens both

⁴³Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 55.

of the earthly state in which they live and of the heavenly state to which they ultimately belong.”⁴⁴ Hawthorne rightly points out the believer’s status as an earthly inhabitant with a heavenly citizenship. Matt Chandler is more practical in his book *To Live Is Christ, To Die Is Gain*, where he reflects on the idea of worth. After pointing out how Paul uses the word “worthy” in other letters to the churches (Eph 4:1; Col 1:10; 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 1:5), Chandler states what the word “worthy” means by saying very simply that it means ascribing worth. Then, he adds, “When he commands others to live in a ‘worthy’ way, he means we should live in such a way that shows what we believe is of supreme worth. For Christians, it means living in such a way that Jesus is seen as big, that Jesus is seen as glorious.”⁴⁵ It means to live on this earth, which is not our home, in the reality that the only thing in this life not worth losing is Jesus, and anything one loses in this life that helps him or her either know Jesus better or make him better known is something he or she should be prepared to lose. A few pages later Chandler asks and answers the same question again with a slightly different nuance,

What does it look like to live a life worthy of the gospel? It looks like dying with Christ to one’s self and being raised in Christ to walk in the newness of life with our brothers and sisters. It means living grace-filled lives that grant patience and mercy and gentleness for the spiritual journeys of others and a respect for the differences and idiosyncrasies we all bring to the Lord’s table.⁴⁶

This talk of heavenly citizenship must have been easy for the Philippians to grasp. Philippi was a Roman colony. This meant that the Philippians lived in one place but that they were citizens of another. As Gordon Fee writes, “As Philippi was a colony

⁴⁴Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 55.

⁴⁵Matt Chandler and Jared C. Wilson, *To Live is Christ to Die is Gain* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2013), 35.

⁴⁶Ibid., 39.

of Rome in Macedonia, so the church was a ‘colony of heaven’ in Philippi, whose members were to live as its citizens in Philippi.”⁴⁷ Believers in general and ministry leaders specifically are to live on this earth as citizens of heaven, an idea Paul states more explicitly in Philippians 3:20. This truth means that each one is to live as if this earth is not his or her home. William Barclay, writing about Paul’s admonition for the Philippians to consider themselves citizens of another kingdom:

Paul was writing from the very center of the Roman Empire, from Rome itself; it was the fact that he was a Roman citizen that had brought him there. Philippi was a Roman colony; and Roman colonies were little bits of Rome planted throughout the world, where the citizens never forgot that they were Romans, spoke the Latin language, wore the Latin dress, called their magistrates by the Latin names, however far they might be from Rome. So what Paul is saying is, “You and I know full well the privileges and the responsibilities of being a Roman citizen. You know full well how even in Philippi, so many miles from Rome, you must still live and act as a Roman does. Well, then, remember that you have an even higher duty than that. Wherever you are you must live as befits a citizen of the Kingdom of God.”⁴⁸

It is fine to enjoy being living on this earth as a believer, but believers can never get so comfortable that they begin to grasp the comforts of this place as if those are the things to be held onto. They do not have to sell everything they have and prove the radicalness of their faith because they never use air conditioning. A false gospel of poverty is no better than a false gospel of prosperity. However, it is too easy to get comfortable when comfort is available. Believers live in a place that is not their home, but they are not here on vacation. They are here on mission. Jesus stated clearly that mission at the end of every one of the gospel accounts. In Matthew, one reads,

⁴⁷Gordon D. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 162.

⁴⁸William Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, rev. ed. (Louisville: The Westminster Press, 1975), 30.

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matt 28:18-20)

In Mark, Jesus says, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all of creation” (Mark 16:15). Luke writes, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:46-48). John puts it like this: “Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you’” (John 20:21). How and why did God send Jesus? “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). That sounds a lot more like a mission than a vacation to me. In case it was not clear in those four Gospel accounts, Jesus makes another appearance and states the mission again in the book of Acts” “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). It does not matter where one lives or moves or has his or her being. God has strategically placed ministry leaders where they are. Further, they have been bought at a price and their citizenship is in heaven so that they can give their lives away for the sake of spreading the fame of his name as he completes the work that he began in them.

This world is not one’s home. To live worthy of the gospel, one must conduct oneself in such a way that demonstrates that Jesus Christ is the supreme value of one’s life. Everything else is worth losing and in fact it may be part of God’s plan for their lives to lose many of the things they temporarily had in their hands while they sojourn in this temporary place as part of his way of continuing the work he began in them.

As I think about loss, I imagine reliving that day on the beach when I momentarily lost my daughter. At that moment, I would have given almost anything to have her back. The thoughtful believer has to evaluate his or her life honestly and ask, “What is worth losing to gain Christ?” Future ministry leaders will be faced with great loss, but what will be gained in the process?

CHAPTER 3

LOSS OF SELF

Why Ministry Leaders Leave

Dark stories are floating around the blogosphere about why pastors leave the ministry. One reads of a mega church pastor who had been living a secret life with a male prostitute, perhaps other men, and purchasing, although not actually using, methamphetamines.¹ One can find stories of pastors and other prominent Christians exposed through the recent internet hacking scandal with Ashley Madison, the internet provider of illicit affairs for married couples. In an August 27, 2015 *Christianity Today* article, Ed Stetzer, Life Way vice president of Lifeway Insights said that he estimates that at least four hundred church leaders—pastors, elders, staff, deacons, etc.—would be resigning that coming Sunday.² Three days before Stetzer wrote this article, one pastor, husband, and father of two who was exposed by the scandal, took his own life rather than deal with the humiliation of having his affair exposed.³ This perusal of headlines can lead one to believe that extramarital affairs are the number one cause for ministry leaders

¹The story being referred to here is of Ted Haggard, former Pastor of New Life Church in Colorado Springs. See “Ted Haggard,” CNN, accessed December 27, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/01/29/lkl.ted.haggard/>.

²“My Pastor Is on the Ashley Madison List,” *Christianity Today*, accessed December 27, 2015, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/august/my-pastor-is-on-ashley-madison-list.html>.

³“New Orleans Pastor Takes Own Life after Being Exposed As an Ashley Madison User,” accessed December 27, 2015, <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/pastor.commits.suicide.exposed.ashley.madison.hack/64281.htm>.

exiting the ministry. The truth is that these stories, while tragic, should serve as a warning to every ministry leader. But the more popular reasons why ministry leaders leave their ministry callings are far more subtle. In the study mentioned in chapter 1 of this project, Lifeway research found that the number one reason pastors left their current roles was a change in calling (37 percent), and the second highest reason was because of conflict in the church (26 percent).⁴ Moral or ethical issues, while well publicized, accounted for 13 percent of those who had left the ministry.⁵ Twice as many pastors leave their ministry posts because of conflict than because of moral issues. While only 26 percent of pastors actually left the place where they experienced conflict, 64 percent reported having experienced conflict.⁶ More than 1 in 3 pastors indicated that they had experienced a significant personal attack at their last church.⁷ One survey respondent in the Experienced Leaders survey said that the most difficult thing they had experienced in ministry was “The betrayal of a close staff person who worked behind my back to (unsuccessfully) have me fired from my job over a difference in philosophy of ministry.”⁸ Another reported, “I was betrayed by a fellow pastor who sought to get me fired by spreading falsehoods and rumors about me. Many chose to believe those things, thankfully, far more chose not to believe them. Over time the things he said were shown

⁴“Reasons for Attrition among Pastors: Quantitative Report,” *Lifewayresearch.com*, <http://www.lifewayresearch.com/files/2015/08/Reasons-for-Attrition-Among-Pastors-Quantitative-Report-Final1.pdf>. Findings indicate that those who minister in smaller churches experience more conflict and those who minister in churches in the Midwest experience more conflict than those in the South (10-11).

⁵Ibid., 10.

⁶Ibid., 12.

⁷Ibid.

⁸See response 22 to question 25 in appendix 3.

to be false but much of the damage had already been done.”⁹ One respondent reporting on loss wrote, “Lost 200 people to a church ‘plant’ that left with a staff member.”¹⁰ Conflict is not something many young ministry leaders expect. Writing for the Gospel Coalition blog, Jason Helopoulos writes this about conflict:

This is arguably one of the biggest surprises to young pastors. Conflict happens in the church; and it happens all the time. Those in ministry will often be called to mediate conflict, navigate the waters of a conflict, and are regularly the target of much conflict. Pastors will find that there are hateful, petty, arrogant, rude, brooding, and discontent people in their congregations. Unfortunately, and coming as a surprise to many pastors, is the fact that the unconverted don’t tend to cause the majority of conflict; it is the converted who launch the hardest persecutions. As Will Still once said, “They want their part of the Gospel or their emphasis, usually that which they wrongly think does not touch them, call upon them, or challenge them.” It is also true that pastors are often the source of conflict themselves. Sin, errors in judgment, and mistakes in leadership can cause firestorms.¹¹

Conflict and the Need for Loss

The apostle Paul addresses the issue of conflict next in his letter to the Philippians. In the beginning of Philippians 2, Paul attacks the source of conflict when he writes,

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Phil 2:1-4)

Philippians 2:1-4, like verses 27-30, constitute one long sentence in Greek. The New International Version (NIV) does not translate it for some reason, but this sentence

⁹See response 55 to question 25 in appendix 3.

¹⁰See response 10 to question 22 in appendix 3.

¹¹Kevin DeYoung, “Why Pastors Quit,” *TheGospelCoalition.org*, accessed on December 27, 2015, <http://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/kevindeyoung/2013/04/18/why-pastors-quit/>.

begins with the conjunction οὖν, which is translated as “therefore” in other versions of the Bible (see NAS, KJV, NKJV).¹² This structure along with the theme of unity connects what Paul says in verses 1-4 back to what he has just been saying in verses 27-30. There he was speaking of conducting one’s self in a manner worthy of the gospel as a citizen of heaven. This place is not the believer’s home. While one lives here and has the potential to become very comfortable here, one’s citizenship is actually in heaven: “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:20). Paul exhorts the Philippians to live according to their citizenship with all of its rights and responsibilities.

Gerald Hawthorne writes, “This new section is closely joined to that which preceded it, not only by the conjunction οὖν (“therefore”), but by Paul’s emphatic reiteration of the one idea that harmony is essential for Christian community and for an effective effort to defend the gospel” (cf. 1:27; 2:2).¹³ One realizes later in the book that harmony was an issue for this church as there was disunity between two apparently prominent women in the church (see 4:2-3). This disunity was causing Paul to experience a loss that no Christian should experience, a loss of joy. The main verb of the sentence, which makes up verses 1-4, is the imperative of verse 2a, “make my joy complete.”¹⁴ Moises Silva, commenting on these verses writes,

¹²Ralph Martin points out, “The word ‘therefore’ looks back to i. 27, and is a bridge between the apostle’s call for the unity of the church in the face of hostility and a continuation of that summons for such concord and harmonious churchmanship as will gladden his heart.” Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 11 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 1983), 90.

¹³Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 43 (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1983), 63-64.

¹⁴Moises Silva, *Philippians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 86.

The Philippians' afflictions have brought discouragement to the community. Because they have lost, or at least are in danger of losing, the fundamental Christian perspective of joy, the apostle in this letter exhorts them repeatedly to rejoice (2:18; 3:1; 4:4). Moreover, Paul reinforces his exhortation by emphasizing the joy that the Philippians have brought him in spite of his afflictions (1:4). Perhaps Paul recognizes that the key to joy consists in shifting our attention away from ourselves and onto the needs of others.¹⁵

Clearly, reading these four short verses one can figure out that the reason for conflict goes beyond the issue of disagreement. Gospel-centered love for one another is lacking. Gospel-centered love is the kind of love that one should express when living as a citizen of heaven. It is the kind of love one expresses when living a life worthy of the gospel. Paul appeals to this love in verse 2 when he says, "Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose." What is the same love Paul is talking about? Are there different kinds of love? Certainly, in our context, this love is a selfless love. Silva points out that "the love referred to in Phil 2:2 is described in 1 Cor 13:5 as one that 'does not seek its own.'"¹⁶

At the heart of the issue of conflict is the issue of selfishness and pride. There is not a lack of all love, for certainly at the heart of conflict there is an immense love for oneself. What is lacking in this selfishness is a lack of gospel-centered love, the kind that one experiences from Christ when God begins a good work in one's life and then the kind of love that one experiences from Christ and his people as God continues to do that work. It has been said that pride is the root of all sin and at the heart of pride is selfishness. The real reason for all conflict in the church is not disagreement but selfishness and pride. John MacArthur comments on verses 3 and 4: "It is not surprising that rejecting

¹⁵Silva, *Philippians*, 86.

¹⁶Silva here calls Corinth Paul's most "schismatic" church. *Ibid.*, 87.

selfishness is listed first, since it is the root of every other sin. It was by placing his will above God's that Satan fell (cf. Isa 14:12-17), and it was by placing their own wills above God's that Adam and Eve first brought sin into the world (Gen 3). Self-will has been the heart of every subsequent sin.”¹⁷

If something causes disunity in heaven and corruption for all mankind, there is no doubt that pride and selfishness will cause conflict in the church. Several respondents when asked in what ways they had been most transformed as a leader listed humility as part of their transformation. One said that he had been “humbled, broken through disappointments, that have led to great God dependence.”¹⁸ One senior leader expressed a death to the idea of leaving his legacy: “I have also surrendered up the idea of a ‘legacy’ for myself. My motto, taken from Zinzendorf is ‘preach the Gospel, die and be forgotten.’ It makes life so much simpler when I don’t have to worry about a legacy, but just be faithful” (see appendix 3). In other words, one must get over oneself to be able to truly serve others. Self is the death of gospel love and the death of a life worthy of the gospel.

It is no wonder that Paul exhorts the believer’s here to do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. What Paul is calling for is a loss of selfish ambition and a loss of vain conceit instead of a loss of joy. Some pastors leave the ministry not because of conflict, a new calling or a moral issue, but actually because of a loss of joy. Some people are looking for joy from the wrong sources and therefore experience depression, anxiety, frustration, and a sense of meaninglessness even though they stand and proclaim

¹⁷John MacArthur, *Philippians, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2001), 109.

¹⁸See response 31 to question 23 in appendix 3. Also, for responses to humility, see appendix 3.

the words of eternal consequence on a weekly and sometimes daily basis? Approximately 74 percent of experienced leaders agree or strongly agree that their ministry is difficult,¹⁹ but perhaps this is good news since approximately 82 percent agree or strongly agree that God has primarily used their most difficult times in ministry to transform them the most.²⁰ Perhaps God is using the healthy and unhealthy tensions that every ministry leader senses as part of his way of completing the work he began in them at salvation.

Notice that Paul does not exhort the Philippians to try to work out their differences. The right response is not to try to find a newer and more fulfilling calling. The issue is not to even simply to ignore the impulses of one's heart. I remember a time when I was experiencing uncontrollable anxiety. At times, I not only wondered if I should leave the ministry, I thought perhaps I was going crazy. But what God brought me back to was not easier circumstances; he instead brought me comfort from his love. He brought a renewal of his grace and a reminder of his sovereignty.

Notice that Paul appeals to four conditional statements in verse 1. These four clauses are not intended to be broken-down rationally and explained as if this were a seminary lecture room.²¹ They appear in the NIV as four “if” statements. Since these are first class conditional clauses, they speak of certainties. Paul knows that God has begun a

¹⁹See question 9 in appendix 3.

²⁰See question 13 in appendix 3.

²¹See Moises Silva's comments about these clauses: “The clauses are deliberately compressed and vague, since the appeal is primarily emotional. That is, verse 1 is not intended to function as a set of four rational, theological arguments but rather as impassioned pleading.” Silva, *Philippians*, 87-88.

good work in these believers. The word “if” could be translated “since” here:²² “If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion” (Phil 2:1). In other words, “Since you have some encouragement from being united with Christ, since you have experienced comfort from his love, since you have fellowship with the Spirit, and since you have some tenderness and compassion,” make his joy complete by demonstrating your unity as citizens of heaven who walk worthy of the gospel. Paul was confident that God had done a work in the lives of these believers and confident that God was still at work.

Paul appeals here to their experience of that work. Paul’s appeal here is not simply for them to get along, it is to relate intimately to Jesus Christ. Dwight Pentecost writes, “Paul says the first basis of our love for the brethren is our relationship to Jesus Christ.”²³ Carson makes it clear that Paul is appealing to one’s experience: “The argument, in brief is this: If you have experienced a number of important and delightful Christian blessings, then there is an entailment: you must act in such and such a manner. To put it another way, Paul argues that if you have enjoyed a certain wealth of experience, then this precious treasure becomes a mandate to specific conduct.”²⁴

²²Robert P. Lightner, *Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary, vol. 2 (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1984), 653.

²³J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Joy of Living a Study of Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Lamplighter Books, 1973), 57.

²⁴D. A. Carson, *Basics for Believers: An Exposition of Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 59.

The question every ministry leader must ask is whether he has experienced what Paul describes here in this passage. “Do I have any encouragement from being united with Christ?” If so, “Why do I lack encouragement? Is it because I am seeking it from a source beyond Christ? Do I have any comfort from his love?” If so, then one has experienced the unconditional and all encompassing love of Christ. How can one experience this love and yet still have a heart that has grown cold to the gospel? Has one experienced fellowship with the Spirit? This same spirit that came upon the apostles at Pentecost is indwelling the believer and yet how many ministry leaders live with no power or passion? Does one have any tenderness and compassion? If so, then certainly one can see that the obnoxious acts of those they minister to are merely cries for help. If one has even a sliver of the compassion that he or she has experienced from God, then certainly he or she can give a small portion of this infinite compassion to others and deny his or her own selfish ambition and empty glory for the sake of the gospel.

I believe the problem for many who enter ministry is that they have been trained to interpret verse 1 of chapter 2, but few know how to experience verse 1 of chapter 2. This results in inevitable conflict. It is shocking that the statistics do not say that 100 percent of ministry leaders experience conflict. Certainly, they do, but maybe those who responded that they do not are the ones who see the conflict differently. Perhaps they are only experiencing healthy tensions of having a heart for the gospel and living in a sin-fallen world. Maybe it is those who realize that the conflict is ultimately part of God’s continued work in their lives, the work that strips away the selfishness and vain conceit that so many times is causing their loss of joy. Many become so busy in doing ministry that they stop experiencing God ministering to them. Where is one’s

comfort from being united to Christ? Where is the fellowship of the Spirit? Where is the comfort from his love? If those are not evident, is it any wonder that tenderness and compassion are lacking? Is it any wonder that selfish ambition and vain conceit rule their hearts? The call here is to experience the joy of Christ. This calls for a loss of selfish ambition and vain conceit.

The Loss of Selfish Ambition and Vain Conceit

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil 2:3-4). The issue is not to have “less” selfish ambition and “less” vain conceit. Paul does not tell them to have very little selfish ambition and only a hint of vain conceit. He says to do “nothing” out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. This is an absolute statement.

What is selfish ambition? A quick check of various English translations will reveal that the word for “selfish ambition” (*επιθεια*) can be translated as “rivalry, selfishness, and strife.” In a society that says the solution to a lack of joy is self-esteem and where one is encouraged to look out for number one, the idea of doing not one thing out of selfish ambition is certainly a foreign concept. It is human nature to be selfish, especially when someone has been wronged. However, that is not the essence of living a life worthy of the gospel. That is not what Jesus, the one that encourages believers, did.

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. (1 Pet 1:21-24)

Jesus entrusted himself to the one who judges justly and selflessly served those who needed to be served. Not only did Jesus do this, but the author of Hebrews writes that his death on the cross, the ultimate act of selflessness, was for the joy that was to come: “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:2). Joy is not lost when selfishness is lost. Charles Swindoll, in his book *Laugh Again*, commenting on Hebrews 12:2, writes, “Look at that! He saw those of us who would benefit from His sacrifice as ‘the joy set before Him.’ We’re back to our theme-joy! He did not come to us grudgingly or nursing a bitter spirit. He came free of all that. While it was certainly not a pleasurable experience, He accepted His coming among us and dying for us willingly and unselfishly.”²⁵

There seems to be a joy that is only truly experienced in selflessness. At the very heart of Christianity is the call to self-denial. Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23). In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin has a section entitled “The Sum of the Christian Life; The Denial of Self.”²⁶ Selfishness has no place in the life of someone who walks worthy of the gospel. One can see this when genuine Christians are willing to give of themselves simply because they are Christians.

²⁵Charles R. Swindoll, *Laugh Again* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 86.

²⁶John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Library of Christian Classics, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 3.2.7.

Christianity was illegal in Rome when Sanctus, a deacon from Vienna, had been arrested and brought to trial. He was repeatedly told to deny his faith and each time he would respond simply with “I am a Christian.” Regardless of the question, he answered, “I am a Christian.” It was almost as if the essence of his being was to make the declaration whether through his life or through his death that he was a Christian. As one reads his story, one can imagine what it would have been like to endure the torture he faced for following Christ. On the day he was to die, he was forced to run the gauntlet, subjected to wild beasts and fastened to a chair of burning iron. Historian Eusibius writes, “Even thus they did not hear a word from Sanctus except the confession which he uttered from the beginning. He repeated simply, ‘I am a Christian’ til his death.”²⁷ This kind of response is not natural. In a moment of weakness and self-interest, one would be tempted to say whatever necessary to stop the pain. What Sanctus did is supernatural presumably because God had done a supernatural work in his life. It would appear that Sanctus had a lifetime of preparation where selfish ambition had already been stripped away and his encouragement from being united with Christ surpassed any selfish temptations in the moment. The kind of life Sanctus lived is one worthy of the gospel. Any leader who will minister not for their own platform but to exalt Jesus Christ will be stripped of pride, ego, and selfish ambition.

All who want to walk worthy of the gospel must lose the selfish pursuits that lead to conflict, the selfish ambition that views people as tasks or stepping stones rather than image bearers, all rivalry that envies those with ministry positions more glamorous or seemingly more meaningful than their own. One of the greatest losses one can

²⁷As cited in John MacArthur, *Slave: The Hidden Truth about Your Identity in*

experience is the loss of selfish ambition. The loss of selfish ambition is necessary for every ministry leader who wants to finish and hear the Lord say those words, “Well done good and faithful servant” (Matt 25:23). Every ministry leader must ask himself in what areas does one see selfish ambition taking hold of one’s heart? In what ways is encouragement from being united with Christ the antidote to this selfish ambition? Does one have fellowship with the Spirit? Does one have comfort from his love? Does one have tenderness and compassion? If they do not, God will use the experiences one has in ministry to drive one to those very things so that he or she may say with John, “He must become greater, I must become less” (John 3:30).

What is vain conceit? Vain conceit is like the cousin to selfish ambition, which is why they are joined together in verse 3. Vain conceit (*κενοδοξία*) literally is the combination of two Greek terms—the first is *κενός* (“empty”) and the second is *δοξά* (“glory”),²⁸ which is why the King James translates this “vainglory.” This is an exaggerated self-evaluation.²⁹ Every ministry leader has the potential to succumb to this pitfall regardless of the size of one’s platform or significance of one’s title. Whether one is on a national stage or in a seemingly thankless position, the desire to seek one’s own glory because of an exaggerated view of oneself is an all too common reality. Whether setting up an event behind the scenes or standing on the main stage, an exaggerated view of self is possible. How many of the leaders who have fallen to immorality thought they

Christ (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 7-8.

²⁸MacArthur, *Philippians*, 111.

²⁹Walter Bauer et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [BDAG] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 538.

would be the exception? How many start out with plans to exalt Christ only to begin to believe their own press clippings? How many are told they are a better preacher than they probably are by someone in their church only to begin to long for more glory? Regardless of the platform, every ministry leader has to evaluate his or her own heart and motives to see what elements of vain conceit and selfish ambition occupy a place that is reserved solely for the selfless servant Jesus Christ to whom every knee will bow and tongue will confess is Lord.

Any amount of selfishness and empty glory that exists in one's heart is a potentially deadly poison to one's ministry. All selfish ambition and vain conceit must be lost or else joy, which is an essential component to the Christian life, will be lost instead. All selfish ambition and empty glory must be lost or all meaningful ministry can be lost.

Paul spends the rest of chapter 2 giving four examples of what true selflessness looks like. He starts with the ultimate example in Jesus Christ, and then he gives a personal example of his own life, followed by two examples of his friends, Timothy and Epaphroditus.

The Ultimate Example

The first example Paul gives is the ultimate example Jesus Christ. While Jesus is certainly more than an example to our faith since he is the object of our faith, he is no less than the ultimate example:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! (Phil 2:5-8).

This is perhaps one of the most debated passages in all of Scripture. The debate surrounds what Jesus emptied himself of. The NIV translates verse 7 “made himself nothing,” while the word that begins verse 7, κενωω, literally means “to empty.”³⁰ When he made himself nothing, did he empty himself of his power? Did he empty himself of his deity? Did he cease being God? What does it mean that Jesus emptied himself? He certainly did not empty himself of his deity or else he could not die for the entire world. He did not empty himself of his divine powers or else he would not have been able to perform the miracles seen throughout the gospels. “In fact, the expression ‘he emptied himself,’ far from meaning he emptied himself of something, is idiomatic for ‘he gave up all his rights’ or similar expressions.”³¹ He made himself nothing means that he became a nobody.³² Jesus, while fully God, did what Paul talked about in the first four verses without selfish ambition or vain conceit. He considered others better than himself. Those others are all who he has or will begin a good work in. That means that what Paul is commanding the Philippians and believers today to serve in the way they have been served. His step from Lord to servant is a lot bigger step down than believers have to take regardless of how exaggerated their view of themselves may be.

³⁰BDAG defines the term in reference to Phil 2:7 as follows: “of divestiture of position or prestige: of Christ, who gave up the appearance of his divinity and took on the form of a slave, εαυτον εκενωσεν he emptied himself, divested himself of his prestige or privileges Phil 2:7.” BDAG, 539.

³¹Carson, *Basics for Believers*, 45.

³²Ibid.

Paul says that one's attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. The word used for attitude in verse 5, φρονέω, is the same word that is used in verse 2 and translated "like-minded." Our mind should not only be united as believers in like-mindedness, but should be the same as that of Jesus, whom we have encouragement from being united with (v. 1). His mindset was the mindset of a servant. Jesus told his disciples that his path to greatness was one of service: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:43-45). Jesus came for the very sake of giving his life away. The call of every ministry leader is one of godly ambition, not selfish ambition. It is the call to lose one's life for the sake of God's glory as one fulfills God's mission as a servant leader.

This attitude was not one of grasping: "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped" (Phil 2:6). Even though Jesus was rightfully God, he did not grasp those rights. When I think of this grasping, I think of my youngest daughter who is currently four years old. Whenever we get out of the car, she has to grab some little plastic toy. If you want to remove that from her hand, you will need some version of the Jaws of Life. If you are successful removing it from her hand, your prize will be uncontrollable weeping and gnashing of teeth due to her apparent loss. Unfortunately, though illustrated by a four-year old, most believers do not simply grow out of this grasping mentality. They may not carry pieces of plastic around as if they are attached to their souls, but they will grasp for anything and everything that they think will ultimately satisfy their souls.

Christians grasp for bigger and better material possessions, vacations, platforms, ministries, recognition, praise, gratitude, acceptance, money, power, prestige and once they are in their grasp, no amount of prying can separate them from their grubby little fingers. Ministry leaders are taught both explicitly and implicitly to grip or grasp for things. This teaching, while familiar from the passage, is foreign to most experiences. Jesus willingly was not a grasper; he instead voluntarily became a servant. In other words, he did nothing out of selfish ambition and certainly did not have an exaggerated view of himself, making himself a nobody.

Paul goes on to say that Jesus took the very nature of a servant. One sees another picture of Jesus service in John 13. In John 13, Jesus knows that he is only hours away from dying. Try to imagine what it would be like to be only hours away from death. If one were aware that death was immanent and one only had hours remaining, whatever one would do would probably be of the utmost importance. I personally doubt that if I knew I were going to die in a matter of hours, I would spend my time checking my Facebook status or some other trivial task. Whatever I would do, it would be of vital importance. Jesus is having a meal with his closest friends, with those he has spent the last several years laughing, crying, and ministering to and with. What he does in these last hours is very informative. He serves. As Dwight Pentecost writes,

The event in this section (referring to John 13:1-20) took place while the evening meal was being served (John 13:2). John noted that it happened “before the Passover Feast” (v. 1). A comparison of these two statements may suggest that the incident occurred while the evening meal was being served but before they actually came to the place where the Passover lamb would be eaten. We have here a studied contrast in attitudes. The apostles, having joined Christ at this feast, were overcome with selfish ambitions (Luke 22:24). They also had given way to greed (Matt 26:8). In contrast, Christ was filled with compassion (John 13:1). Christ had come into the world not only because He loved the Father but because He loved the world as well.

Christ looked forward to the cross because He loved the world. He was ready to give Himself as a sacrifice for the sin of the world.³³

His friends, his twelve closest followers, have just been arguing about who is the greatest. There was no doubt that Jesus was their leader and master and that he was the greatest among them. While they were filled with selfish ambition, arguing about who was greatest, Jesus stood up and removed his priestly robe and wrapped a towel around his waist. Jesus washes each of his disciple's feet, even the feet of Judas. By removing his clothes to serve, he shows great humility,³⁴ perhaps even giving an image of himself as the suffering servant (Isa 53).³⁵ One must remember that Jesus knows that he will soon be leaving the ministry in the hands of eleven of these twelve men. Knowing that these men would be leaders in the church, knowing that they would have to carry on his message, teaches them a crucial lesson. Knowing that he would die in a matter of hours, Jesus does not give them a crash course on preaching. He does not share with the twelve principles of leading a movement. Jesus does not even teach them how to start a church. Knowing what was about to happen, he teaches them the importance of service. He shows them what it looks like to put the interests of others ahead of one's own. Here, one sees what it looks like to literally do nothing out of selfish ambition or have an exaggerated view of oneself. When Jesus is finished, he says, "Now that I, your Lord and

³³J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ: A Study of the Life of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 427.

³⁴Craig S. Keener *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2014), 288.

³⁵Keener writes, "By so serving, Jesus prefigures his death as the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 on behalf of the many. Jesus' milieu celebrated honor and feared shame. Unlike most elite men in Greco-Roman society, Judaism valued humility; but like other societies, it also upheld societal roles. Jesus overturns even positions of social status. Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi (about A.D. 220) was said to be so humble

Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him" (John 13:14-16).

Ministry leaders are not greater than the one who stooped to wash his follower's feet. Before one is a ministry leader, one is a Jesus follower. How is it that Jesus was able to do such a thing? It is very interesting that John gives some insights at the beginning of chapter 13 that answer this question. He says, in verse 3, that "Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God" (John 13:3). Why does John say this just before saying "So he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist" (John 13:4)? Why say that Jesus knew that the father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God. It is as if John was saying that Jesus did not have anything to prove, which freed him to serve. Often it is one's insecurity that stops him or her from serving. Christians can become so busy grasping for their exaggerated view of themselves that they miss opportunities to serve. Insecurity squelches service. Being secure in one's identity in Christ gives one a freedom to serve him. One survey respondent astutely gives this advice to future leaders: "It's not about being cool. It is about obedience and simply doing what he Lord calls you to do. If you compare yourself with others, you will be miserable. Your identity needs to be in your

that he would do anything for others-except relinquish his superior position; seating according to rank was crucial. Jesus goes beyond even this" (ibid., 288).

relationship with Jesus.”³⁶ Once a ministry leader has placed his or her faith in Jesus, his or her identity is in who he or she is in Jesus Christ (John 1:12; Eph 1:1-14; 1 Pet 2:9). Jesus’ security in who he was and where he was going gave him incredible freedom to serve and empty himself of his rights. True servants do not seek selfish ambition. True servants seek self-emptying.

Jesus was doing the very thing Paul exhorted the Philippians to do in verses 1-4, but he was not simply taking on a menial task like washing feet, he was obeying his father to the point of death, even the worst form of death: “And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Phil 2:8). Not only did God the Son obey God the Father, but he also obeyed to the point of death. Carson points out,

It is very hard for us today to hear the shocking overtones of the words Paul uses, because the cross has become for us such a domesticated symbol. Today many women and some men dangle crosses from their ears. Our bishops hang crosses around their necks. Our buildings have crosses on the spires, or stained wooden crosses are backlit with fluorescent lights. Some of our older church buildings are actually built in cruciform, and no one is shocked.

Suppose you were to place in a prominent position in your church building a fresco of the massed graves of Auschwitz. Wouldn’t everyone be horrified? But in the first century, the cross had something of that symbolic value. Scholars have gone through every instance of the word ‘cross’ and related expressions that have come down to us from about the time of Jesus and shown how ‘crucifixion’ and ‘cross’ invariably evoke horror. Of the various forms of Roman execution, crucifixion could be used only for slaves, rebels, and anarchists; it could never be used for a Roman citizen, apart from the express sanction of the Emperor. Crucifixion was considered too cruel-so shameful that the word itself was avoided in polite conversation.³⁷

³⁶See response 29 to question 27 in appendix 4. “Imagine you are sitting across the desk from a future ministry leader. What would you most like to tell a future ministry leader that no one else is telling them right now?” See appendix 3.

³⁷Carson, *Basics for Believers*, 46.

The cross was gruesome, the cross was horrifying, and the cross is what Jesus submitted to. Why would Jesus become obedient to death, even death on a cross? The answer is found in Hebrews 12:2—for the joy set before him. What was the joy set before him? It was the salvation of his children. Jesus died to give his life as a ransom for many. He did not come for his own interests, he came for the interests of others. Jesus is the ultimate example of one who put the interests of others ahead of his own. He put the interests of his children ahead of his own when he left the place with no crying, no pain, and no sin to come and die a gruesome death, taking on the wrath of His Father. That is far more than an example. Jesus' death is what allows believers to be united to him.

Is there any encouragement from being united with Christ? Is there any comfort from knowing that someone would die for another out of love? Is there any fellowship with the Spirit who indwells believers? Is there any tenderness and compassion? “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

The last has become first. The one who took the lowest position has been exalted to the highest. Everyone who has bowed their knees to Jesus should have the same attitude that he has, not grasping but giving his own rights up for the best interest of those he serves. Jesus is the ultimate example.

Paul’s Personal Example

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence-- continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may

become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life-- in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing. But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. (Phil 2:12-17)

Paul here makes this matter very personal. He begins with a personal greeting, "Therefore my dear friends." The "therefore" ties back to what has just preceded it in his example of Jesus, which illustrates 2:1-4 and ties back further to 1:27-30 about living in a manner worthy of the gospel. What Paul is about to share is tough teaching, and he wants to remind them that he is their friend. He first exhorts the Philippians to continue to work out their salvation. He is clearly not telling them to be saved as he has already identified them as believers (1:1, 6, 27). He is commanding them to work out the salvation that they have, to continue the work that was begun in them. He then reminds them that God is the one ultimately working in them (v. 13). He then exhorts them to do this hard work without grumbling or complaining. At first, one may wish to say that this is easier said than done and one may wish to insert a comment, "But you don't understand the people I have to deal with or the circumstances I am facing. Paul you do not know the betrayal I have faced, the comments, the whispers, the sacrifices I have made, and the verbal abuse my family has taken." When one then considers that these words are coming from the man who was stripped, flogged, and thrown in prison as the early days of this church began, one may be more apt to bite his or her tongue. Paul writing again from prison with plenty of his own experiences since starting this church reminds these believers not to complain because it is God working in them, doing the work he began. The point is so that they will become pure and blameless children and, for Paul's sake, he will know that he did not run or labor for nothing but that all the losses he has experienced were for an

ultimate gain. Paul talks about his losses in verse 17 where he refers to his own ministry as one that has been poured out like a drink offering.

Paul gives a vivid picture probably drawing from his own Jewish background, referring to the drink offering. The drink offering consisted of wine that was poured on the altar over top of the sacrifice.³⁸ The sacrifice and service Paul refers to is the sacrifice and service of the Philippians. Paul genuinely viewed their ministry as a partnership. The Philippians were not merely those he ministered to or those who funded his ministry, they were his gospel partners (1:5).

In his book *Dangerous Calling*, Paul Tripp discusses the hazards of ministry. He shares about a time when he was training future ministry leaders as a seminary professor. He was teaching a required counseling class. Since it was a required class, he knew that many of his students did not want to take the course but were simply fulfilling a requirement. The fact that many of the students did not want to be in this class made it difficult for him as a professor. He developed a strategy to try to begin to pastor these students into realizing how much they needed the tools he was offering. His strategy was to share pastoral horror stories, which he described as “the kinds of things no pastor really wants to deal with but which all pastors do.”³⁹ These were stories of death, fear, pain, brokenness, violence, depression, and a variety of other things. Tripp said he wanted his students to “feel the weight of being called to make an invisible Christ visible in the lives of people who desperately need to ‘see’ his presence and remember his

³⁸J. D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney, eds., *The New International Dictionary of the Bible/Pictorial Addition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), s.v. “Sacrifice and Offerings,” by Steven Barabas.

³⁹Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 43-45.

grace.”⁴⁰ On one particular occasion that he says neither he nor anyone else in his class will forget, he told the story of a man who had already consumed a significant amount of his time with someone he was asked to visit. While telling this story, one of his students raised his hand and blurted out “All right, Professor Tripp, we know that we will have these projects in our churches. Tell us what to do with them so we can get back to the work of the ministry!” This student did not realize that these “projects” are the ministry. These projects are the people ministry leaders are called to minister to, and not just minister to, but minister *with* as partners in the gospel. Tripp says that he knelt down next to that student’s desk so that they would be face-to-face and, in a pastoral moment, asked that student to repeat what he said word for word. After he had repeated the statement, Tripp writes, “I asked him to repeat what he had called these people. He softly said, ‘Projects.’”⁴¹

The people God brings into a ministry leader’s life are not simply ministry assignments, they *are* the ministry and, beyond being those who the ministry leader ministers to, they are those the ministry leader will partner with. Paul knew that reality as he says here his sacrifice goes along with the ministry of the Philippians and their “sacrificial service.” The drink offering was poured out in addition to the burnt offering.⁴² Paul here states he would rejoice if his life were poured out in sacrifice and service to

⁴⁰Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, 43.

⁴¹Ibid., 44-45.

⁴²G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 189. In addition, Hansen notes that “the preposition *on* in this imagery of sacrifices made by Paul and the Philippians may have alluded to the practice in both Jewish and Greek ceremonies of pouring the drink offering directly on the sacrifice that was on the altar. But in this context this preposition may have less of its primary spatial meaning and more the sense of ‘in addition to.’”

them. Paul is using a graphic metaphor for his joy in being poured out alongside his partners in the gospel ministry:

This metaphor bears striking resemblance to the metaphor used in the portrayal of Christ: Christ emptied himself (2:7). Just as Christ's self-emptying led to death on a cross, so Paul views the possibility of following in the way of Christ by being poured out unto death. Paul rejoices not in the act of martyrdom itself, but in the possibility of being one with Christ in being poured out as Christ emptied himself to be obedient unto death on a cross.⁴³

Paul has a story of loss. His life of ministry is one of continual sacrifice and service to others. Even reflecting back to the beginning of Paul's ministry. The story in Acts 9 is often retold merely as a dramatic conversion story, but one need think of all the loss that conversion meant for Paul. Not only was it the death to an old way of life as it is for all who turn to Christ, not only does one see Paul get baptized right after his conversion, but, in that same chapter, one sees him fleeing from the Jews who conspired to kill him. It was so serious they had to sneak him out in a basket. However, those he was fleeing were once his friends. It is like so many experienced leaders responded in the survey when they wrote that one of their greatest losses was relationships (see appendix 3). Paul knew this loss. It was Paul who was persecuting the church. It was Paul who had gone to the High Priest and received letters to the synagogues in Damascus so that if he found any Christians he could take them as prisoners (Acts 9:1-3). Now he was on the run as his former friends sought to take his life. It is sensational to talk about the drama of sneaking around at risk of one's own life but what about the relational loss Paul experienced? One has to stop and consider that ministry for Paul meant incredible loss. Every experienced ministry leader knows what it is like to lose relationships.

⁴³Hanson, *The Letter to the Philippians*, 188.

Over the years of planting Southbridge, many people have come and gone from our church. It is always exciting when new people come. Sometimes it is even exciting when people leave for missions, to start churches, relocated by God, and even some who are difficult cause one to rejoice. However, I can remember times when it was difficult to see certain people go, where I felt as though a friendship had ended. My wife and I can both recall the emotions of these losses. Tears have been shed over those relationships. I can imagine the pain in Paul's soul as he reflected on the lost friendships he had. Perhaps he had some of these people in mind when he said he would give up his own salvation, if they would only trust Christ (Rom 9:2-4). God used the losses in Paul's life to shape him more and more into the mold of his son Jesus Christ. Paul not only lost friends, he lost his former reputation that he had worked so hard to attain. God later used his reputation as a zealous Jew to spread his church. Later, in 2 Corinthians, Paul writes of many of the losses he experienced as he lived as a ministry leader:

Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. (2 Cor 11:24-28)

Do not forget the concern for all the churches. Many of the things on this list are tangible and dramatic, but how does one measure the emotional pressure that only a leader knows? One survey respondent said it well when he wrote, "Leadership is a 24-7

pursuit. You never stop thinking about your ministry.”⁴⁴ There is an emotional and spiritual weight that is hard to describe and makes the call of Jesus in Matthew 11 very inviting: “Come to me all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls (vv. 28-29). Soul rest is exactly what a ministry leader needs. Jesus’ next statement sounds confusing: “For my yoke is easy and my burden is light (v. 30). How can a yoke of self-denial and cross bearing be easy? The answer is that Jesus is the one doing the work in and through every ministry leader. So, is he doing the work or is the ministry leader doing the work? The answer is yes. God is at work in the ministry leader’s life and as the leader works for him, he is at work through his or her life.

Paul says here to his partners that he considers it a joy to be poured out. These are all losses Paul is glad to endure because these things help him know his savior better. Even if he is martyred like a drink offering, it will only help him better accomplish his ultimate goal, knowing Christ and the power of his resurrection even to the point of sharing in his sufferings and becoming like him in his death (Phil 3:8). He considers everything else a loss in comparison to that goal (v. 10).

Paul’s being poured out is God’s plan for him to work out his salvation (2:12-13). And part of working out that salvation is God stripping away every part of Paul’s, the Philippians lives, and every ministry leader’s life that does not look like Christ. I have personally seen God put his finger on my pride, my insecurities, my fears, my lack of trust toward others, and defense mechanisms that I use to keep people at a distance to try

⁴⁴See response 64 to question 27 in appendix 4. “Imagine you are sitting across the desk from a future ministry leader. What would you most like to tell a future ministry leader that no one is telling them right now?” See appendix 3.

to avoid being hurt. These are all things that prevent me from pouring my life out like a drink offering. There is no limit to what God will strip away—pride, impatience, anger, jealous, unforgiveness, greed, selfish ambition, self-centeredness, entitlement, self-righteousness, jealousy, lust, slander, control, laziness, and an endless list of ungodly characteristics that are very common among future and present ministry leaders. Those things, while ugly when written out on paper, can become near and dear to one's heart. They become associated with the leaders identity and wrapped and hidden behind safeguards, defense mechanisms, and theologically-rich language that justifies their existence in one's heart and life.⁴⁵ However, they cannot remain if one is going to be poured out like a drink offering in service of those one partners with in ministry. Paul desired to be poured out in obedience just as Jesus was obedient to the point of death on the cross because he had encouragement from being united with Christ, comfort from his love, fellowship with the Spirit, and tenderness and compassion in his life (Phil 2:1).

Timothy's Example

In the next verses, Paul gives the example of Timothy. None of Paul's teammates is mentioned as often nor is found with him as frequently as Timothy.⁴⁶ It is no wonder that Paul writes about Timothy in such glowing terms:

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with

⁴⁵Paul David Tripp starts his book *Dangerous Calling* with a story about how he would wrap himself in robes of righteousness when his wife would confront him about his anger. He then shares how God as a relentless Redeemer would not stop pursuing him and will not “forsake the work of his hands until that work is complete.” Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, 17-20.

