10 Reasons Why Pastors Leave the Ministry

By Jim Fuller

NOTE: In 2004, Pastoral Care, Inc. interviewed hundreds of pastors who have left the ministry. The results of our interviews reveal some of the reasons why pastors leave the ministry. Comparing results from one denomination to another or comparing different demographics can bring different results. Also please note that many of the pastors interviewed reported that two or more of the reasons listed in this article were contributing factors for leaving the ministry.

DISCLAIMER: The results of these interviews are not to be construed to a statistical measure but should be considered to be contributing factors for one leaving the ministry.

**10. LACK OF VISION**

Most pastors start out in the ministry with the energy and vision necessary to be able to

conqueror almost everything. While their vision may change from time to time, depending on the direction from God, their energy is often tied to several different factors that are influenced by either positive or negative variables. These variables, as well as ministers learning how to deal with them, can determine whether a pastor may or may not continue in the ministry. Positive attributes are usually marked by high levels of energy, determination, and confidence. If not preserved or maintained, they can lead to negative attributes of feelings of insecurity, isolation and often needing the validation from others to confirm their vision and calling.

**POSITIVE FACTORS:**

• Affirmation

• Acceptance

• Confirmation

• Success

• Validation

• Progress

• Belonging

• Support

• Appreciation

• Spiritual Hunger

• Good Health

**NEGATIVE FACTORS:**

• Rejection

• Resistance

• Stagnate

• Isolation

• Failure

• Poor Health

• Lack of Accountability

• Lack of Spiritual Hunger

Sometimes, these physical and emotional factors seem overwhelming and larger than life itself. While these are only a few factors, they can still influence one's calling and vision. People so often use these two terms interchangeably. There is a vast difference in “being called” into the ministry and have a “vision” or direction where you feel God is leading. Many pastors become disillusioned, tired, and seemingly unable to “hear” from God when these negative variables are present. If not recognized and quickly dealt with, they will interfere with the ability to “seek” God's direction.

Many pastors in this “Lack of Vision State” have not surrounded themselves with people with whom they trust or confide, such as an accountability partner, one who could help them through difficult times. One survey state that 70% of the ministers report not having a close friend to whom they can confide! Even Jesus surrounded himself with others for support as well as to train them for the future.

“Pastors are people too” and are made up of “flesh and blood” just like everyone else. So many ministers report thinking they must “live on an island” and thus be isolated from anyone else. God never intended for us to be alone.

The demands of the ministry can be overwhelming at times but “We can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us”, Philippians 4:13. Pastors cannot afford to