⁴⁶J. D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney, *The New International Dictionary of the Bible/Pictorial Addition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 1018.

his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. (Phil 2:19-23)

Paul says that there is no one else like Timothy in a direct reference to what he exhorted the Philippians to in 2:1-4 when he said to do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit but in humility consider others better than yourself. He then writes here about Timothy that he has no one else who takes a genuine interest in his welfare. This is such a contrast to those who were mentioned as preaching Christ with false motives in chapter 1—Timothy ministered for the sake of others.

Paul was not writing this to flatter Timothy, but to encourage the Philippians and their ministry leaders to follow his example.⁴⁷ True selflessness means a humble service where one first recognizes and then takes action to meet the needs of those God has placed in one's path. Timothy lived a life that exemplified selfless service.

One does not know all of the acts of selflessness that Timothy had lived out for Paul and for the Philippians (see Acts 16). Rarely can one find great stories of humble people. The very fact that they are humble and not seeking their own glory hinders one from capturing the stories. Sure, one may know of the George Mueller's who started orphanages and the apostle Paul's who were shipwrecked, but how much stronger would the church be if it were filled with Timothy's, people willing to drop what they are doing to serve those God has strategically placed in their lives. Perhaps it was this selfless mentality that caused Timothy to say yes to so many of the dangerous trips that he accompanied Paul on. Doubtless this mentality is what fostered such a strong friendship between the two that when Paul was about to die he urged Timothy to come quickly to be

⁴⁷Carson, *Basics for Believers*, 72.

by his side (2 Tim 4:9, 21). Even if just one future leader reads these words and sets out to be like Timothy, then this project was worth writing.

Epaphroditus's Example

The final example that Paul gives in Philippians 2 is of a man named Epaphroditus. Many have not heard of Epaphroditus because this is the only place that he is mentioned in the Bible.

But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him,³⁰ because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me. (Phil 2:25-30).

One gets a glimpse of Epaphroditus's character from the opening lines that say that he is distressed because the Philippian's have heard that he was ill. He is not distressed because he is ill, but he is distressed because others may be distressed who have heard that he is ill.⁴⁸ Here again Paul uses an example of someone who is more interested in the needs of others than he is of himself. It is like what Jesus taught his disciples in Matthew 20:25-26: "Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.'" Jesus himself not only taught this truth or even exemplified this, but, in his

⁴⁸Carson, *Basics for Believers*, 75.

followers, he replicated this. Those who are united with Christ have the attitude of Christ.

Dwight Pentecost describes Epaphroditus as follows:

Epaphroditus was a man who, served in no public office, was not given the privilege of shepherding a flock of God, was not privileged by God to establish a church in a new and unreached area, was not privileged to receive revelation from God which he was to write by inspiration of the Holy Spirit for edification of the saints. Here is one whose ministry was the ministry of being a servant—if you please a valet.⁴⁹

R. Kent Hughes adds to this description of Epaphroditus: “We must understand that to serve in some unnoticed, unrecognized place in the body of Christ is as much the work of Christ as is public ministry.”⁵⁰ It’s unclear whether Epaphroditus would have qualified to be on anyone’s list of experienced ministers.

Add to that that in this passage Paul says to “honor men like him” (Phil 2:29). Many leaders are not very good in this anti-authoritarian culture of honoring much of anyone, but one has to ask after reading this passage whether our Christian culture honors the wrong people. Is our Christian celebrity mentality a feeding ground to produce the exact opposite of selfless servants who do nothing out of selfish ambition? I once heard Andy Stanley say, “What is rewarded is repeated.” I am not saying that every well-known Christian is well known as a result of selfish ambition, but how many want to be well known because of the idols in their hearts. Those very idols are things God may use to remove the pain and difficulties of one’s ministry. How can one better honor the selfless servants of Christian ministry, those who selflessly care for the needs of others?

⁴⁹Pentecost, *The Joy of Living*, 113.

⁵⁰R. Kent Hughes, *Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel*, Preaching the Word Commentary series (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 115.

Here one sees that Epaphroditus was not only not thinking of himself, he was actually risking himself. In verse 30, Paul says that Ephaproditus had risked his life in service to them. Paul does not say exactly what illness he had, but malaria or typhoid were possibilities.⁵¹ How he became ill is unclear, but he was ill to the point of almost dying, and it happened as a direct result of his ministry.

Paul holds up as an example someone who knows the battle scars of service. Carson summarizes this passage by saying, “In short, emulate those who have proven themselves in hardship, not the untested upstart and the self-preening peacock.”⁵² There is something rich that can be learned from those who have seen the frontlines of battle and can speak of what they have learned about the God they encountered while serving there. I remember one time at a dinner with seasoned ministry leader Crawford Loritts when he looked right at my wife and I and said, “Never trust a leader who has not experienced great pain.” When you hear a ministry leader who only has stories of success, there is something wrong. Leadership is formed and fashioned in the crucible of pain and loss. Perhaps that is why approximately 74 percent of experienced ministry leaders say that ministry is difficult.⁵³

⁵¹Keener *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 562.

⁵²Carson, *Basics for Believers*, 76.

⁵³This number is based on the finding that 73.92 percent of ministry leaders either agree or strongly agree with the statement “My ministry position is relatively difficult.” See responses to question 9 in appendix 3.

I remember when the year I graduated from college my wife and I answered a call to come and be the youth pastor at her home church, which was in both of our hometowns. Prior to that, my father, who had recently trusted Christ, had experienced some serious heart problems. He died during my first year of ministry. It was an incredibly painful loss for me. I had regrets of things that I had said the last time we talked. I had wishes for how I wanted our relationship to be. I wished I had been a better son at times and now he was gone. I had a lot of people say a lot of things to me during that time to attempt to bring me comfort. I only vividly remember one. It was a woman who I love dearly who had also lost her father as well. She said, "Scott, your dad loved you very much, but there is absolutely no way he would come back to see you." She then went on to say, "What he is experiencing now is too good."

My dad had trusted Christ about a year before he died. I took great comfort from those words, but the loss still hurt. I have sat with several people who have lost loved ones as a pastor. There has not been one that has not made me think of my own loss. There is not one time that I do not think of what they must be feeling in light of what I have felt. God grew my compassion in that loss. I lost my dad, but even if not to the extent I wish, I grew more like my savior. If there is any tenderness or compassion in someone, any fellowship with the Spirit, any comfort from the love of Christ, any encouragement from being united with Christ, be like-minded.

The ministry leader does not know what God is doing in one's times of trial, pain, and loss. It has been said that the problem with Job is that he never read his own book. The irony in that is that he was living the book while it was being written. One gets special insight into his story in chapter 1 that Job did not have access to:

One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. The LORD said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the LORD, “From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it.” Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.” “Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied. “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.¹¹ But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.” The LORD said to Satan, “Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.” Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD. (Job 1:6-12)

One reads the entire book knowing that this conversation has taken place. Job, however, is unaware that this conversation took place. He does not realize the spiritual warfare that is taking place. He does not know what is at stake. From his perspective, the wheels fell off of his life and there is no explanation. However, God teaches him incredible lessons through these trials. God has leadership lessons for everyone in the midst of pain. Some of the pain ministry leaders experience will be a direct result of the ministry they are involved in. Some pain will simply seem unexplainable.

Did Epaphroditus think that his illness was just a coincidence? He got malaria or some sickness delivering money to Paul. This illness does not sound the same as being arrested attempting to share the gospel with ISIS. But, Paul says he risked his life in service. He was living worthy of the gospel (1:27), he was serving selflessly (2:3), he was pouring his life out for the gospel, sacrificially serving (2:17). One does not know Epaphroditus’s story after this point, but I imagine this time serving Paul and almost dying shaped him for whatever other ministry God had in store for him. Like Paul shares from his own trials in 2 Corinthians 1, ministry leaders can say,

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ

our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort. We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. (2 Cor 1:3-9)

God used these trials to strengthen Paul's faith, to grow him in greater reliance on him (v. 9), to help him comfort those who needed comforting (v. 4). How many pastors have been diagnosed with cancer and keep preaching through chemotherapy treatments? How many pastors experience personal attacks and not only turn the other cheek, but serve the very people who are causing their greatest pain? How many leaders have lost something or someone significant to them and then been expected to give of themselves for the sake of others? Epaphroditus knew the pressure, he knew what it was like to risk his life, to be willing to lose it all in sacrificial service. Men and women like Epaphroditus should be honored. It is a joy to know these people and have them in our lives. May more ministry leaders be like Epaphroditus. May more of leaders die to selfish ambition and vain conceit and grow in selfless service to those they partner with in the gospel, even the ones who bring the greatest conflict into their lives. Lord willing, less ministry leaders will leave and more will lose their selfish ambitions.

CHAPTER 4

THE JOY OF LOSS

Willing to Lose

In developing a theology of loss, one has to decide what they are willing to lose. The apostle Paul demonstrates a biblical theology of loss in Philippians 3:1-11:

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Paul begins chapter 3 with an interesting term. The NIV and the English Standard Version both begin with the word “Finally.” However, Paul is clearly not wrapping up his letter to the Philippians as he still writes about 44 more verses. Carson states,

In fact, our common translations have made things unnecessarily difficult for us. The Greek word used here often served, at this late period of Greek, as a loose connective particle, like our “So then” or the like. What Paul is doing is picking up the theme of rejoicing he introduced in 2:17-18. There he insists that as he is prepared to offer himself as a kind of drink offering, poured out on *their* self-

sacrifice, he is glad and rejoices with all of them, and he wants them to rejoice with him. In the following verses, he has told of two helpers, Timothy and Epaphroditus, who have similarly displayed their willingness to suffer for the sake of others—a stance which ironically, brings joy. “[So then], my brothers,” Paul now writes, “rejoice in the Lord!” (3:1).¹

Joy was a theme of Paul’s. Many have called Philippians the book of joy. The imperative to rejoice runs through it like a thread (2:18; 3:1; 4:4; cf. 1:18; 2:17, 28; 4:10).² Here it is interesting that Paul transitions from a section of the book where he has just given four examples of sacrificial service: Jesus (2:1-11), his own testimony (2:17-18), and Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-30). For each, their sacrifices were a joy. Philippians 2:5-8 describes the ultimate form of sacrifice in describing the obedience of our Savior:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Jesus was obedient to the ultimate extent, death! Not only was Jesus obedient to death, it was the most gruesome form of death, death by crucifixion. Why would Jesus do this? The author of Hebrews explains, “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the *joy* set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (12:2, italics added). It was for the *joy* set before him. So, this gruesome death was for *joy*? Anyone who has ever witnessed a crucifixion would hardly use the word “*joy*” to describe that event.

¹D. A. Carson, *Basics for Believers: An Exposition of Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 80.

²Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 43 (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1983), 124.

In Philippians 2:17-18, Paul describes his own life as a drink offering and sacrifice and then describes himself as glad and rejoicing with all of the Philippians. Here is that concept of joy again attached to loss. What kind of person in his right mind would ever describe a life of sacrifice as something to rejoice over?

When Paul describes Timothy in Philippians 2:19-24, he says that Timothy considers others better than himself (2:20). Timothy is doing the very thing commanded to all believers in Philippians 2:5, namely, having the same attitude as Jesus. Epaphroditus is willing to give up his life for the sake of others (v. 27). Paul commands the believers in Philippi to greet Epaphroditus with “great joy” and to honor men like him because he almost died for the work of Christ (vv. 29-30). How can joy be so closely associated with loss?

After discussing the fact that the word “finally” is actually better translated as a transitional statement from what proceeds, Carson tells of how joy can come from such a counterintuitive place such as sacrifice:

In the verses that follow—although Paul will warn against some false teachers in the strongest language—the issues still turn, in part, on this willingness to put aside what the world and self-interest might choose, in order to pursue knowledge of Christ. But from Paul’s perspective, doing this is such a wonderful privilege, that what starts off as self-abnegation turns out to be exactly what the thoughtful Christian wants to do anyway, simply because there is nothing better and finer and more enjoyable than knowing Jesus Christ.³

Paul’s counter-cultural thinking here is crucial to his obtaining the true joy that he discusses throughout this letter. Obtaining this joy hinges on what he is willing to lose. Putting aside the false promises of this world, self-interest and sin may lead one to follow God’s plan for loss. Being a thoughtful Christian requires that one examine his or her life

³Carson, *Basics for Believers*, 80-81.

and determine what he or she is willing to lose. If one loses the right things, the result is good news of great joy.

False Promises, False Pursuits

Our culture says that one can have it all, but the truth is that one must decide what one will lose. Socrates is known as having said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Being a thoughtful Christian and determining what one is willing to lose requires intense self-examination.

Believers need to start by asking themselves what they are currently pursuing as their sources of joy? What motivates them to get out of bed in the morning? What gives them the drive to work late when everything is not done? Why do they do what they do? It does no one any good to lie to him or herself or to settle for surface-level Sunday school answers. This requires a searching of the heart (Pss 139:23-24).

Paul warns in Philippians 3 of how dangerous it can be when one’s pursuits, even when they look noble on the outside, are wrong on the inside: “Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus and who put no confidence in the flesh” (Phil 3:2-3). These people that Paul calls “dogs” were actually people who from all outward appearances seemed to be on some of the noblest possible pursuits.⁴ However, it is clear from Paul’s language that these people are not the examples one should follow. He calls them “dogs”:

⁴Silva correctly argues that the people Paul is referring to here are not as Hawthorne argues non-Christian Jews, but are in fact Judaizers or Jewish Christians who insisted that Gentile Christians submit to the Mosaic law, including circumcision. Moises Silva, *Philippians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 147.

Paul has carefully chosen his terms to achieve intense irony, not merely to use derogatory speech. The very first item clearly illustrates our problem, for the pejorative sense of the English *dog* is normally applied insultingly to people considered worthless and vulgar. For the Jews, however, the term had a distinctly religious sense: it referred to the Gentiles, those people who, being outside the covenant community were considered ritually unclean. When Jews drew a comparison between the Syro-Phoenician woman and dogs (Mark 7:27), the woman recognized the analogy not as a vulgar insult but as a religious statement. Paul, therefore, is making a startling point: the great reversal brought by Christ means that it is the Judaizers who must be regarded as Gentiles.⁵

The problem with these “Judaizers,” these “dogs,” these “mutilators of the flesh,”⁶ is that they were false teachers leading people to believe that if they just added obeying the mosaic law, including circumcision, to their lives, then they would be the kind of Christians God was really looking for. They had the wrong pursuit of joy.

The believer has to ask what he or she is pursuing to find joy. All desire to experience joy. However, not all pursue the same path to obtain that joy. What path should the believer take to obtain joy? Is it one of addition or subtraction?

One is just as susceptible to follow a path of false hope for false joy as Paul. The thought is similar to what most marketing gurus do with the masses. If one truly wants to be happy, one needs to add something to one’s life. One *needs* a new widget. If that does not work, then try the gold or platinum version of the widget. Upgrade until one’s heart is literally content. It leaves one thinking that if one could just get the right “fix,” then one would be content. A new car, new office, certain salary range, new

⁵Silva, *Philippians*, 147.

⁶Thielman points out that Paul is making a play on words in this passage: “The Greek Text reveals a play on words that is virtually impossible to reproduce in English. The phrase ‘mutilators of the flesh’ translates *katatome* and the word ‘circumcision’ translates *peritome*. The only difference between the two words is the prepositional prefix, *kata* in one and *peri* in the other.” Frank Thielman, *Philippians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 167.

position, new spouse, the right vacation, the perfect experience, something has to deliver the joy one has been seeking for so long.

Ministry leaders go on various false pursuits based on false promises just like Eve in the Garden believing that if she ate of the tree she would be like God. The fruit looked good to eat just as one's false pursuits look good to the eye. However, just like Eve found out when she ate the fruit, these false promises do not deliver what one had hoped. Why is it that enough is never enough? Why is it that no matter how much one accomplishes, there is always more to do? Why is it that no matter how loved one is by one's family, friends, co-workers, and others, it can still feel as if something is missing? The reason is because when one looks to the promise of these things, one descends on a journey of a false pursuits that will never truly satisfy, and these false pursuits are based on false promises.

Many ministry leaders pursue accomplishment. One survey respondent when asked “In what ways have you been most transformed as a leader?” responded, “I am more dependent upon God than ever before. I’m learning that success in ministry isn’t always measured by the traditional scorecard of attendance and offering. I feel that my pride has been stripped in a lot of ways and I’m learning to lead from the role of a servant instead of desiring to be a rock-star pastor.”⁷ Notice the respondent said that he is “learning,” present tense. He sounds as if he knows the correct answer, but it is taking time to get into his heart. Also, notice that according to this respondent, success sometimes is defined by attendance and offering. The label “rock-star pastor” seems inconsistent with the undershepherd described by Peter in 1 Peter 5:14. However, these

⁷See response 75 to question 23 in appendix 3.

things are true of many ministry leaders. It is easy for one to believe that perhaps success in ministry or any job will bring one the fulfillment that one has longed for. However, it will not. Like a drug addict pursuing their next fix, many leaders thinks if they just obtained the next thing on their list of empty promises of accomplishment, they would have true joy. So, they continue to strive toward the top, only to find out that the ladder never ends or as a friend once told me, “You climb to the top only to realize your ladder is leaning against the wrong building.”

Others find themselves in the pursuit of pleasure. The pursuit of pleasure is that continual longing for more that drives someone. The pursuit of pleasure for pleasure’s sake continues to make promises that it will never keep, promises like the one that Eve fell for in the Garden (Gen 3): “If you eat the fruit, then you will be like God.” False promises like the ones Jesus rejected in his temptations (Matt 4:1-11), the idea that one can have the crown without the cross. It may sound like a shortcut at work or school. Perhaps it is the young couple saying, “We are going to get married someday, why wait?” Maybe in a stressful moment it is indulging in food, escaping through alcohol, or indulging yourself in pornography. These are false promises of pleasure that have sent many on false pursuits. For many entering ministry, there is a strong desire to please other people, people one ministers to or people one is seeking out for his or her affirmation. One survey respondent when asked about the transformation in their life, said, “I have become far less of a people pleaser and more dependent on God’s power.”⁸

Ministry leaders often pit religion and the pursuit of pleasure against each other. However, the kind of religion that Jesus condemned in many of the religious

⁸See response 63 to question 23 in appendix 3.

leaders of his day focused on the externals and neglected the inward transformation that comes from a genuine relationship with Jesus (Matt 23:23-28). Many who attend churches today who profess to be Christian and even some Christian leaders practice external religion as a false pursuit in hopes of obtaining joy. This type of religion is very similar to the pursuit of pleasure, only presented in a different way. False religion like this comes in a variety of forms, but at the heart of this religious pursuit are moral people trying to do more good than bad. For some, Halloween is evil, Santa is a demonic figure, rock-and-roll is bad and sex is naughty. People on this pursuit do not cheat on their taxes or their spouse (at least not physically), and they do not swear (at least not the “secular” swear words). Every week they hear at least one sermon that gives them three points to apply, which leads to one hundred and fifty-six new things to do every year. They fail to remember, much less apply, most of the things they hear. If they try hard enough they can be more moral than most. This “Christian” life is supposed to deliver joy. However, when lived like the religion just described, it fails to deliver.

Another pursuit is what I call the “just around the corner” pursuit. This pursuit is based on the false promise that joy is just around the corner, and it is pursued by both religious and non-religious people. These optimistic people believe that joy is “just around the corner.” One who thinks this way believes that joy will happen once one gets done with school or once one gets married, perhaps after one buys a house or has kids, maybe once the kids get to be a certain age or after one gets done with a busy season, which never ends. One keeps thinking that joy is “just around the corner,” once one completes the next stage of his or her life. The “just around the corner” crowd live life like the NASCAR driver perpetually thinking that the good stuff is just around the corner.

They too lack joy. It is an endless pursuit of joy by addition that never leads to fulfillment.

Biblical Examples

Throughout history, there have been many pursuits of joy. From an earthly perspective, King David had it all. He was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). He was wealthy, had multiple wives and children. He was popular with the people. However, one day, standing on the roof of his palace, he decided he needed more. He went on a false pursuit of Bathsheba. In that moment, his legacy was changed, his kingdom weakened, and the consequences severe (2 Sam 11). Even after his repentance (2 Sam 12), one sees severe consequences in his life because he followed a false path to joy.

One of his sons, Solomon, was the wealthiest and wisest man of his day (2 Chron 1:11-12). He writes a book called Ecclesiastes describing how he denied himself nothing and yet was still empty:

I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure.
My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil.
Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve,
everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun. (Ecc 2:10-11)

So, here is someone who had more than anyone else and still lacked true joy. He went on every pursuit and none of it delivered. Being king was not enough, the women were not enough, the popularity was not enough, and the money was not enough. None of it truly mattered. So, even someone who had it all is saying that having it all is not enough. It is as if he knows what Paul tells us later in Philippians 3. He acknowledges that he wasted his own life on false pursuits.

One of the most tragic and joyless characters in human history has to be Judas Iscariot. Here was a man who spent three years walking the same path as Jesus. He was living life side-by-side with Jesus, sharing meals and private intimate moments with Jesus. He heard Jesus teach with his own ears. He watched Jesus perform miracles with his own eyes. He even performed miracles (Matt 10:1-42). He experienced the full extent of Jesus' love for him (John 13:1). However, even that was not enough for him. Instead, he would sell Jesus out for thirty silver coins (Matt 26:14-16). The Bible says of Judas that it would have been better had he never been born (Matt 26:24; Mark 14:21). Why is he so bad off? He did get his thirty silver coins. The money, however, did not fulfill Judas even in the short-term as he gives the money back, then murders himself (Matt 27:3-5). This is an example of yet another joyless pursuit of addition.

Another interesting character in the New Testament is the nameless wealthy man in Luke 18:18-25 known simply as the “rich young ruler.” Here is someone who comes to Jesus eager to inherit eternal life. He asks, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” In most evangelical churches, this guy would be told to bow his head, pray a prayer, and then, after boasting about his conversion experience, he would become an immediate “rock-star” Christian and be sent to the conference circuit to give a testimony. However, Jesus proceeds to have a conversation with this man to test his heart. Jesus being omniscient knows that this ruler loves money more than he desires eternal life, so he gives him an opportunity to lose his money so he can have what he hopes his money will deliver, namely, joy. Mark’s account of the story says that Jesus looked at him and loved him (1:21). Jesus then interestingly tells the man he lacks one thing, but, instead of telling him to go make an addition to his life, Jesus proceeds to tell him what to lose.

Jesus loved him enough to tell him what he had to lose. Jesus told him he had to lose the thing that was keeping him from what would actually deliver true joy. God desires to strip away the things that stop people from knowing Christ. Loss is the key to joy. Jesus tells him that he lacks one thing then proceeds to mention three things he needs to do (Luke 18:22). The one thing he needs to do is follow Jesus, but before he can truly do that Jesus knows he has to lose his other master, which in his case is money. So, Jesus tells him to sell his possessions and give the money not to Jesus' building fund, but to the poor. Then Jesus says, "Come follow me." The last one hears of this man is telling. Luke 18:23 reads, "When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth." Why was he sad? He loved money and when he walked away he still had all of his money, but, interestingly enough, he was sad. He was sad because he was not willing to lose the very thing that was keeping him from gaining what he ultimately wanted. Future ministry leaders must be willing to lose. According to this authors research, a healthy 78 percent of future ministry leaders expect to lose something as a result of their future ministry.⁹ As a ministry leader, one must ask oneself not simply whether one is willing to lose something but what one is willing to lose.

Jesus Commands Loss

The truth about loss is not something that only the apostle Paul knew. It is not something only radically-obedient Christians know. It is not simply something for missionaries, pastors, or those ready to be martyred for their faith. The command of loss is something Jesus gave for all of his followers. In the gospel of Luke, right after Jesus'

⁹The exact percentage is 77.55 percent, which is based on a response of either agree (44.90 percent) or strongly agree (32.65 percent) to the statement "I fully expect to lose something as a result of

twelve closest followers had called him the messiah, Jesus then told them about his upcoming rejection, suffering, execution, and resurrection. He then gave these very important and inclusive instructions, “Then he said to them all: ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?’” (Luke 9:23-25). Jesus is clear that this command is for anyone who will ever come after him. It is also obvious that Jesus is calling for a loss. This sounds different than the call for greater purpose, meaning, and better self-esteem, or greater retirement portfolios that are often given in many churches today. Jesus is commanding loss as a normal part of the Christian life. The same one who promises the Holy Spirit in John 14:15-17, the same Holy Spirit that produces a fruit of joy Galatians 5:22, here commands a denial of oneself.

This was Jesus’ command for anyone who would come after him. This command is for every follower who will ever profess to be one of his. This was a command of loss. In case that was not clear in verse 23, Jesus went on to ask a ridiculous question: “What good is it to gain the whole world and lose your very self?” The answer is that it is no good. This is not a valid option, and no one whose mind is actually engaged in the question would even consider such an option. However, Christians do it all the time. Judas did. The rich young ruler did. Entire generations of people do it because they believe false promises that lead them on false pursuits.

my future ministry.” See question 16 in appendix 4.

It is easy to look back at Judas and shake one's head because people today have such distaste for betrayal or perhaps out of pity for someone who made such a terrible decision. However, what is currently taught in evangelical churches may be producing an entire generation of Judas' and rich young rulers who are unknowingly walking down the same path? One has to wonder what believers two thousand years from now would think if they read about what many who profess Christ are currently doing to pursue wealth, accomplishment, religion, and other self-interests over actually knowing Christ. Christians today think they are gaining the whole world, when in reality, they are forfeiting their souls.

It is not as if Jesus left this call to loss to simply one verse in the New Testament. One sees this call to loss repeatedly. Consider his repeated warnings to the religious elite, that their moralism was the very thing that was blinding them from seeing him for who he truly was (see Matt 15:1-10). After his commands in Luke 9:23-25, consider what Jesus says to several individuals about following him. As Jesus was walking along one man professed utter allegiance to Jesus, saying, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied letting him know that this pursuit would not lead to luxury as Jesus did not even have a place to lay his head. In that same passage, there was a second man that Jesus called to follow him, who then explained he wanted to go first bury his father. Jesus replied, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." There was a third man in this passage who proclaims as many believers do today, "I will follow you Lord, but first . . .," then they explain their stipulations to Jesus. First, one must go back and say good-bye to one's family. Jesus

writes, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:57-62).¹⁰

In Luke 14, Jesus gives what seems to be an even more extreme call: “Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ‘If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple’” (Luke 14:25-27).

The call here was not simply for that crowd but for anyone throughout all of history. Notice how inclusive the call Jesus makes is here. It seems not only is there a loss but that the loss that Jesus commands is great. The loss that Jesus calls for is not that one simply stop eating meat for thirty days or give up chocolate. Jesus is calling for anyone who follows him to utterly deny him or herself. He calls for a loss of one’s life. Jesus commands one to give up one’s life so that one may gain true life. One cannot miss this is not self-denial for self-denial sake. It is not some new teaching on discipline that means pain today that will someday result in pleasure. Jesus is showing that the path to joy is only found by taking a counter-cultural path, not by elevating one’s self-interest but by losing one’s self so that he or she gains him. He is the joy giver. He is the source of true life (John 10:10; 14:6). The call to lose anything and everything that hinders one from knowing Christ is not just when one first sets out to follow Christ, it is true in getting to know him as well. Loss is God’s plan in the sanctification process.

¹⁰For further insights into the three men who Jesus teaches about following in this passage, see Mark Bailey, *To Follow Him: The Seven Marks of a Disciple* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 1997), 99-105. I am indebted to Bailey for how I view this passage every time I read it now. In his book, Bailey gives three memorable titles that he says he received from his seminary mentor Stan Ellisen. He calls these

Willing to Lose It All

A real person who lived out what Jesus commanded regarding loss was the apostle Paul. In Philippians 3, one reads that Paul had it all from the perspective of the false teachers he calls dogs. What he shows in Philippians 3 is that at one time he too was being led astray. After connecting the Philippian readers to the theme of joy in verse 1, Paul shares with them his own false pursuits based on false promises when he lists some of his own spiritual credentials in verses 4-6. Moises Silva writes that “the apostle will quickly proceed to tell us that the virtues enumerated here constitute a spiritual liability (vv. 7-8).”¹¹ In Philippians 3:4-6, Paul shares that the things he once considered beneficial in his life before he made the shift to loss. These were his false pursuits built on the false promises that he believed:

Though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

These verses comes right after Paul mentions the false teachers who bragged about what they did before God. Chandler writes, “Paul here, as loudly as he can, is saying, ‘Who cares? I did all that too. On the scale, I’m even better than *you!*’”¹² Paul does not give an exhaustive list in verses 4-6, but he does share seven characteristics. The seven characteristics can be broken down into two categories. The first category includes

three men Mr. Too Hasty, Mr. Too Hesitant, and Mr. Too Homesick while explaining why these men like many Christians are not truly ready to follow Jesus.

¹¹Bailey, *To Follow Him*, 149.

¹²Matt Chandler and Jared C. Wilson, *To Live is Christ, to Die is Gain* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2013), 81.

the first four characteristics, which Paul had by birth. The last three characteristics are things that Paul did by choice.¹³ Paul shares how he too spent a portion of his life being led astray and thinking that joy could be found by what he accomplished. Carson says that the list he gives “would fly very well in some conservative Jewish circles in the first century.”¹⁴

If this were the academic world Paul would be saying he was a Harvard graduate with a Ph.D. who has been published in all the most reputable journals, lectured at the most prestigious events, and is a world-renowned researcher. If he were a rapper, he would have the largest mansion, the greatest bankroll, with the biggest entourage. In many sects of modern Christianity, he would have been the poster boy at denominational events. He was like the servant of the year who had gone on the most mission trips, willing to go anywhere and do anything. He was the one who had given away the most time and done the best deeds. However, he lacked one thing, joy. He had been adding and adding and adding and had no gain in the area of joy.

The credentials he lists go right to the core of what the Judaizers valued most. First, he says he was circumcised on the eighth day. Literally, he was an “eighth-day person.” Gerald Hawthorne writes, “With only two words, then, the apostle has made for himself the proudest claim any Jew could make, namely that in strict conformity with the Law he was circumcised on precisely the right day (Gen 17:12; Lev 12:3; cf. Luke 1:59;

¹³Robert P. Lightner, *Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary faculty (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1984), 660.

¹⁴Carson, *Basics for Believers*, 83.

2:21).¹⁵ This first claim may be the clearest claim that he was a Jew of the Jews whose parents obeyed the law. This was a big deal in Paul's day. Second, he was of the people of Israel. Third, he was from the tribe of Benjamin, one of only two tribes that did not rebel against the Davidic dynasty.¹⁶ The fourth characteristic that was decided for Paul was that he was a Hebrew of Hebrews. Silva points out that the phrase "Hebrew of Hebrews" (Ἐβραῖος εἰς Ἐβραῖος) seems to have a climatic effect and could be understood to mean "pure blooded."¹⁷ Other commentators believe it means that Paul spoke Aramaic.¹⁸ Either way, the point is that he had every religious advantage in his day.

Paul then moves to the final three characteristics in which he made a conscious choice. The fifth of the seven characteristics listed is that Paul, as far as his own observance of the law, was a Pharisee. Many modern readers hear that as a negative comment. When those who have been in the church for a while hear the title Pharisee they think of the legalists who were more concerned with the minutia of religious rituals than they were with loving God. However, this was a very impressive statement to readers in Paul's day. Not only was this an exclusive and small club (probably numbering only about 6,000),¹⁹ it was considered thoroughly biblical. Silva writes,

¹⁵Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 132.

¹⁶Carson, *Basics for Believers*, 83.

¹⁷Moises Silva, *Philippians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 153.

¹⁸Thielman, *Philippians*, 169. Thielman points out that John Chrysostom (A.D. 354-407), whose native language was the language in which Paul wrote, took the phrase "Hebrew of the Hebrews" (*hebraios ex hebraion*) to mean that Paul was raised to speak Aramaic, the language of Palestinian Judaism in the first century. Most modern commentators agree with this understanding of the phrase.

¹⁹John MacArthur states that "the origin of the Pharisees is not known for certain, but the sect probably arose formally during the intertestamental period. It had been developing since Ezra's time when the concern for God's law was revived (Neh 8:1-8). Although relatively few in number (the first-century

Here in Philippians he first indicates that the particular approach he chose for his interpretation of the law was that of the Pharisees. This perspective, which emphasized the “ancestral traditions” (Gal 1:14; this phrase corresponds to the rabbinic oral law), was widely perceived as the one most faithful to Scripture; the Judaizers, at any rate, could not have asked for anything more impressive.²⁰

His dedication as a Pharisee shows that he was conservative in his approach to the Bible and religious matters. The sixth characteristic listed was his zeal. As for his zeal, Paul says one only need to look at his record as a persecutor of the church. No one could argue with Paul about his zeal. Misguided, yes. Violent yes. But the pursuit he was on was clearly a passionate one. In Acts 7, one reads a story about the first Christian martyr, Stephen. Stephen was one of the first seven deacons in the church described as “full of faith and the Holy Spirit.” Some wicked men who were posing as representatives of God lied about Stephen, saying they heard him speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God (Acts 6:11). This got people stirred up, so they brought him before the Sanhedrin. Stephen stands before these men and proclaims the history of their killing the prophets and now the messiah. They become furious and drag him out of the city and stone him. While all of this is happening, Paul, named Saul then, was there giving approval (Acts 8:1). In Acts 9, the resurrected Christ arrests Paul while he is on his way to arrest and imprison believers himself. Jesus greets him as a persecutor: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” Later, in Acts 22:4, when Paul shares with a crowd about his persecution of Christians: “I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison.” When writing to his

Jewish writer Josephus estimated their number at 6,000), they had the greatest religious influence on the common people. John MacArthur, *Philippians, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2001), 231.

²⁰Silva, *Philippians*, 150-51.

young protégé Timothy, he describes himself by saying, “Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief” (1 Tim 1:13). It is well documented that Paul was a persecutor of the church. He not only had all of the privileges of birth that would set him up to be approved by those who were opposing him, but he had an even more passionate pursuit of the things they were presenting than they themselves did. If anyone had reason for confidence in the flesh, Paul had more.

However, Paul was following false promises. Paul was following the false promise that he could obtain joy by his own efforts and accomplishments. Those false promises sent him on a false pursuit. Of the seven characteristics that Paul lists, the seventh and last is what he calls “legalistic righteousness.” When Paul calls himself righteous, he is not claiming that he did not break the law. In fact, the NIV translates the word “faultless,” while others use “blameless” (ESV, KJV, NKJV), but none of these terms indicates that Paul was sinless. Thielman brings clarity to this matter:

This does not mean that Paul thought of himself as sinless prior to his conversion, for his blamelessness would include careful attention to the means of atonement the law provided for those who sin. It means instead that his parents had done everything for him that the law required Jews to do and that he had himself diligently observed the law. Paul trusted that one day his heritage and these achievements would help him to stand acquitted before God.²¹

Paul clearly states elsewhere that he knows that he violates the law. He even describes the inner battle he has with a desire to do what is right, while also having a desire to sin (Rom 3:10, 23; 7:14-25). Here, his point is that he was trusting in his own accomplishments. Those accomplishments exceeded the accomplishments of those who

²¹Thielman, *Philippians*, 170; and Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 70-71.

were trying to lead the Philippians astray with their false promises that would send them on the same false pursuits. At one time in his life, these pursuits and what they promised meant everything to Paul. However, now he considered them all a loss.

The thoughtful Christian must wrestle with what he or she is willing to lose. For some, this means *losing* the pursuit of what one thought would bring joy. This means *losing* the very reason that someone does what they do. The reason this is a smart loss is because many are pursuing a false pursuit based on a false promise. Paul was willing to lose anything and everything that did not lead him to genuine joy. One must evaluate whether one is willing to lose everything one thought would bring joy and has not? One has to ask if he or she is willing to lose job, reputation, pursuit of pleasure, material possessions, and an optimistic “just around the corner” attitude, or even false religion for the sake of joy? If one wants the joy that Paul speaks of in Philippians, if one wants the plan that God has for them, then the future ministry leader has to be willing to lose it all. Paul tells us how.

One Thing

But whatever was to my profit I now consider *loss* for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a *loss* compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have *lost* all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection of the dead. (Phil 3:7-11, italics added)

As Paul demonstrated his stellar credentials, he admitted the things that at one time he was trusting in to bring him joy. However, in verse 7, he writes, “But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.” Paul is not using the word “whatever” like an apathetic teenager saying “whatever.” Paul is referring to his previous

list and showing that it was not exhaustive.²² That list of seven characteristics and “whatever” else anyone could ever list as a potential profit, he now considers a loss (v. 7).

Paul shifts from religious language in verses 4-6 to business language in verses 7-8. He is now speaking like an accountant. The things that were once assets, he now considers liabilities. The stuff he once considered profit, he now considers a loss. He goes on to say that he considers everything a loss compared to one thing. Paul has made the decision that helps one make every other decision. Paul knows his one thing. Paul knows the one thing for which he would lose everything else.

The thoughtful believer has to ask, what is the one thing for which he or she would lose everything else? As one considers that question, one must take notice that Paul was not talking about losing bad things when he listed his seven characteristics. He did not say that he considered all of his adultery a loss, all of his stealing loss, all of his lying a loss. Instead, Paul’s list is noble. The characteristics Paul lists are things that even the most religious person could brag about. It would be the equivalent of saying, I consider all of the hours I spent preaching, all the mission trips, all the hospital visits, all the prayer meetings, all the conferences and schooling, even all the extra hours studying my Bible a loss, if, in those moments, I was trying to gain anything other than Jesus Christ. For Paul, he could say this because he knew his one thing. Paul’s one thing was intimately and experientially knowing Jesus Christ because that was the one thing he knew that he could never lose. Jesus is the one thing that will deliver true joy in the life of the believer. Joy will not be found in accomplishment, religion, another person, approval,

²²Homer A. Kent Jr. *Ephesians-Philemon*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed.

getting to the next stage of life, or any of the other false pursuits he or she may be tempted take based on false promises. Jesus is the one thing that will deliver true joy. Also, it is not Jesus plus the lies one may believe. It is simply Jesus.

One could imagine a business professional who worked her entire life so that she could have a nice retirement sitting on a paddleboat watching the sunset? After twenty years of working hard toward her retirement goals, she decides to log in to her 401(k) account that she has been putting large chunks of money in. However, when she logs into her account, she finds that everything she thinks has been credited to her account was actually withdrawn from her account. Everything she thought was a credit was actually a debit. She owed the amount she thought she had saved. That is what Paul is saying here. Everything he once counted as a credit was actually a debit because it was keeping him from the one thing for which he would gladly lose everything else.

Paul knew his one thing. How many believers are actually hindered from intimacy with Jesus by their good deeds, by their accomplishments, by their religion, by their ambition for Jesus, by their ministry position and success? What if the things they do for Jesus are actually keeping them from Jesus? A mere 14 percent of experienced ministry leaders said that God had used their greatest successes in ministry to shape them the most.²³ While that is true, 82 percent say that God has primarily used difficult times

Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1978), 140.

²³Just over 14 percent agree with the statement “God has primarily used my greatest success in ministry to shape me the most.” Zero percent strongly agreed with this statement and 35.87 percent somewhat agreed. See question 12 in appendix 3.

in ministry to shape them the most.²⁴ However, most ministry leaders would love to jump from difficult times to success. Maybe the success is actually a trap.

Paul's one thing was Jesus Christ and everything else was a loss. In Philippians 3:8, Paul goes on to say that when he considers or examines his life, everything is a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus his Lord. That is an incredible desire for his one thing. This is the one thing that drove Paul to journey from town to town facing persecution for the gospel. This is the one thing that caused him to stay faithful while imprisoned, shipwrecked, and beaten, under pressure from bandits, and slandered by believers. This is the one thing that drove him to work late, to rise early, to persevere, to actually experience the joy he had been talking about repeatedly throughout the letter.

Just saying that he considers knowing Christ a loss is not enough. Paul goes on to show how his view of everything else had dramatically changed. In verse 8, he says that he considers them σκυβαλα or “rubbish” (NIV) or “dung” (ESV, KJV). Everything that does not help Paul gain Christ, he considers an utter waste. Paul viewed anything he considered as personal achievement for God as revolting compared to simply knowing Jesus. Silva describes the use of the Greek term σκυβαλα, saying,

And yet the apostle goes even further: what he once regarded highly he now finds revolting. There is no need to downplay the meaning of *skybala* with such equivalents as “rubbish” (NASB, NIV); while such a meaning is attested (cf. Sir. 27:4—the Greek term could be used of various kinds of filth), a specific reference to *excrement* is not uncommon and the KJV rendering “dung” is both appropriate and probable.²⁵

²⁴The exact number is 81.52 percent. See response to question 13 in appendix 3.

²⁵Silva, *Philippians*, 157.

Paul is showing here not only that he was trusting in Christ alone for his salvation, but that he considered trusting in anything else for his ongoing relationship with Christ a total waste. As a Christian leader, the temptation to trust not in Christ for eternity but in one's own abilities or accomplishments for ministry success is a daily temptation. Personally, I know the struggle in the pressure of the moment to default to my own decision-making ability or gifts or past successes rather than to look to Jesus. Sometimes my actions essentially communicate that I trust Jesus for eternity, but I will handle the here and now. Paul says no. That thinking is a way to waste one's life. He considers everything that does not push him closer to Christ, his one thing, an utter waste.²⁶ It is not about trying to have it all, it is about that one thing. Ministry leaders must know that ultimate thing for which they would lose everything else. For Paul, it was Jesus Christ. Believers are wise to examine if Jesus is their one thing or not.

Once someone makes this decision, the other decisions in life begin to fall into place. I remember one of my professors in seminary, Howard Hendricks, affectionately known as “prof,” telling the class that he did not have to decide whether to cheat on his wife. He said, “I made that decision once a long time ago. Once I decided that she was the one woman for me, I did not have to keep making that decision.” Once he made that decision, a bunch of other decisions also fell into place. He did not have to decide whether to flirt with a co-worker. He did not have to decide whether things were getting

²⁶Ralph P. Martin says here that the vigorous language and the widened scope of the apostle’s confession support Heinzelmann’s view that Paul has in mind here, not so much the decision many years before at his conversion, but his ever-present choice against a recurring temptation to rely on anything apart from Christ. So the tense passes from the perfect to the present. All the privileges he could claim as a Jew (vv. 5-7) and as a Christian (v. 8) were offset by inestimable gain. This is stated in terms of *knowledge* (v. 10), which is described in such a way as to leave the reader no doubt about its uniqueness. Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 145.

“too difficult” in his relationship with his wife. He had already decided that she was the one. When you decide that Jesus is the only true source of joy, it protects you from all the false pursuits. Temptation may still arise, but the decision that makes all other decisions has been made.

It is tempting to simply copy Paul and say that the one thing in one’s life is Jesus Christ. Further, it is tempting to say that one would lose everything else for Christ. In fact, one may even point to apparent sacrifices made in the name of Jesus. As a ministry leader it is easy to say the words that one would lose everything to know Jesus more, but when the leader honestly evaluates their life would they truly lose anything?

There comes a point when every ministry leader has to learn that in order for there to be great gain they need to be willing to suffer great loss. It happened in the life of Aron Ralston one day when he was taking what should have been, for him, a simple hike. The 27-year-old Ralston, who up until this point thought life was all about what you “do,” had accomplished a lot. He had graduated with two degrees at the top of his class from Carnegie Mellon University and retired at the age of 27. Ralston, a speaker, survivor, and author²⁷ tells the story of how being trapped one hundred feet down, in a canyon, about three feet wide seven miles from his car and thirty miles from a paved road, changed his life. It was there that Ralston realized that the only way to survive was to cut off his own arm. Ralston an experienced mountaineer took off on a hike making the mistake of not telling anyone where he was going. While he was in this canyon, an 800-pound boulder came loose and pinned his right arm to the canyon wall. While

²⁷“Tragedy and Triumph: Author Aron Ralston Cut Off His Arm to Save His Life,” accessed July 19, 2015, <http://www.mammothtimes.com/content/tragedy-and-triumph-author-aron-ralston-cut-his-arm-save-his-life#sthash.Lkhh7raH.dpuf>.

speaking about the incident Ralston told an audience, “I was screaming, I was totally freaked out,” he said, “I cursed, I yelled.” He realized that he had to figure out a way out. He tried moving the boulder. He even used his knife to try to chisel away the boulder. He knew that cutting his arm off was an option. On the third day, he tried. However, when he hit bone the knife could not make it through. He was stuck. He began video taping his last words to his family in the bottom of the canyon. He was going to die. On the sixth day at the bottom of the canyon he knew his knife would not cut through the bone, but he had one other option. He could break the bone. Leveraging the arm against the rock, he broke the bone. However, he had forgotten that there are two bones in your forearm. So, he had to break the second bone too. When it was done Ralston said, “I knew what life was like without limitations. I was going to get out. I was free. I was free.”²⁸ Ralston lost his arm to gain his life and, in the process, learned that life was about more than what you do. In his words, “It’s not about what you do in life, it’s about what you are. It’s about love, about who you love, about being loved.”²⁹

God loves followers of Jesus Christ so much that he gave his only Son so that he could reconcile the relationship that man broke with him. He died for mankind while they were sinners. This is true of every person who has ever walked the earth. I heard Rick Warren say one time, “God never made a person He did not love.” Everyone who reads these words is one of those God loves and one who was made to love him back. He pursues everyone and has given everything for mankind so that they could do what they were made to do. When one pursues false promises, one fights against God’s plan and

²⁸“Tragedy and Triumph.”

²⁹Ibid.

design for one's life. Christians are loved by a Savior who suffered great loss, leaving heaven, a place of perfect peace, a place without sin, a place with constant and perfect worship. Jesus left that place to come to this place, a place of crying and pain, a place where people are abused, where value is measured by accomplishments, where people hurt others in an attempt to get ahead themselves, a place where self-worship rules the day. Jesus came to this place to show the full extent of his love. Jesus is the only true and pure demonstration of love. He loved man while man was fighting against him (Rom 5:8).

The problem is that, like Paul, one's temptation even after one's conversion is to seek love in other places. I remember a time when I felt like my church did not appreciate me like they should. It was about five years after starting Southbridge. I was angry. I was not sure how to respond. I reached out to one of my mentors, Robert Lewis, to inquire whether he ever had the same or similar feelings. I wrote him a very personal and revealing letter about my frustrations. He wrote me back and bluntly said, "I had a lot of feelings reading your personal thoughts." Then he gave me this pointed counsel, "You're not going to feel loved by achieving."³⁰ He went on to give me some very practical advice for my particular situation, but he came back and said it again, "But stop thinking that achieving will bring you love . . . IT WON'T! Only love brings love."³¹

Only love brings love and the one who ultimately brings love is the only one worth losing everything else for, Jesus Christ. For me, this truth lead to a major shift in my thinking. It is not that I did not know Jesus or love him. I did. My problem was that I

³⁰Robert Lewis, e-mail message to author, September 5, 2012.

³¹Ibid.

did not even realize that I was trying to find love from my accomplishments. Love does not come from accomplishments or from belonging to an organization. Love is found in the context of a relationship and comes from a person. The greatest love comes from the greatest relationship with the greatest person, Jesus Christ. I needed a conversion of thinking. I needed to consider the things I was seeking love from an utter loss compared to actually knowing Christ Jesus better. Every believer who wants to experience true joy needs to come to the place where he or she realizes everything is an utter loss compared to knowing Jesus better.

Paul had this kind of thinking. That is why he could say, “Whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things” (Phil 3:7-8a). Paul did not learn this lesson 100 feet down in a three-foot wide canyon. He was first confronted with it on the road to Damascus in Acts 9. However, based on how he writes Philippians 3 as a man now in his sixties, I imagine this was a lesson he continued to learn, fighting the temptation to trust in himself, in his own achievements, in his zeal, in his heritage, in his accomplishments, in his religion, in his fleshly pursuits of pleasure, or even in his optimism about what is just around the corner. I know it is a lesson that I am continuing to learn. Recently, in an exit interview with a staff member I consider a good friend, he told me that I was too busy to be relational. He reminded me of a time that I walked into his office explaining how and why we should start another service at our church. He told me then that I was too busy to have any space in my life for another service and listed the things I had going on at that time. After saying to him that I can decide whether I am too busy and do not need his

help, I said, “I don’t want to miss out. I want to live the abundant life and not miss anything God has for me.” He then very pointedly replied, “But do you want to do it alone?” His point was that I did not have the space to be relational. The question I asked myself was, “What am I trying to accomplish and why?” Was the busyness an escape from dealing with what was going on in my heart or a pursuit of accomplishments that lead to false promises? Every ministry leader should ask him or herself whether he or she is trying to find love from a source that will not deliver what they are looking for.

Even though this search for love was inevitably a struggle for Paul, he knew in his heart that joy-filled love only comes from the relationship one has with Jesus Christ, and he would give everything to know the depths of that love. That is why Paul gives some of the most passionate words in all of his writings in the next few verses. After speaking of losing everything that he may gain Christ in verse 8, Paul says he does not trust in his own righteousness; instead, he wants to be found in him. He wants righteousness from God that is by faith. In verse 10, one hears what sounds like the passionate longing of his heart. The kind of longing that would make someone get out of bed in the morning and do whatever needs to be done. He says, “I want to know Christ.” This is the cry of Paul’s heart. Verse 10 goes on to say, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection.” What Christian does not want to know the power of victory over sin and death? But before they can know the power of the resurrection, guess what has to be experienced? Death. Paul’s next statement is beyond radical. He says, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so somehow, to attain to the resurrection

from the dead” (Phil 3:10-11). “Whatever” was once a profit is now a loss, an utter waste in comparison to knowing Christ for whose sake he had lost all things.

What is the one thing for which every believer should be willing to lose everything else? Is it ministry, reputation, accomplishments, schooling, family, friends, an upset church member, or is it Jesus Christ? Paul had been following Jesus for about thirty years when he wrote this. He was an experienced leader in the church. He had planted many churches, suffered great loss, and experienced a lot of suffering, and he says above everything else he wants to know Christ.

A good friend of mine and member of our church, Anne Graham Lotz, wrote a book called *Just Give me Jesus*. After describing a couple of action-packed years where she had accomplished a lot and had been through some difficult times too, she writes, “My duties and responsibilities at times seem overwhelming and my schedule is overfilled. But I don’t want a vacation, I don’t want to quit, I don’t want sympathy, I don’t want money, I don’t want recognition. I don’t want to escape, I don’t even want a miracle! This book is the cry of my heart—just give me Jesus. *Please!*”³²

It is almost as if these seasoned Christians like Anne and Paul have a grasp of the glory, satisfaction, and joy that is found nowhere other than Christ. To hear these words from people who have accomplished so much and suffered so much has to add weight to the words. Not only have they experienced what this life has to offer, they have experienced Jesus Christ and nothing else compares to him. Like the man that Jesus speaks of in Matthew 13:44 who was traveling through a field and found a treasure buried there: “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man

³²Anne Graham Lotz, *Just Give Me Jesus* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), vi.

found it, he hid it again, and then in his *joy* went and sold all he had and bought that field” (italics added). He went and, “in his joy,” sold all he had and bought the field. He was willing to lose everything else because what he would gain was so good.

I get it. I understand this truth. I have taught it from the pulpit. However, it can be a struggle in my own life. Do not get me wrong. I love Jesus. However, sometimes I struggle with keeping that as my focus. I think a lot of Christians struggle with this. Recently, my wife and I had a disagreement before church. It seems that is the perfect time for us to have these moments. During this disagreement, I remember thinking that we needed to wrap it up, I mean, “I had to go preach the Word!” What a hypocrite. A few days later we were talking through what had happened and my wife, in a way that wives have an innate ability to do, asked, “What’s going on with you?” I simply said, “I am bored.” I was bored with life. I should not have been bored. I had planted and was pastoring a vibrant church, I had recently run my first marathon, I was working on a doctorate, and I have four very life-giving daughters, but I was bored. She kept asking me questions about my problem. I honestly did not have answers for any of her questions. I just knew that was how I felt. She asked, “What do you want to do?” I said, “I don’t know.” She asked, “What is wrong?” I said, “I don’t know.” She told me that I had better get it figured out. I thought that sounded great, but I had no idea how that was going to happen.

A few days later, I boarded a plane to Dallas for a pastor’s dinner. My Pastor, Jack Graham, was going to be speaking at the dinner. I remember as he stood to speak he said, “I want to share something with you guys that matters. The reality is that in 20 years most of you won’t be in ministry. Some will burn out, some will flame out, some for

moral reasons, and some will just quit.” He had my attention. He began to share from John 21. It is the passage where Peter gets restored after denying Jesus three times. I knew the passage. I have preached it many times myself. However, when he spoke, it was like he was speaking directly to me. The Holy Spirit gripped me. He began to explain that Peter had gone fishing and he was not going back to a hobby, he was going back to an old way of life. That struck a chord as I had considered what I would do if I stopped being a pastor. When he got to the part of John 21 where Jesus asks Peter three times “Do you love me?” Peter answers all three times in the affirmative, and all three times Jesus tells Peter to feed his sheep. He then pointed out to us that Jesus did not ask, “Peter do you love *teaching*, Peter do you love the *ministry*, Peter do you love *evangelism*? ” He asked, “Peter do you love *me*? ” As I sat there listening to Pastor Graham preach to a room of preachers, I was struck with great conviction. Scott, your problem is not your life, your circumstances, and certainly not Jesus. Your problem is you. My focus was off of the one thing that could bring me true joy. I was trying to find satisfaction from things other than Jesus. I was bored and Jesus is not boring. Jesus is infinite. Christians are going to spend eternity getting to know him, and it still will not exhaust what it means to know him.

Jesus is more valuable than the treasure in the field. Jesus is more precious than keeping an upset person in my church happy. Jesus is more valuable than any temptation in this life. Jesus delivers more joy than any accomplishment. Jesus satisfies more than any pursuit of pleasure. Jesus is more rewarding than any religion. Jesus is more fulfilling than any circumstance or life stage that is “just around the corner” in this life (Ps 63:3). Jesus is more life giving than any idol. Jesus is more loving than any relationship. Jesus is the only one who delivers true joy. Jesus is worth losing it all.

CHAPTER 5

WHERE LOSS LEADS AND CONCLUSIONS

Anxiety of Loss

It began in prayer. I was on my face in my office talking to the Lord about life. I felt this overwhelming surge of anxiety over things that had gone poorly in the lives of others I had ministered to. I was quickly convinced it must have been my fault even if I could not figure out how or why. That was one of my first bouts with severe anxiety. However, the signs of this battle had been around for years. I desperately wanted everything to be perfect. I had spiritual language to cover my desire for control and to perform perfectly, but the underlying issues were ugly. Soon they began to manifest themselves in obsessive-compulsive behavior. I would lock doors repeatedly. I would park my car until I had it just right. I would be frozen in my closet picking out what clothes to wear in hope that God would make it evident to me. Those were normal daily routines. My times were the worst when I would pray. It was in prayer that I found myself often envisioning past sins and lamenting how wretched I was. This progressed to wondering if I had even more sin than I could remember. After having an anxiety attack in prayer one day, I called an elder and asked him to come over and help me figure out if I was going crazy. He and his wife came over and sat down with my wife and myself. This led to some intense accountability with this elder along with counseling twice a week for the next eighteen months with a professional counselor.

As I began counseling, things got worse. It was at this point that my skilled counselor began to get me beyond the surface-level issues I was having, to deal with what was actually happening in my heart. Dealing with these heart issues only intensified the anxiety I just mentioned along with the symptoms like the obsessive behavior and intense anxiety in prayer. The worst was often just before I would stand to preach, and I would begin thinking thoughts like, “If they really knew you, no one would want to hear you preach.” I had often been told that one of the things people loved about my preaching was my authenticity, but I felt like an imposter. I knew the depths of my depravity and felt like even if I shared a struggle people would make it into strength. I was broken and only a few people—my wife, that elder and now my counselor—knew it. I felt like I was trapped in a prison and underlying all of the stress and anxiety was an intense fear of loss.

I was afraid that because I was far more damaged than anyone around me realized that I would mess up what God was doing at our church and in turn lose my family, my ministry, my reputation, and everything that I treasured. I began sharing these thoughts and many of my irrational fears with my wife. I remember asking her if I was going crazy. She was unsure. I confessed all kinds of sins to her. I had been convinced before that we would not ever get a divorce, but told myself if she really knew me we would at best live like roommates in the same house. We could get along, but the intimacy would not be there. However, her grace and compassion have been the greatest demonstration of Jesus Christ I have ever experienced from a person that I can see and embrace.

Those eighteen months of battling through those fears, anxieties, sins, and control issues were the worst eighteen months of my life. What I learned were some of

the simplest truths. It was also on my face in prayer that God began to reveal these truths to me. The first was simply that God loves me. This was something that I knew in my head. I had preached these truths countless times to others. However, it was through this intense struggle with anxiety that these truths became an experiential reality.

It was on my face battling through these issues that I actually learned that the grace I preached is not just for the people in the congregation, but is for me too. It was on my face in prayer that I sensed God led me down a path that revealed to me he does not love me any more or less if I am a pastor, lead millions of people to Christ, write books, serve on the mission field, or do any other acts of ministry. I am his child and nothing I can do changes his love for me. His love for me is much like my own love for my children, only perfect. It was through this struggle God dealt with my fear of loss. While I never heard an audible voice, it was in prayer one day anxiously anticipating the loss of so many of the idols I held so dear in my heart I sensed God reveal that no matter what happens, I cannot lose him (Rom 8:29-39).

Loss Leads to Peace

Since that time I have begun to learn losing all things at least as idols if not actually losing them is actually incredibly freeing. In fact, it is the death of the hold those desires have on one's heart that actually leads to peace. Paul expresses this clearly in the Philippians 4 when he says,

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. (Phil 4:6-9)

It is very easy to say not to be anxious about anything, but it is far more difficult to do. This is true of many commands. It is easy to say one will love one's enemy or forgive as one has been forgiven, but to actually do these things is incredibly difficult. This is because what Paul is talking about here is not some theoretical subject to be debated on a grandiose level. This is real everyday practical theology that was being fleshed out in the lives of the Philippians because God began a good work in them back in Acts 16. Now it is being realized in their everyday lives. This is the kind of command that becomes reality when the leader is on his or her face talking to God about the intimate details of their life. This is something that becomes real when one becomes overwhelmed with their own inadequacy, lack of control, potential loss of things they value more highly than they should, and any other stress-inducing thought they may have while praying to their heavenly Father.

Paul starts with the command not to be anxious about anything, and then commands one to pray about everything. For me, prayer, at times, seemed to be part of the problem. It was in prayer God dealt with the depths of what was truly in my heart; it was in prayer the fear of loss became known. Paul here presents prayer almost like an antidote to anxiety. What about all of the emotional stress Paul must have felt for all of the churches mentioned in 2 Corinthians 11:28? This verse is sometimes almost prescribed like medicine to those who are dealing with anxiety. What a tragedy to use such a rich verse in such a trite way. What God reveals here through Paul is essential to dealing with the anxiety of loss, but it's not simply to memorize this passage, imaging

one will then be fine in the morning. This is deep practical theology fleshed out through the crucible of life.

Notice that Paul says not only to not be anxious, but he does not allow any exceptions. As a parent, it seems as if whenever one of my children disobeys they have a reason why their disobedience is actually understandable, if not acceptable. Usually the response to my displeasure with their disobedience begins with “But Dad . . . ,” which is then followed by some explanation that if I was truly compassionate and truly understanding, would clearly make sense to me. In fact, not only would I accept their disobedience, I think they honestly believe that if I knew their reasoning, I may even reward them for acting so justly. This is often how Christians treat worry. Worry is an acceptable sin in most Christian circles. It is couched in various spiritual language, but rarely is worry something to be treated with radical and extreme repentance.

Much like gluttony, laziness, and a lack of prayer, worry is one of those things that everyone does. Therefore, most act as if it is not something to get too worked up about. There are a lot of things to worry about—terrorism, the economy, job loss, health, relationships, marriage, kids, and aging parents to name a few.¹ While these are all real issues for everyone, including the ministry leader, ministry leaders also know the emotional stress of the ministries they lead (see 2 Cor 11:28). Ministry leaders know the stress of leading a declining ministry, of pastoring a church in conflict, of leading a church that is not on the list of the fastest growing churches, and not meeting others expectations. One experienced ministry leader wrote, “Often I have felt that my capacity

¹Carson gives a brief history of how different worry was 800 years ago before our global connectedness. D. A. Carson, *Basics for Believers: An Exposition of Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 110-11.

to lead is larger than my current ministry position. Our growth has been much slower and I've often felt unchallenged and at times bored. I continue to push, learn and grow, but I have often felt unfulfilled as a leader.”² Ministry leaders know what it is like when their ministry does not bring the fulfillment that they had perhaps hoped. Is it any wonder, then, that even ministry leaders, like disobedient children, can justify their worry and make it an acceptable behavior. Add to that the pressure that tax-exempt status could be removed from their ministries if they do not compromise their convictions. Perhaps not just marginalization or being misportrayed as a hate monger, but actual physical persecution could come. It is easy to see how anxiety is a very acceptable response. However, Paul is extreme in his language here. He says not to worry about anything and to pray about everything. Peter O'Brien writes,

The hostility from the Philippians' neighbours and the possible threat of persecution to the infant congregation (1:28-29) may well have caused Paul's friends to worry. But whatever the particular circumstances that gave rise to their anxiety, they are now urged to be anxious “in nothing” ($\mu\delta\acute{e}iv$), an expression that, like the corresponding “in everything” ($\grave{\epsilon}\nu \pi\alpha\tau\acute{e}i$), excludes all exceptions.³

There is no exception. Paul shows an understanding of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6, namely that worry does not do anything beneficial.

Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.² Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these

²See response 76 to question 24 in appendix 3. “What have been your greatest sacrifices as a leader?” See appendix 3.

³Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 491.

things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matt 6:27-34)

Not only is worry not beneficial, it is sin. I wonder how ironic it must seem to God to hear the prayers of ministry leaders who pray to him asking him to bless the very ministry that they are sinning over? “God please grow this ministry that I am anxious about. God, I am trying to control everything can you please do what I want?” How many sinful prayers are lifted regularly to the throne of grace?

The immediate context in Philippians is one of conflict (Phil 4:2-3), yet Paul tells them not to worry about anything. In this life, there will be problems with marriage, kids, finances, friends, health, but the command is not to worry. The Philippians were facing problems from within (conflict), not to mention all of the what-if-scenarios that they undoubtedly faced: “What if my kids don’t love Jesus?” “What if this church splits?” “What if we do not have enough money because of the gift we gave to Paul?” “What if I end up in prison like Paul?” “What if what I am doing as a profession was a big mistake and not God’s plan after all?” “What if the person I trust most betrays me?” The what-if-scenarios that could have run through the heads of the Philippians are as endless as the ones that run through many ministry leaders’ heads. “What if one is not the best husband/wife and preacher/expositor ever?” “What if excelling in one area of ministry means being bad at another?” “What if you are just as sinful as the people you minister too?” “What if they find out?” “What if your ministry never becomes what you envision?” “What if there is conflict?” “What if some worst case scenario takes place?” “What if you get arrested for your faith and never see your family again?” “What if you never face persecution, but never sense you are used significantly?” The possible what-if-scenarios are only limited by the things one fears they may lose.

What in the ministry leader's mind is the worst possible situation when considering one's life, family, reputation, dreams, goals, ambitions, and any other element of one's life? When future leaders were asked what they anticipated, their greatest sacrifices would be they answered with things like finances, personal desires, time, and relationships.⁴ What if it is far more personal than the future ministry leader can imagine? One experienced ministry leader expressed his greatest sacrifice when he said, "There is also a sacrifice of emotion and mind-space that is constant; you feel this job in your bones when you lie down at night because of the burden of ministering to people who need the gospel."⁵

No matter what one loses in any of these areas, one can never lose Christ. Jesus gives these reassuring words to his followers when he is preparing them for his death: "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33b). Ministry leaders have Jesus and nothing can take him away. If the believer is locked in a prison naked, beaten, mocked, and isolated from all other human contact, they still have Jesus. If a believer is slandered, ridiculed, and falsely accused of some terrible crime, they still have Jesus. If a believer is commanded to deny one's faith while facing execution, they still have Jesus.

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also,

⁴See responses to question 24 in appendix 4.

⁵See answer 1 to question 24 in appendix 3.

along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom 8:29-39)

Not only does one who God has begun a good work in have Jesus, but Jesus cares. I remember sitting in a seminary classroom taught by Dr. John Reed. Dr. Reed served in the military chaplaincy in the United States Air Force reserves and as a pastor. He had a heart for people. One time in class he asked if we knew 1 Peter 5:7. No one responded. He said, “If you don’t know this verse and you plan to minister to people, you better get to know it.” He then quoted it: “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” Not only does Paul say not to worry here, he tells how to keep from worrying.⁶ Christians are not to worry about anything, but they are to pray about everything. It is not just the act of praying about everything, it is trust in God’s sovereign control that is the part of prayer which is essential to experiencing the peace that surpasses all human understanding. This means the loss of the illusion of one’s own control. This means the loss of holding onto anything as an idol. This means ultimately peace and freedom regardless of circumstances.

In verses 8-9 of Philippians 4, Paul lists what one is to think about in place of worry. Paul starts with truth, which is the opposite of the lies one may be tempted to believe in the midst of anxious thinking. The believer must remember the spiritual battle

⁶Carson, *Basics for Believers*, 112-13

of ministry (Eph 6:10-18) and that one's enemy is the father of lies (John 8:44), who desires to steal, kill, and destroy all who promote the gospel (John 10:10). Paul lists whatever is noble and right next. Gordon Fee aptly notes that "as with 'truth,' what is 'right' is always defined by God and his character."⁷ After listing virtues to think about as pure, lovely, admirable, and praiseworthy, Paul says to put into practice whatever they have seen or heard from him and closes this thought with a promise, "And the God of peace will be with you" (v. 9). Paul says to think about these exalted things such as God loves them, his grace is for them, not just those they ministered to. Think about the truth that no matter what they lose they will never lose him. He then concludes with the promise that one actually has the very presence of God in one's life. This is the promise of the Great Commission (Matt 28:20).

This promise is prominent in both the Old and New Testaments. The God who promised an insecure Moses he would be with him (Exod 3:4) is the same God who John speaks of in Revelation 21:3: "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.'" God is present with his people. His presence is why the Psalmist can say he fears no evil (Ps 23:4). His presence is why Joshua is to have courage (Josh 1:9). His presence is the inclusio of the book of Matthew as Jesus came to be Immanuel, God with man (1:23). He concludes the Great

⁷Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 417-18.

Commission with the promise, “And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt 28:20b).

Fee’s interpretation of this passage in Philippians is that God is now present through his spirit. This spirit is the same spirit that produces the fruit of peace (Gal 5:22-23).⁸ It is the practical reality, not merely theoretical, of this truth that enables one to be willing to lose everything else knowing that no matter what, one cannot lose him. This is how loss actually leads to peace, real genuine peace regardless of one’s circumstances.

Loss Leads to Contentment

Paul now moves to the topic of contentment. In Philippians 3:8 Paul had said that he considers everything a loss, and now he says he has learned the secret of contentment in all circumstances:

I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Phil 4:10-20)

Paul speaks of contentment here. Contentment is one of those things that most people believe they will obtain at some point, but few ever experience. Most live with the

⁸Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 421.

myth that if they just had more time, money, a certain possession, or life circumstance, then they would be content. However, Paul says here that he knows contentment regardless of the circumstance. After thanking the Philippians for their financial generosity and giving from their poverty (see 2 Cor 8:1-2), he says that his contentment is not because of their gift for he knows contentment in any circumstance and goes on to say, “I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want” (v. 12).

To truly learn contentment one needs to know what it means to have plenty and have very little. Carson points out that few people learn contentment in posh circumstances or in depravity, but it is the exposure to both that teaches one contentment.⁹ Both scenarios have their own temptations. The person who has experienced both as Paul has here truly knows contentment.

Notice too that contentment is a learned condition. This is not something that happens immediately; it is part of the work that God begins at salvation (Phil 1:6). Paul learned (*ἔμαθον*) the secret of contentment. O’Brien points out that the Greek word *ἔμαθον* is a constative or complexive aorist, which means that this summed up Paul’s learning experiences.¹⁰ He explains this by saying, “The implication is that Paul’s learning *αὐτάρκησιών* had extended over a period of time, particularly from his conversion, until he penned these words.”¹¹ Paul learned contentment from his various

⁹Carson, *Basics for Believers*, 118.

¹⁰O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 520.

¹¹Ibid.

experiences in life and ministry. While the context here is clearly financial and the need for the ministry leader to find financial contentment is important, there is also an implied teaching here about ministry success and failure. God does not just grant ministry leaders with the “gift” of contentment after a certain amount of time in training or because one has mastered word studies on this verse. As 82 percent of experienced leaders indicated, God primarily uses the most difficult times to shape believers the most.¹²

Like so much of the practical theology taught in the book of Philippians by Paul to the saints and their leaders, this is a lesson learned through experience. Contentment in ministry comes after one has experienced various levels of success and defeat. It happens to the person who has both seen record numbers of people trust Christ at an outreach event and has gone through seasons of wondering whether their ministry is bearing any fruit whatsoever. It is in those seasons that the ministry leader learns what it is to be content in any circumstance.

So, what is this contentment? Most commentators speak of the Stoic roots of the word Paul is using for contentment here. Hawthorne, speaking of Paul’s use of content (αὐταρκεῖ), writes, “It was a favorite word in the vocabularies of the Stoic and Cynic philosophers to refer to that independent spirit and that free outlook on life that characterized the wise man (cf. Malherbe, *Cynic Epistles*, 124.25; 176.12; 244.4).”¹³ What is stressed is that contentment comes from independence and self-sufficiency: “It

¹²This number is based on the response that 81.52 percent said they agree (45.65 percent) or strongly agree (35.87 percent) with the statement that “God has primarily used my most difficult times in ministry to shape me the most.” See appendix 3.

¹³Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 43 (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1983), 198.

was said that the wise man needed no one but himself and was completely independent.”¹⁴

After discussing the stoics desire for independence, William Barclay adds, “They proposed to eliminate all desire. The stoics rightly believed that contentment did not consist in possessing much but in wanting little, ‘If you want to make a man happy,’ they said, ‘add not to his possessions, but take away from his desires.’”¹⁵ I could not disagree with Barclay more.

The secret to contentment is not weak desires. Paul had very strong desires; they just were not based on his circumstances regardless of what those circumstances were. Paul longed to know Christ. He counted everything a loss in comparison to knowing Christ and being found in him. He wanted to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and fellowship in his suffering. He pressed on like an athlete straining with every muscle toward this goal. Paul’s desires were not weak; they simply were not for the things of this world. Instead, he learned ($\xi\mu\alpha\thetaov$) through all of his life and ministry experiences the secret of contentment. It was a lesson he was desiring to pass on to these Philippians. He wanted to point them to a contentment that came through loss. Yes, it meant a loss of desire for certain things, but it was not some apathetic loss of feeling where regardless of circumstances he did not care. It was such a strong desire for Christ that regardless of one’s circumstances, he knew those circumstances, whether plenty or

¹⁴Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 566.

¹⁵William Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, rev. ed. (Louisville: The Westminster Press, 1975), 84.

want, whether hungry or well-fed, whether successful or a perceived failure, would all point him and others to Christ.

Paul is the same man who penned the words of Romans 8:28: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Paul knew that God is so sovereign and trustworthy that he will work everything out for his own glory and the ultimate good of his followers. He knew that all things would ultimately be used to advance the gospel, just as he had stated to the Philippians about his current imprisonment in Philippians 1:12. Here is a man who was appointed to suffer when God called him (Acts 9:16). Paul is writing from prison to a church whose founding began largely from his imprisonment in Acts 16. He knew what it was like to be naked, beaten, and locked up for the gospel and he had seen that very gospel advance in the face of what appeared to be great opposition. He also knew what it was like to go into a town and see numbers of people trust Christ.

Later in this very chapter (v. 22), Paul sends his final greetings from himself and all the saints who belong to the house of Caesar.¹⁶ This was a subtle nod to the Philippian believers telling them that people even in Caesar’s household were coming to know Christ. It is not known who exactly is included in Caesar’s household, and it is

¹⁶Homer A. Kent Jr. writes, “Paul also extends special greetings from ‘those who belong to Caesar’s household.’ This expression denotes those engaged in imperial service, whether as slaves or freedmen, in Rome or elsewhere. Among them may have been the palace guard (1:13). It is most unlikely that Nero’s immediate family is meant, but the expression could refer to persons of considerable importance on the emperor’s staff. Paul does not say why they were singled out for special mention. Presumably the Philippians would understand. Perhaps some of these government servants had come from Philippi or had once been stationed at that Roman colony.” Homer A. Kent Jr., *Ephesians-Philemon*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1978), 158.

unlikely that it meant members of his own family, but it seems to be Paul pointing out that the gospel was advancing even though he was in less than ideal circumstances.¹⁷

Paul knew success and he knew what appeared to be defeat. In both success and failure he knew that God was to be trusted in both situations to fulfill his mission, which included simultaneously completing the work God had begun in Paul while also using Paul to further the gospel message he had implanted in him. Paul could be content no matter what he would lose because he would never lose Jesus Christ for whose sake he was willing to lose all things. Loss led to contentment in Paul's life.

The loss was not a loss of finances, freedom, loved ones, or any other tangible item. Paul's loss was a loss of desire in lesser things. Paul lost a degree of trust in things that were never meant to be trusted for meaning, purpose, security, and sufficiency. He lost these things for a greater desire, for a greater trust in Christ. This was the "secret" to contentment.

Paul is clearly not talking about the self-sufficiency and independence promoted by the stoics as can be seen in verse 13. In verse 13, Paul writes one of the most misquoted verses in the entire Bible, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength."¹⁸ Paul is not saying he can dunk a basketball or rise above his poverty and

¹⁷Keener points out that the "household of Caesar" could refer to anyone in Roman civil service directly dependent on Caesar, including all his slaves and freedmen; it always indicated great prestige. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 567. Gerald Hawthorne comments, "Since there is no evidence that members of the royal family had converted to Christianity as early as this letter of Paul, nor any high public officials attached to the praetorium (cf. 1:13), it is likely that Paul is speaking now of Roman soldiers stationed in the barracks, or slaves or freedmen handling the domestic affairs of the emperor, or both." Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 214-15.

¹⁸Matt Chandler gives a humorous explanation of this verse being taken out of context when he explains that this verse does not mean anyone can be a CEO or a major league baseball player. Carson makes a similar observation and explains that everything in this passage is not unlimited but is limited by the context: "Paul's 'everything' is constrained by the context. His point is that whatever the circumstances

gain financial prosperity by speaking things into existence. The context here is one of contentment regardless of circumstances and the power for that kind of contentment not to change circumstances, but to be content in them regardless of what they may be. His contentment comes from his dependence on the one for whose sake he would lose all things. Every ministry leader would be shot off the launchpad into ministry like a space shuttle if they had this contentment when they started ministry. Unfortunately, it is a lesson that is only learned (*ἐμαθον*) through the ups and downs, the wins and losses, the successes and failures of life as a ministry leader. In order to know this truth, one must know loss.

Significant Findings

I found three significant findings from this study. The first significant finding concerns the statistical findings between the future ministry leaders and experienced ministry leaders regarding loss due to their leadership roles. Two surveys were administered, one to future ministry leaders (see appendix 1) and the other to experienced ministry leaders (see appendix 2). The future ministry leaders shared their expectations, while the experienced ministry leaders shared about their actual experiences.

One of the most significant statistical findings was found in the difference between expectations and experiences of future ministry leaders and experienced ministry leaders regarding loss. Of future ministry leaders surveyed, almost 78 percent agreed or

in which he finds himself, whether with the rich and the powerful or with the poor and the powerless, whether preaching with unction to substantial crowds or incarcerated in a filthy prison, he has learned to cast himself on God *and to be* content. He can do all these things, everything that God assigns him to do, through the one who gives him strength. Let the gospel advance, let God's will be done in me and through me, Paul is saying, I am content, for I can trust the one who invariably strengthens me to do what he assigns me." Carson, *Basics for Believers*, 119-20; and Matt Chandler and Jared C. Wilson, *To Live Is Christ, to Die Is Gain* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2013), 200-1.

strongly agreed with the statement “I fully expect to lose something as a result of my future ministry.” Only 39 percent of experienced ministry leaders agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I entered ministry expecting to lose something as a result of my ministry.”¹⁹ However, when reviewing the open-ended questions, future ministry leaders answered the question “What do you anticipate will be your greatest cost/loss as a ministry leader?” with the following top three answers: (1) friendships/relationships, (2) time, and (3) money. Experienced leaders answered the open-ended question “What has been your greatest cost/loss as a ministry leader?” with the following top three answers: (1) friendships/relationships, (2) freedom/privacy, and (3) time. The experienced leaders mentioned money but rarely.²⁰ Privacy and freedom were in the top three answers of the experienced leaders and not in the top three of future leaders.²¹ Experienced leaders made statements like the following: “A loss of privacy and personal freedom.”²² One respondent said, “Just being able to be one of the guys.”²³ Another responded, “I always feel like I am on. So, in some ways, I’ve lost the freedom to come and go from the

¹⁹ Just over 77 percent of future ministry leaders agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I fully expect to lose something as a result of my future ministry” (see question 16 in appendix 4). Only 39.13 percent of experienced leaders agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I entered ministry expecting to lose something as a result of my ministry” (see question 16 in appendix 3).

²⁰ Only 4 of the 84 responses to question 22 on the experienced leader survey results referred to money or losing income as part of their greatest cost/loss in ministry (see appendix 3).

²¹ When I first reviewed the future leader surveys, I did not even have a category for “privacy/freedom” as that response did not stand out. I had included space for “self” simply under the category of time. I went back to see if any of their responses could possibly be categorized as “privacy/freedom” and found responses that spoke of personal life, putting self first and selfish desires, but I do not believe that is what the experienced leaders meant when they referred to “privacy” and “freedom” (see question 22 in appendices 3 and 4).

²² See answer 1 to question 22 in appendix 3.

²³ See answer 6 to question 22 in appendix 3.

church. . . . [I]t's on my heart all of the time. Part of that is my fault and part of it seems to be the nature of the calling.”²⁴

Both groups mentioned most frequently the loss of relationships. The future leaders spoke of this loss as something they anticipate being a reality. The experienced leaders spoke from experience with a tone that demonstrates the emotional weight of these relational losses. One person who I categorized under relational loss wrote, “Loss of a long time friend that I had to fire from my staff.”²⁵ A different respondent wrote, “Strain on my marriage in which divorce was considered.”²⁶ Another stated plainly, “Lost a marriage.”²⁷ After analyzing many of the responses by the experienced leaders, I sensed a weight to their words that came from their experiences. One pastor responded by saying, “Relational loneliness.” The issue was not that he did not have relationships, but that he was lonely even in those relationships. He went on to say, “On the staff, you are the senior leader, and while you can be ‘friends,’ at the end of the day, everyone knows you’re they’re boss; in the church everyone knows you are the senior pastor so they continually see you through that lens.”²⁸ The answers given by the experienced leaders, while expected by the future leaders, should help equip future leaders for these experiences. Not only will these future leaders expect losses, but, through the experiences that have been shared by the experienced leaders, future leaders can know when they

²⁴See answer 78 to question 22 in appendix 3.

²⁵See answer 12 to question 22 in appendix 3.

²⁶See answer 39 to question 22 in appendix 3.

²⁷See answer 77 to question 22 in appendix 3.

²⁸See answer 82 to question 22 in appendix 3.

occur in their own lives they are not alone. Loss is a normal part of ministry, and God uses it to complete the work he begins at the point of salvation (Phil 1:6).

A second significant finding from this project is the central theme of loss in the book of Philippians. When I began this project the intent was to focus the theological foundation of the project on Philippians 3:1-11, where Paul speaks directly about considering things he once considered gain as loss. However, as the author continued to investigate the book of Philippians, the subject of loss began to emerge as a central theme of the book. Starting with the loss of one's old life at the point of salvation (1:6). The theme of loss continues on to the mindset of death as gain by Paul (1:21) and the life lived worthy of the gospel in 1:27-30. This theme of loss then carries into Paul's exhortation in 2:1-4 to do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, which leads to four examples of great loss by Jesus Christ (2:5-11), Paul (2:12-18), Timothy (2:19-24), and Epaphroditus (2:25-30). After these four examples, Paul gives the central text on considering everything a loss in 3:1-11. Paul then concludes the book written to people experiencing conflict within the church (4:1-3) while he is in prison and tells them to rejoice always and not be anxious about anything (4:4-9) and to be content regardless of their circumstances (4:10-20). The loss of anxiety and the ability to be content are possible for those who know the value of losing for the sake of knowing Christ (3:7-10). Whether in plenty or in want, Paul has Jesus Christ, the one who empowers him for everything he desires for him to do. Loss is a natural part of ministry, but the things God causes one to lose serve as part of the sanctification process that he begins at the point of salvation. Therefore, everything one loses here is of eternal gain. Every selfish ambition, every vain conceit, false hope, misplaced trust, every place one finds identity apart from

Christ is all being stripped away so that one can say, like Paul, that whatever was to my profit I now consider loss in comparison with knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

The third significant finding through this research project has been the importance of the sanctification process. As one survey respondent wrote when asked what he wished someone had told him before he entered into a ministry leadership position, said, “Enjoy the journey while you’re on it. It’s a great ride even in the midst of the difficulties.”²⁹ This is a lesson that I have learned not only through this research project but also through the last ten years of my own ministry of church planting and serving as a lead pastor. I have attempted to integrate my own learnings throughout this project, using my own life as a case study. Since working on this project, I have become more active in being fully present in the moment. Jim Elliot once said, “Wherever you are, be all there. Live life to the hilt in every situation you believe to be the will of God.” This means not skipping to the end result but being an active participant in the process.

One cannot skip the process. I wish that I could write an equipping tool that once a student read it, he or she would leave transformed. Unfortunately, as one witnesses throughout the book of Philippians and through the study of experienced ministry leaders, God does his work of transformation through life experiences. I encourage anyone who reads this material to not miss the process.

As John Piper writes, “If something gets in the way of following Jesus, we must get rid of it.”³⁰ Getting rid of whatever gets in the way of one following Jesus is a process that God will do in each ministry leader’s life as he or she completes the work

²⁹See answer 29 to question 26 in appendix 3.

³⁰John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 72.

God has begun. The process of sanctification is often a painful one of loss of those things that get in the way of one following Jesus. In the end, being a leader will ultimately make one a better follower of the one who stood on the edge of the Sea of Galilee and summoned four men to come follow him and who promised to make them fishers of men (Mark 1:17). Paul learned these things through a lifetime of ministry experiences. Lord willing, so will every ministry leader who is willing to lose what does not matter for the one that does. My hope is that the material contained in this project will better prepare ministry leaders for this process of loss.

Application for Pastors

Pastors, be engaged in the process of your own sanctification. Do not allow yourself to simply jump into the stream of ministry success and at the end have accomplished all of your goals, made it to the top of the significant lists, have everyone in your church think you are great and, while gaining all of these things, not have grown closer to Jesus Christ. In fact, it may be the very loss of these things along with some friends, relationships, goals, and ambitions along the way that actually grow you closer to Christ. God began a good work in you before you ever accepted or even thought about a ministry position. That position is something God desires to use to complete the work he began in you. That work will mean a stripping of your ungodly selfish ambition and making you into a servant who is fully confident of your identity in Christ. You will become one whose success looks not to goals achieved but to what was achieved at the cross, someone who can be content in any and every situation because its through those situations of being in plenty and being in want that you learn the power of the resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings.

Application for Churches

Churches, especially elder boards, take an interest in your pastor's relationships with Jesus. Most likely he is a man gifted and experienced enough to keep most people thinking he is doing well spiritually. While, Lord willing, he is not out on the weekend doing drugs and having an illicit affair, odds are that the conflict he is experiencing and his death by a thousand paper cuts is taking a toll on him. Be there to encourage him to seek counsel from a professional counselor before he is in crisis mode. Encourage him to care for his own soul. Remind him that above the attendance and offerings of the church, there will be his relationship with Jesus. He may not need a vacation, more money, or sympathy, but, as Anne Graham Lotz says, "Just give me Jesus." Point your pastor to Jesus continually. Remind him that anything done apart from Jesus will mean nothing anyways. He cannot do this job apart from Jesus and deep down why would he want to?

Conclusions

God did not need any ministry leader on his team. Be very clear about that. No future or current ministry leader was needed for God to fulfill his mission. Instead, part of his work in and through the life of every ministry leader he calls is to complete the work he began in them. That work includes a death to selfish ambition and vain conceit. That work includes a place of contentment regardless of circumstance. That work includes a life that evidences a willingness to count everything a loss in comparison to knowing Christ. That means a life that is lived for Christ to the point that death itself is not considered a loss, but instead a gain because at that point, the ministry leader gets his or her life goal, Christ.

I challenge ministry leaders to go back not to the moment of their salvation,³¹ but to the moment they decided to enter ministry as a life calling. They need to ask themselves why they made such a decision. Perhaps the reasons in their hearts are convoluted.³² Perhaps there is a mix of both a pure desire to follow Christ alongside selfish ambition, a desire to please someone other than or in addition to God, some false or mixed motives, some godly as well as ungodly ambitions. Perhaps it was an intellectual desire to study God's word and parse all the verbs in the Bible. Maybe it was because good guys go into ministry. Maybe it was because of a drive to make one's life matter and what could matter more than where one spends eternity. God will remove the things that were not from him. It may be painful, it may feel like an incredible loss, it may come through success or failure, but it will be for one's ultimate good and God's ultimate glory. It will lead to knowing Christ more and an advancement of his gospel message.

Regardless of how convoluted one's motives may have been at the core, somewhere perhaps deep down was a genuine love for Christ and the work he began in one will, Lord willing, lead one to say with Paul, "I consider everything a loss compared to knowing Christ" and passionately crying out, "I desire strongly and with everything I am to know Christ and the power of his resurrection even if that happens best by sharing in his sufferings. I want Christ. Everything else is worth losing."

³¹This endeavor would be a beneficial exercise and that is the beginning that Paul was referring to in Phil 1:6.

³²Certainly all men's hearts are deceptive (Jer 17:9) and only God truly knows the heart (Ps 139:23).

Suggestions for Further Research

In diving into this topic of ministry loss, I have discovered that God does a great work through the losses of ministry leaders. I think some further study could expand on the research I cited by LifeWay about pastors who leave the ministry. It would be very interesting to dive further into what it is about conflict that causes so many pastors to leave the ministry. I would love to see someone carry out some case studies on the men who left due to conflict and then see what themes emerge from their stories.

I also believe there is more study that could be done from the life of Paul on loss. This study focused primarily on what Paul shared in the book of Philippians. It would be interesting to see someone track his travels through the book of Acts after his conversion and make application to the current and future ministry leaders. It has grown tiresome to hear people make empty moanings of how different church is today from the book of Acts. Of course, it is. Christians today are in a different context but can still grow as leaders in being the type of leader Paul was, one who endured so many victories and defeats and yet remained faithful to the mission God laid out before him and how much he changed from Acts 9 to Acts 28. Further study need not be limited to Paul. This author's draw to Paul originated from his statements in Philippians 3:1-11 about losing all things and his passionate desire to know Christ. Of course, further study could look at leaders throughout the Bible and more modern history and how God's stripping away of their selfish ambitions was ultimately for his glory and their good.

APPENDIX 1

EXPERIENCED LEADER SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the views of current ministry leaders regarding experiences you have had as part of your leadership role. Scott Lehr is conducting this research for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential and at no time will your name be identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

1. What is your age?

- 17 or younger
- 18-20
- 21-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 or older

2. Are you male or female?

- Male
- Female

3. What is your current marital status?

- Married
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated
- Single, never married

4. How many years have you been in a senior level ministry leadership position?

- 1-5
- 5-10
- 10-20
- 20+

5. What is your current ministry leadership role?

6. How many people do you currently lead?

7. Do you believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Rate Your Expectations

Directions: Answer the following questions using the following scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree Somewhat, Agree Somewhat, Agree, Strongly Agree; please check the appropriate answer.

8. My ministry position is relatively easy.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

9. My ministry position is relatively difficult.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

10. God has primarily used my ministry to transform me.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

11. God has primarily used my ministry to transform the lives of others.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

12. God has primarily used my greatest success in ministry to shape me the most.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

13. God has primarily used my most difficult times in ministry to shape me the most.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

14. I entered ministry because I thought I would get something out of it.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

15. I entered ministry fully aware of what I would be giving up.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

16. I entered ministry expecting to lose something as a result of my ministry.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

17. My ministry has negatively affected my marriage.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

18. My ministry has negatively affected my relationship with my children.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

19. My ministry has negatively affected other relationships.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

20. I have lost something due to a poor ministry decision that I have made as a leader.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

21. I have lost something due to a good ministry decision that I have made as a leader.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

Comment Section

Directions: These questions are open ended. Please write out your response in the comment box provided.

22. What has been your greatest cost/loss as a ministry leader?

23. In what ways have you been most transformed as a leader?

24. What have been your greatest sacrifices as a leader?

25. What has been the most difficult thing you have experienced that is directly related to your leadership?

26. What do you wish someone had told you before you entered into a ministry leadership position?

27. Imagine you are sitting across the desk from a future ministry leader. What would you most like to tell a future ministry leader that no one is telling them right now?

28. If you are selected for the gift card offer associated with this survey, how would you like us to contact you? Please leave the contact information where you would like your gift card sent.

APPENDIX 2

FUTURE LEADER SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the views of future ministry leaders regarding experiences you have had as part of your leadership role. Scott Lehr is conducting this research for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential and at no time will your name be identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

1. What is your age?

- 17 or younger
- 18-20
- 21-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 or older

2. Are you male or female?

- Male
- Female

3. What is your current marital status?

- Married
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated
- Single, never married

4. How many years have you spent preparing specifically for your desired future ministry position?

- 1-5
- 5-10
- 10-20
- 20+

5. What ministry role do you anticipate having one day?

6. How many people do you anticipate leading?

7. Do you believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Rate Your Expectations

Directions: Answer the following questions using the following scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree Somewhat, Agree Somewhat, Agree, Strongly Agree; please check the appropriate answer.

8. I believe my future ministry position will be relatively easy.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

9. I believe my future ministry position will be relatively difficult.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

10. I believe God will primarily use my future ministry to transform me.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

11. I believe God will primarily use my future ministry to transform the lives of others.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

12. I believe God will primarily use my greatest success in ministry to shape me the most.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

13. I believe God will primarily use my most difficult times in ministry to shape me the most.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

14. I am entering ministry because I think I will get something out of it.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

15. I am entering ministry fully aware of what I will be giving up.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

16. I fully expect to lose something as a result of my future ministry.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

17. My ministry will negatively affect my marriage.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

18. My ministry will negatively affect my relationship with my children.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

19. My ministry will negatively affect other relationships.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

20. I believe I will lose something due to a poor ministry decision that I will make as a leader.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

21. I believe I will lose something due to a good ministry decision that I will make as a leader.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree
 Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree
 Strongly Agree

Comment Section

Directions: These questions are open ended. Please write out your response in the comment box provided.

22. What do you anticipate will be your greatest cost/loss as a ministry leader?

23. In what ways do you anticipate being most transformed as a leader?

24. What do you anticipate your greatest sacrifices will be as a leader?

 25. What has been the most difficult thing you have experienced that has prepared you for your future ministry role?

 26. What has been the greatest piece of advice you have received as you have prepared for your future ministry role?

 27. Imagine you are sitting across the desk from a seasoned ministry leader. What would you most like to ask them that no one is talking to you about right now?

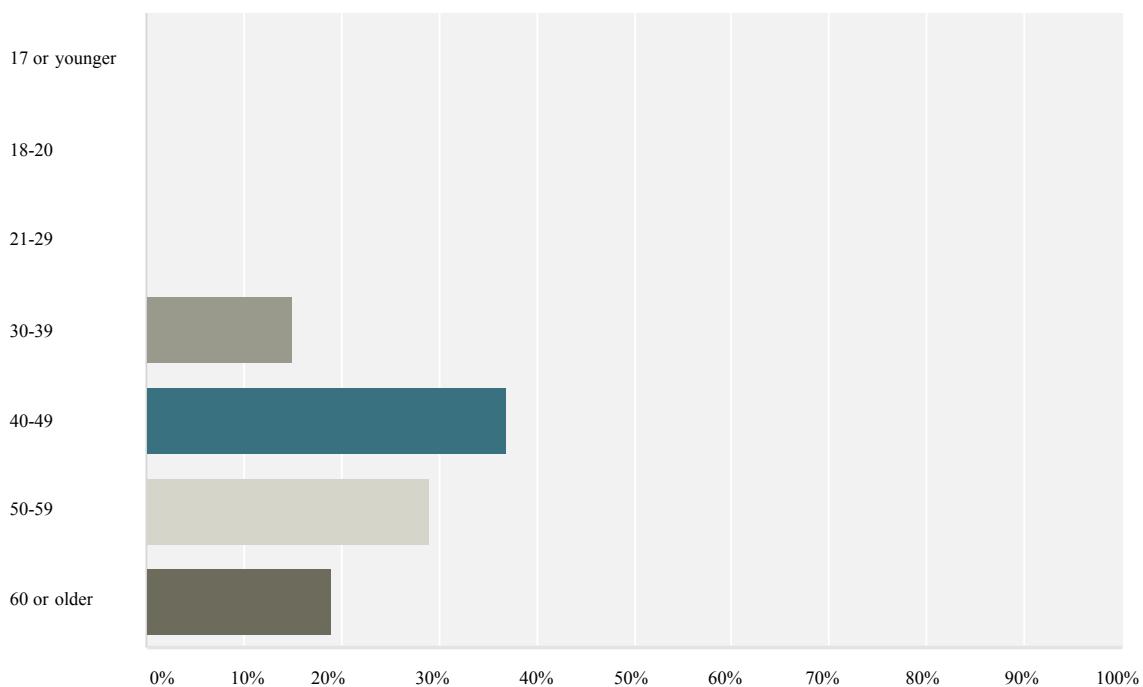
 28. If you are selected for the gift card offer associated with this survey, how would you like us to contact you? Please leave the contact information where you would like your gift card sent.

APPENDIX 3

EXPERIENCED LEADER SURVEY RESULTS

Q1 What is your age?

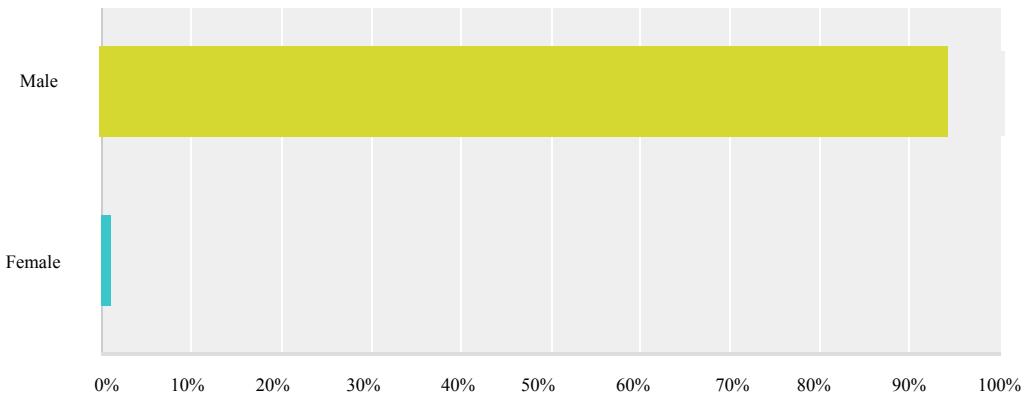
Answered: 100 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
17 or younger	0.00% 0
18-20	0.00% 0
21-29	0.00% 0
30-39	15.00% 15
40-49	37.00% 37
50-59	29.00% 29
60 or older	19.00% 19
Total	100

Q2 Are you male or female?

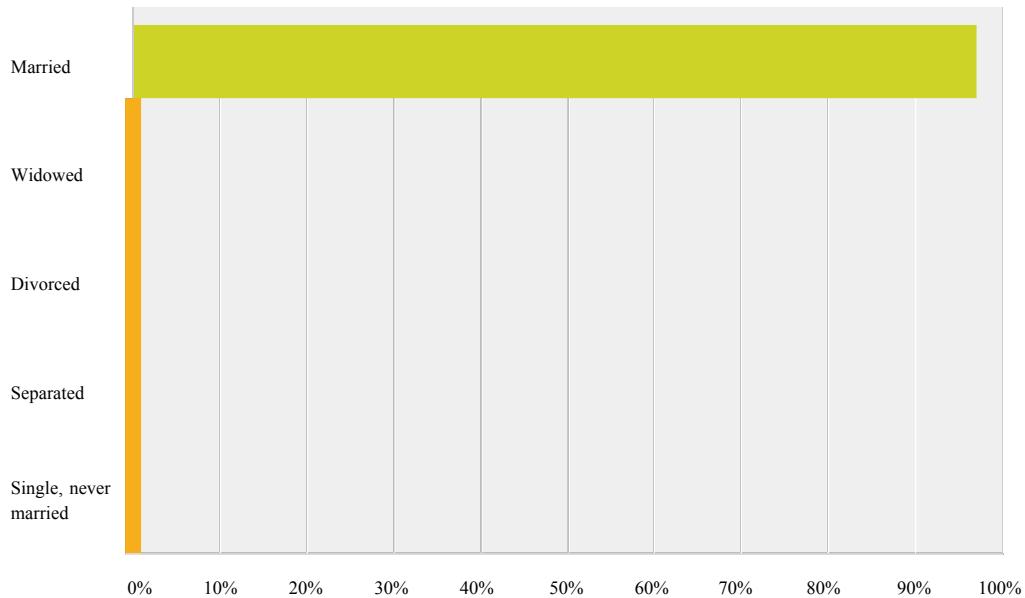
Answered: 100 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Male	98.00%
Female	2.00%
Total	100

Q3 What is your current marital status?

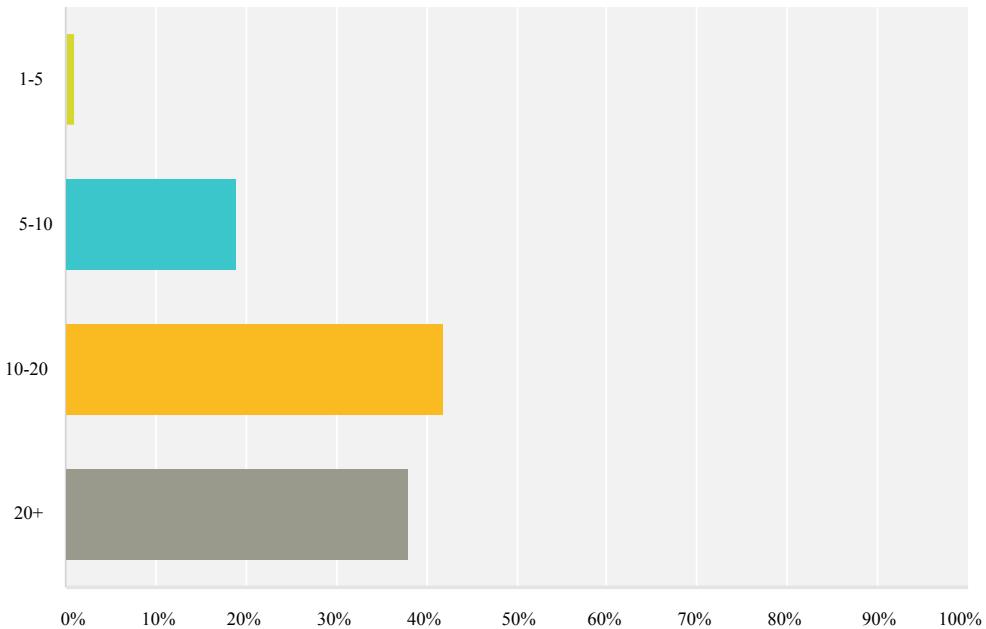
Answered: 100 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Married	97.00% 97
Widowed	0.00% 0
Divorced	2.00% 2
Separated	0.00% 0
Single, never married	1.00% 1
Total	100

Q4 How many years have you been in a senior level ministry leadership position?

Answered: 100 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
1-5	1.00%
5-10	19.00%
10-20	42.00%
20+	38.00%
Total	100

Q5 What is your current ministry leadership role?

Answered: 99 Skipped: 1

#	Responses	Date
1	Senior Pastor at The Meeting House in Carlisle, PA	1/16/2016 9:10 PM
2	Senior Pastor	1/16/2016 1:54 PM
3	Senior pastor	1/16/2016 1:21 PM
4	lead pastor	1/16/2016 7:12 AM
5	sr pastor	1/15/2016 11:57 AM
6	Founding and Lead Pastor	1/14/2016 11:43 PM
7	Senior Pastor	1/14/2016 1:42 PM
8	Lead Pastor	1/14/2016 7:47 AM
9	lead pastor	1/13/2016 7:11 PM
10	Senior Pastor	1/13/2016 6:56 PM
11	Lead Pastor	1/13/2016 6:02 PM
12	Lead Pastor/Elder	1/13/2016 5:42 PM
13	Senior	1/13/2016 5:05 PM
14	Lead Pastor	1/13/2016 1:33 PM
15	Lead Pastor	1/13/2016 1:02 PM
16	Lead Pastor Restore Community Church	1/13/2016 1:00 PM
17	Lead Pastor	1/12/2016 9:09 PM
18	Lead Pastor	1/12/2016 9:01 PM
19	Lead Pastor	1/12/2016 7:34 PM
20	Sr Pastor	1/12/2016 6:09 PM
21	Lead Pastor	1/12/2016 5:38 PM
22	Senior Pastor	1/12/2016 5:34 PM
23	Senior Pastor	1/12/2016 4:47 PM
24	Senior/Lead Pastor	1/12/2016 4:24 PM
25	Lead Pastor	1/12/2016 2:37 PM
26	Lead Pastor	1/12/2016 2:28 PM
27	lead pastor	1/12/2016 1:22 PM
28	Lead Pastor	1/12/2016 1:10 PM
29	Founding pastor of Hosanna Lutheran Church	1/12/2016 11:45 AM
30	director of leadership development	1/12/2016 11:23 AM
31	Lead Pastor	1/12/2016 10:52 AM
32	Lead/senior pastor	1/12/2016 10:14 AM
33	Lead Pastor	1/12/2016 6:21 AM
34	Lead Pastor in a "Multi-Site" Church Model	1/12/2016 2:19 AM

35	Senior pastor	1/12/2016 12:58 AM
36	Senior Pastor	1/12/2016 12:23 AM
37	Lead Pastor	1/11/2016 11:38 PM
38	Senior Pastor	1/11/2016 10:31 PM
39	Lead Pastor	1/11/2016 10:19 PM
40	senior pastor	1/11/2016 9:44 PM
41	Senior pastor	1/11/2016 9:16 PM
42	Lead Pastor	1/11/2016 8:41 PM
43	Lead Minister	1/11/2016 8:15 PM
44	Senior Pastor	1/11/2016 8:08 PM
45	Sr. Pastor	1/11/2016 8:04 PM
46	Sr. Pastor	1/11/2016 7:48 PM
47	Retiring from staff June 2016; previously Founding Pastor and Directional Leader for 28 years; last 4 years, Director of BiLD Training Center at the church	1/11/2016 7:26 PM
48	Lead Pastor	1/11/2016 7:26 PM
49	Lead Pastor/Superintendent	1/11/2016 6:57 PM
50	Lead Pastor	1/11/2016 6:44 PM
51	Lead Pastor	1/11/2016 6:43 PM
52	Senior Pastor/Teacher	1/11/2016 6:39 PM
53	Senior Pastor	1/11/2016 6:36 PM
54	Lead Pastor	1/11/2016 6:32 PM
55	Lead pastor	1/11/2016 6:23 PM
56	Lead Pastor	1/11/2016 6:09 PM
57	Lead Pastor	1/11/2016 5:57 PM
58	Senior pastor	1/11/2016 5:56 PM
59	Sr. Pastor	1/11/2016 5:55 PM
60	Lead pastor	1/11/2016 5:50 PM
61	Lead Pastor	1/11/2016 5:36 PM
62	Lead Pastor	1/11/2016 5:24 PM
63	Lead pastor of Ginghamsburg Church	1/11/2016 5:22 PM
64	senior pastor, lead staff, president of corp. and president of the board	1/11/2016 5:03 PM
65	Senior Pastor	1/11/2016 5:01 PM
66	Senior Pastor	1/11/2016 4:59 PM
67	Sr. Pastor	1/11/2016 4:57 PM
68	Senior Pastor	1/11/2016 4:57 PM
69	Lead Pastor	1/11/2016 4:54 PM
70	Senior Pastor	1/11/2016 4:51 PM

71	Lead pastor	1/11/2016 4:50 PM
72	Executive Minister	1/11/2016 4:49 PM
73	Senior Pastor	1/11/2016 4:48 PM
74	Lead Pastor	1/11/2016 4:47 PM
75	Lead Pastor	1/11/2016 4:47 PM
76	Senior Pastor	1/11/2016 4:47 PM
77	Senior or Lead Pastor	1/11/2016 4:46 PM
78	Lead Pastor	1/9/2016 7:20 PM
79	Teaching Pastor	1/6/2016 11:50 AM
80	CEO	12/16/2015 9:20 PM
81	Director of a Church Planting Leadership Residency Program	12/10/2015 11:30 AM
82	Lead Pastor	12/9/2015 10:41 PM
83	Lead Pastor	12/9/2015 3:31 PM
84	Lead pastor	12/8/2015 9:09 PM
85	Mission/Teaching Elder	12/7/2015 5:47 PM
86	senior pastor	12/5/2015 8:40 AM
87	Retired after 25 yrs. I'm 48.	12/4/2015 6:32 PM
88	Queen bee	12/4/2015 2:36 PM
89	Director of our Church Planting Program	12/4/2015 9:54 AM
90	Lead Pastor	12/3/2015 4:27 PM
91	Director of Operations for a Homeless ministry	12/3/2015 8:55 AM
92	Lead Pastor at Impact Church in Lowell, MI	12/3/2015 7:56 AM
93	Senior Pastor	12/2/2015 9:48 PM
94	Founder / President	12/2/2015 8:48 PM
95	Lead Pastor	12/2/2015 4:38 PM
96	Founding and Lead Pastor of New Vintage Church.	12/2/2015 12:32 PM
97	Senior Pastor	12/2/2015 10:44 AM
98	Lead Pastor	12/2/2015 10:30 AM
99	Shepherding Pastor (Care and Small Groups)	12/2/2015 9:17 AM

Q6 How many people do you currently lead?

Answered: 98 Skipped: 2

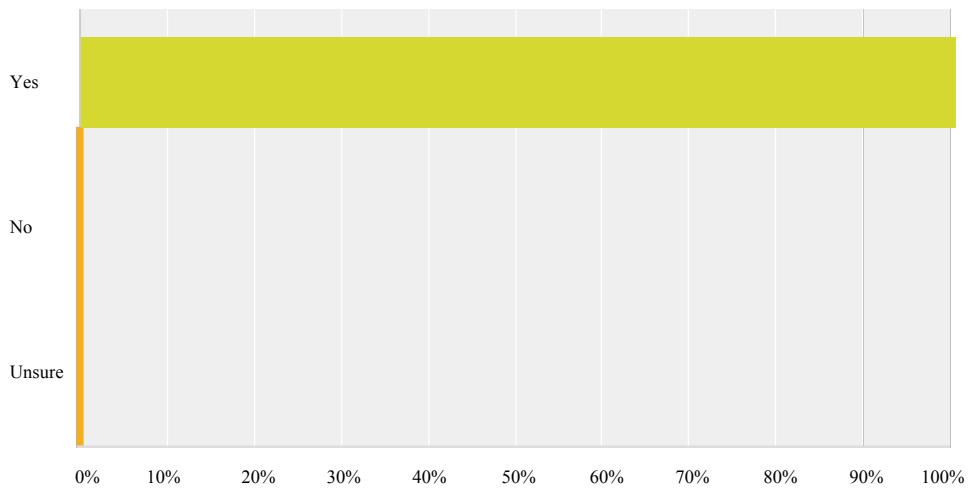
#	Responses	Date
1	Over 2,000	1/16/2016 9:10 PM
2	1000	1/16/2016 1:54 PM
3	10,000	1/16/2016 1:21 PM
4	2500 give or take	1/16/2016 7:12 AM
5	3000+	1/15/2016 11:57 AM
6	Congregation of 2600; 5 sites; 50 staff	1/14/2016 11:44 PM
7	8000+ church members	1/14/2016 1:42 PM
8	8,000	1/14/2016 7:47 AM
9	18 f/t pastoral staff. Church staff of 56	1/13/2016 7:11 PM
10	Congregation--2500---3000 Staff 30 FTE	1/13/2016 6:58 PM
11	10 staff, 50 volunteers	1/13/2016 6:03 PM
12	5000 +	1/13/2016 5:42 PM
13	3500	1/13/2016 5:05 PM
14	Congregation is 1200 Primary leadership is to elders (5 men) and Leadership Team (4 people)	1/13/2016 1:34 PM
15	2000 (sunday attendance) 3 direct reports	1/13/2016 1:03 PM
16	7 Direct Reports, 17 on Staff, 975 in attendance	1/13/2016 1:02 PM
17	1500	1/12/2016 9:09 PM
18	1800	1/12/2016 9:02 PM
19	Staff = 18 FT & PT Church -1,000	1/12/2016 7:35 PM
20	Staff 200+	1/12/2016 6:09 PM
21	1200	1/12/2016 5:38 PM
22	Congregation membership 8,000 30 fulltime ministry statff 90 employees	1/12/2016 5:35 PM
23	Staff of 7. Congregation of 400	1/12/2016 4:47 PM
24	3000 people call our church home. 1300 show up each weekend. And 40 are on staff either full time or part time. Positionally or Personally I attempt to lead them all.	1/12/2016 4:27 PM
25	1000 (100,000 in Network)	1/12/2016 2:38 PM
26	7 Direct Reports; total staff of >35	1/12/2016 2:29 PM
27	1600	1/12/2016 1:23 PM
28	900	1/12/2016 1:11 PM
29	The congregation has over 7,000 members	1/12/2016 11:46 AM
30	200 staff	1/12/2016 11:24 AM
31	1500 plus	1/12/2016 10:52 AM
32	Staff - 100+ Congregation - average attendance 4700	1/12/2016 10:14 AM

33	1600	1/12/2016 6:21 AM
34	2,000 in attendance 60+ staff	1/12/2016 2:19 AM
35	111	1/12/2016 12:58 AM
36	staff - 24 congregation 1400	1/12/2016 12:23 AM
37	1400	1/11/2016 11:38 PM
38	2,000 at the church, 30 on staff	1/11/2016 10:32 PM
39	1150	1/11/2016 10:20 PM
40	2100	1/11/2016 9:44 PM
41	Lead Team =4 Staff =120 Members=9300	1/11/2016 9:17 PM
42	7 direct reports (120 on staff)	1/11/2016 8:41 PM
43	20 church staff	1/11/2016 8:17 PM
44	2,000	1/11/2016 8:08 PM
45	49	1/11/2016 8:04 PM
46	3200	1/11/2016 7:49 PM
47	Weekly church attendance 7000-7500; church staff 175+; Senior Management Team 8; Elders 10; all during my Directional Leader tenure.	1/11/2016 7:28 PM
48	10 staff, 600 church	1/11/2016 7:26 PM
49	This question is a bit unclear. Our congregation is around 1,500 in attendance. Our volunteer team is 400 in number. Our staff is 28 members. My direct reports are 8.	1/11/2016 7:01 PM
50	1500 as Pastor 8000 as Superintendent	1/11/2016 6:58 PM
51	45	1/11/2016 6:44 PM
52	3 direct reports, 25-30 staff members, 1500 attendees	1/11/2016 6:43 PM
53	3500	1/11/2016 6:39 PM
54	3000	1/11/2016 6:36 PM
55	1000 weekly	1/11/2016 6:32 PM
56	2900	1/11/2016 6:23 PM
57	30 staff and 3700 in church	1/11/2016 6:09 PM
58	1,200	1/11/2016 5:57 PM
59	10,000	1/11/2016 5:56 PM
60	7000	1/11/2016 5:56 PM
61	2 direct reports	1/11/2016 5:50 PM
62	3500	1/11/2016 5:36 PM
63	1,500	1/11/2016 5:24 PM
64	120 staff/4700 Church	1/11/2016 5:22 PM
65	our church weekend service is 4,500 our employees are 240. Our full time staff is 60 and I directly oversee 9 people	1/11/2016 5:04 PM
66	1800	1/11/2016 5:02 PM
67	40 staff 2000 weekly attendance of 4000 people	1/11/2016 4:59 PM
68	Employees 100	1/11/2016 4:58 PM

69	35	1/11/2016 4:58 PM
70	2300	1/11/2016 4:54 PM
71	Over 800	1/11/2016 4:51 PM
72	1200	1/11/2016 4:51 PM
73	22 Direct reports. 50+ in official organization roles (Staff + Board) 2,400 member church	1/11/2016 4:50 PM
74	weekend attendance of 2300. Staff of 40	1/11/2016 4:48 PM
75	5000	1/11/2016 4:48 PM
76	Staff - 50 Congregation - 5000	1/11/2016 4:47 PM
77	3k+	1/9/2016 7:21 PM
78	nearly 200 church staff	1/6/2016 11:50 AM
79	22	12/16/2015 9:21 PM
80	Presently, eight. Previously, served on a church leadership team that managed over 100	12/10/2015 11:31 AM
81	40	12/9/2015 10:41 PM
82	1,000	12/9/2015 3:32 PM
83	1000 adults	12/8/2015 9:09 PM
84	Staff = 27 full/part time Congregation = 1,000/1,100	12/7/2015 5:50 PM
85	8000 +	12/5/2015 8:40 AM
86	When I was a pastor - 750+	12/4/2015 6:33 PM
87	way too many	12/4/2015 2:36 PM
88	One. For the first 30 years of my ministry I helped lead a staff of 100.	12/4/2015 9:55 AM
89	300	12/3/2015 4:27 PM
90	15	12/3/2015 8:55 AM
91	1,200	12/3/2015 7:56 AM
92	200+	12/2/2015 9:48 PM
93	24 - as mentor / facilitator 1 - as direct report 1200 - as elder	12/2/2015 8:48 PM
94	21 Staff 1500 in church	12/2/2015 4:38 PM
95	500	12/2/2015 12:32 PM
96	50+ Staff / 3500+ in our church	12/2/2015 10:44 AM
97	150	12/2/2015 10:31 AM
98	30-60 volunteers yearly in small group leadership	12/2/2015 9:18 AM

Q7 Do you believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God?

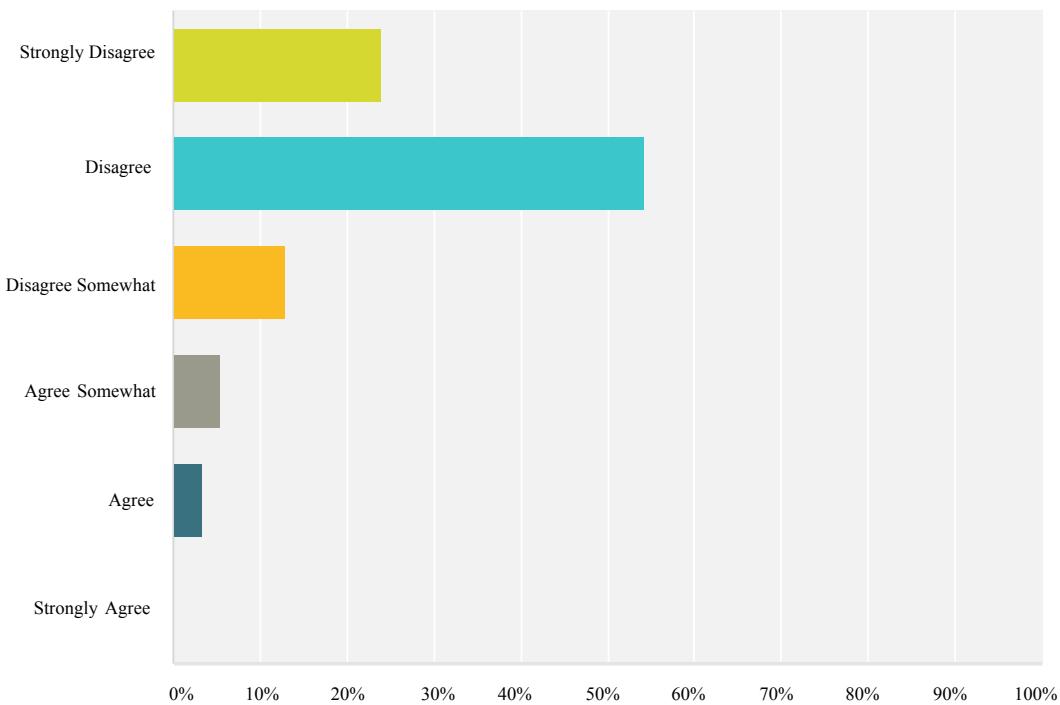
Answered: 99 Skipped: 1



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	98.99%
No	0.00%
Unsure	1.01%
Total	99

Q8 My ministry position is relatively easy.

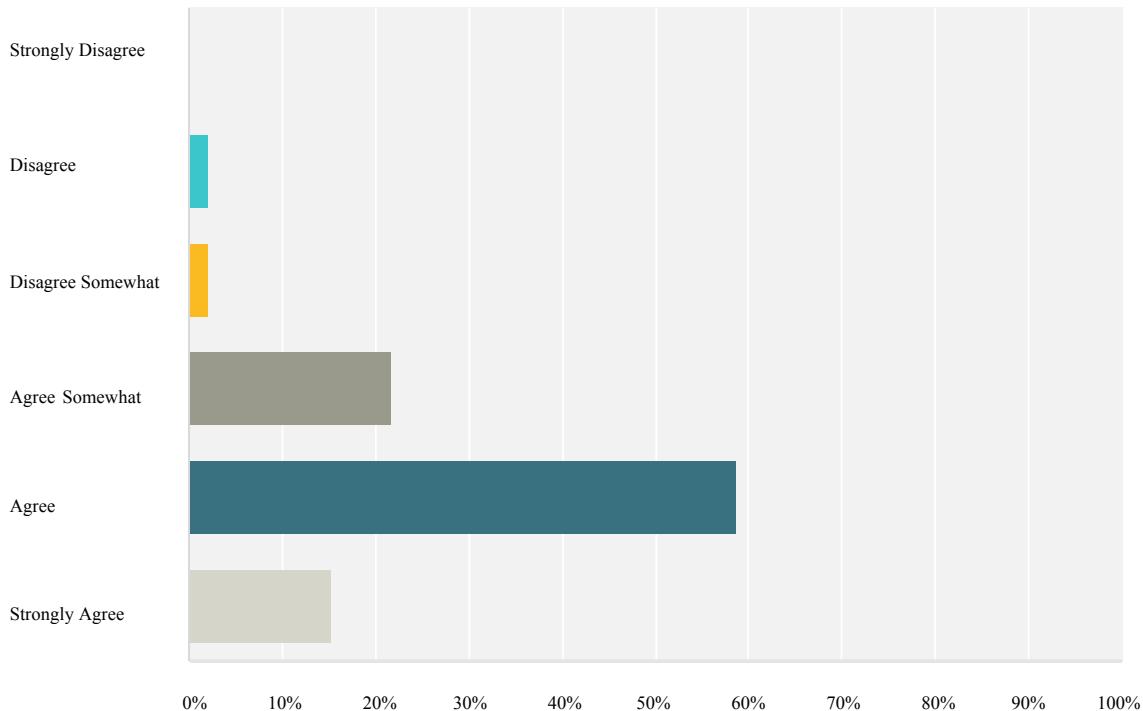
Answered: 92 Skipped: 8



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Disagree	23.91%
Disagree	54.35%
Disagree Somewhat	13.04%
Agree Somewhat	5.43%
Agree	3.26%
Strongly Agree	0.00%
Total	92

Q9 My ministry position is relatively difficult.

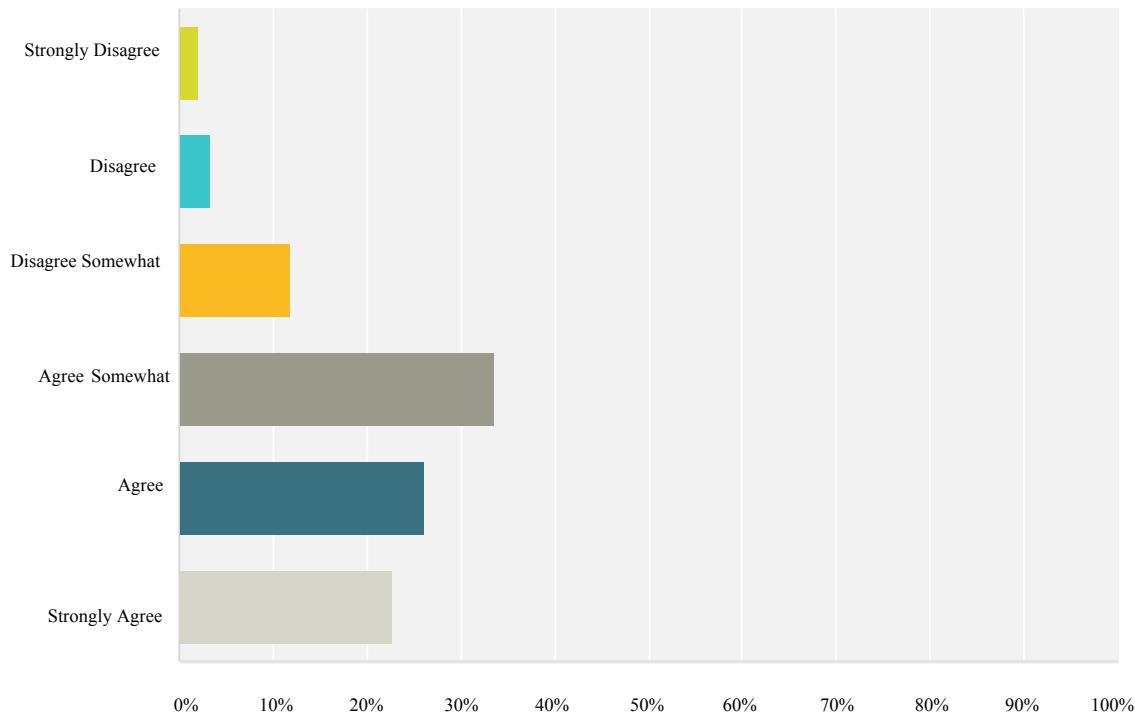
Answered: 92 Skipped: 8



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Disagree	0.00%
Disagree	2.17%
Disagree Somewhat	2.17%
Agree Somewhat	21.74%
Agree	58.70%
Strongly Agree	15.22%
Total	92

Q10 God has primarily used my ministry to transform me.

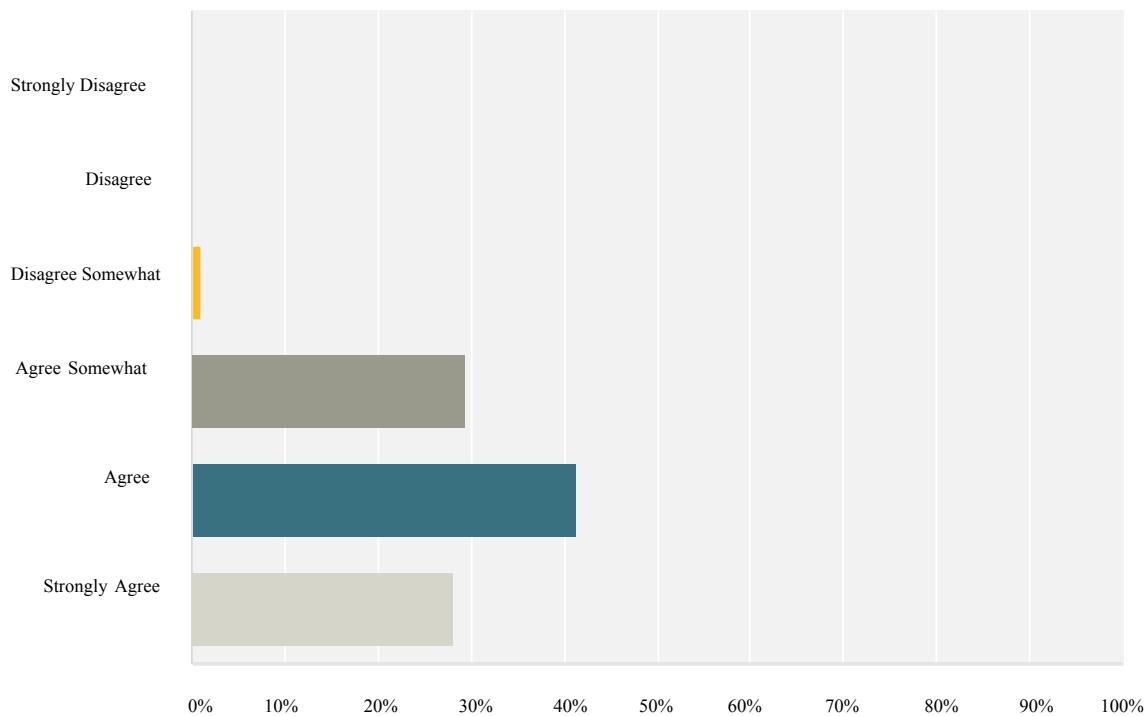
Answered: 92 Skipped: 8



Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	2.17%	2
Disagree	3.26%	3
Disagree Somewhat	11.96%	11
Agree Somewhat	33.70%	31
Agree	26.09%	24
Strongly Agree	22.83%	21
Total	92	

Q11 God has primarily used my ministry to transform the lives of others.

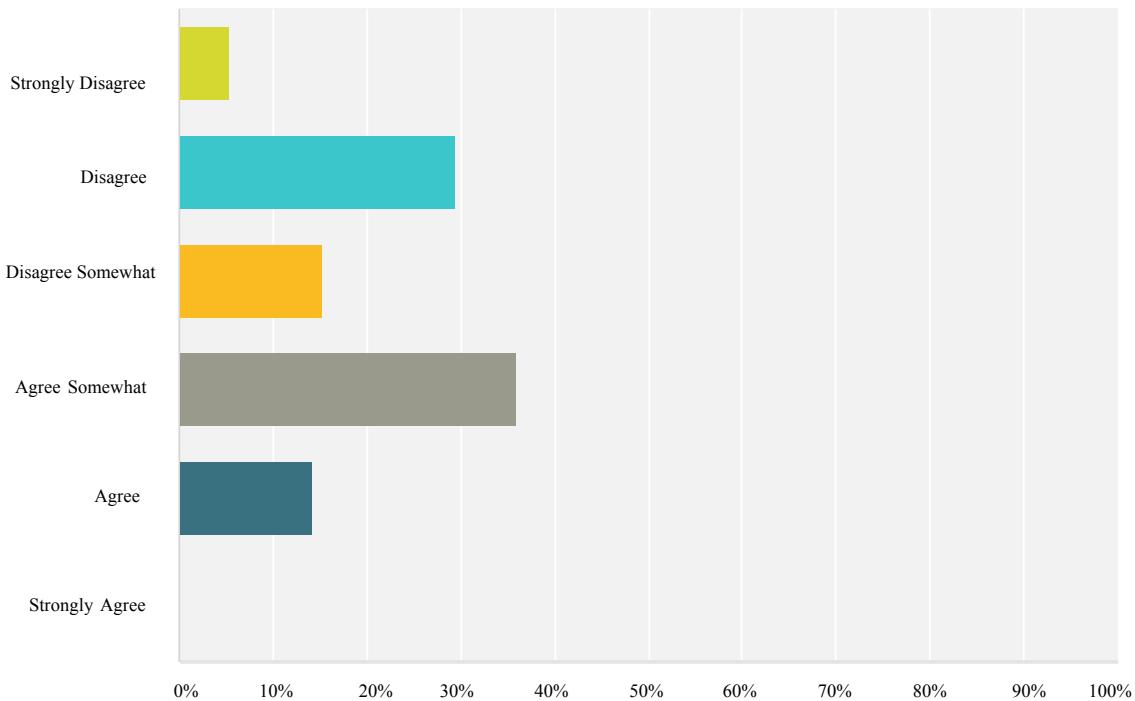
Answered: 92 Skipped: 8



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Disagree	0.00%
Disagree	0.00%
Disagree Somewhat	1.09%
Agree Somewhat	29.35%
Agree	41.30%
Strongly Agree	28.26%
Total	92

**Q12 God has primarily used my greatest success
in ministry to shape me the most.**

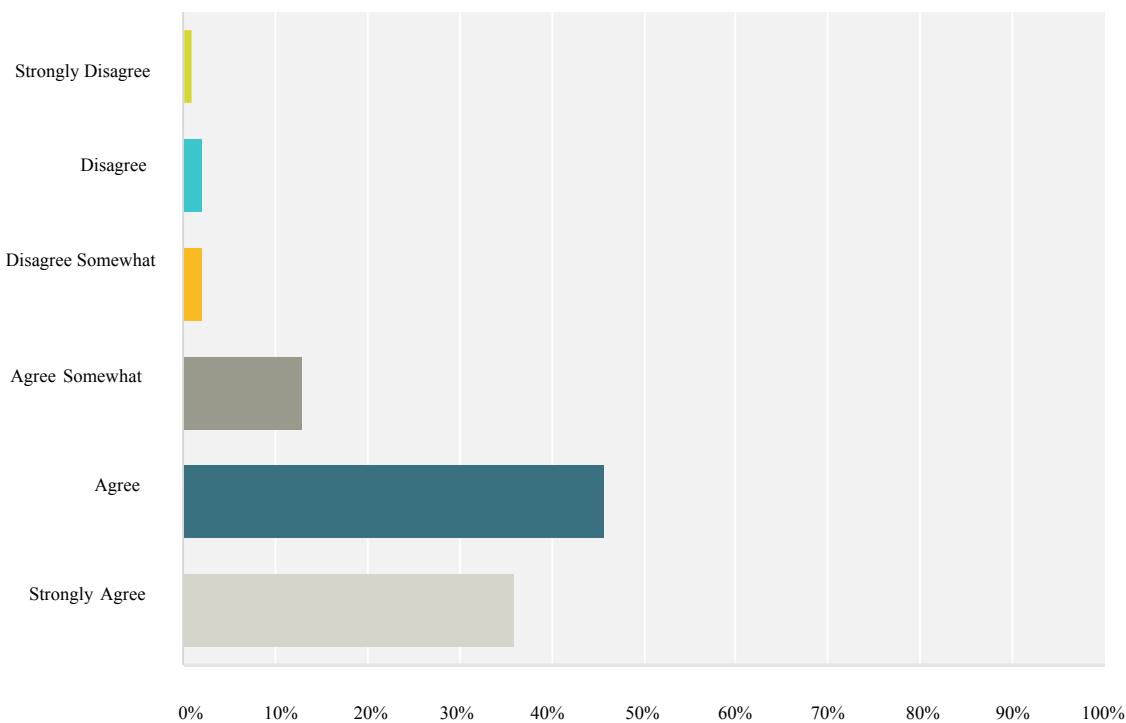
Answered: 92 Skipped: 8



Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	5.43%	5
Disagree	29.35%	27
Disagree Somewhat	15.22%	14
Agree Somewhat	35.87%	33
Agree	14.13%	13
Strongly Agree	0.00%	0
Total	92	

**Q13 God has primarily used my most difficult times
in ministry to shape me the most.**

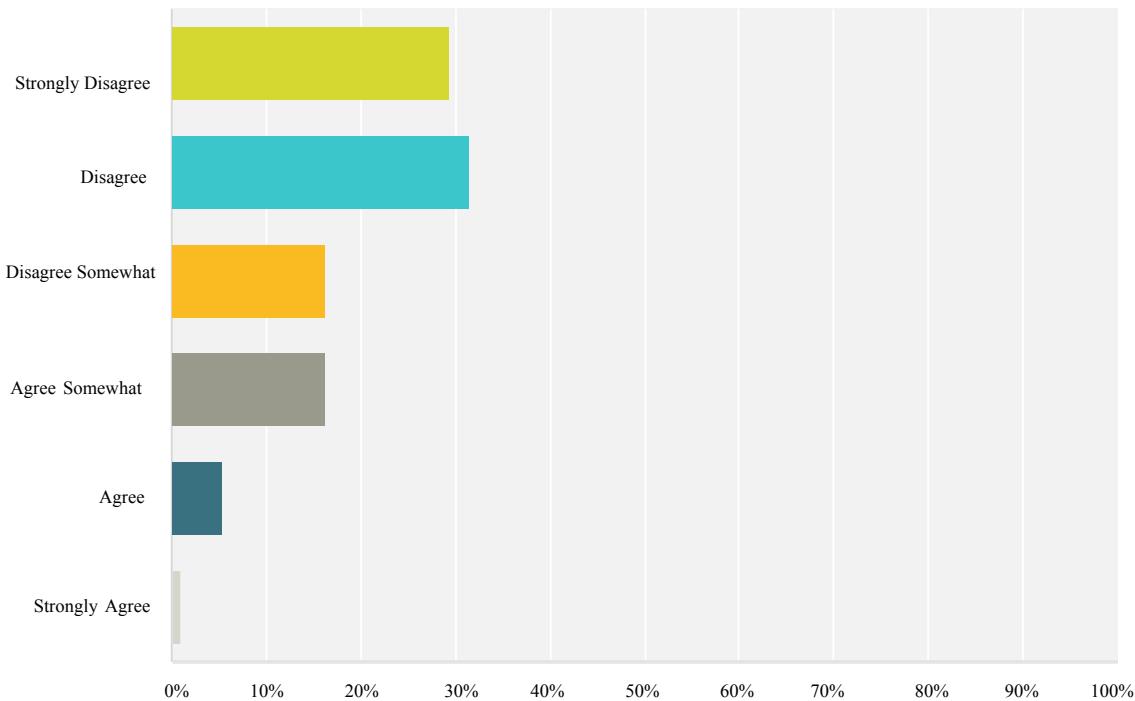
Answered: 92 Skipped: 8



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Disagree	1.09%
Disagree	2.17%
Disagree Somewhat	2.17%
Agree Somewhat	13.04%
Agree	45.65%
Strongly Agree	35.87%
Total	92

**Q14 I entered ministry because I thought
I would get something out of it.**

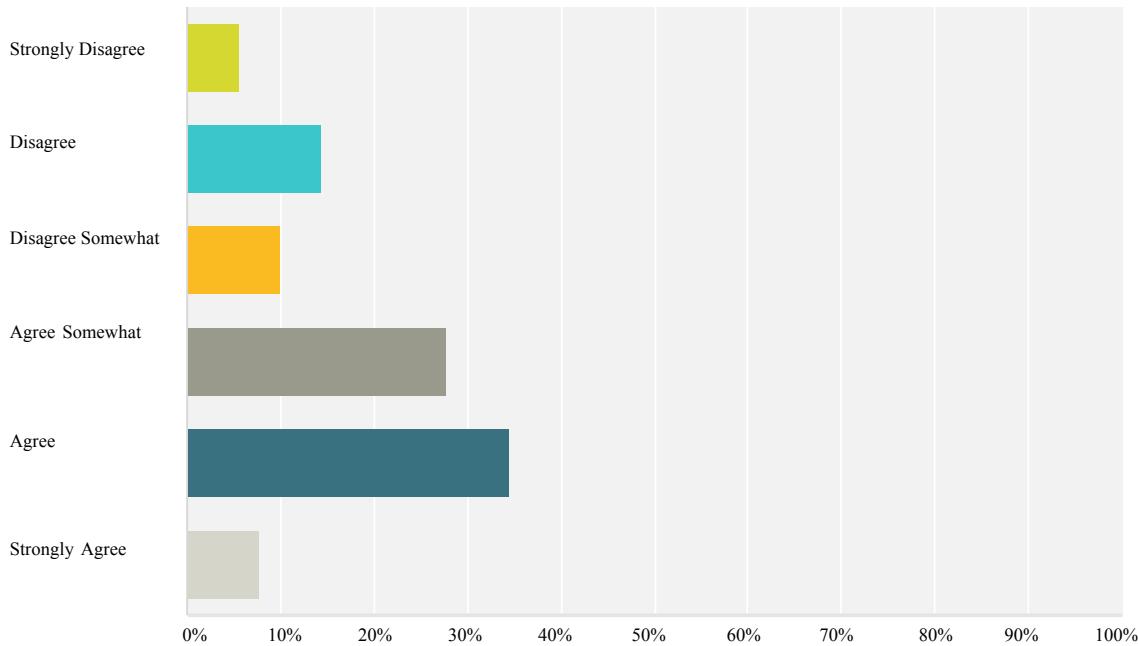
Answered: 92 Skipped: 8



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Disagree	29.35% 27
Disagree	31.52% 29
Disagree Somewhat	16.30% 15
Agree Somewhat	16.30% 15
Agree	5.43% 5
Strongly Agree	1.09% 1
Total	92

Q15 I entered ministry fully aware of what I would be giving up.

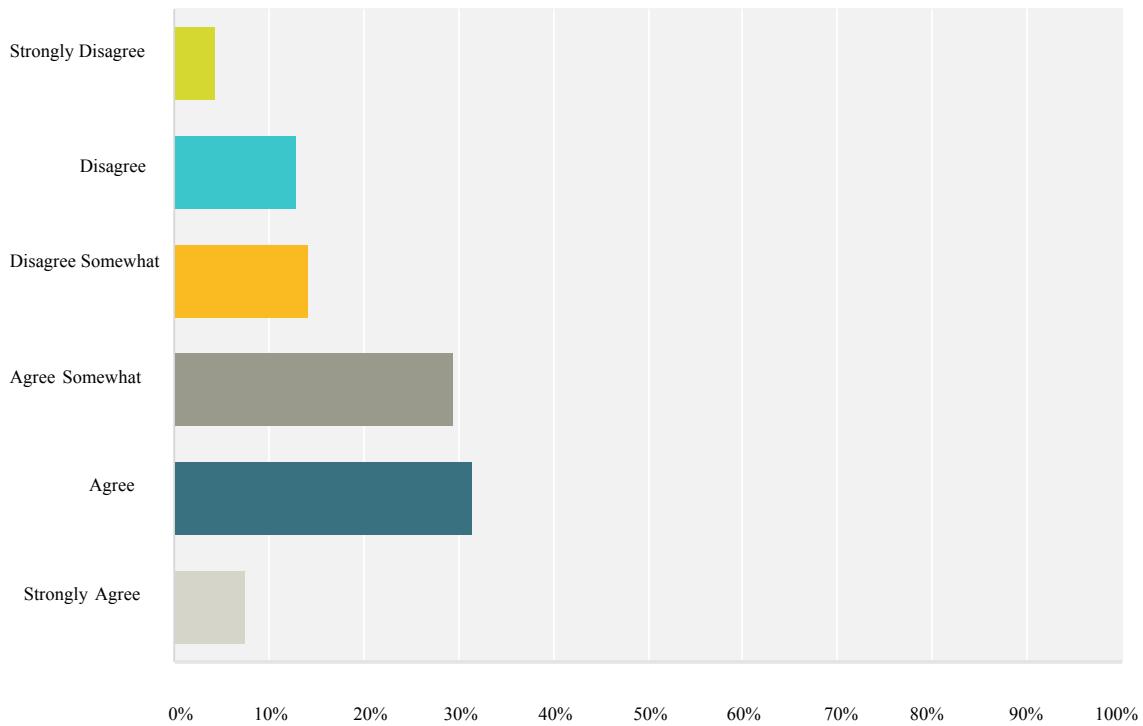
Answered: 90 Skipped: 10



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Disagree	5.56%
Disagree	14.44%
Disagree Somewhat	10.00%
Agree Somewhat	27.78%
Agree	34.44%
Strongly Agree	7.78%
Total	90

Q16 I entered ministry expecting to lose something as a result of my ministry.

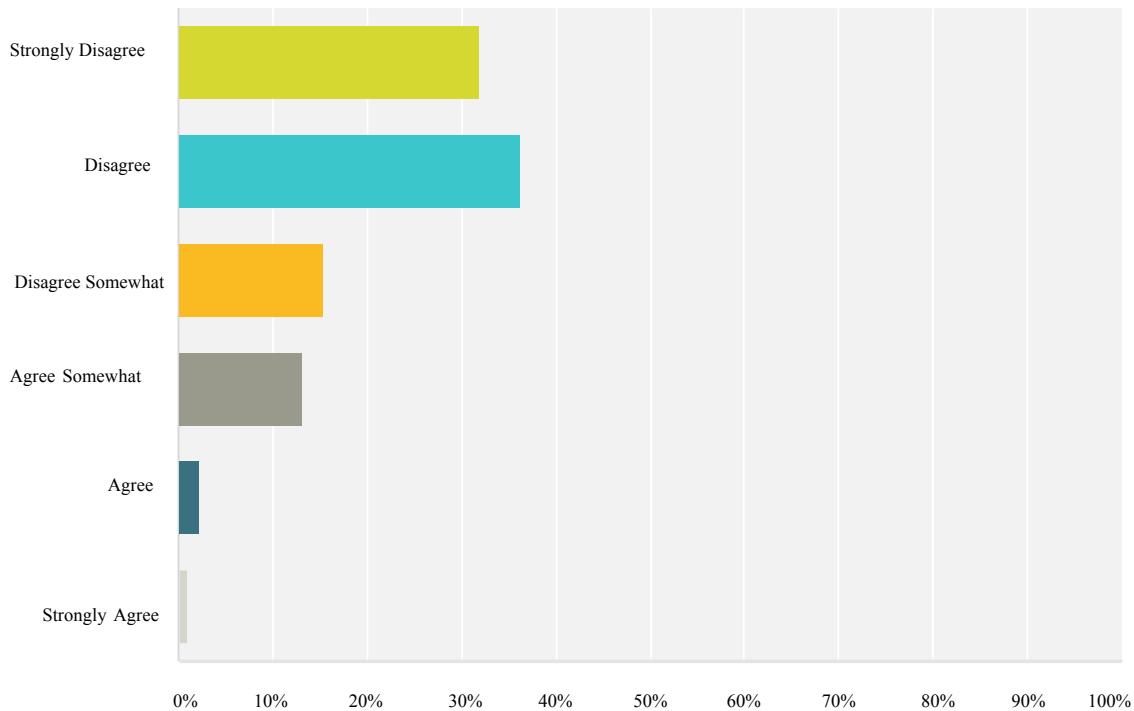
Answered: 92 Skipped: 8



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Disagree	4.35% 4
Disagree	13.04% 12
Disagree Somewhat	14.13% 13
Agree Somewhat	29.35% 27
Agree	31.52% 29
Strongly Agree	7.61% 7
Total	92

Q17 My ministry has negatively affected my marriage.

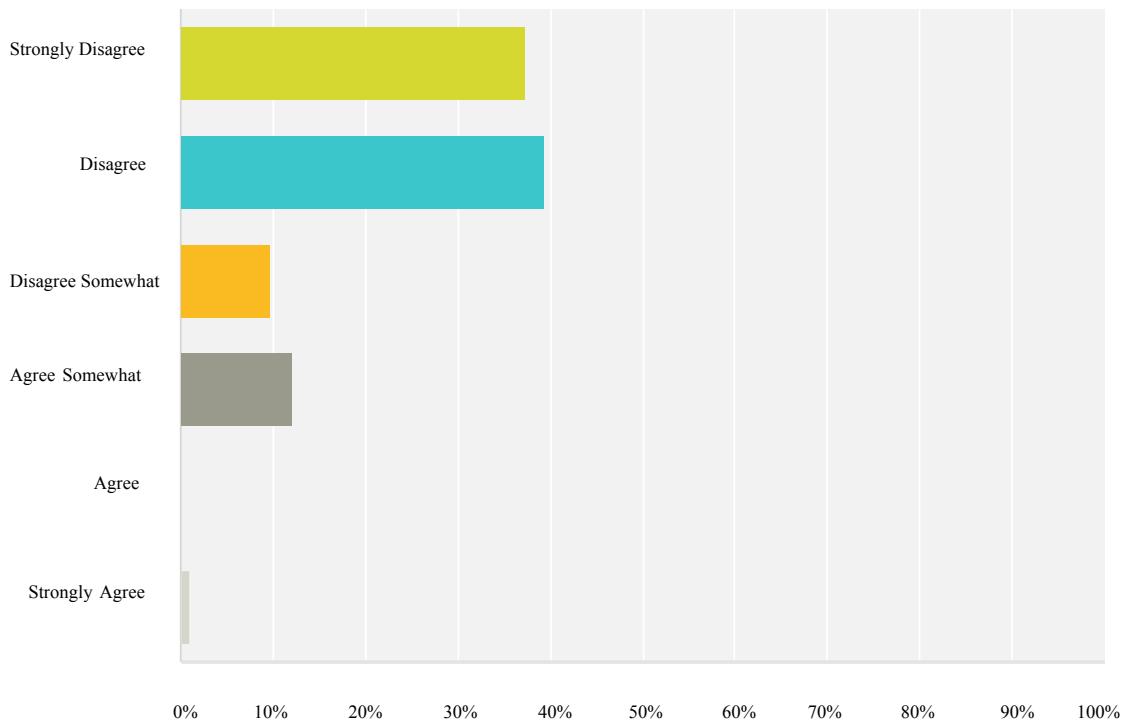
Answered: 91 Skipped: 9



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Disagree	31.87% 29
Disagree	36.26% 33
Disagree Somewhat	15.38% 14
Agree Somewhat	13.19% 12
Agree	2.20% 2
Strongly Agree	1.10% 1
Total	91

**Q18 My ministry has negatively affected
my relationship with my children.**

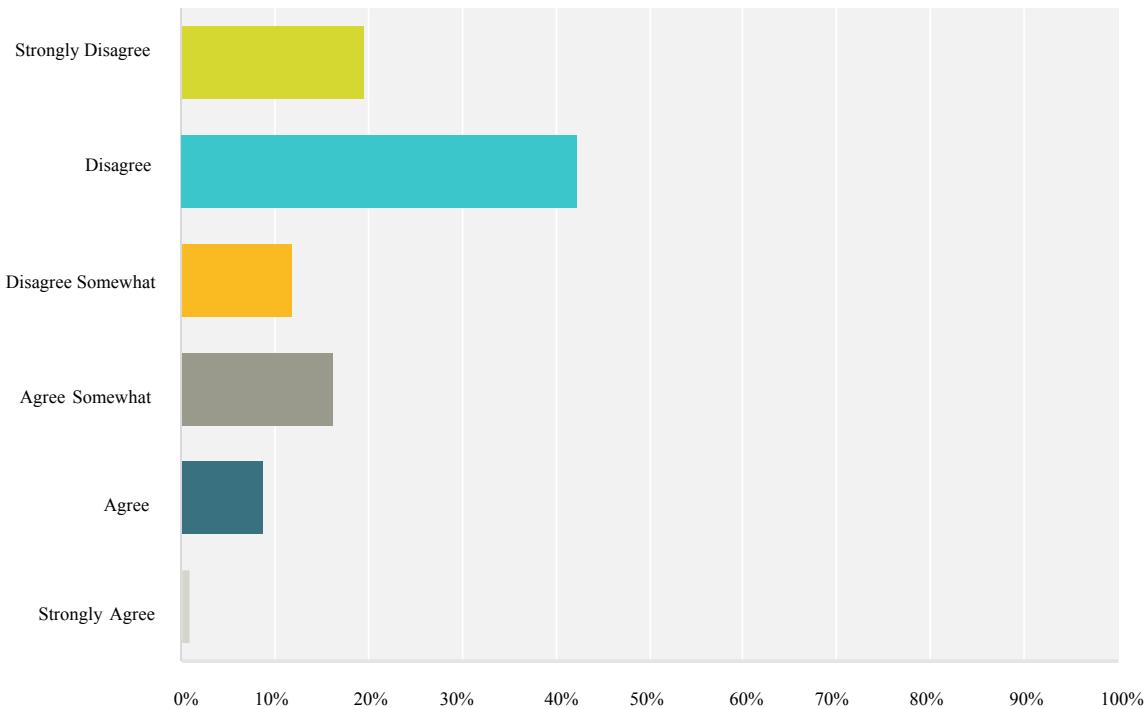
Answered: 91 Skipped: 9



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Disagree	37.36%
Disagree	39.56%
Disagree Somewhat	9.89%
Agree Somewhat	12.09%
Agree	0.00%
Strongly Agree	1.10%
Total	91

Q19 My ministry has negatively affected other relationships.

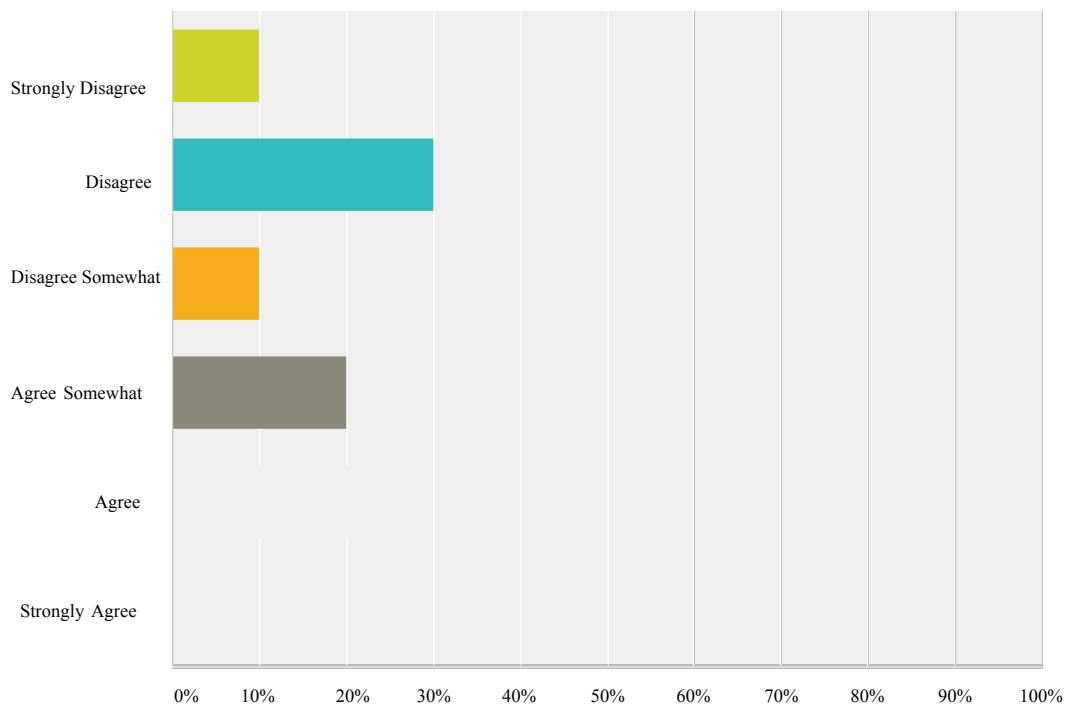
Answered: 92 Skipped: 8



Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	19.57%	18
Disagree	42.39%	39
Disagree Somewhat	11.96%	11
Agree Somewhat	16.30%	15
Agree	8.70%	8
Strongly Agree	1.09%	1
Total	92	

Q20 I have lost something due to a poor ministry decision that I have made as a leader.

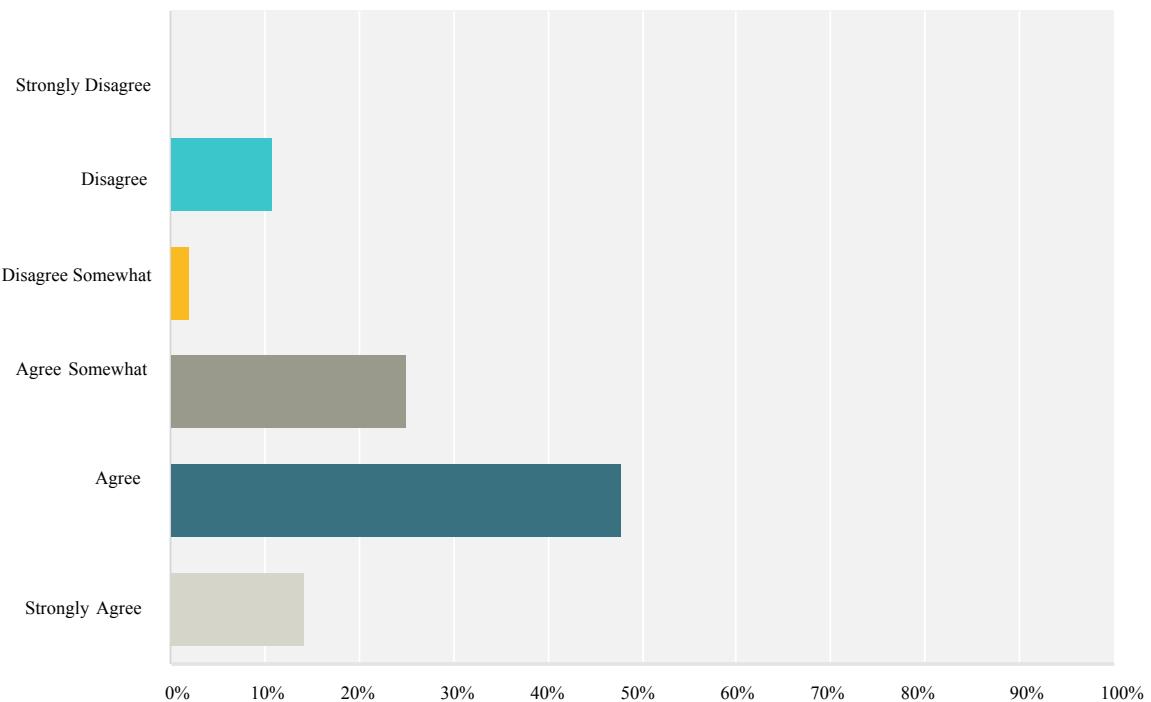
Answered: 92 Skipped: 8



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Disagree	9.78%
Disagree	29.35%
Disagree Somewhat	9.78%
Agree Somewhat	19.57%
Agree	25.00%
Strongly Agree	6.52%
Total	92

Q21 I have lost something due to a good ministry decision that I have made as a leader.

Answered: 92 Skipped: 8



Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	10.87%	10
Disagree Somewhat	2.17%	2
Agree Somewhat	25.00%	23
Agree	47.83%	44
Strongly Agree	14.13%	13
Total		92

**Q22 What has been your greatest cost/loss
as a ministry leader?**

Answered: 84 Skipped: 16

#	Responses	Date
1	Loss of privacy and personal freedom. Most of our friendships are with people within the church and that means any friendly night out can end with someone talking about what is church for them and work for me. As a very public figure, I've lost the ability to completely control the narrative of who I am in the eyes of others. I feel like I have to constantly modulate what I say and how I say it.	1/16/2016 9:17 PM
2	Time investment is huge so relationships suffer	1/16/2016 1:24 PM
3	uncertain as to how to answer	1/16/2016 7:16 AM
4	friends who leave	1/15/2016 11:59 AM
5	Relationships; There have been some relationships lost or fractured because of difficult decisions that had to be made. Most seem irreparable.	1/14/2016 11:47 PM
6	Just being able to be one of the guys.	1/14/2016 7:50 AM
7	losing friends in ministry and losing church members	1/13/2016 7:13 PM
8	I honestly cannot identify any significant loss that I have experienced in my ministry.	1/13/2016 7:01 PM
9	Friendships	1/13/2016 6:55 PM
10	Lost 200 people to a church "plant" that left with a staff member. Lost my sense of self in my first ministry assignment (those two events are separated by 19 years, btw)	1/13/2016 6:05 PM
11	Giving up my rights...vulnerability. deep hurt... health	1/13/2016 5:09 PM
12	Loss of a long time friend that I had to fire from my staff	1/13/2016 1:38 PM
13	Trying to hold things together, that I should have just let die... Cost me time... energy...etc...	1/13/2016 1:05 PM
14	When we left Naperville IL and friends at Community Christian Church to move to Kansas City, MO to plant Restore. All those wonderful relationships changed.	1/13/2016 1:04 PM
15	Physical condition; lack of sleep	1/12/2016 9:12 PM
16	at times I have been betrayed or unfairly criticized	1/12/2016 9:04 PM
17	I often feel very lonely.	1/12/2016 7:38 PM
18	Support of those who disagreed with decision(s)	1/12/2016 6:11 PM
19	Free time to pursue hobbies outside of church.	1/12/2016 5:41 PM
20	Having always been a senior pastor I had not one hold me accountable regarding balancing my ministry and as result I developed and was emotionally rewarded for unhealthy work habits. My workaholism was rewarded.	1/12/2016 5:40 PM
21	Managing disappointment when people we've invested in fail to follow through or appreciate the work we've put in to help them grow or navigate a crisis. After all the work, they often leave the church.	1/12/2016 4:51 PM
22	Relationships	1/12/2016 4:29 PM
23	Losing friends over theological and philosophical differences.	1/12/2016 2:39 PM
24	Relationships with friends and family as I carry a very unique stress burden and schedule.	1/12/2016 1:12 PM
25	The loss of freedom on weekends.	1/12/2016 11:49 AM
26	physical and emotional health	1/12/2016 11:29 AM

27	Not enough time off; worked way too much!	1/12/2016 10:54 AM
28	I don't really feel much loss. Greatest battle is to stay connected to the Father at a personal level. But I can't say ministry role caused this. Each calling in life has unique privileges and challenges, including church leadership.	1/12/2016 10:18 AM
29	Security for the future, deep friendships & anonymity	1/12/2016 2:27 AM
30	Privacy	1/12/2016 1:00 AM
31	betrayal of trusted associate(s) after sacrificial investment	1/12/2016 12:27 AM
32	Rejection. Relationships.	1/11/2016 11:42 PM
33	being a pastor is 24x7 without much money and it makes you a bit of a pariah	1/11/2016 10:34 PM
34	friendships and financial gain	1/11/2016 10:22 PM
35	staff friends who I had to let go	1/11/2016 9:46 PM
36	The pain of betrayal	1/11/2016 9:21 PM
37	Loss of privacy. Always under a microscope.	1/11/2016 8:45 PM
38	Friendships. Usually, because of my immaturity. In a different situation, we lost friendships because our friend became bitter about not hiring one of their children. The relationship was never able to be mended from that point. Very sad.	1/11/2016 8:27 PM
39	Strain on my marriage in which divorce was considered.	1/11/2016 8:12 PM
40	Friendships lost when having to transition ineffective or immoral staff members.	1/11/2016 7:59 PM
41	Ability to do what I want, when I want; as church demands grew, my discretionary time shrank	1/11/2016 7:31 PM
42	emotional energy	1/11/2016 7:28 PM
43	Friendships due to various factors	1/11/2016 7:01 PM
44	When much younger, I focused too much on ministry. I've changed that now, but I can't go back and change the past.	1/11/2016 6:49 PM
45	I have given up the hobbies and leisure pursuits I once enjoyed, as well as the whole idea of "free time". I only have one day off weekly (we have Saturday services) and I have given up the expectation that having 2 days off brings	1/11/2016 6:42 PM
46	Friends	1/11/2016 6:38 PM
47	Rest	1/11/2016 6:35 PM
48	Friendships	1/11/2016 6:26 PM
49	Money	1/11/2016 5:59 PM
50	Not being near my wife's family because of God's call to be here.	1/11/2016 5:59 PM
51	Freedom of time and availability	1/11/2016 5:58 PM
52	long term friendships, most of my oldest friends haven't moved away like I have because of ministry call	1/11/2016 5:54 PM
53	Relationships. People I love and respect(ed) who walked away from our relationship when they walked away from the church I was leading.	1/11/2016 5:39 PM
54	Gain has far outweighed the cost. It hurts though when people who you have ministered to and with for long periods of time leave the church for wrong reasons.	1/11/2016 5:28 PM
55	Relationships in which people place extraordinary expectations on me and I cannot fulfill them ... in fact, no one could	1/11/2016 5:26 PM
56	losing friends that didn't want to follow the vision for the church I knew God gave	1/11/2016 5:07 PM
57	Loss of good friends who I have had to transition out of their vocational role in our church. Only 3 in 20 years, but still painful.	1/11/2016 5:04 PM

58	Learning to stand alone in God in unpopular/difficult seasons	1/11/2016 5:02 PM
59	Relationships	1/11/2016 5:00 PM
60	Time	1/11/2016 4:56 PM
61	Seeing families leave that had so much potential. They didn't want to pay the price of following Jesus.	1/11/2016 4:53 PM
62	Career respect.	1/11/2016 4:52 PM
63	relationships after staffing changes	1/11/2016 4:50 PM
64	The loss of close friends and family members because of disagreement with leadership decisions	1/11/2016 4:49 PM
65	relationships/privacy	1/11/2016 4:49 PM
66	probably just time with family on weekends due to our Sat. night and Sunday schedule	1/6/2016 11:52 AM
67	I don't do politics and I used to be good at it.	12/16/2015 9:23 PM
68	A close friendship	12/10/2015 11:36 AM
69	At times challenging relationally with my wife	12/9/2015 10:45 PM
70	Freedom in social relationships	12/9/2015 3:34 PM
71	Leaving a church/city where I had great community to start a church in a smaller city and lost a lot of those relationships. Loneliness in leadership.	12/8/2015 9:13 PM
72	Initially some relationships left behind from previous places of ministry.	12/7/2015 5:54 PM
73	freedom	12/5/2015 8:42 AM
74	I lost who I was.	12/4/2015 6:35 PM
75	nobody wants to talk to me on an airplane. :(12/4/2015 2:38 PM
76	My greatest loss has been time and resources. Church planting is a life-style, not a job. Therefore, it often requires much more attention than a traditional 40 hour a week job. Also, the financial burden has been very tough at times as it lacks the security another job or position might afford	12/3/2015 4:31 PM
77	Lost a marriage	12/3/2015 8:57 AM
78	I always feel like I'm on. So in some ways I've lost the freedom to come and go from the church...it's on my heart all the time. Part of that is my fault and part of it seems to be the nature of the calling.	12/3/2015 7:59 AM
79	I have lost two Deacons because I refused to allow promotion of any politics (theirs was conservative in view) in the church	12/2/2015 9:51 PM
80	The greatest cost has been losing friends whom I have hired and then later determined they were not a good fit for the next level of our church	12/2/2015 4:43 PM
81	Losing income for a lengthy stretch as we planted New Vintage Church, leaving good and stable income (along with a sizable ministry).	12/2/2015 12:36 PM
82	Relational loneliness - on the staff, you are the senior leader, and while you can be "friends," at the end of the day, everyone knows you're the boss; in the church, every one knows you are the senior pastor so they continually see you through that lens	12/2/2015 10:46 AM
83	Friendships	12/2/2015 10:33 AM
84	Cost of relationships in standing firm on belief where others felt they couldn't remain in relationship because of my belief/views. My family has had to sacrifice some time with me as result of various on call ministry circumstances as typical for any minister	12/2/2015 9:23 AM

#	Responses	Date
1	I have learned to care about and care for an incredibly diverse group of people. It's increased my ability to relate across generations, races, and socioeconomic stratas. It's also changed the way I think about the Gospel and given me a broader perspective of who God is and how Christ can be Lord of all.	1/16/2016 9:19 PM
2	Deeply humbled as I have watched God work	1/16/2016 1:25 PM
3	my relationship with Christ.	1/16/2016 7:16 AM
4	kinder, more grace-filled	1/15/2016 12:00 PM
5	Stripped of self-confidence and yet becoming even more confident in what God wants to do in me and through me for his glory.	1/14/2016 11:48 PM
6	I think it has made me more humble as i realize i have so much to learn.	1/14/2016 7:51 AM
7	more like Jesus because He has stripped things away	1/13/2016 7:13 PM
8	I have learned incredibly lessons of trust.	1/13/2016 7:01 PM
9	Forced maturity	1/13/2016 6:56 PM
10	Confidence. Sense of identity. Clarity of calling. I'm sure I'm in the right place, doing the right things.	1/13/2016 6:06 PM
11	Older i get less i know. Older i get the more i know how but have less energy to do it. My failures are my greatest change agents	1/13/2016 5:11 PM
12	Ministry has forced me to be dependent on God in ways I didn't know were possible. Also, getting a front row seat to life change is a constant reminder that God is active and powerful. This gives me great confidence in Him.	1/13/2016 1:40 PM
13	Seeing God's kindness... trying to be more loving...	1/13/2016 1:06 PM
14	I have had amazing mentors in Dave Ferguson and Dan Southerland. I have also had a front row seat to watch God change lives and eternities.	1/13/2016 1:05 PM
15	More willing to speak the truth and enter into conflict.	1/12/2016 9:12 PM
16	It has helped me die to my flesh and live for Christ	1/12/2016 9:05 PM
17	I have been humbled, for sure, and my arrogance/pride has been tempered. Although I still have a long way to go.	1/12/2016 7:38 PM
18	Glass house living keeps you on your toes	1/12/2016 6:12 PM
19	Learning that often God used my critics to speak truth to my soul help transform my view of the church and the community of faith. People who I have often thought of as enemies were often God's best messengers in my life.	1/12/2016 5:42 PM
20	I have learned to love people wherever they are at in life.	1/12/2016 5:42 PM
21	Through my ongoing relationship with Christ. Through ministry challenges and opportunities. Through anything that strips me of my selfishness and pride.	1/12/2016 4:52 PM
22	Seeing what God does in people	1/12/2016 4:30 PM
23	Finally found my identity in who I am in Christ	1/12/2016 2:39 PM
24	Learned to wait, to trust God and others more, to be patient and listen. To keep loving people when it hurts.	1/12/2016 1:13 PM
25	I know with great confidence that the Lord has given me gifts to change lives and advance his kingdom.	1/12/2016 11:50 AM
26	more intimate with Christ and more discerning with people	1/12/2016 11:30 AM
27	More of a student of the Word and have grown in my understanding of myself and others.	1/12/2016 10:55 AM

28	1. More balanced between being driven and grace 2. Stronger leadership wisdom 3. Work with teams and in teams much better	1/12/2016 10:19 AM
29	Self awareness, wrestling with ego, growth in living a disciplined life	1/12/2016 2:27 AM

Q23 In what ways have you been most transformed as a leader?

Answered: 83 Skipped: 17

30	Learning what it is to be a servant leader	1/12/2016 1:00 AM
31	humbled, broken through disappointments, that have led to great God dependence	1/12/2016 12:28 AM
32	Internal transformation. Patience. Grace. Fruit of the Spirit.	1/11/2016 11:42 PM
33	through suffering and mistakes	1/11/2016 10:34 PM
34	Seeing God undeniably at work around me...and through me. And, a changing of my desires even more than any results.	1/11/2016 10:23 PM
35	humility, dependence, courage	1/11/2016 9:46 PM
36	My identity as a son of God. Result of a sabbatical. Life-transforming	1/11/2016 9:22 PM
37	Humility has come from serving through the tough times.	1/11/2016 8:45 PM
38	(In random order) 1. Taking risks, failing, and learning from the experience. 2. Being part of a weekly discipleship group of 4 men, all older than I, from different denominations. 3. Listening to my wife	1/11/2016 8:33 PM
39	I got over myself.	1/11/2016 8:13 PM
40	Simply becoming more like Christ, especially in compassion.	1/11/2016 7:59 PM
41	Youthful arrogance has passed; the journey to realism and a measure of Biblical humility has slowly emerged.	1/11/2016 7:33 PM
42	humility, dependence on God	1/11/2016 7:28 PM
43	Grown in dependency upon the strength and help of God	1/11/2016 7:02 PM
44	Accepted my brokenness and dived deeper into being a humble dependent leader.	1/11/2016 6:49 PM
45	I have learned to see the big picture better, to see what people can be, and then meet them where they are and help take them where God wants them. I have also surrendered up the idea of a "legacy" for myself. My motto, taken from Zinzendorf is "preach the Gospel, die, and be forgotten." It makes life so much simpler when I don't have to worry about a legacy, but just be faithful.	1/11/2016 6:44 PM
46	Failure	1/11/2016 6:38 PM
47	In areas of compassion	1/11/2016 6:36 PM
48	Character of Christ	1/11/2016 6:27 PM
49	Can't live for people's approval	1/11/2016 6:00 PM
50	How God is addressing selfishness, self-centeredness, ego	1/11/2016 5:59 PM
51	I've grown in my love of God, people, the church and the community. Mostly through the relationships I have with other seasoned leaders.	1/11/2016 5:59 PM
52	Humility and confidence! There is a humble confidence that comes knowing that I am not that good, but God has called me and remains faithful	1/11/2016 5:55 PM
53	I've been desperate, weak, insecure, and afraid; in places personally where it was painfully aware that Jesus is all I have.	1/11/2016 5:40 PM
54	Have truly experienced the sanctifying work and maturity through the Holy Spirit of my own inner life.	1/11/2016 5:30 PM
55	I am always in the process of learning that as a beloved son of the Almighty I have nothing to prove and no one to impress, ever. Therefore, I can surrender the outcomes of all things.	1/11/2016 5:27 PM
56	more open to God's direction and leading in my life. Willing to be used by God to do whatever it takes. Staying with ministry for the long haul. Presently 41 years on staff at the same church	1/11/2016 5:08 PM
57	Through the growth of the church that pushed my leadership abilities to the max.	1/11/2016 5:04 PM

58	Humbled. "Who am I?" as David asked.	1/11/2016 5:02 PM
59	Faith	1/11/2016 5:00 PM
60	Learning what it means to love others well.	1/11/2016 4:56 PM
61	God has shaped me by ministry experiences and seeing lives radically changed by the	1/11/2016 4:54 PM
62	a deepened faith, trust in Jesus,	1/11/2016 4:51 PM
63	I have become far less of a people pleaser and more dependent on God's power	1/11/2016 4:50 PM
64	freed from people pleasing (still in process)	1/11/2016 4:50 PM
65	have a consistent awareness that its not about me and a growing desire to be faithful in the context of ministry that God has given me.	1/6/2016 11:53 AM
66	I think I was most formed by being discipled in college. And while I was a leader then in some ways, it has not been my leadership roles or reflections that transformed me, but my experience with Christ	12/16/2015 9:24 PM
67	Suffering, difficulty, trial has been used as a great asset to transform me at a heart level. I am much more self-aware as a leader.	12/10/2015 11:38 AM
68	Humility and patience	12/9/2015 10:45 PM
69	Through suffering that has taught me (a) God's love; (b) not to measure myself based on performance; (c) to have a differentiated self from church & ministry	12/9/2015 3:35 PM
70	Word of God Spirit of God People of God	12/8/2015 9:13 PM
71	Hopefully and prayerfully growing in humility and needing/asking for wisdom	12/7/2015 5:55 PM
72	forced to mature and be more depend on Christ... my understanding of being dependent on faith is much stronger	12/5/2015 8:43 AM
73	I found who I truly am.	12/4/2015 6:35 PM
74	appreciate pastors way more	12/4/2015 2:38 PM
75	I am more dependent upon God than ever before. I'm learning that success in ministry isn't always measured by the traditional scorecard of attendance and offering. I feel that my pride has been stripped in a lot of ways and I'm learning to lead from the role of a servant instead of desiring to be a rock-star pastor.	12/3/2015 4:32 PM
76	Humbled simply to keep serving	12/3/2015 8:57 AM
77	I feel like I've learned that I refined through suffering and that suffering causes a deep humility to be forged into my heart.	12/3/2015 7:59 AM
78	Two things - I realize that success is measured by changed lives, not by numbers, and, I realize that I cannot do everything, I must make choices	12/2/2015 9:53 PM
79	I have found strengths I didn't know that I had. Over and over, God has used me in ways I never imagined. With each year that passes, I take myself less serious and with that seems to cast more down for the Kingdom	12/2/2015 4:49 PM
80	Getting a front row seat to many amazing works of God.	12/2/2015 12:36 PM
81	I have learned to trust in Jesus like never before. I have learned (and continue to learn) how to pray and seek the Spirit's discernment. I have learned that I am a people pleaser and I have to "cast down" that idol.	12/2/2015 10:47 AM
82	Humility, Steadfastness	12/2/2015 10:33 AM
83	God has used life experience in local church ministry in my life to cultivate wisdom and dependence upon Him. As a result the Lord has transformed me into a better bachelor father friend and minister of the Gospel	12/2/2015 9:25 AM

Q24 What have been your greatest sacrifices as a leader?

Answered: 84 Skipped: 16

#	Responses	Date
1	Ego, time, selfishness. What you find if you do this well is that many of the sacrifices it takes to lead people in the Kingdom of God are sacrifices that actually transform your character and make you more like Jesus. There is also a sacrifice of emotion and mind-space that is constant; you feel this job in your bones when you lie down at night because of the burden of ministering to people who need the Gospel.	1/16/2016 9:23 PM
2	Friendships	1/16/2016 1:25 PM
3	certain personal freedoms.	1/16/2016 7:17 AM
4	money and time	1/15/2016 12:00 PM
5	Time. Being very available has cost me rest and health at times.	1/14/2016 11:49 PM
6	Time. Time. Time.	1/14/2016 1:44 PM
7	Time with spouse and family	1/14/2016 7:52 AM
8	time, friends	1/13/2016 7:15 PM
9	N/A	1/13/2016 7:01 PM
10	Family in general. Brother, mom, wife, kids	1/13/2016 6:57 PM
11	Hands down: my marriage (due to my own issues) at the beginning of my ministry. Note: didn't divorce, set in place unhealthy patterns we still wrestle with 20 years later.	1/13/2016 6:06 PM
12	Financially given everything 3 times. Lost my health in my 30s because of imbalance. Hard to trust friends	1/13/2016 5:13 PM
13	Deep friendship. My wife and I had to leave behind the greatest friends we ever had when I became the pastor of our church. It's been tough to reestablish friendship like that since.	1/13/2016 1:41 PM
14	Having to have painful conversations...	1/13/2016 1:06 PM
15	Relationships through reproducing. The going and sending changes all relationships.	1/13/2016 1:05 PM
16	Free time	1/12/2016 9:12 PM
17	my own fleshly desires for my right to appreciation and approval.	1/12/2016 9:05 PM
18	Time	1/12/2016 7:39 PM
19	No more than any other job	1/12/2016 6:12 PM
20	Family time	1/12/2016 5:42 PM
21	Time for myself. Money.	1/12/2016 5:42 PM
22	Time. Relationships. But know that I'm not resentful about these things. They are just realities of taking on a role that requires making hard decisions and investing in things of significance.	1/12/2016 4:53 PM
23	Finances and friendships	1/12/2016 4:31 PM
24	Emotional toll taken by the stress and burdens	1/12/2016 2:40 PM
25	Time and friendships.	1/12/2016 1:13 PM
26	Loss of free time. Inability to explore other hobbies and interests.	1/12/2016 11:53 AM
27	health, time for the little things with family and friends	1/12/2016 11:31 AM
28	Financial	1/12/2016 10:55 AM
29	Felt called to adopt a special needs child from the foster system. But don't know that this was due to being a church leader.	1/12/2016 10:20 AM
30	Free time & friendships	1/12/2016 2:28 AM

31	Time with family	1/12/2016 1:00 AM
32	Personal sacrifices made to advance and platform younger leaders. Personal sacrifices made to help my family through abusive treatment at the church	1/12/2016 12:37 AM
33	Emotional stress.	1/11/2016 11:43 PM
34	hours/stress	1/11/2016 10:35 PM
35	I'm having trouble naming a sacrifice. I have been betrayed a couple times. Walking through that has been the most painful, and perhaps sacrificial.	1/11/2016 10:24 PM
36	time with family and friends, weekends giving myself away to other week after week	1/11/2016 9:47 PM
37	I worked for 27 years for less than half the pay of my contemporaries	1/11/2016 9:23 PM
38	Control of my personal time	1/11/2016 8:46 PM
39	1. Finances. 2. Time. (Being on call 24/7; mentally always feeling "on"; working holiday seasons when others are relaxed.) 3. Quality of family life. If we were not in ministry, we would not live in the DC area.	1/11/2016 8:38 PM
40	Moving far distances from family	1/11/2016 8:13 PM
41	Not living near extended family.	1/11/2016 7:59 PM
42	What could have been with a different vocation, but I have loved the journey regardless of perceived sacrifices...no regrets, only gratitude.	1/11/2016 7:35 PM
43	emotional energy, mental rest	1/11/2016 7:29 PM
44	Emotional energy as I carry the burdens of others, Private life at times, anonymity, some holidays, some friendships,	1/11/2016 7:08 PM
45	Financial. Where I live (I was a missionary for many years).	1/11/2016 6:50 PM
46	I was kicked out of seminary for a particular doctrinal conviction (plurality of elders) and it was really hard dealing with that, and took 10 years in the corporate world before getting back into ministry.	1/11/2016 6:44 PM
47	People don't understand my decisions at times	1/11/2016 6:39 PM
48	Time and money	1/11/2016 6:36 PM
49	Time, finances	1/11/2016 6:27 PM
50	Pursuing other endeavors - business, investing...	1/11/2016 6:01 PM
51	Freedom of time, at times loss of peace with big decisions or periods of criticism during change	1/11/2016 6:00 PM
52	- Being near extended family. - Being able to maintain some friendships as the church grows and my demands increase.	1/11/2016 6:00 PM
53	Resisting the pedestal that people/organizations want to put me on...selfishly would have been easy to lean in and self promote to make a platform/name for myself	1/11/2016 5:56 PM
54	The ability to make cost-free mistakes.	1/11/2016 5:41 PM
55	Ministry takes many hours, weekends and holidays for me since 1972. But I truly feel honored and blessed to have been honored by God to live this calling. All of my children are followers of Jesus in their 30's. Whatever sacrifices we have made has given us returns in our children.	1/11/2016 5:33 PM
56	My own agenda (which is often a good thing)	1/11/2016 5:29 PM
57	time that I could have used for sports or recreation. Pay - ministry does not pay as much as secular jobs	1/11/2016 5:08 PM
58	Loss of personal preferences with regard to size of church (prefer about 300-500 and I pastor a church of about 1600 - with about 2000 who are involved in some way with our ministry)	1/11/2016 5:05 PM

59	Time. Opportunity cost of corporate career.	1/11/2016 5:03 PM
60	Personal desires	1/11/2016 5:01 PM
61	Money and time	1/11/2016 4:56 PM
62	Time and energy that would have gone to family.	1/11/2016 4:54 PM
63	flexibility of schedule with family	1/11/2016 4:51 PM
64	the lack of a predictable schedule, the lack of monetary gain, the loss of typical friend relationships	1/11/2016 4:50 PM
65	financial security sleep	1/11/2016 4:50 PM
66	time	1/6/2016 11:53 AM
67	Some financial sacrifices but I can't complain.	12/16/2015 9:24 PM
68	the investment of time and energy to serve the needs of others and level of compensation that I earned.	12/10/2015 11:41 AM
69	My preconceived idea of 'successful' ministry	12/9/2015 10:47 PM
70	Personal time	12/9/2015 3:35 PM
71	See number 22	12/8/2015 9:14 PM
72	It usually comes back to time.	12/7/2015 5:56 PM
73	relationship with people who hurt or betray me freedom	12/5/2015 8:44 AM
74	Freedom	12/4/2015 6:35 PM
75	friends, family, money, time	12/4/2015 2:38 PM
76	Often I have felt that my capacity to lead is larger than my current position. Our growth has been much slower and I've often felt unchallenged and at times bored. I continue to push, learn and grow, but have often felt unfulfilled as a leader.	12/3/2015 4:34 PM
77	Little time to self	12/3/2015 8:58 AM
78	Loss of Sleep, Leading people to growth and change and feeling resistance, having to fire people that are gifted but not acting out of good character...the fallout of those decisions. I feel that there have been years where I sacrificed financial security in order to move into a new church plant	12/3/2015 8:01 AM
79	time - I sacrifice personal time that I should be using to refresh myself for the ministry	12/2/2015 9:54 PM
80	Putting the church before friendships.	12/2/2015 4:50 PM
81	Money, status, sometimes vocational flexibility. But, it is a small price to pay.	12/2/2015 12:37 PM
82	"Normal" relational connections within the church. While I have a few good friends (including my spouse) that I can share everything with, I feel relationally isolated at times.	12/2/2015 10:48 AM
83	Friendship, Money, Time	12/2/2015 10:33 AM
84	Time, Energy, Emotional Strain as I give myself to the spiritual good of the lives of others who call upon me.	12/2/2015 9:27 AM

Q25 What has been the most difficult thing you have experienced that is directly related to your leadership?

Answered: 82 Skipped: 18

#	Responses	Date
1	Moving people through change. People don't dislike change; they dislike loss. But almost all change comes with some kind of loss attached to it. There are rational conversations that you can have with people about this and there are emotional ones. Many people struggle with change at church because of other areas in their lives that are out of control. Change management is probably the most difficult aspect of leadership in the church that I have faced, and yet it has also grown my leadership	1/16/2016 9:26 PM
2	Having to stand against people that I love who have sin in their life and will not	1/16/2016 1:26 PM
3	rejection	1/16/2016 7:17 AM
4	people don't want to be led	1/15/2016 12:00 PM
5	Being personally attacked as uncaring and a dictator. Some did not agree with my decisions and so they attacked me publicly and professionally.	1/14/2016 11:50 PM
6	Daily challenge to keep Christ 1st and family 2nd and occasional opposition with the church in the early days	1/14/2016 1:45 PM
7	People that you care for leave the church.	1/14/2016 7:53 AM
8	losing friends	1/13/2016 7:15 PM
9	I had to deal with broken relationships that were a result of my predecessor's ministry. This situation affected both congregation and staff.	1/13/2016 7:03 PM
10	Telling a lady that her husband had died-when he hadn't. Satan used that to plant doubt in my mind	1/13/2016 7:00 PM
11	Pain of staff transitions that happen and me needing to lead them.	1/13/2016 6:07 PM
12	My failures Staff failures Firing staff...	1/13/2016 5:14 PM
13	Watching people leave. Our church has grown substantially over the past four years, but it's always hard to watch people walk away.	1/13/2016 1:42 PM
14	Having to challenge people to work through sin issues and the cause and effect on their influence and leadership	1/13/2016 1:06 PM
15	Feeling betrayed by trusted individuals	1/13/2016 1:06 PM
16	Leading our community through a capital campaign and change of facility	1/12/2016 9:13 PM
17	having someone I have invested in turn on me.	1/12/2016 9:05 PM
18	The short answer is criticism and negativity. Specific situation, transitioning someone off of staff that handled it in very immature ways, spreading lies about me to people in the church.	1/12/2016 7:41 PM
19	Once again, life is full of disappointments and loss. I'm not sure I've had anymore because I'm in professional ministry.	1/12/2016 6:12 PM
20	Making staff decisions. The pain of having terminate staff members and the pain that resulted from not terminating staff members in a timely manner who needed to be relieved of their duties	1/12/2016 5:43 PM
21	Personal criticism.	1/12/2016 5:43 PM
22	The betrayal of a close staff person who worked behind my back to (unsuccessfully) have me fired from my job over a difference in philosophy of ministry.	1/12/2016 4:55 PM
23	Staff betrayal; Lay Leader betrayal; Pouring into people for over a decade only to watch them leave rather than take the steps to health that they know they need.	1/12/2016 4:32 PM
24	Weirdness and charismania	1/12/2016 2:40 PM
25	Stress, depression, and expectations due to the failure of others in ministry at the church before I got here. Eight years of a lawsuit dealing with past negligence of leaders.	1/12/2016 1:14 PM
26	The experience of isolation or loneliness at times.	1/12/2016 11:53 AM

27	health challenges	1/12/2016 11:31 AM
28	People who leave after years of pastoring them. Their unwillingness to talk thru issues. People just bail on you! Really sad to me.	1/12/2016 10:56 AM
29	1. The church discipline of a staff member who went awry. 2. Handful of times staff members had to be dismissed. 3. Most recent building program.	1/12/2016 10:21 AM
30	Creating margin	1/12/2016 2:28 AM
31	Insisting on accountability that resulted in the releasing of staff for moral failure, dishonesty, and incompetence	1/12/2016 12:40 AM
32	Rejection and slandered by people I've tried to help.	1/11/2016 11:43 PM
33	staff tension	1/11/2016 10:35 PM
34	Betrayal.	1/11/2016 10:24 PM
35	losing staff friends I had to let go	1/11/2016 9:47 PM
36	The betrayal of a staff member	1/11/2016 9:23 PM
37	Loss of some relationships (tough employment calls needed to be made).	1/11/2016 8:46 PM
38	Leading the church through our first building project.	1/11/2016 8:40 PM
39	Firing staff and making poor staffing decisions	1/11/2016 8:14 PM
40	Lost friendships	1/11/2016 8:00 PM
41	Being misunderstood and maligned. Taking blame for things I would have been opposed to if I had known about them.	1/11/2016 7:36 PM
42	staff transitions	1/11/2016 7:29 PM
43	Handing off a church I planted to my chosen successor and watching him kill it and then blame me. Having to choose between our mother church and the church I planted out of the mother church.	1/11/2016 7:11 PM
44	Betrayal and rejection by key leaders.	1/11/2016 6:50 PM
45	The most difficult thing is when those you are toiling with, and attempting to help follow Christ more closely turn on you and become adversaries.	1/11/2016 6:45 PM
46	Lose of friends	1/11/2016 6:39 PM
47	Firing former friends...the former part came because I had to let them go	1/11/2016 6:37 PM
48	Stress of criticism and rejection from church people	1/11/2016 6:28 PM
49	Betrayal in relationships	1/11/2016 6:02 PM
50	Early on in the Sr. leadership role was involved in making many changes that some loved and others rejected...some of those decisions caused sharp controversies that got very personal. I knew it would happen, and it sure did! It was hard for me to not take those personally	1/11/2016 6:01 PM
51	- The pain of staff who feel hurt as the church grows and begins to out-grow their abilities and/or proximity to me.	1/11/2016 6:01 PM
52	Making really hard calls that affect real people ((saying no, firing, moving, etc..))	1/11/2016 5:57 PM
53	An exodus of people from our church to a church-plant that actively recruited them away during a vulnerable time of transition for our church family.	1/11/2016 5:43 PM
54	Letting staff go when it is time for them to move on.	1/11/2016 5:33 PM
55	I was betrayed by a fellow pastor who sought to get me fired by spreading falsehoods and rumors about me. Many chose to believe those things, thankfully, far more chose not to believe them. Over time the things he said were shown to be false ... but much damage had already been done.	1/11/2016 5:30 PM

56	losing two of my closest friends who stood opposed to the church move I knew God wanted. We did move and they moved on to other churches.	1/11/2016 5:09 PM
57	The firing of staff. Either for immorality on their part, or ineffective job	1/11/2016 5:05 PM
58	Letting a beloved staff member and great friend go	1/11/2016 5:03 PM
59	Criticism and attacks.	1/11/2016 5:01 PM
60	Friends who turn against you when you make hard decisions.	1/11/2016 4:56 PM
61	Firing employees that have made poor decisions. Taking the "high" road when they leave/fired.	1/11/2016 4:55 PM
62	unrealistic expectations of my life from others	1/11/2016 4:52 PM
63	A lawsuit	1/11/2016 4:50 PM
64	loss of relationships	1/11/2016 4:50 PM
65	the pressure of leading up	1/6/2016 11:53 AM
66	Having to lay people off several times.	12/16/2015 9:24 PM
67	An unresolved conflict with other believers.	12/10/2015 11:44 AM
68	Leading believers who don't ascribe to a biblical worldview	12/9/2015 10:48 PM
69	The end of a relationship; Depression	12/9/2015 3:35 PM
70	Hurt feelings from speaking the truth and addressing cultural issues that I don't think are very biblical. Ie being "nice", politically correct	12/8/2015 9:15 PM
71	Investing in people only to see them walk away from the relationship with you or their relationship with others in the church or their walk with God.	12/7/2015 5:56 PM
72	people betraying me... those who claim to be friends and focused on the same kingdom goals	12/5/2015 8:44 AM
73	Leading strong in adversity and opposition	12/4/2015 6:36 PM
74	hard choices involving staff and clients	12/4/2015 2:39 PM
75	Making difficult decisions and having difficult conversations can be very lonely and challenging for me. I'm a people pleaser, so making difficult decisions to let go of staff or remove volunteer positions has been very tough for me.	12/3/2015 4:35 PM
76	Divorce	12/3/2015 8:59 AM
77	Betrayal by people on your team that you thought were with you. Also, leading a building expansion and finding out who gives and who does not...that ripped my heart in half when I found out who I thought was all in, who didn't give anything to our ministry.	12/3/2015 8:02 AM
78	Two things, losing Deacons, having to confront staff members that are not fulfilling their position.	12/2/2015 9:55 PM
79	Resigning ministries I loved because the leadership culture around me had become toxic.	12/2/2015 12:38 PM
80	Having to make hard staffing decisions (transitioning key staff, reorganizations as the church grows that changes peoples' roles, etc.)	12/2/2015 10:49 AM
81	Being maligned by angry people when I have done the right thing in the right way	12/2/2015 10:34 AM
82	Seeing people walk away from caring relationships that are guided by biblical truth and grounded in spiritual accountability. That feeling of "abandonment" and the difficulty of the over and again realization that I am inadequate to "save" anyone, and that I can be so self righteous even in how I seek to pastor people.	12/2/2015 9:29 AM

**Q26 What do you wish someone had told you before
you entered into a ministry leadership position?**

Answered: 81 Skipped: 19

#	Responses	Date
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1	That the most important ministry tool you will have is learning how to forgive other people. People, even with good intentions, will say things that hurt you and make you question your gifts and sometimes even make you question your own motivations. It's not usually just one person or one incident that leads a pastor to get out of ministry; it's 1,000 different negative comments, emails, whispers, and Facebook messages over the course of years. It's death by paper cut: at some point you realize you're bleeding out and you hadn't even noticed that you had a thousand little nicks on you.	1/16/2016 9:29 PM
2	Nothing I think I came in with my eyes wide open and I had a great seminary professors who helped prepare me	1/16/2016 1:27 PM
3	it's a marathon.	1/16/2016 7:17 AM
4	can't please them---please the Lord	1/15/2016 12:01 PM
5	Guard your heart. So much of ministry is done from a place of exhaustion rather than a place of joy if you do not protect your heart and life.	1/14/2016 11:51 PM
6	Love God, love your family, love your people. You can't pray too much.	1/14/2016 1:46 PM
7	It really is lonely at the top.	1/14/2016 7:53 AM
8	I came in eyes wide open... no surprises	1/13/2016 7:15 PM
9	I wish leadership had told me about the problems of my predecessor.	1/13/2016 7:03 PM
10	How hard leading a staff is....	1/13/2016 7:01 PM
11	You will hurt. But inside the hurt is the gift of self-knowledge and the grace of God.	1/13/2016 6:07 PM
12	This will be the hardest thing you can do...do anything else if you can.	1/13/2016 5:15 PM
13	I don't know if it would have been possible, but I wish someone could have helped me understand the weight of my position. I've been in ministry for almost 15 years, but had no idea the weight of being the lead guy until four years ago. It's definitely been a learning process.	1/13/2016 1:44 PM
14	Keep investing in people especially those a generation or two younger than you.	1/13/2016 1:07 PM
15	I felt adequately warned - thanks to Duffy Robbins	1/13/2016 1:07 PM
16	Make sure you work out of your strengths and see the strengths of everyone around you	1/12/2016 9:14 PM
17	that it would get so much easier with time to be able to deal with the challenges in ministry.	1/12/2016 9:06 PM
18	How lonely I would often feel.	1/12/2016 7:41 PM
19	Relax. Do your best under the circumstances and then take a nap.	1/12/2016 6:13 PM
20	Leadership requires risk and that people need clearly defined vision and mission. If you cannot describe the vision quickly and concretely no one will follow.	1/12/2016 5:45 PM
21	You need thick skin and a tender heart.	1/12/2016 5:43 PM
22	I was very well aware of what I was getting into.	1/12/2016 4:55 PM
23	The people who greet you with complements may end up calling for your crucifixion.	1/12/2016 4:33 PM
24	Don't do it until you've been through recovery.	1/12/2016 2:40 PM
25	I feel like I was "told" enough, actually. I had some great mentors and an incredible	1/12/2016 1:14 PM
26	Be absolutely confident that the Lord is going before you and He has given you all that will be required of you.	1/12/2016 11:54 AM
27	that you would never find it easier or more comfortable if you continue to be willing to be a leader	1/12/2016 11:33 AM
28	The amount of hard work it would require.	1/12/2016 10:57 AM

29	Enjoy the journey while you're on it. It's a great ride even in the midst of the difficulties.	1/12/2016 10:21 AM
30	Be willing to fail in the eyes of others in order to succeed in the eyes of your family	1/12/2016 2:30 AM
31	That no matter what you do or say someone isn't going to agree with you.	1/12/2016 1:01 AM
32	the weight of cumulative emotional/spiritual drain of day to day ministry over decades.	1/12/2016 12:45 AM
33	The emotional and relational weight of ministry.	1/11/2016 11:44 PM
34	not sure i would have listened, i was too self assured.	1/11/2016 10:35 PM
35	I had good advice. I think I had a fair picture of it, even if they had not covered an exhaustive list.	1/11/2016 10:25 PM
36	how to lead a large organization	1/11/2016 9:47 PM
37	This is the most rewarding and emotionally expensive job on the planet	1/11/2016 9:25 PM
38	1. The footprints of the leader are seen everywhere in the church. Take responsibility. Don't be defensive. Do what you can. 2. Good preaching overcomes a multitude of sins. 3. God builds the church. Figure out how to let Him.	1/11/2016 8:47 PM
39	Some key people in leadership positions will disappoint you in ways you didn't expect (i.e. moral failure from a board member)	1/11/2016 8:47 PM
40	Do whatever it takes to make your family a priority and to take time for myself	1/11/2016 8:15 PM
41	Move towards the funk, don't be afraid of confrontation or conflict.	1/11/2016 8:00 PM
42	It's not about you, not about your dreams, not about success, not about church growth, not about anything else. It is about Jesus Christ and Him alone.	1/11/2016 7:38 PM
43	The heaviness of the emotional strain and how the buck stops with you and the weight of responsibility for the staff and church. How complex the job really is but how faithful God really is.	1/11/2016 7:13 PM
44	How alone it can be - you have to make decisions that even those close to you won't be able to fully understand what you experience in the process.	1/11/2016 6:51 PM
45	I grew up in a pastor's family so I had a very good understanding of the pressures and challenges. If I have to say something it would be: You can't change people; all you can do is extend the love and truth of Christ and pray the Spirit uses it. I spent many of the first years of pastoring trying to change people who really only wanted to anesthetize the pain and not really change.	1/11/2016 6:47 PM
46	?	1/11/2016 6:40 PM
47	Go slower. The long-haul matters.	1/11/2016 6:38 PM
48	It would be a blessing and a curse	1/11/2016 6:29 PM
49	That real impact takes a very long time	1/11/2016 6:04 PM
50	That, especially the sr. role, is a wonderful but crazy life that you can only understand when you are there	1/11/2016 6:02 PM
51	That ministry would not be an automatic path to a close walk with God.	1/11/2016 6:01 PM
52	Leadership is stewardship, it's temporary and you are accountable for your season of it	1/11/2016 5:57 PM
53	The higher you go on the organizational chart, the harder the problems become. All the easy decisions get solved on the way up the chain of command.	1/11/2016 5:44 PM
54	I was fortunate to have great mentors.	1/11/2016 5:34 PM
55	That many people only want to be your friend because you are a pastor ... they don't really love and care for you.	1/11/2016 5:31 PM

56	That I didn't have to do it myself, volunteers are not only needed but are critical for successful ministry. Someone should have told me people can be really nice and a few can be really mean.	1/11/2016 5:10 PM
57	Don't worry. God will lead you when you are at the end of your personal leadership abilities!	1/11/2016 5:06 PM
58	Becoming a church planter or senior pastor means you are also embracing the role of "fundraiser-in-chief"	1/11/2016 5:04 PM
59	It will be better than you imagine and harder than you can fathom.	1/11/2016 4:57 PM
60	Balance of time and energy.	1/11/2016 4:55 PM
61	Be prepared to disappoint people	1/11/2016 4:51 PM
62	it's harder than you think for longer than you think	1/11/2016 4:50 PM
63	that people will fail you but God will not	1/6/2016 11:54 AM
64	Be responsible for your own learning and development. But I learned that from a mentor very early	12/16/2015 9:25 PM
65	I wish that I had a leader to mentor me in self-awareness, margin for continuing my personal growth, leading with head and heart, more integrated.	12/10/2015 11:49 AM
66	Make sure you and your wife have people who hold you accountable	12/9/2015 10:49 PM
67	There's nothing anyone could have "told" me. The lessons learned were things I had been adequately "told" in advance but had to learn fully via experience	12/9/2015 3:36 PM
68	It can be very lonely	12/8/2015 9:16 PM
69	When people leave they won't give you the real reason.	12/7/2015 5:57 PM
70	people will hurt you and fight you for vision	12/5/2015 8:44 AM
71	How to stay centered and true to myself	12/4/2015 6:36 PM
72	how difficult it really is	12/4/2015 2:39 PM
73	I'm not defined personally or spiritually by what happens in our church. I'm first and foremost a child of God and my identity is in HIM, not in THEM.	12/3/2015 4:35 PM
74	How much you will be criticized	12/3/2015 8:59 AM
75	The fear, panic and stress that can literally paralyze you and how to work through it with good counsel and a deepening trust in God. That hit me out of nowhere. Maybe there nothing that could prepare someone for that.	12/3/2015 8:03 AM
76	How to invest in people to create leaders	12/2/2015 9:55 PM
77	Pace myself for a marathon and not start out like a sprint. I had unlearn a lot a few years into senior leadership.	12/2/2015 4:51 PM
78	Your highs will be higher and your lows will be lower than you can imagine.	12/2/2015 12:38 PM
79	The organizational leadership is the most difficult thing (not the preaching and pastoral counseling, etc.)	12/2/2015 10:49 AM
80	I believe I was given great instruction but I also do not think there is anything someone could tell another person to fully prepare them for church planting.	12/2/2015 10:36 AM
81	It's okay to admit that you don't know everything, that you don't think you have what it takes to come through in some instances and that people will be okay if you tell them "no". Remember that you have Christ and He loves and approves of you.	12/2/2015 9:31 AM

Q27 Imagine you are sitting across the desk from a future ministry leader. What would you most like to tell a future ministry leader that no one is telling them right now?

Answered: 84 Skipped: 16

#	Responses	Date
1	That this is harder than you can imagine right now. But: we grow most from experiencing great pain and experiencing great love, and you will walk through both of those experiences repeatedly in this job. Your response to those experiences will determine what kind of man or woman you ultimately become, but it will give you the opportunity to become a leader who has been forged by fire and is able to articulate a holistic understanding of the gospel that will transcend whatever your current understanding is. That this will be harder than you can imagine. And that, if	1/16/2016 9:31 PM
2	Keep your soft heart and humble spirit not to seek after growth but the pour their lives into others and let Jesus take care of the rest	1/16/2016 1:28 PM
3	it's a marathon.	1/16/2016 7:18 AM
4	it take commitment to a vision that will be tested over and over	1/15/2016 12:01 PM
5	Work hard. Play hard. Make your family a priority.	1/14/2016 11:53 PM
6	Same as 26	1/14/2016 1:46 PM
7	It is hard to let your hair down once they see you as a pastor.	1/14/2016 7:53 AM
8	be cure of your calling... it will cost you more than you realize and you need to be at peace with it all before you start the journey	1/13/2016 7:16 PM
9	Be patient.	1/13/2016 7:04 PM
10	Don't underestimate the importance of communication. Hustle! Be HUNGRY! Work harder than everyone else	1/13/2016 7:03 PM
11	#1 Get ready to be in pain. Your ability to absorb pain is directly related to your success in ministry. #2 Give it away immediately. Be a people developer from the start. Instead of seeing your ministry as a platform to pontificate, see it as a platform to give other people platforms to express their gifts.	1/13/2016 6:08 PM
12	Climate is changing...you will have to find a new way to reach people. Don't play it safe	1/13/2016 5:16 PM
13	Ministry leadership is not for the faint of heart or the thinned skin. If they want to make it, they better learn to develop thick skin while maintaining a soft heart. Also, they better be sure that God has called them to ministry because there will come a day when calling is all they have to rely on.	1/13/2016 1:45 PM
14	I'm not sure no one is telling them, but relationships at the key. Your relationship with God, your relationship with your spouse and children, and your relationships with your staff, leaders, friends. Relationships always trump tasks.	1/13/2016 1:08 PM
15	1. Is there clear evidence of the gospel in this person's life 2. Is there a call to minister	1/13/2016 1:08 PM
16	Ground your identity in Christ for the strength you will need to face the rejection that will come	1/12/2016 9:15 PM
17	God is always doing something. Ministry is best when you are joining Him in what He is doing and not trying to get him to bless your own ideas.	1/12/2016 9:07 PM
18	Work with a good counselor to deal with your own baggage and family of origin issues. The more wounded you go into ministry, the more painful it will be and the more people you will damage. Then use that experience of growth and healing to become a wounded healer.	1/12/2016 7:43 PM
19	Don't take yourself too seriously. Do your best. You have nothing to prove and no one to impress.	1/12/2016 6:14 PM
20	Have a clear purpose for your life that is not defined by a position. Be bold in your leadership but be very quick to admit when your leadership is wrong. Passive leaders and leaders who cannot admit they are wrong end up at the same level of ineffectiveness.	1/12/2016 5:49 PM
21	Develop thick skin and a tender heart. Don't have all the answers. Your ministry of presence often means more than the right words. Be teachable your whole life.	1/12/2016 5:44 PM

22	Among other things, this is a career not a job. That people will disappoint you but that is not a reason not to give yourself fully to them or to become cynical. That faithfulness is more important than fruitfulness, as important as that might be. The managing relationship will be one of the most difficult and rewarding parts of the job.	1/12/2016 4:57 PM
23	Care for your self, your family, and your soul. Those are the entities that will	1/12/2016 4:34 PM
24	Find your identity in who you are in Christ	1/12/2016 2:41 PM
25	It isn't about you or your strategy. It is about God's work. He grows the church. You have to believe that and remember it. Be faithful, be honest with yourself and be willing to fail. Don't put your identity in your ministry. Put it in Jesus. Look to other's ministry for inspiration and guidance but don't rely on it. Talk and listen to God.... most pastors stop doing this.	1/12/2016 1:28 PM
26	Listen more, talk less. Find an experienced pastor to soak and learn from BEFORE you make any decisions about your ministry calling and your specific role(s) at a church.	1/12/2016 1:15 PM
27	You are the anointed, appointed leader for this time and for this congregation. Work and walk in that confidence.	1/12/2016 11:54 AM
28	pursue intimacy with God, let God promote you or give you greater responsibility rather than you pursuing it, live a balanced life	1/12/2016 11:34 AM
29	It is not about being cool. It is about obedience and simply doing what the Lord calls you to do. If you compare yourself with others you will be miserable. Your identity needs to be in your relationship with Jesus. Need to learn the power of contemplative spirituality. Do not sacrifice your family on the altar of ministry. Develop your attitude and people skills--that's real key!	1/12/2016 10:58 AM
30	Enjoy yourself. Stay in the battle to get your identity in the Father and not in success/failure of ministry.	1/12/2016 10:22 AM
31	Be willing to fail in the eyes of others in order to succeed in the eyes of your family. Everyone will want you to slow down and no one will let you.	1/12/2016 2:31 AM
32	If you aren't called then get out. You will never make it.	1/12/2016 1:01 AM
33	Being at peace with who you are - who God made you to be - and the HE called you has to be quickly settled and tightly held onto for longevity in ministry A conviction of God's call on your life, and a contented embrace of who He made you to be is a crucial sustaining perspective.	1/12/2016 12:48 AM
34	Lose your idealism. It's going to be tough but you can do it.	1/11/2016 11:44 PM
35	You shouldn't do it unless you are called and you can live in gratitude.	1/11/2016 10:26 PM
36	how to live life in rhythm - working really hard and resting deeply	1/11/2016 9:48 PM
37	Build people and let Jesus build the church. Don't get caught up in a race to get on "the list."	1/11/2016 9:27 PM
38	1. Don't try to be cutting edge and cool. Don't let yourself be the pop theoreticians' Guinea pig. Figure out how to apply old Biblical principles in fresh ways. That's how God will make you original & fresh. 2. Lead out of your giftedness-- not other's expectations 3. Pride is your biggest problem. Figure out what that means and purge daily.	1/11/2016 9:13 PM
39	This is going to be the hardest ride of your life so make sure you are doing it for the right reason. If you are, it will be the greatest ride of your life. And you better have a few safe people around you at all time who love you, support you, and have the courage to speak truth to you.	1/11/2016 8:48 PM
40	Get over yourself. Put your spouse and kids first - they will be there long after your ministry is gone. Never stop learning, be humble and work hard. If you sweat in preparation you will not bleed in battle	1/11/2016 8:17 PM
41	The difference between where you are and where God wants you to be is the pain that you're unwilling to embrace.	1/11/2016 8:01 PM
42	Who you are is more important than what you do.	1/11/2016 7:39 PM

43	Quoting Eugene Peterson ... make your ministry about a long obedience in the same direction, no matter what comes.	1/11/2016 7:31 PM
44	Dig deeper...Deeper in your private spiritual life. Deeper in your marriage. Deeper in your character. Foundation is so much more critical than what is visible. Build a better support network. Learn spiritual warfare. Ministry must be the overflow or your personal love relationship with Jesus. Read 15 Characteristics of Effective Pastors. :)	1/11/2016 7:17 PM
45	Don't buy into the lie of seeking success, even in ministry. Humility is the only path to effective leadership. Be bold but stay humble. Embrace it and nurture it. No one will encourage it and few model it.	1/11/2016 6:53 PM
46	Know the Bible. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to do the work of God in the lives of people. All the church growth jargon and clever branding will ever do is draw a crowd (maybe) but it is the power of the Word, correctly and lovingly taught by those dedicated to dependent prayer that the Spirit uses to bring faith, repentance,	1/11/2016 6:49 PM
47	Christ died for you, loves you, and delights in you apart from your performance. Your emotional health matters more than you think. Make friends. Find mentors. Don't sweat the small stuff. Celebrate well.	1/11/2016 6:42 PM
48	Love Jesus follow Jesus forget about tangible results	1/11/2016 6:41 PM
49	Stay humble and teachable and pray that your heart n gee become cold	1/11/2016 6:32 PM
50	Get & stay right with God. Get some tough skin but keep a soft heart. Be prepared to work harder than you think you can. Don't expect accomplishment to fill you up. Find joy in obedience and trust God with the outcomes.	1/11/2016 6:07 PM
51	Make sure you do as much as you can to work through your own identity issues now, so they don't have to be worked out then. And be prepared for a sometimes difficult but still a really great life	1/11/2016 6:03 PM
52	Jesus died for the church, you don't have to. Be who God has called you to be, work hard, and rest in the truth that Jesus builds his church.	1/11/2016 6:02 PM
53	Humility is the soil in which the spiritual gifts flourish....stay humble!	1/11/2016 5:58 PM
54	Develop a strategy to stay in constant, daily, intimate, transparent fellowship with Jesus before you even think of dreaming up a strategy for anything else.	1/11/2016 5:46 PM
55	Make sure you make your marriage and family a priority over the church.	1/11/2016 5:35 PM
56	The most important thing for a pastor is not his or her talent, gifts, skills or abilities ... the most important thing is his or her relational, emotional and spiritual health.	1/11/2016 5:31 PM
57	Enjoy the ride. Let God lead you and do ministry with people you love. Hiring people is critical, make sure to surround yourself with the right team. Don't let people derail you from you know for sure God is calling you to do. Don't worry each week about the offering, God is faithful. People will follow your example so live a life that will please God and will be a benefit to those who follow you	1/11/2016 5:12 PM
58	Keep your relationship with God #1 despite all the time pressures. Pray about everything because God knows what to do when you don't and can do what you can't Your ministry will only grow as much as you grow personally and as a leader There's always 1-2 things you need to address in tepee church that's now holding you face. Have the courage to address those.	1/11/2016 5:07 PM
59	Be radically gospel centered in everything - including your ability to lead this church. And, at the same time, work your butt off in leadership!	1/11/2016 5:07 PM
60	Follow God over people	1/11/2016 5:02 PM
61	find two people you will tell everything to and have a right and the courage to tell you what others are thinking.	1/11/2016 4:57 PM
62	Make sure you wife is in it to win it with you.	1/11/2016 4:56 PM
63	don't isolate yourself from others...build deep and meaningful friendships...it is a myth that good leaders can't have great friends.	1/11/2016 4:53 PM

64	Leadership is a 24-7 pursuit. You never stop thinking about your ministry. Share the wins with your family but protect them from the assaults.	1/11/2016 4:52 PM
65	make sure you are called by God--if you can do anything else, do it	1/11/2016 4:51 PM
66	that personal character is more important than anything and will be the foundation for future success in ministry	1/6/2016 11:54 AM
67	Be responsible for your future learning. Travel light.	12/16/2015 9:25 PM
68	The priority of nourishing his soul spiritually, growing in self-awareness, being proactive not just reactive, and having a team of men to do life with.	12/10/2015 11:52 AM
69	God will do as much or more in you than what He will do in your ministry	12/9/2015 10:50 PM
70	It will be hard. Draw close to God in good times and hard times. Prayer is the most important thing you'll do.	12/9/2015 3:37 PM
71	Don't sacrifice your relationships- your personal relationship with Christ, wife, kids, etc. on the altar of success. Don't get your worth in what you do. Address the deep idols of significance and control. (33series- a man and his traps)	12/8/2015 9:19 PM
72	Think well about how to push back with people who want to put you on a pedestal. I don't know of many guys in ministry who want it to be all about them but I also don't know of many who are thinking well about pushing back on people making it about them.	12/7/2015 5:58 PM
73	be sure of you calling and out the cost... ministry has much more to do with leadership than theology	12/5/2015 8:45 AM
74	Make sure you have a clear target and understanding of what it is God is calling you to do. Have a clearly defined target of what Jesus meant when he said go and make disciples. Question everything you have been programmed to believe when it comes to the definition of church and ministry in the 21st century - is this really what God	12/4/2015 6:39 PM
75	it's a lot harder than you think	12/4/2015 2:39 PM
76	Put your family first. Refuse to reach other families at the expense of your own. What will it profit you if you gain the entire world (grow a big church) and lose your own soul (or family). Celebrations aren't great if you don't have someone to celebrate with.	12/3/2015 4:36 PM
77	Only go into ministry if you are truly called. If you are thinking about other options then try them first	12/3/2015 9:00 AM
78	Head Knowledge will only get you so far...your heart has to be engaged and prepared for hurt. I would try and emphasize the fellowship of His suffering, not the power of His resurrection. People naturally are drawn to the glory of what they see and behind the scenes it's a lot of menial tasks and trials.	12/3/2015 8:05 AM
79	Interesting question. I would tell them to make sure that they understand their ministry model, to be able to communicate it with any perspective leaders that were teammates, and lovingly teach their congregation.	12/2/2015 9:59 PM
80	When you're tempted to "fudge" numbers, results and hide the truth, don't do it. The truth always honors God, no matter how hard it is to tell." God loves you and values you regardless of your results.	12/2/2015 4:53 PM
81	Your ability to tolerate pain will determine your effectiveness in ministry than nearly anything else.	12/2/2015 12:40 PM
82	Know your gifts, have wise people help you determine your capacity, and DO NOT put your identity in your ministry or success/failures.	12/2/2015 10:50 AM
83	Know yourself, Know you are called, Build your life and ministry around the Word	12/2/2015 10:40 AM
84	Your ministry position is not what will bring ultimate happiness. Hide God's Word in your heart, draw close to Christ, remember that He is with you. He holds all this in His caring hand. He loves the church more than you. Life is short, find a way to joyfully lead from your giftedness in your greatest interests.	12/2/2015 9:33 AM

Q28 If you are selected for the gift card offer associated with this survey how would you like us to contact you? Please leave the contact information where you would like your gift card sent.

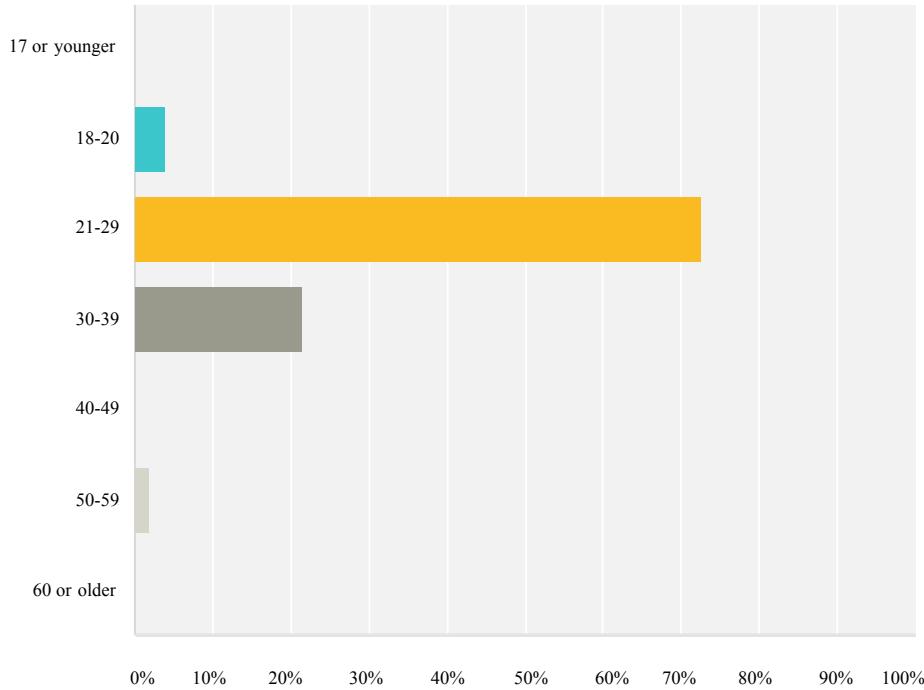
Answered: 76 Skipped: 24

*The answers to this question are not listed to protect the privacy of the respondents.

APPENDIX 4
FUTURE LEADER SURVEY RESULTS

Q1 What is your age?

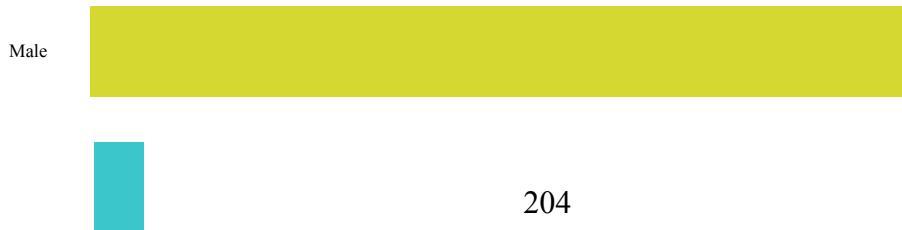
Answered: 51 Skipped: 0



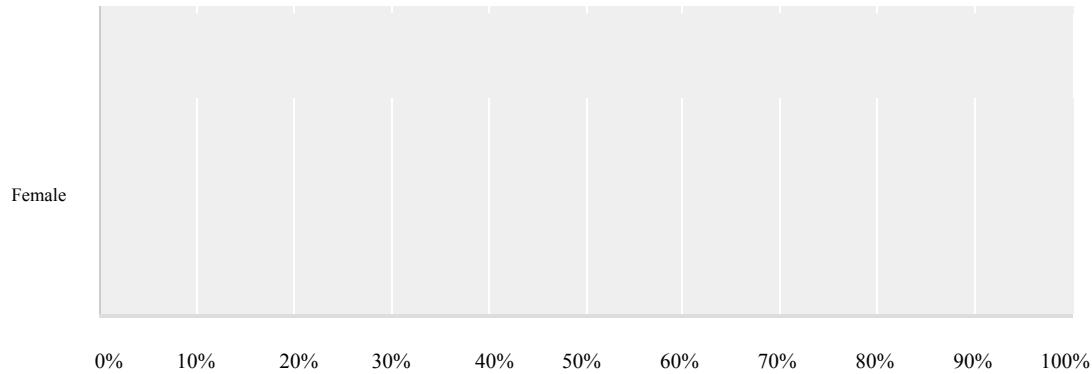
Answer Choices	Responses
17 or younger	0.00% 0
18-20	3.92% 2
21-29	72.55% 37
30-39	21.57% 11
40-49	0.00% 0
50-59	1.96% 1
60 or older	0.00% 0
Total	51

Q2 Are you male or female?

Answered: 51 Skipped: 0



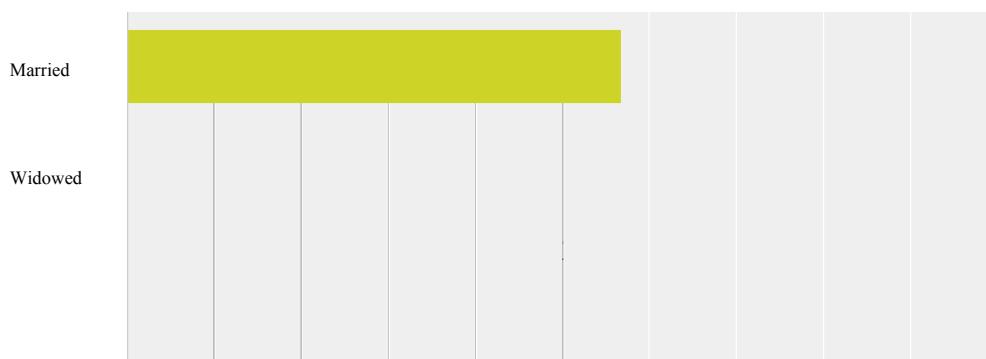
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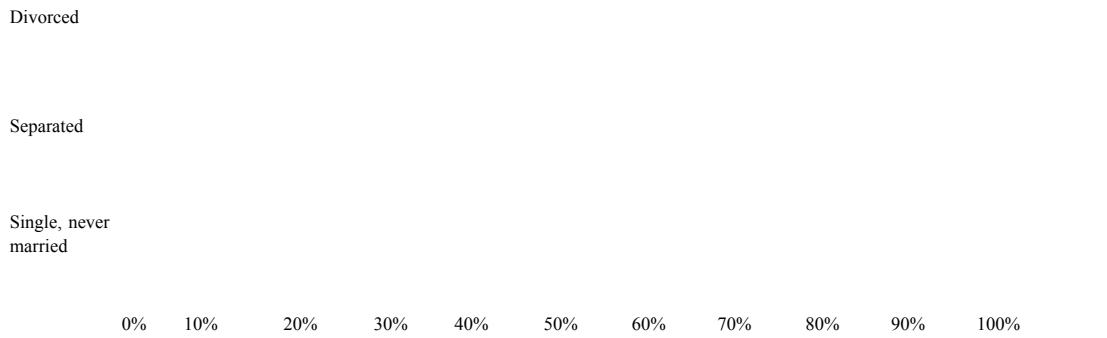


Answer Choices	Responses
Male	94.12%
Female	5.88%
Total	51

Q3 What is your current marital status?

Answered: 51 Skipped: 0

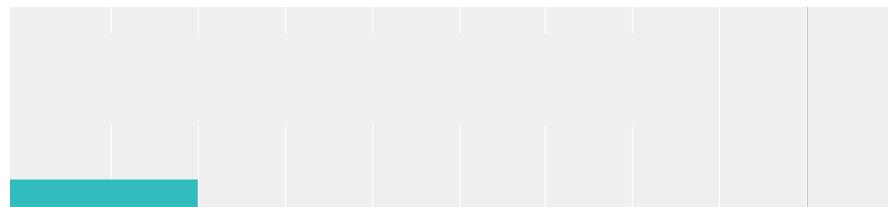


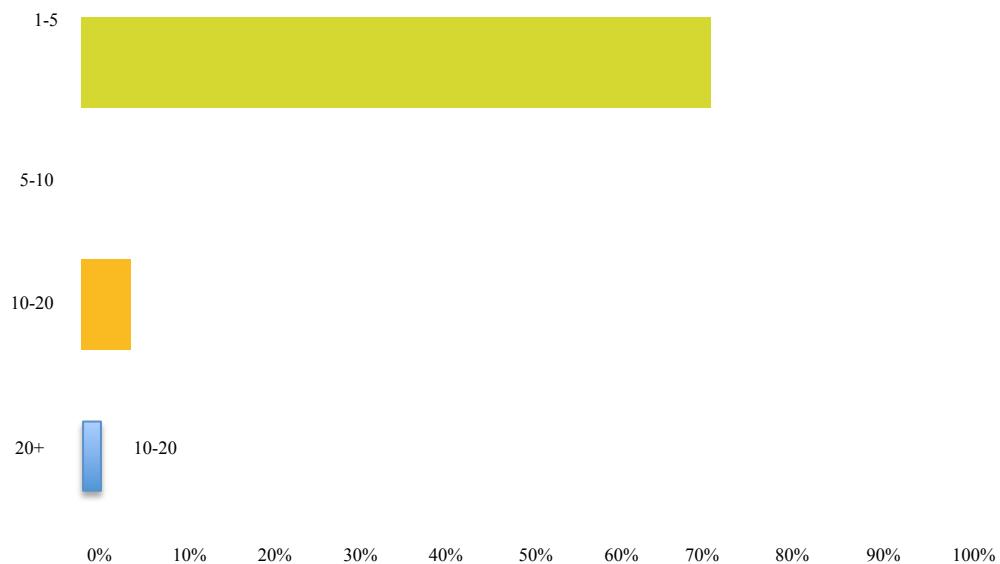


Answer Choices	Responses
Married	56.86%
Widowed	0.00%
Divorced	0.00%
Separated	0.00%
Single, never married	43.14%
Total	51

Q4 How many years have you spent preparing specifically for your desired future ministry position?

Answered: 51 Skipped: 0





Answer Choices	Responses
1-5	72.55%
5-10	19.61%
10-20	5.88%
20+	1.96%
Total	51

Q5 What ministry role do you anticipate having one day?

Answered: 51 Skipped:

#	Responses	Date
1	Head teaching pastor in USA	1/20/2016 2:06 PM
2	I would currently like to teach Bible at a private high school. I could see becoming a pastor later down the road.	1/19/2016 7:27 PM
3	A pastoral role in the US, most likely head teaching pastor	1/19/2016 1:54 PM
4	Church planter	1/17/2016 10:40 AM
5	Lead Pastor/Church Planter	1/15/2016 3:59 PM
6	I hope to be an executive pastor	1/15/2016 3:00 PM
7	Discipleship Pastor, Executive Pastor, Community Pastor	1/14/2016 6:28 PM
8	I would love to be involved with planting a church.	1/14/2016 7:11 AM
9	Church planter/lead pastor	1/13/2016 1:17 PM
10	Student ministry. Either with college students or high school and middle school	1/13/2016 10:46 AM
11	Missionary or Pastor	1/10/2016 9:46 PM
12	Pastoral	12/20/2015 5:59 AM
13	I anticipate to have a position as a Minister of Education or Teaching Pastor.	12/17/2015 2:01 AM
14	Christian Financial Advisor	12/16/2015 10:33 PM
15	Being a minister over a specific ministry division, be that children's, students, adults, ect.	12/16/2015 12:29 PM
16	I would like to be a Executive Youth Pastor in the long term (10 years). Until I get to that point I will be honing my skills to become a Youth Pastor.	12/16/2015 11:58 AM
17	Pastor	12/16/2015 11:53 AM
18	College Pastor and or Spiritual Development/Discipleship Pastor	12/16/2015 11:51 AM
19	The role I am currently doing	12/14/2015 11:45 AM
20	Lead Pastor	12/13/2015 9:00 PM
21	Lord willing, frontier missionary	12/9/2015 9:40 AM
22	Lead Teaching Pastor/Directional Leader	12/9/2015 7:31 AM
23	Directional Leader	12/8/2015 8:00 PM
24	Pastor	12/8/2015 5:25 PM
25	Preaching pastor	12/8/2015 4:54 PM
26	Senior Pastor	12/8/2015 4:22 PM
27	Lay eldership.	12/8/2015 3:30 PM
28	Pastor, missionary	12/8/2015 3:28 PM
29	Pastor/Elder and/or church planter	12/8/2015 3:01 PM
30	Teaching and equipping ministry (either local church or academic setting or both)	12/8/2015 2:58 PM
31	Pastoral and teaching	12/8/2015 2:56 PM
32	Either a professor or pastor (possibly both)	12/8/2015 2:32 PM
33	Pastoral ministry, teaching ministry in a university	12/5/2015 2:23 PM
34	pastoring in a local church and possibly teaching theology externally	12/4/2015 8:37 AM

35	Pastor/Counselor	12/3/2015 12:26 PM
36	My desire from the time I looked at seminary has been to be in a pastoral position. Initially it was for the preaching pastor, but my desire has broadened to include discipleship and other offices within the church. I am content with being any of the above and am willing to be bio-vocational if the Lord leads me to.	12/2/2015 11:14 PM
37	Teaching in an academic-theological institution.	12/2/2015 10:13 PM
38	Bi-vocational co-elder	12/2/2015 5:04 PM
39	Missionary	12/2/2015 4:34 PM
40	Preaching Elder	12/2/2015 4:27 PM
41	Preaching pastor	12/2/2015 3:54 PM
42	Youth Pastor and eventually a Lead Pastor role	12/2/2015 3:49 PM
43	Missionary	12/2/2015 3:27 PM
44	Pastor	12/2/2015 3:00 PM
45	Senior pastor	12/2/2015 2:48 PM
46	Counseling, Pastor's Wife	12/2/2015 2:08 PM
47	Pastor in the local church.	12/2/2015 1:41 PM
48	Teacher	12/2/2015 1:40 PM
49	Teacher, whether on church staff, at a college or seminary, or both	12/2/2015 1:37 PM
50	Senior Pastor/Preaching Pastor	12/2/2015 1:29 PM
51		12/2/2015 9:12 AM

Q6 How many people do you anticipate leading?

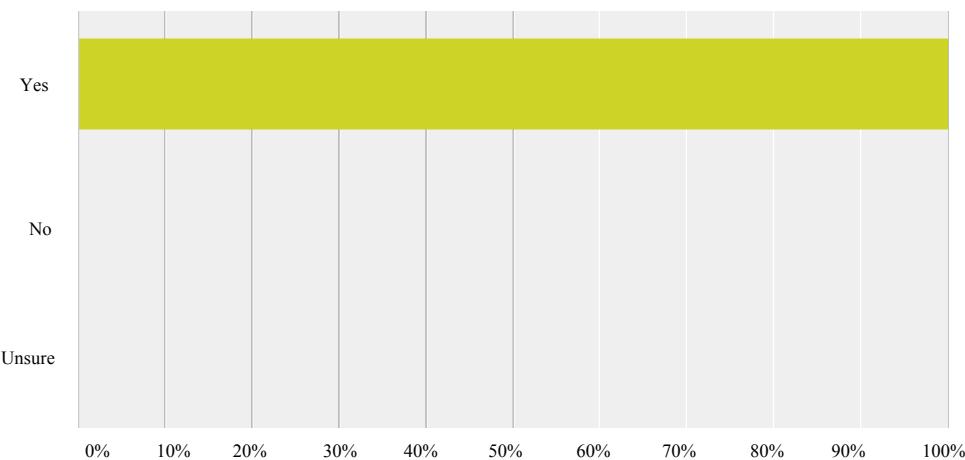
Answered: 49 Skipped: 2

#	Responses	Date
1	200-300	1/20/2016 2:06 PM
2	Around 20 to 30 high school age children would be the immediate anticipation.	1/19/2016 7:28 PM
3	200-300	1/19/2016 1:54 PM
4	Potentially in the hundreds	1/17/2016 10:40 AM
5	1000	1/15/2016 3:59 PM
6	As my lid grows I hope that I have the competency to lead a large staff.	1/15/2016 3:00 PM
7	Haven't considered	1/14/2016 6:28 PM
8	Never thought about the number	1/14/2016 7:11 AM
9	Hard to say really. I would hope at least 500.	1/13/2016 1:17 PM
10	as many as God will put in front of me	1/13/2016 10:47 AM
11	5 to 200	1/10/2016 9:47 PM
12	100-400	12/20/2015 5:59 AM
13	How ever many God blesses me with. If a number is needed approx. 100-200.	12/17/2015 2:02 AM
14	As many as the Lord provides. I don't foresee a limit to what he can do.	12/16/2015 10:34 PM
15	Hundreds, if not thousands.	12/16/2015 12:29 PM
16	I anticipate on leading my staff, volunteers, and students. I would anticipate leading around 60 people total not including students. I would like to serve in a student ministry of around 500+.	12/16/2015 11:59 AM
17	400-500	12/16/2015 11:53 AM
18	Whatever God gives me. Not really sure how to answer this.	12/16/2015 11:52 AM
19	Whatever God allows...	12/14/2015 11:46 AM
20	200	12/13/2015 9:00 PM
21	aside from my family, if I am where the church is not planted, I would anticipate 0-5 people initially	12/9/2015 9:43 AM
22	500-1000	12/9/2015 7:31 AM
23	500-1000	12/8/2015 8:01 PM
24	900	12/8/2015 5:26 PM
25	500-1000	12/8/2015 4:54 PM
26	Probably a smaller number, anywhere from 25-100 in a smaller church setting, either an established church or church plant	12/8/2015 4:23 PM
27	At this point, I do not know.	12/8/2015 3:31 PM
28	30-300	12/8/2015 3:28 PM
29	300-600	12/8/2015 3:01 PM
30	Depending on context. Immediate team: no more than 5.	12/8/2015 2:58 PM
31	Uncertain; probably very small church at first. Hopefully through teaching ministry (young / lay / missionary trainees, college students) have influence over at	12/8/2015 2:57 PM
32	100-200	12/8/2015 2:32 PM
33	100	12/5/2015 2:24 PM

34	250	12/4/2015 8:37 AM
35	Unknown - possibly small church under 100	12/3/2015 12:26 PM
36	About 100	12/2/2015 11:15 PM
37	However many the Lord puts under my care.	12/2/2015 10:14 PM
38	70-100	12/2/2015 5:04 PM
39	20-30 (women)	12/2/2015 4:35 PM
40	500 maximum	12/2/2015 4:28 PM
41	Not sure what is meant by "leading." If you mean congregation size, I'd say 100-150. If you mean staff & elders, maybe 5-10.	12/2/2015 3:57 PM
42	500	12/2/2015 3:49 PM
43	Small teams (i.e. 2-12 people)	12/2/2015 3:28 PM
44	500+	12/2/2015 3:00 PM
45	150-200	12/2/2015 2:48 PM
46	Unsure	12/2/2015 2:08 PM
47	100-200 people.	12/2/2015 1:41 PM
48	Unsure	12/2/2015 1:38 PM
49	As many as God gives me	12/2/2015 1:30 PM

Q7 Do you believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God?

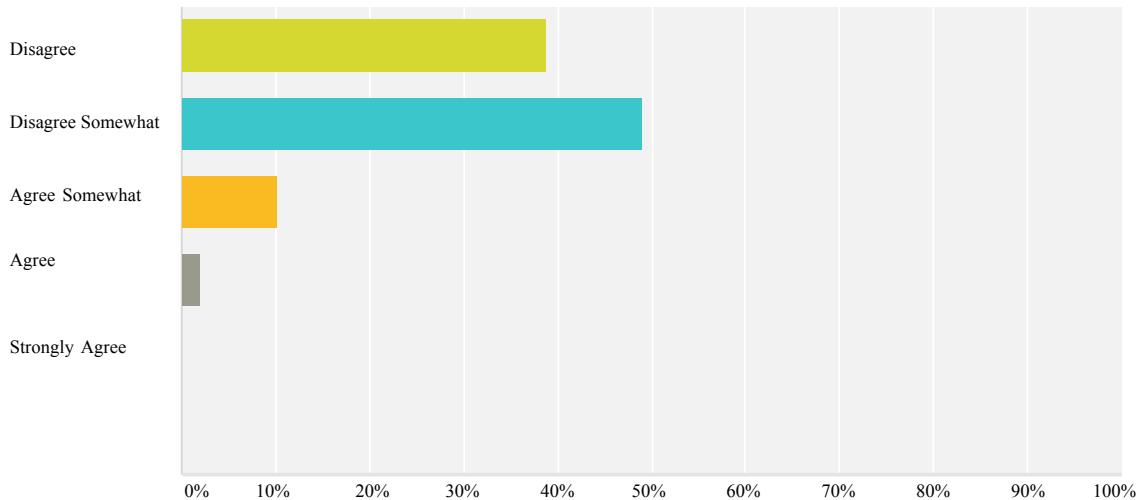
Answered: 48 Skipped: 3



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	100.00%
No	0.00%
Unsure	0.00%
Total	48

**Q8 I believe my future ministry position
will be relatively easy.**

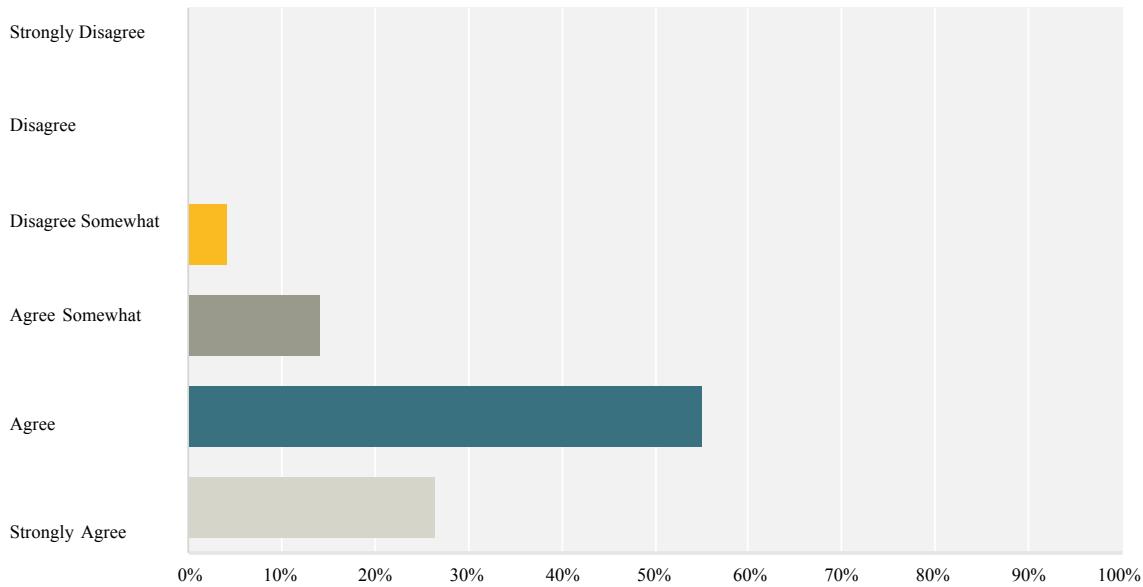
Answered: 49 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	38.78%	19
Disagree	48.98%	24
Disagree Somewhat	10.20%	5
Agree Somewhat	2.04%	1
Agree	0.00%	0
Strongly Agree	0.00%	0
Total	49	

**Q9 I believe my future ministry position
will be relatively difficult.**

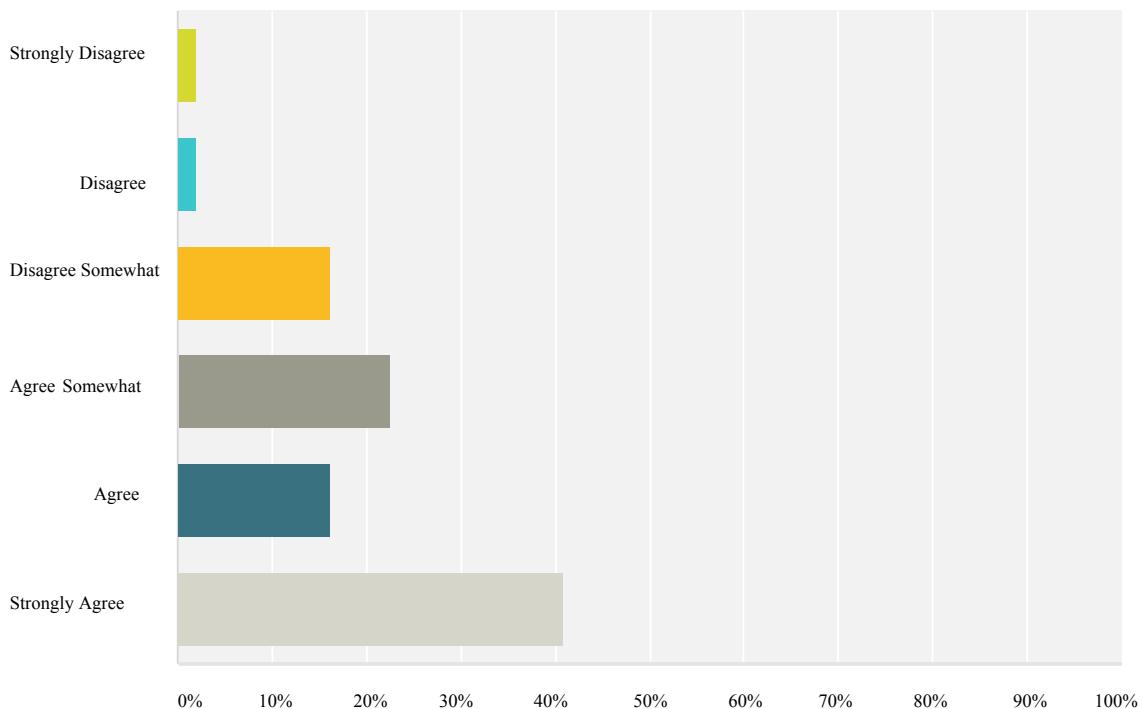
Answered: 49 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree Somewhat	4.08%	2
Agree Somewhat	14.29%	7
Agree	55.10%	27
Strongly Agree	26.53%	13
Total		49

**Q10 I believe God will primarily use my future ministry
to transform me.**

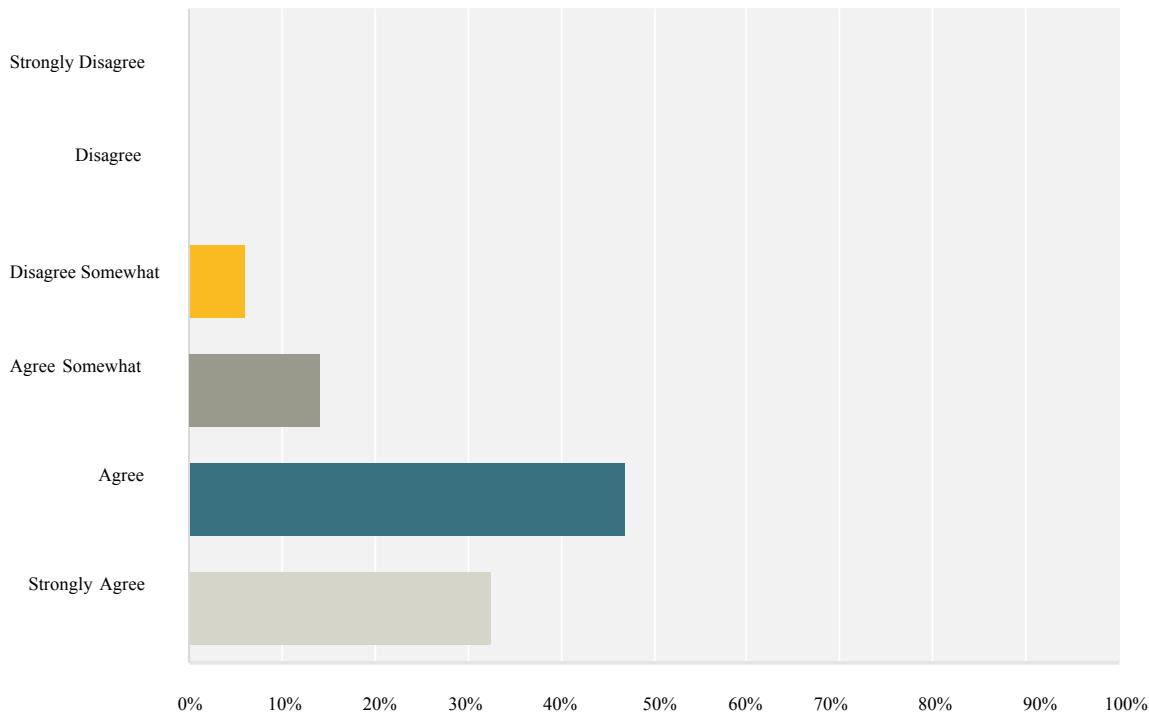
Answered: 49 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	2.04%	1
Disagree	2.04%	1
Disagree Somewhat	16.33%	8
Agree Somewhat	22.45%	11
Agree	16.33%	8
Strongly Agree	40.82%	20
Total	49	

Q11 I believe God will primarily use my ministry to transform the lives of others.

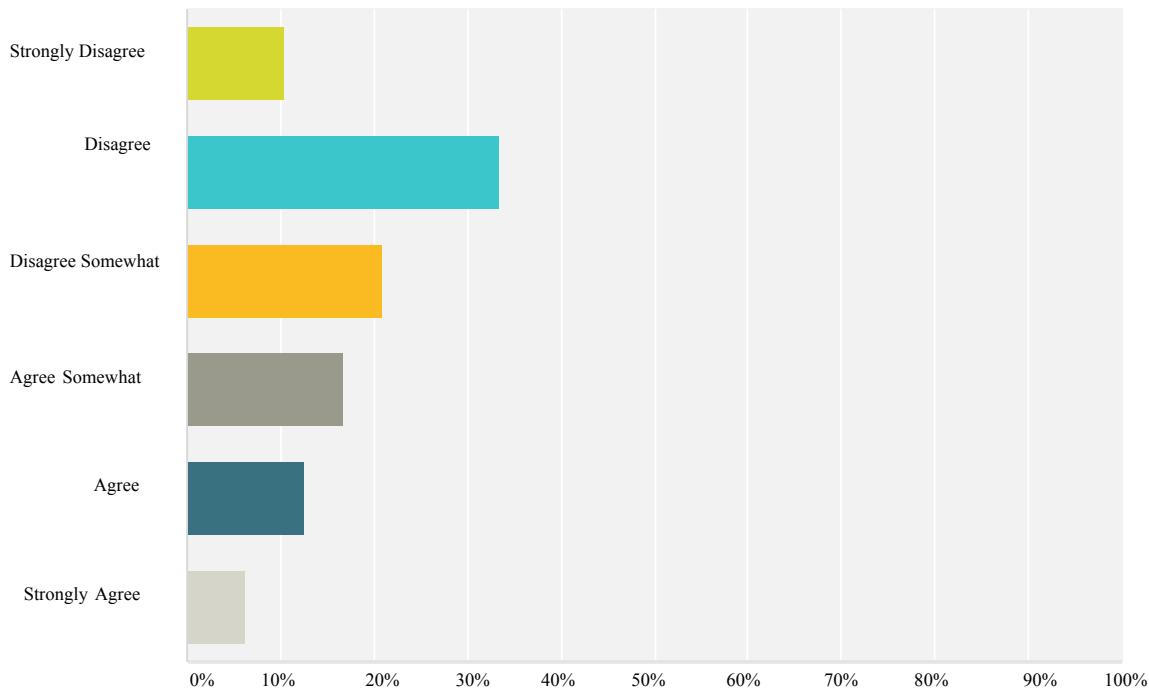
Answered: 49 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree Somewhat	6.12%	3
Agree Somewhat	14.29%	7
Agree	46.94%	23
Strongly Agree	32.65%	16
Total	49	

Q12 I believe God will primarily use my greatest success in ministry to shape me the most.

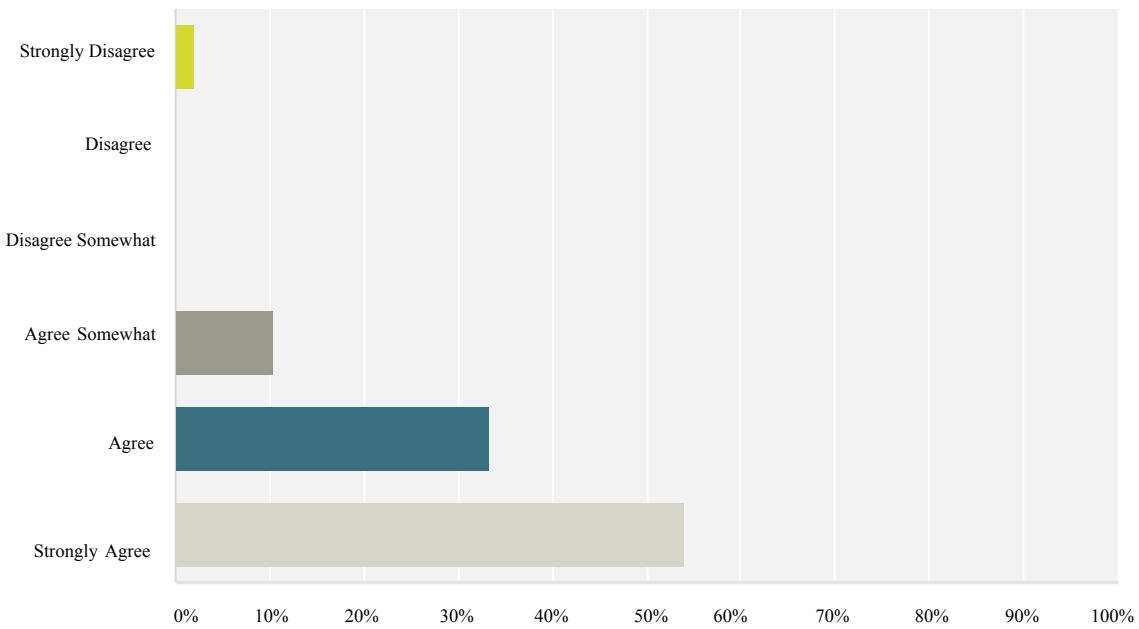
Answered: 48 Skipped: 3



Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	10.42%	5
Disagree	33.33%	16
Disagree Somewhat	20.83%	10
Agree Somewhat	16.67%	8
Agree	12.50%	6
Strongly Agree	6.25%	3
Total	48	

Q13 I believe God will primarily use my most difficult times in ministry to shape me the most.

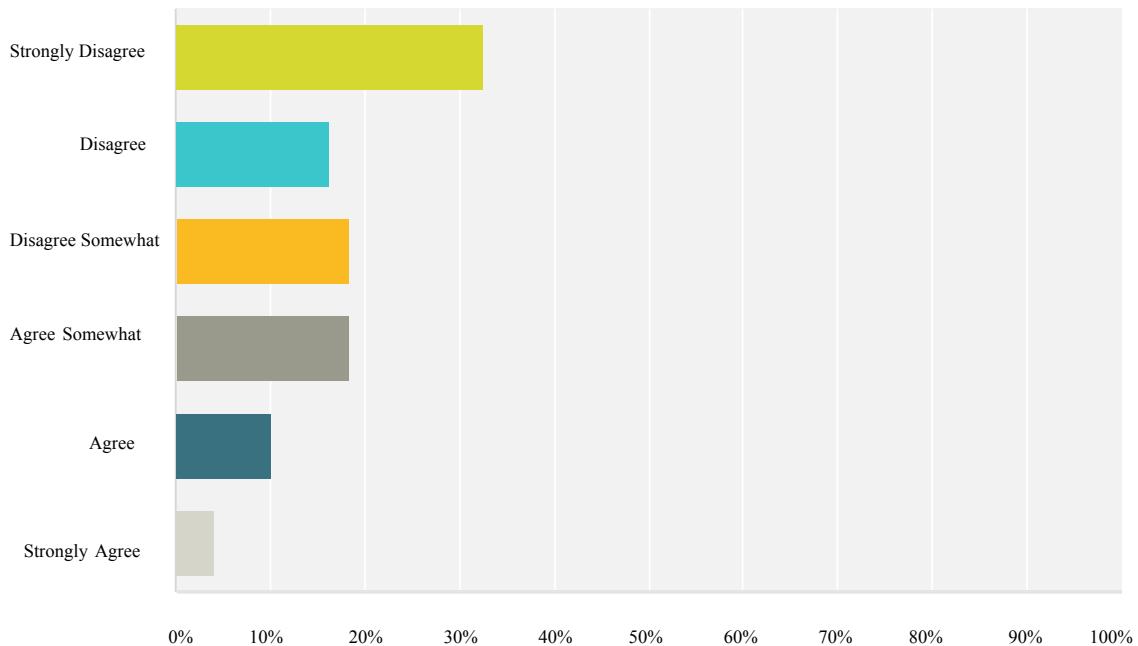
Answered: 48 Skipped: 3



Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	2.08%	1
Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree Somewhat	0.00%	0
Agree Somewhat	10.42%	5
Agree	33.33%	16
Strongly Agree	54.17%	26
Total	48	

**Q14 I am entering ministry because I think
I will get something out of it.**

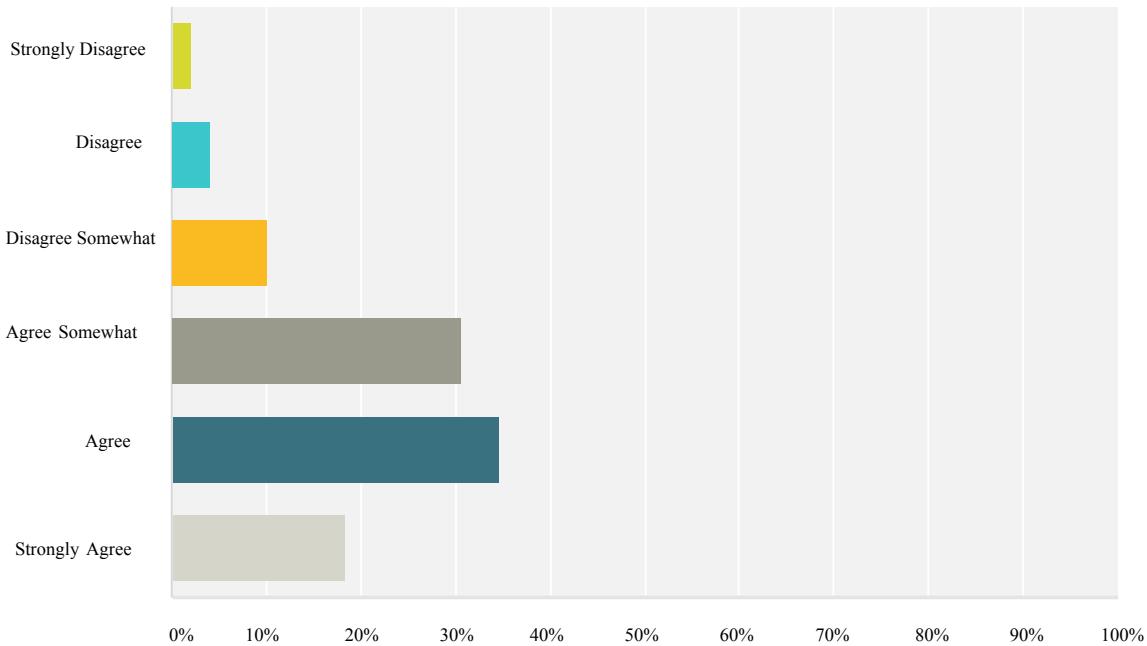
Answered: 49 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	32.65%	16
Disagree	16.33%	8
Disagree Somewhat	18.37%	9
Agree Somewhat	18.37%	9
Agree	10.20%	5
Strongly Agree	4.08%	2
Total	49	

**Q15 I am entering ministry fully aware
of what I will be giving up.**

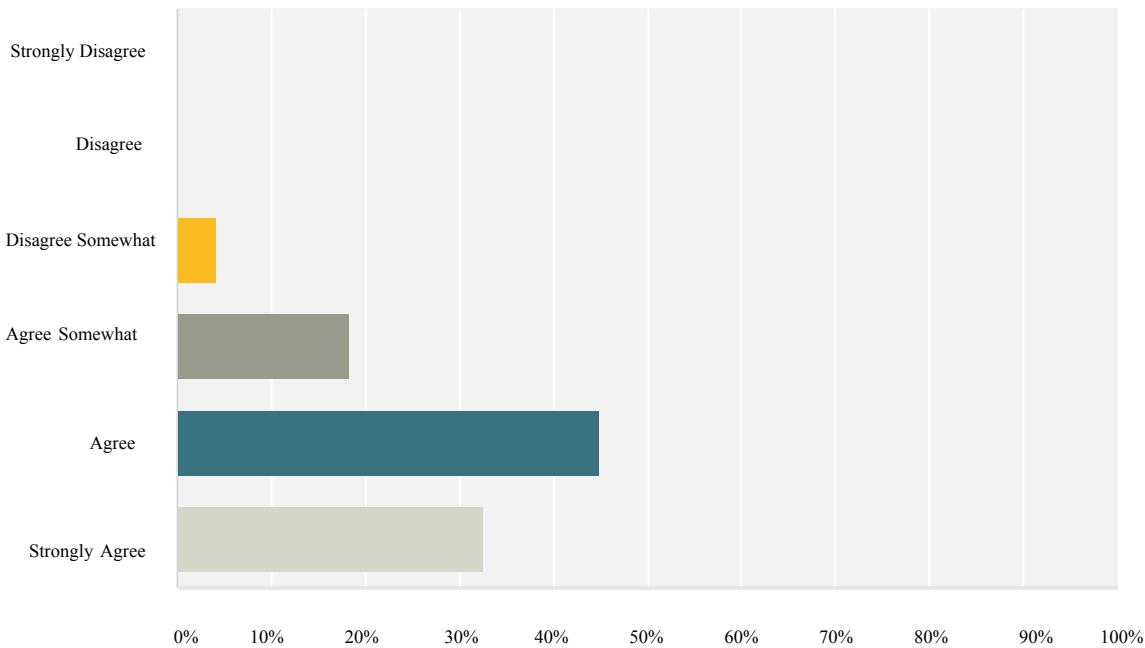
Answered: 49 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	2.04%	1
Disagree	4.08%	2
Disagree Somewhat	10.20%	5
Agree Somewhat	30.61%	15
Agree	34.69%	17
Strongly Agree	18.37%	9
Total	49	

Q16 I fully expect to lose something as a result of my future ministry.

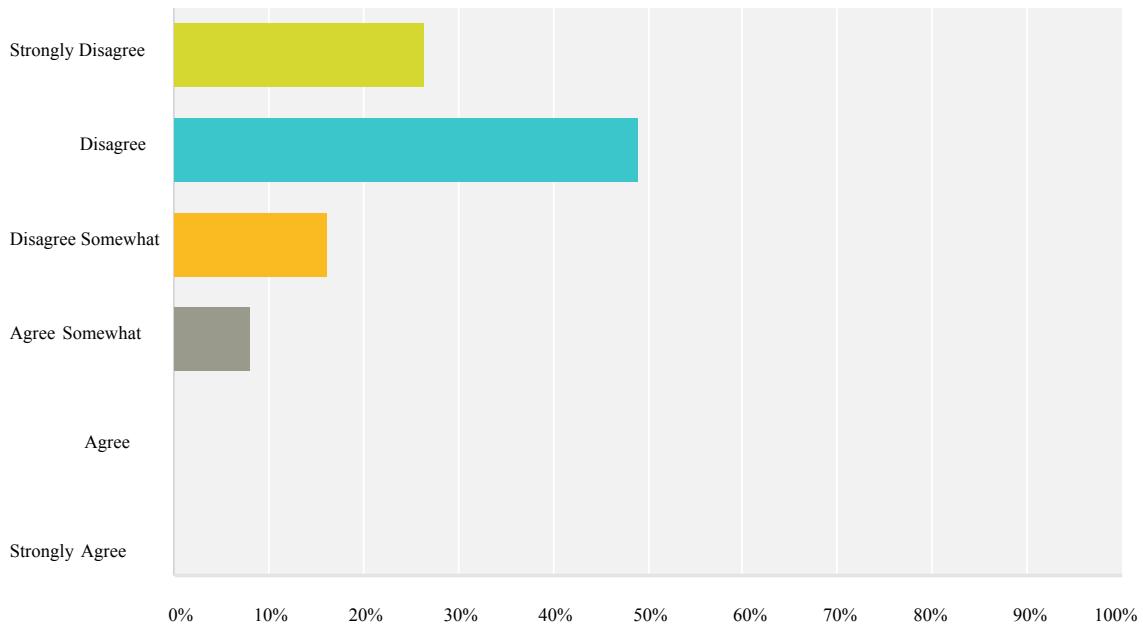
Answered: 49 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree Somewhat	4.08%	2
Agree Somewhat	18.37%	9
Agree	44.90%	22
Strongly Agree	32.65%	16
Total	49	

Q17 My ministry will negatively affect my marriage.

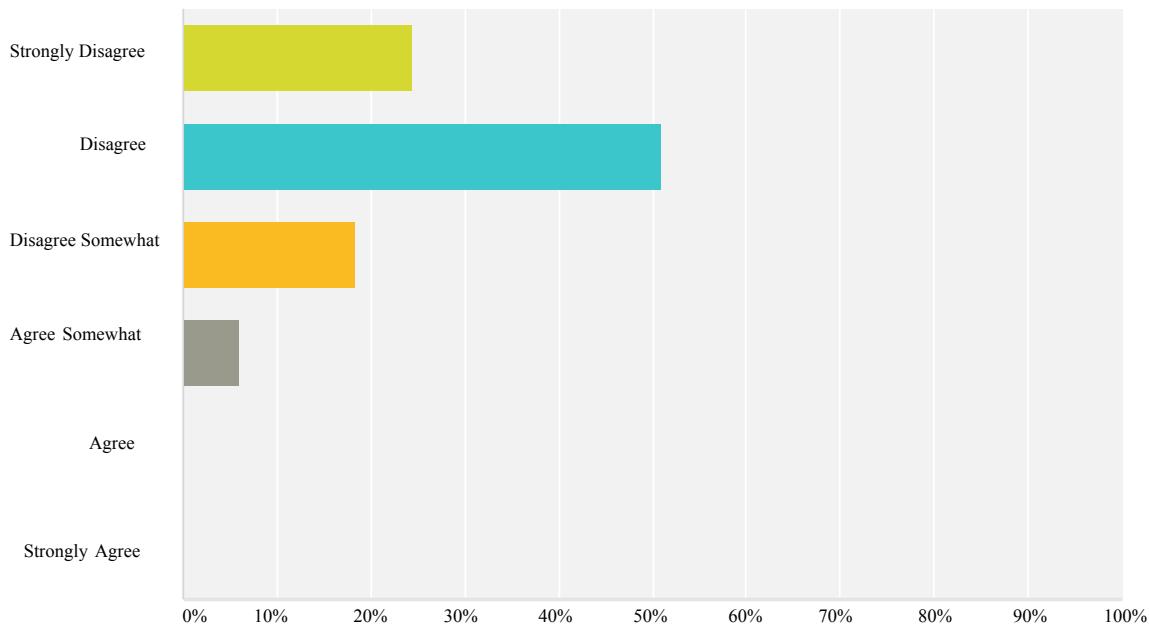
Answered: 49 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	26.53%	13
Disagree	48.98%	24
Disagree Somewhat	16.33%	8
Agree Somewhat	8.16%	4
Agree	0.00%	0
Strongly Agree	0.00%	0
Total	49	

Q18 My ministry will negatively affect my relationship with my children.

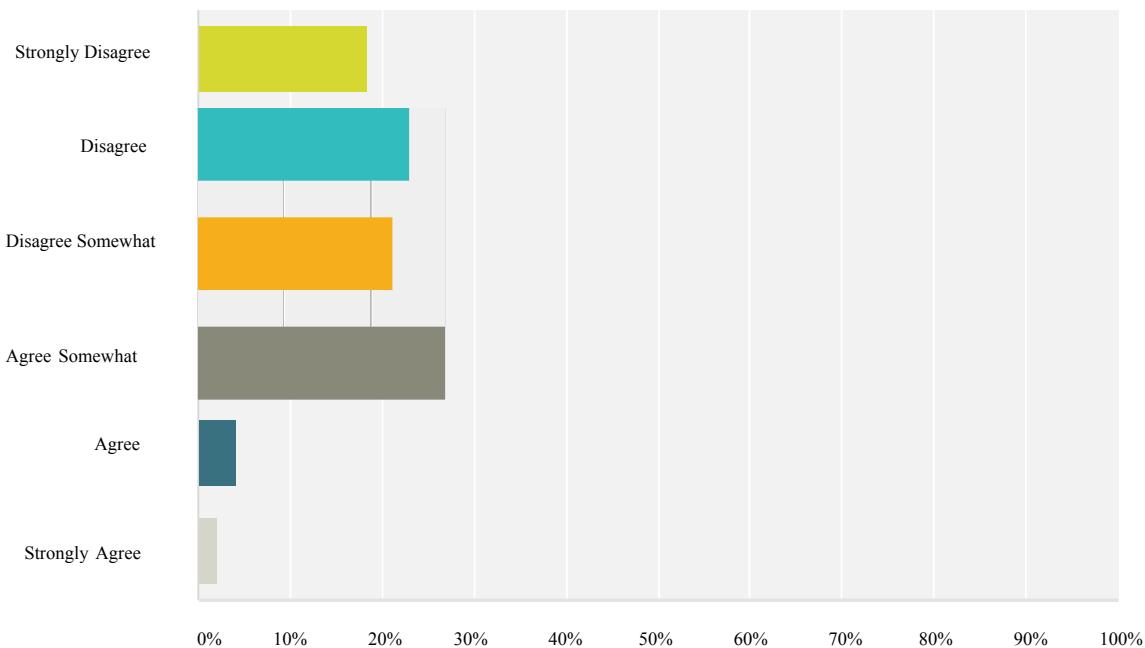
Answered: 49 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	24.49%	12
Disagree	51.02%	25
Disagree Somewhat	18.37%	9
Agree Somewhat	6.12%	3
Agree	0.00%	0
Strongly Agree	0.00%	0
Total	49	

Q19 My ministry will negatively affect other relationships.

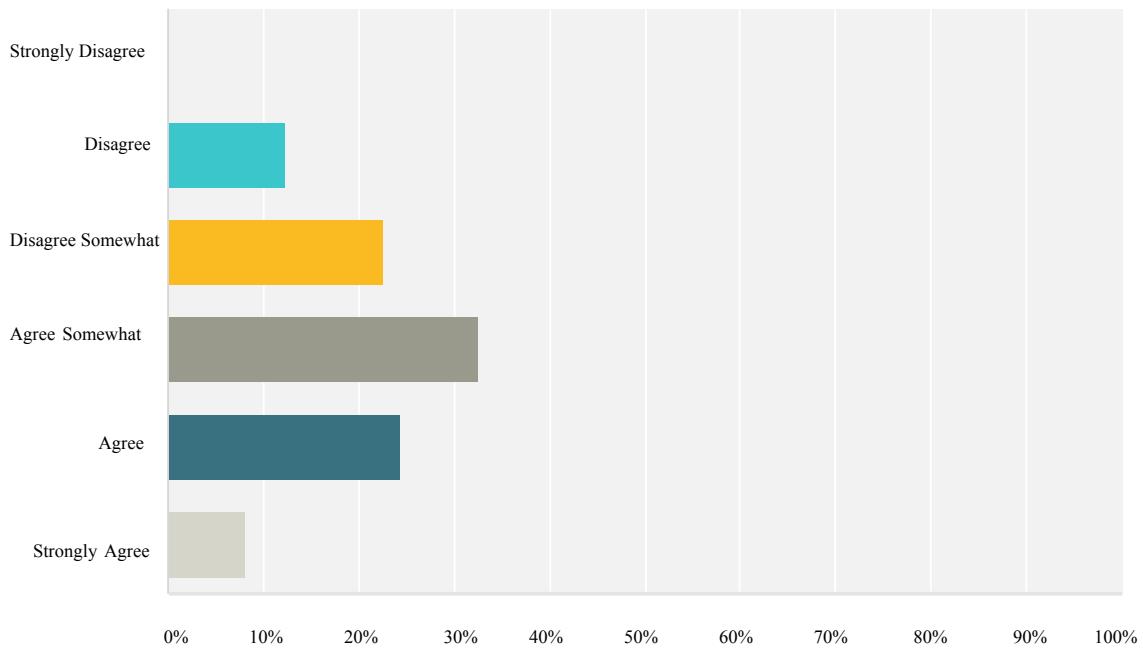
Answered: 49 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Disagree	18.37%
Disagree	24.49%
Disagree Somewhat	22.45%
Agree Somewhat	28.57%
Agree	4.08%
Strongly Agree	2.04%
Total	49

Q20 I believe I will lose something due to a poor ministry decision that I will make as a leader.

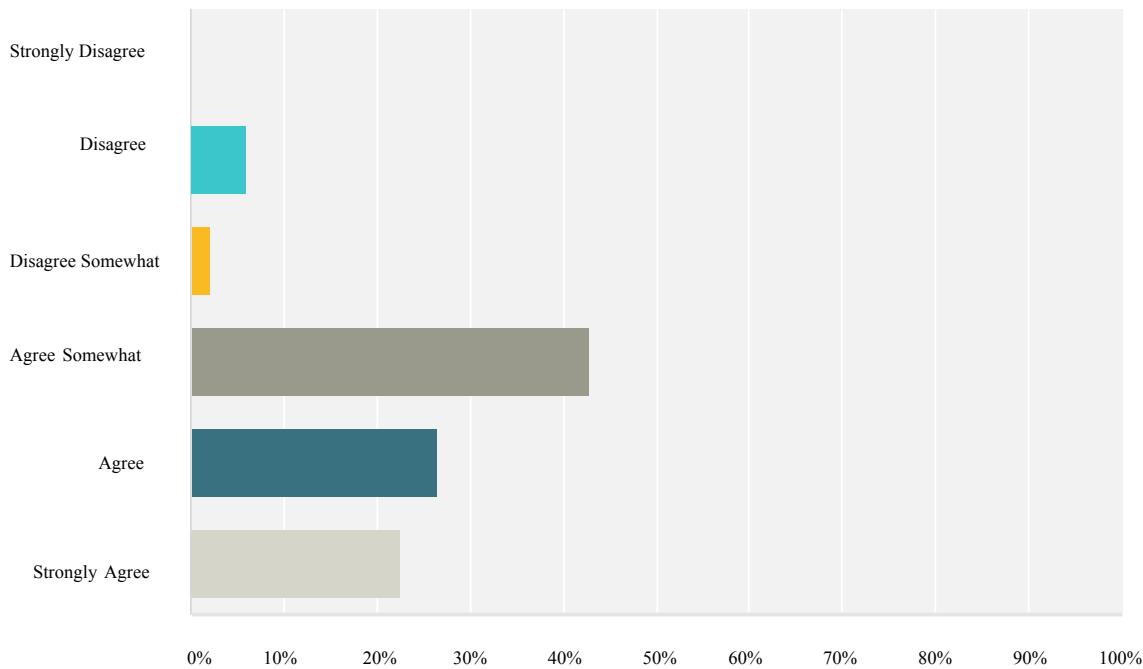
Answered: 49 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Disagree	0.00%
Disagree	12.24%
Disagree Somewhat	22.45%
Agree Somewhat	32.65%
Agree	24.49%
Strongly Agree	8.16%
Total	49

Q21 I believe I will lose something due to a good ministry decision that I will make as a leader.

Answered: 49 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Disagree	0.00%
Disagree	6.12%
Disagree Somewhat	2.04%
Agree Somewhat	42.86%
Agree	26.53%
Strongly Agree	22.45%
Total	49

Q22 What do you anticipate will be your greatest cost/loss as a ministry leader?

Answered: 48 Skipped:

#	Responses	Date
1	Sacrificing financial security in the business world in order to pastor a church will be a loss, but it will not compare to the benefit of leading others closer to Jesus. Financial distress will most likely be a difficult factor as a ministry leader, but God will provide.	1/20/2016 2:09 PM
2	The amount of attention I give to myself.	1/19/2016 7:32 PM
3	Personal life and financial distress	1/19/2016 1:58 PM
4	A consistent place where I live and raise my family, I will always be moving and planting.	1/17/2016 10:43 AM
5	Friendships.	1/15/2016 4:01 PM
6	American comforts	1/15/2016 3:03 PM
7	I will have to lose my pride and I will never have a huge salary	1/14/2016 6:31 PM
8	Giving of my self / personal time	1/14/2016 7:17 AM
9	1) Having to make hard decisions staff wise/having difficult conversations with people in the church. Knowing that this will most likely hurt the relationship I have with said staff if they need to be let go, or having to confront someone about something knowing it will cause hurt in the relationship even if it's the most loving thing to do. Or 2) Being characterized publicly for any particular biblical belief I may hold. Not that I mind what people think of me, but rather	1/13/2016 2:35 PM
10	I think it will be the people who have a strong opinion against the gospel that I am trying to reach	1/13/2016 10:52 AM
11	My life	1/10/2016 9:50 PM
12	Not sure	12/20/2015 6:03 AM
13	As a ministry leader I believe my greatest loss will be something that doesn't matter at the end of the day but it is missing out on the adventures that my friends/peers are able to do during the holidays or on vacations that I will be unable to do while having the responsibility of leading a ministry each week.	12/17/2015 2:11 AM
14	I got a degree in Finance so most likely a lucrative salary.	12/16/2015 10:36 PM
15	Currently, it is the loss of most recreation time. I do not know what may come up in the future.	12/16/2015 12:35 PM
16	My own personal wants, desires, and in essence the ability for me to have my own life apart from the church. I anticipate that I will be giving up what it is that I want to do for what it is that God has for me.	12/16/2015 12:02 PM
17	balance time and my schedule (sometimes relationships will suffer)	12/16/2015 11:55
18	I think the greatest cost, is the cost of having a stable life. If God calls me somewhere I will follow.	12/16/2015 11:54 AM
19	I think losing people who at one time were committed to your church... Especially those who you counsel and invest a lot of time in...	12/14/2015 11:49 AM
20	Socially hanging out with friends.	12/13/2015 9:03 PM
21	My, and my wife's, extended family. Comfort is relative, people are not.	12/9/2015 9:53 AM
22	I don't know what the loss maybe and I'm not even sure I would call it loss, but I know that I will experience heartache and bear the brunt of criticism and the frustration of others	12/9/2015 7:36 AM
23	I'm afraid of the possibilities.	12/8/2015 8:04 PM

24	My greatest loss, I think, will be the physical safety of myself and my family. It will be gain in the end.	12/8/2015 5:30 PM
25	Pride. Making bad leadership decisions based on ego not on Biblical principle.	12/8/2015 4:58 PM
26	Comfort and ease	12/8/2015 4:26 PM
27	My desire to put my self first.	12/8/2015 3:33 PM
28	If the Lord calls me overseas, I anticipate this will be the costliest endeavor I will undertake in ministry.	12/8/2015 3:30 PM
29	Health	12/8/2015 3:05 PM
30	Loss of relationships / popularity as a result of needing to take a stand on crucial	12/8/2015 3:00 PM
31	Personal time	12/8/2015 3:00 PM
32	Popularity - Preaching the Word is not popular. I believe it will continuously grow more and more unpopular.	12/8/2015 2:38 PM
33	We (my soon to be wife) won't have a lot of money.	12/5/2015 2:33 PM
34	The greatest potential loss is possibly damaging my relationship with God by burning out or falling into some sin. Beyond that, hurting or neglecting family would be the greatest loss that I could incur. Seeing that both of these are potential not necessarily anticipated, the greatest cost I see coming is a loss of public standing and respect. To be a faithful pastor in this increasingly post-Christian culture is to be an increasingly loathsome thing, so though I don't look forward to that I do expect it.	12/4/2015 8:52 AM
35	Personal time, sleep, feeling "good" and well prepared	12/3/2015 12:28 PM
36	Time - especially as it relates to family	12/2/2015 11:17 PM
37	Earthly fame.	12/2/2015 10:16 PM
38	Self pursuits, personal time	12/2/2015 5:06 PM
39	Closeness to my family back in the states	12/2/2015 4:37 PM
40	The ability to relate normally to church members	12/2/2015 4:29 PM
41	Hm. I'd say the greatest loss pastors experience is the loss of souls, church member	12/2/2015 4:04 PM
42	my health	12/2/2015 3:54 PM
43	Difficulty in maintaining relationships with friends and family while living	12/2/2015 3:32 PM
44	Losing a member of the flock.	12/2/2015 2:50 PM
45	Financial sacrifices and familial/societal approval	12/2/2015 2:10 PM
46	My health, because I will come back China, where the air, water and food	12/2/2015 1:44 PM
47	Respect in the eyes of the world	12/2/2015 1:40 PM
48	Friends, Family, Finances, time, emotional baggage, loss of social status, I could probably go on	12/2/2015 1:33 PM

Q23 In what ways do you anticipate being most transformed as a leader?

Answered: 46 Skipped: 5

	Responses	Date
1	I anticipate growing in my ability to deliver God's word graciously yet boldly. I currently either deliver His truth too boldly without grace or too tenderly without firmness. I anticipate God molding me to find a better medium for effective teaching.	1/20/2016 2:12 PM
2	Greater utilization of previous skills that I have learned but maybe don't always put into practice.	1/19/2016 7:34 PM
3	The way I view God and others.	1/17/2016 10:43
4	I expect to grow in my capacity to lead others and in fruit of the spirit.	1/15/2016 4:03
5	I pray I reflect Christ in my attitude and speech despite ministry difficulties	1/15/2016 3:03
6	Through seeing the gospel at work in others and in me.	1/14/2016 6:31
7	Hopefully in my genuine love for others. That by leading them I would care most about them individually before I care about them getting "better," or growing in their relationship with Jesus. Those things are important, but not if I don't love them first.	1/13/2016 2:37 PM
8	Probably in ways of gaining discernment and patience. Considering all angles of a situation no matter what my current state is	1/13/2016 10:54 AM
9	Dependence on Spirit power. Learning to love.	1/10/2016 9:52
10	Preparing to preach the Word always changes me as I must obey it before I preach	12/20/2015 6:04
11	I anticipate to be transformed the most through the relationships that will be made to become more humble and aware of what is going on around me.	12/17/2015 2:17 AM
12	I've already lost a lot of inhibitions I have about the way people view me. So maybe the removal of fear of what people might think of me when I reach out with the gospel.	12/16/2015 10:38 PM
13	Growing more patient and more able to endure the tests.	12/16/2015 12:35
14	I think that my spiritual gifts will be enhanced and God will develop me into a better youth minister. Speaking, leading and teaching.	12/16/2015 12:03 PM
15	Being more patient and graceful	12/16/2015 11:55
16	humility, courage, boldness, prayer life, wisdom	12/16/2015 11:55
17	I believe through failure and hard times u learn the most... Life is easier when things	12/14/2015 11:50
18	Becoming more generous and loving.	12/13/2015 9:03
19	Most, I pray, would be in my marriage, in loving my wife as Christ loves the church.	12/9/2015 10:00
20	I think the Lord prove to me that he is better than anything else in this world. I cognitively assent to that but I don't know that the truth of it is fully integrated into my heart.	12/9/2015 7:37 AM
21	Being completely broken by my own inability to affect change and being forced to rely on the Spirit.	12/8/2015 8:05 PM
22	God will sanctify me in His grace and faithfulness. As I study His Word, lean on Him, repent to Him.	12/8/2015 5:31 PM
23	How to be used by God. I expect that my current expectations about what is the "great thing to do" may be different in the future.	12/8/2015 4:59 PM

24	Doing things that God stretches me in, things I wouldn't normally do, ministering to people I wouldn't normally minister to will change me	12/8/2015 4:26 PM
25	I believe I will grow to be more sacrificial.	12/8/2015 3:34 PM
26	I anticipate I will be most transformed as I experience difficult days in ministry whether it is in my church, planting a church, or going overseas.	12/8/2015 3:31 PM
27	I anticipate my love for God and His people would be full.	12/8/2015 3:06 PM
28	Knowing that to be a leader I must continually devote time and energy to making and keeping my own walk with the Lord strong.	12/8/2015 3:01 PM
29	Reliance upon God; deeper affection for his word	12/8/2015 3:01 PM
30	I anticipate a frequent humbling and increasingly greater dependence upon the Lord.	12/8/2015 2:38 PM
31	To lead with confidence when some people reject me.	12/5/2015 2:33 PM
32	I think that ministry will make me a much humbler person. Although the temptation to pride is great, the Lord is faithful to burden his ministers such that they learn to rely on him more fully. As I grow in humility I trust that I will.	12/4/2015 8:54 AM
33	Humbled	12/3/2015 12:28 PM
34	I expect to be most transformed in humility and patience.	12/2/2015 11:18 PM
35	I anticipate it will humble me more than anything else.	12/2/2015 10:17 PM
36	Increased humility	12/2/2015 5:07 PM
37	In suffering	12/2/2015 4:37 PM
38	In my focus on the mission	12/2/2015 4:29 PM
39	More prayerful. More humble. More longsuffering. Less looking to others for approval and worth.	12/2/2015 4:06 PM
40	in my view of God and my view of myself.	12/2/2015 3:54 PM
41	Lord willing, I will be sanctified in my reliance on God for all things. Relationship tensions and struggles with sin are often intensified and highlighted when living in another culture context and that pressure either fosters greater trust or self-reliance (the later will eventually fail you).	12/2/2015 3:35 PM
42	Hopefully become more of a servant.	12/2/2015 2:51 PM
43	I expect God to humble me. I hope to learn by loving and serving, rather than exerting authority over others.	12/2/2015 2:11 PM
44	I could be transformed to be more relying on God, not my strength.	12/2/2015 1:45 PM
45	Greater humility and wisdom	12/2/2015 1:41 PM
46	Seeing more and more my inability outside of Christ	12/2/2015 1:33 PM

Q24 What do you anticipate your greatest sacrifices will be as a leader?

Answered: 46 Skipped: 5

#	Responses	Date
1	Finances will be a sacrifice, as I stated earlier, but time will be the greatest sacrifice. Tending to the flock by being available all day and night will be difficult and taxing on me and my family. It will be hard to find a good medium to know which appointments to go to or which members to visit during hard times without getting burnt out. That will most likely be stressful for my family and myself.	1/20/2016 2:13 PM
2	Again, I would have to say myself. I don't think I have completely understood what it means to die to self.	1/19/2016 7:35 PM
3	Personal desires	1/17/2016 10:44 AM
4	Money, time, emotional closeness with everyone. They are in some ways sacrifices, but they are also just part of the job. Being an astronaut could mean that you "sacrifice" being gymnast, but that is a crazy way to look at it. It is only a sacrifice if you have some expectation or feel as though it is something you deserve.	1/15/2016 4:05 PM
5	Personal comforts and preferences.	1/15/2016 3:53 PM
6	time for others, pride, and (gain) more accountability an won't be able to live as carelessly, not that Christians can live carelessly ever, but I will be under much greater scrutiny.	1/14/2016 6:33 PM
7	Having to make difficult decisions that may be unpopular to others who don't know all the facts. Knowing my character and integrity will be questioned no matter what I may do.	1/13/2016 2:38 PM
8	my time to my friends and family, although I do hope that I find a healthy balance	1/13/2016 10:55 AM
9	Children's relationship with family. "Personal time" and personal goals.	1/10/2016 9:52 PM
10	Not sure	12/20/2015 6:04 AM
11	Time spent with those that I love. Hopefully through learning from those that have done this I can find a way to not let this be a sacrifice but ultimately I believe it will still be a sacrifice.	12/17/2015 2:19 AM
12	My free time.	12/16/2015 10:39 PM
13	I honestly do not know.	12/16/2015 12:36 PM
14	I think that will be sacrificing my time more than anything, and also my control over my life. I will be giving up my personal time, and I anticipate that.	12/16/2015 12:04 PM
15	A sacrifice of having a life outside of ministry.	12/16/2015 11:55
16	same answer as # 22	12/16/2015 11:55
17	Time... I feel like I am being pulled in a million different directions...	12/14/2015 11:50
18	Time and energy	12/13/2015 9:03 PM
19	Those moments when my calling as a husband and a father takes priority over the people I am serving.	12/9/2015 10:03 AM
20	Ultimately, it will be time. As much as I want to be faithful to establish rest and Sabbath, much of my life will be poured out in walking with and pursuing people with the hopes of them becoming more like Christ and many of those may never receive his grace/mature at the pace I would desire.	12/9/2015 7:41 AM
21	The loss of all things.	12/8/2015 8:05 PM

22	My free time, my safety. Again, it will all be gain in the end.	12/8/2015 5:32 PM
23	Personal sacrifice. Not living for myself, not pleasing myself. Knowing that I could be making more money, living a more affluent lifestyle. But counting those "sacrifices" as true joy as they are eternally worthless.	12/8/2015 5:00 PM
24	I will sacrifice my personal ambitions and desires, comfort and even strong family relationships to serve Christ	12/8/2015 4:27 PM
25	My time.	12/8/2015 3:34 PM
26	Willingly going anywhere I feel the Lord is calling me. This includes uprooting my life and my family if necessary.	12/8/2015 3:31 PM
27	Time with family	12/8/2015 3:07 PM
28	Lots of time, stress of needing to make difficult decisions and give direction to others/church.	12/8/2015 3:02 PM
29	Location and occupation preferences	12/8/2015 3:01 PM
30	Leisure time, popularity, money	12/8/2015 2:39 PM
31	I don't know	12/5/2015 2:36 PM
32	Having a front seat to my Dad's ministry, I think family life is one of the greatest potential sacrifices I could potentially face. Missing sporting events, family outings, and such because of responsibilities at church seems somewhat inevitable to some degree. Proper balance can help mitigate losses in family life, but it seems that I have to prepare for some measure of sacrifice here. Another sacrifice would be making tough and unpopular choices that will lead to hurt relationships. Sometimes the right thing isn't the popular thing, but to lead God's people well must include sacrificing one's own survival instinct for the ultimate good of the people we serve.	12/4/2015 9:01 AM
33	Having to choose truth over people's feelings/desires	12/3/2015 12:29 PM
34	My time with family	12/2/2015 11:18 PM
35	Time and recreation.	12/2/2015 10:17 PM
36	Time, other pursuits	12/2/2015 5:07 PM
37	Not always being liked by all people	12/2/2015 4:37 PM
38	Secular ambitions	12/2/2015 4:29 PM
39	Time, emotion, mental energy, personal preferences.	12/2/2015 4:07 PM
40	my life	12/2/2015 3:54 PM
41	Again it pertains to relationships. Relationships with friends and family will suffer because of time differences and distances. Additionally, because I'll be working primarily with college students, it is sometimes necessary to filter those students who are not showing interest in the gospel by not focusing your time on them, despite forming real relationships with them, and entrusting them to the	12/2/2015 3:37 PM
42	Spending time with family	12/2/2015 2:51 PM
43	I am unsure.	12/2/2015 2:11 PM
44	My heart.	12/2/2015 1:45 PM
45	Time for myself	12/2/2015 1:41 PM
46	People will eventually really hate me	12/2/2015 1:33 PM

Q25 What has been the most difficult thing you have experienced that has prepared you for your future ministry role?

Answered: 45 Skipped: 6

#	Responses	Date
1	My battle with pornography has been a very difficult part of my life, but nothing has drawn me closer to Jesus than this trial. I have realized through this sin issue that only God frees people from their bondage to corruption and only His Spirit has the power to transform hearts. As a ministry leader, it will be my role to spread God's truth and to allow the Spirit to transform others, not me. I experienced that truth during my battle with sin, as many mentors spoke truth to me, but ultimately the Spirit was the one who changed my heart and freed me from that evil.	1/20/2016 2:16 PM
2	I am still going through it and I am confident that God is going to use it for something incredible, but it has been struggling with my Parents to get them back involved in Church.	1/19/2016 7:37 PM
3	That my future plans have alienated me from some of my family.	1/17/2016 10:44 AM
4	Disrespect and hurt from church leaders. The difficulty of deciding when to trust other leaders or when to be guarded around them so that they will pour	1/15/2016 4:06 PM
5	As a young leader it is a hard thing to identify now. I think I will be able to answer this more accurately in 10 years.	1/15/2016 3:54 PM
6	Struggling to do well in a job that I ended up getting let go from. The process humbled me and showed that I can't make success happen but that God was in control and had a plan.	1/14/2016 6:34 PM
7	For me personally I probably saying trying to stay patient and not trying to force things. Knowing God is leading me to do certain things doesn't mean it's going to happen tomorrow. Patience isn't fun and not something that comes naturally to me. I've had to grow a lot in this.	1/13/2016 2:40 PM
8	leading a college bible study for a school year	1/13/2016 10:56 AM
9	Living and ministering overseas in Madagascar	1/10/2016 9:53 PM
10	During an internship I learned how real the sacrifice of missing out on big events in loved ones life's can be and I believe that has prepared me to learn to better evaluate my schedule and when to say yes and no to tasks.	12/17/2015 2:21 AM
11	Realizing that in a church the size of Prestonwood, sometimes priorities get out of order with those in a higher position than you, and they therefore have to become your priorities even though you don't think they necessarily should be.	12/16/2015 10:40 PM
12	Working nonstop for several weeks at a time, being constantly faced with new challenges, and having to do so with joy and a positive, upbeat attitude.	12/16/2015 12:39 PM
13	Being under seemingly constant spiritual warfare since I have started to intern for the church that I am working at. When I first got here feeling alone, and having people sacrifice my friendship for something that they wanted. I learned how to better forgive and love.	12/16/2015 12:05 PM
14	My struggle with depression	12/16/2015 11:57
15	several friends going through depression and even suicidal attempts	12/16/2015 11:56
16	My wife's 7-year battle with cancer...	12/14/2015 11:50
17	Discouragement from others and Satan.	12/13/2015 9:04 PM
18	my engagement to my wife was a long and hard season of suffering, far more than the loss of any close family member	12/9/2015 10:05 AM

19	A few years ago, I was leading a young adult ministry and five members of my leadership team began to deal with "dark nights of the soul". Four of the team members (two married couples) entered into divorce proceedings within a month of one another. The fifth team member was diagnosed with brain cancer. For the first time, I felt the sting of loss on every level- I lost friends, I lost ministry effectiveness and I lost confidence in my ability as a leader. It was both crushing and sweet because it pushed me to the Lord.	12/9/2015 7:45 AM
20	Being judged on my qualification based on how I grew up.	12/8/2015 8:08 PM
21	I had an engagement that was broken off.	12/8/2015 5:33 PM
22	Loss of my niece. And at times, lack of direction.	12/8/2015 5:00 PM
23	I have been a part of several different churches, traditional and established, church plants just starting out and have endured a church closing because of apathy. These experiences have prepared me well.	12/8/2015 4:29 PM
24	My time in seminary has been tremendously fulfilling, but it has also shown me many areas where I am weak and will need to rely on the grace of God throughout my ministry. Personal evangelism and private devotion are two areas where I have seen myself challenged immensely over the past three years.	12/8/2015 3:34 PM
25	Serving as a chaplain and giving up my time.	12/8/2015 3:34 PM
26	Opposition from Christians	12/8/2015 3:07 PM
27	Chronic illness of my sister and mother--forces me to seek to trust God more deeply and keeps me from spewing out cheap platitudes to others in deep pain and sorrow.	12/8/2015 3:03 PM
28	Ongoing transition over the past 3-5 years	12/8/2015 3:01 PM
29	The death of loved ones and a broken engagement	12/8/2015 2:39 PM
30	To wrestle with a biblical doctrine and its implications for pastoral ministry.	12/5/2015 2:37 PM
31	Probably my own personal battle with sin. Day after day of fighting against, falling into, repenting from, and winning small victories over sin is a draining process. I've learned more about the deadly consequences of sin, my utter helplessness apart from God's strength, and the abounding love and grace of God to both forgive and progressively sanctify me. Having an acute awareness of this struggle prepares me to minister to other sin-sick hearts with the humility and compassion that is proper to a gospel minister. What is more, I know that their--and my, for that matter-- only hope is to run to Christ.	12/4/2015 9:07 AM
32	Marriage and children	12/3/2015 12:29 PM
33	Rebuilding a broken relationship with my wife before we decided to get married.	12/2/2015 11:19 PM
34	Remaining patient for the ministry to come.	12/2/2015 10:17 PM
35	The many jobs and responsibilities that I have.	12/2/2015 5:08 PM
36	The strain of workload on top of family and jobs	12/2/2015 4:38 PM
37	Helped revitalize a church	12/2/2015 4:30 PM
38	ministry and being a PK	12/2/2015 4:23 PM
39	Seeing my brother and sister not walk with the Lord.	12/2/2015 4:10 PM
40	I have two years of overseas experience already, so that would be the most difficult and relevant to future ministry.	12/2/2015 3:40 PM
41	Having the mindset that my real ministry will come later, rather than being fully engaged in service to God where I'm at.	12/2/2015 2:53 PM
42	Feeling unqualified for ministry--I am so broken myself, how will I help other broken people.	12/2/2015 2:12 PM
43	The opposition from parents.	12/2/2015 1:46 PM

44	A chronic work-related injury	12/2/2015 1:41 PM
45	Taking a stand that the Word of God is the only authority which others in my family have not agreed with, which has lead to unfortunate results	12/2/2015 1:34 PM

**Q26 What has been the greatest piece of advice
you have received as you have prepared for
your future ministry role?**

Answered: 46 Skipped: 5

#	Responses	Date
1	There is so much...but I think one phrase which stands out is, "success is measured by faithfulness." Success in life, ministry, or whatever, is not determined by numbers or recognition but by faithfulness to God and His word. That renewed definition of success has guided me through so much and has	1/20/2016 2:18 PM
2	Pray and trust in God because he has a better plan than you.	1/19/2016 7:38 PM
3	Focus on God and he will move through me.	1/17/2016 10:45 AM
4	Do what God says.	1/15/2016 4:07 PM
5	Don't be entitled.	1/15/2016 3:55 PM
6	Having healthy relationships with those you are leading can greatly increase ones	1/14/2016 6:35 PM
7	Hard to say off the top of my head. I think it's just the idea that faithfulness doesn't automatically equal growth or easily evident fruit. I grew up going to a great church that was always growing, but have no always been able of ministries that didn't grow fast. Seeing both sides has been a great reminder that God is in control, not us.	1/13/2016 2:43 PM
8	you cannot satisfy everybody	1/13/2016 10:56 AM
9	Keep your humor and/or "God will never let up on you; never give up on you."	1/10/2016 9:55 PM
10	Lord Jesus is all you need, but often you won't realize that until he is all you have.	12/20/2015 6:06 AM
11	You cannot make everyone happy! I am a huge people pleaser but at the end of the day you are not going to be able to make everyone happy because someone is going to have a difference of opinion.	12/17/2015 2:22 AM
12	If you're too big to serve, you're too small to lead.	12/16/2015 10:41 PM
13	The little things matter	12/16/2015 12:40 PM
14	You have to make time for yourself. No one is going to guard your time for you. You need to make sure that you are saying no, when you can and if you	12/16/2015 12:06 PM
15	Understand the culture of your church before you try and change anything.	12/16/2015 11:58
16	Love God, love people	12/16/2015 11:56
17	The importance of staying faithful to God's Word...	12/14/2015 11:51
18	Be led by the Holy Spirit. He will guide you.	12/13/2015 9:04 PM
19	"To the degree you are not amazed in the gospel, everyone else around you pays. Your congregation will pay, your children will pay, and most of all your	12/9/2015 10:16 AM
20	To pray this often, "Lord, I think this is you- protect me where I am wrong."	12/9/2015 7:46 AM
21	On your story, be who God has called you to be, don't try to be anyone other than	12/8/2015 8:08 PM
22	Jesus is better than ministry.	12/8/2015 5:33 PM
23	Don't allow your cheerleaders or your critics be the defining voices.	12/8/2015 5:01 PM
24	Be who God has made you to be, not someone else.	12/8/2015 4:29 PM
25	A minister of the gospel must be a man of God publicly and privately. There can be no separation between the man I am in front of others and the man I am	12/8/2015 3:35 PM
26	Count the cost of ministry.	12/8/2015 3:34 PM
27	If you choose to enter full time ministry, serve now as if you will serve later.	12/8/2015 3:08 PM
28	To focus on your own personal walk with the Lord.	12/8/2015 3:04 PM

29	Take things slow.	12/8/2015 3:03 PM
30	Personal character. You can only lead insofar as you have a personal, thriving relationship with the Lord.	12/8/2015 2:40 PM
31	Stay in the Word and pray.	12/5/2015 2:38 PM
32	Paul Tripp's work on pastoral ministry has reminded me that the greatest need of the pastor is to treat their own heart with the Gospel remedies they seek to apply to others. It is easy in my busyness to lose my awe of God, neglect spiritual disciplines, and rely on my own strength, even in a seminary environment. The need for the pastor to not neglect his own soul continues to be the best advice I've received.	12/4/2015 9:12 AM
33	Build relationships - put emphasis on them	12/3/2015 12:29 PM
34	The greatest advice I have received has been to never stop focusing on God while in seminary. To keep my personal time with the Lord while studying and doing ministry.	12/2/2015 11:20 PM
35	Remain in the Word.	12/2/2015 10:18 PM
36	Stick close to the word in all things.	12/2/2015 5:08 PM
37	1Tim. 4:16 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.	12/2/2015 4:43 PM
38	The importance of preparation does not take away from the urgency	12/2/2015 4:39 PM
39	Pragmatism is one of the greatest enemies	12/2/2015 4:32 PM
40	let the text breathe when you're preaching...and spend time with your family 2/3 nights a week without distractions.	12/2/2015 4:24 PM
41	Learning how to communicate with and love members of the same team well.	12/2/2015 3:41 PM
42	To delegate. I tend to subscribe to the motto, "if you want something done right, then do it yourself."	12/2/2015 2:54 PM
43	God always provides what you need, emphasis on "need" as He sees my needs.	12/2/2015 2:12 PM
44	Trust in the power of God's Word.	12/2/2015 1:47 PM
45	"He who marries the spirit of the age today will be a widower tomorrow."	12/2/2015 1:42 PM
46	Make a priority for your own personal relationship with God, and for your family	12/2/2015 1:35 PM

Q27 Imagine you are sitting across the desk from a seasoned ministry leader. What would you most like to ask them, that no one is talking to you about right now?

Answered: 46 Skipped: 5

#	Responses	Date
1	How do you know what type of ministry you should pursue? I have contemplated becoming a head pastor, missionary overseas, or a missionary using business as a ministry tool. How do I know which one I should pursue?	1/20/2016 2:21 PM
2	This seems kind of trivial, but I want to know how other ministers do their devotions.	1/19/2016 7:40 PM
3	What is the best way to handle not knowing exactly what my ministry will look like?	1/17/2016 10:46 AM
4	How did you respond to changes in the church as you were serving over the years?	1/15/2016 4:09 PM
5	How do you plow where you are at in ministry but continue to have a vision for the future?	1/15/2016 3:55 PM
6	I would ask about their past successes and failures. What caused them to happen and what they learned from them.	1/14/2016 6:36 PM
7	As some who is complementarian theologically and also is not at this time comfortable with having women preach on Sunday's, how can I best include women and their giftings in the church without compromising my conscious? What does it look like to have them be high functioning leaders and get their input on big decisions without them being on the elder board?	1/13/2016 2:48 PM
8	How do you cope with all the people seeing you on a daily basis?	1/13/2016 10:59 AM
9	How to intentionally discipline and set up our lives for everyday evangelism and discipleship bi-vocationally.	1/10/2016 9:57 PM
10	How do I remain faithful in all the pastoral duties over the long haul?	12/20/2015 6:07 AM
11	In regards to life in ministry when or do you feel it is okay to take a break? As in to take a break or sabbatical to refresh your mind and heart to be able to have time away from the day-to-day operations of the	12/17/2015 2:26 AM
12	Right now I'm not getting a lot of practical instruction on how a ministry is run. I feel like more of a cog in the machine. So possibly instruction on how to do things like make a budget, or plan a mission trip, rather than build a set piece or fill in details on a flow for Sunday mornings.	12/16/2015 10:42 PM
13	What benefit is gained from doing many of the things that we do/ how essential will these work practices be in the future?	12/16/2015 12:41 PM
14	Is the way that I am feeling right now justified? (Burnt out, tired, like I don't have a life apart from the church and because of that I want to leave this church.)	12/16/2015 12:07 PM
15	How do you put boundaries in your life?	12/16/2015 11:59
16	Why does the Church today not look anything like the Church of the New Testament?	12/16/2015 11:57 AM
17	I would like to pick their brain on growth barriers	12/14/2015 11:52
18	How to handle people who have been hurt by other ministries/churches.	12/13/2015 9:05 PM
19	Raising children on the mission field	12/9/2015 10:27 AM
20	How have you loved and protected your wife as you or she has entered seasons of transition?	12/9/2015 7:48 AM
21	How do you stay encouraged in the valleys?	12/8/2015 8:09 PM

22	How do you write your sermons?	12/8/2015 5:34 PM
23	How to get the proper in-ministry training needed to succeed.	12/8/2015 5:03 PM
24	How do you stay above reproach, stay pure and stay fresh in your love for the Gospel?	12/8/2015 4:30 PM
25	What was your greatest fear entering into the ministry and how have you seen the Lord's faithfulness in bringing you through that?	12/8/2015 3:36 PM
26	How do you keep yourself accountable to another man you trust?	12/8/2015 3:35 PM
27	How do you deal with your hypocrisy?	12/8/2015 3:09 PM
28	Advice on improving my devotional life, and wisdom on how / when to "make an issue" of certain (important) doctrinal disagreements with others.	12/8/2015 3:05 PM
29	Do you suffer from performance envy (envious of others' abilities in ministry)?	12/8/2015 3:04 PM
30	Balancing devotions and ministry	12/8/2015 2:40 PM
31	How to reconcile limited atonement with the love of God and a universal call of repentance and faith. If he has no answer, how to deal with not having thought through everything and still preaching confidently.	12/5/2015 2:39 PM
32	I'd have a million questions! Seminary does a great job of equipping you with the exegetical, theological, and homiletical tools to be a decent preacher, but in my experience, it doesn't always prepare you for the day-to-day life of a minister. I would ask: 1) how do you balance church and family life? 2) how do you care for your own soul? what discipleship and accountability are in place in your life? 3) what are some struggles you've experienced in ministry that you didn't expect? Those would round out my top three at the moment.	12/4/2015 9:17 AM
33	How do you sustain yourself spiritual, relationally, and physically?	12/3/2015 12:29 PM
34	I would like to ask him how he balances his family time with his ministry. How much time does he spend with his wife and kids and how does he disciple them amidst ministry.	12/2/2015 11:20 PM
35	What do you regret?	12/2/2015 10:19 PM
36	Hard decisions	12/2/2015 5:09 PM
37	Do the joys outweigh the sorrows?	12/2/2015 4:44 PM
38	What have you learned that you wish you knew at the beginning	12/2/2015 4:40 PM
39	How he maintained passion for Christian ministry	12/2/2015 4:34 PM
40	If you were to start your ministry over, what would you change?	12/2/2015 4:24 PM
41	Spiritual warfare and depression. Also how Christians partnering with international ministries (e.g. college ministries, bible translation, humanitarian work, etc.) should work with local churches (international churches or native).	12/2/2015 3:52 PM
42	What is your biggest temptation as a leader? Or, in what area of your life do you think Satan attacks you the most?	12/2/2015 2:55 PM
43	The strain that ministry puts on marriage and families, and leading churches that need revitalization.	12/2/2015 2:13 PM
44	What is the most difficult things that the pastors will face?	12/2/2015 1:49 PM
45	How do you balance time for family with the demands of ministry?	12/2/2015 1:43 PM
46	How do you continue to minister to others when your own life is cracking?	12/2/2015 1:37 PM

**Q28 If you are selected for the gift certificate offer associated
with this survey how would you like us to contact you?
Please leave the contact information where you would
like your gift card sent.**

Answered: 45 Skipped: 6

*The answers to this question are not listed to protect the privacy of the respondents.

APPENDIX 5

WORDS FROM EXPERIENCED MINISTRY LEADERS

In my survey of experienced ministry leaders I asked two questions that resulted in some significant wisdom being shared. I have selected a few of the answers that I believe would be a valuable resource to Future Ministry Leaders.

Here are some highlights of what experienced ministry leaders shared in response to the question: What do you wish someone had told you before you entered into a ministry leadership position?

1. That the most important ministry tool you will have is learning how to forgive other people. People, even with good intentions, will say things that hurt you and make you question your gifts and sometimes make you question your own motivations. It's not usually just one person or one incident that leads a pastor to get out of ministry; it's 1,000 different negative comments, emails, whispers, and Facebook messages over the course of years. It's death by paper cut: at some point you realize you're bleeding out and you hadn't even noticed you had a thousand little nicks on you.
2. It's a marathon
3. Guard your heart. So much of ministry is done from a place of exhaustion rather than a place of joy if you do not protect your heart and life.
4. You will hurt. But inside the hurt is the gift of self-knowledge and the grace of God.
5. This will be the hardest thing you can do...do anything else if you can.
6. I don't know if it would have been possible, but I wish someone could have helped me understand the weight of my position. I've been in ministry for almost 15 years, but had no idea the weight of being the lead guy until four years ago. It's definitely been a learning process.
7. Make sure you work out of your strengths and see the strengths of everyone around you.
8. Relax. Do your best under the circumstances and then take a nap.
9. Leadership requires risk and that people need clearly defined vision and mission. If you cannot describe the vision quickly and concretely no one will follow.
10. You need thick skin and a tender heart.
11. Enjoy the journey while you're on it. It's a great ride even in the midst of the difficulties.

12. The emotional and relational weight of ministry.
13. It's not about you, not about your dreams, not about success, not about church growth, not about anything else. It is about Jesus Christ and Him alone.
14. That ministry would not be an automatic path to a closer walk with God.
15. Be prepared to disappoint people
16. I'm not defined personally or spiritually by what happens in our church. I'm first and foremost a child of God and my identity is in HIM, not in THEM.
17. The fear, panic and stress that can literally paralyze you and how to work through it with good counsel and a deepening trust in God. That hit me out of nowhere. Maybe there nothing that could prepare someone for that.
18. It's okay to admit that you don't know everything, that you don't think you have what it takes to come through in some instances and that people will be okay if you tell them "no". Remember that you have Christ and He loves and approves of you.

Here are some highlights of what experienced ministry leaders shared in response to the question: Imagine you are sitting across the desk from a future ministry leader. What would you most like to tell a future ministry leader that no one is telling them right now?

1. That this is harder than you can imagine right now. But: we grow most from experiencing great pain and experiencing great love, and you will walk through both of those experiences repeatedly in this job. Your response to those experiences will determine what kind of man or woman you ultimately become, but it will give you the opportunity to become a leader who has been forged by fire and is able to articulate a holistic understanding of the gospel that will transcend whatever your current understanding is. That this will be harder than you can imagine. And that, if God is leading you to it, it will be worth it.
2. Be sure of your calling...it will cost you more than you realize and you need to be at peace with it all before you start the journey.
3. Give it away immediately. Be a people developer from the start. Instead of seeing your ministry as a platform to pontificate, see it as a platform to give other people platforms to express their gifts.
4. I am not sure no one is telling them, but relationships are the key. Your relationship with God, your relationship with your spouse and children, and your relationship with your staff, leaders, friends. Relationships always trump tasks.
5. Ground your identity in Christ for the strength you will need to face the rejection that will come.
6. Don't take yourself too seriously. Do your best. You have nothing to prove and no one to impress.
7. Be teachable your whole life.

8. Listen more talk less. Find an experienced pastor to soak and learn from BEFORE you make any decisions about your ministry calling and your specific role(s) at a church.
9. It is not about being cool. It is about obedience and simply doing what the Lord calls you to do. If you compare yourself with others you will be miserable. Your identity needs to be in your relationship with Jesus.
10. This is going to be the hardest ride of your life so make sure you are doing it for the right reasons. If you are, it will be the greatest ride of your life. And you better have a few safe people around you at all time who love you, support you, and have the courage to speak truth to you.
11. Don't buy into the lie of seeking success, even in ministry. Humility is the only path to effective leadership. Be bold but stay humble. Embrace it and nurture it. No one will encourage it and few model it.
12. Christ died for you, loves you, and delights in you apart from your performance. Your emotional health matters more than you think. Make friends. Find mentors. Don't sweat the small stuff. Celebrate well.
13. Don't isolate yourself from others...build deep meaningful friendships...it is a myth that good leaders can't have great friends.
14. Leadership is a 24-7 pursuit. You never stop thinking about your ministry. Share the wins with your family but protect them from the assaults.
15. Don't sacrifice your relationships-your personal relationship with Christ, wife, kids, etc on the altar of success. Don't get your worth in what you do. Address the deep idols of significance and control. (33 series a man and his traps)
16. Your ministry position is not what will bring ultimate happiness. Hold God's Word in your heart, draw close to Christ, remember that He is with you. He holds all this in his caring hand. He loves the church more than you. Life is short, find a way to joyfully lead from your giftedness in your greatest interests.

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ABSTRACT

THE HIGH COST OF LEADERSHIP: EQUIPPING LEADERS FOR LOSS

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Chapter 1 describes the high cost of leadership and the difficulty of ministry through both quantitative and qualitative research. In ministry, there will be loss, but the good news is that the ministry leader has the opportunity to choose what to lose. The rationale for this project is that while the statistics are overwhelming, the experiential battles are even worse. Therefore, every future ministry leader must be equipped for what is surely to come.

Chapter 2 debunks the myth that one can have it all in ministry or life. In this chapter, I begin looking at the book of Philippians and what the apostle Paul taught his most beloved church and their leaders about loss in ministry. Here one learns that loss is life for the leader, that one must chose to lose the right things and not the wrong ones, that loss begins as part of the work that God begins at the point of salvation, and that there is great freedom found in loss.

Chapter 3 continues the study of loss in the book of Philippians, looking at the loss of self. The chapter starts by discussing why ministry leaders leave and then proceeds to discuss the need to lose selfish ambition and vain conceit while looking at the four examples that Paul gives in Philippians 2 of those who were selfless.

Chapter 4 walks the future leader through Philippians 3, where Paul says that he considers everything a loss in comparison to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord. One discovers here that false promises lead one on false pursuits

and that the ministry leader must be willing to lose it all except the one thing he needs, namely Christ.

Chapter 5 looks at the final chapter of the book of Philippians and the anxiety that surrounds loss. The future leader discovers that true peace and contentment comes from finding Christ. The chapter concludes with applications for pastors, churches, and areas of further study that could be explored regarding ministry leaders and loss.

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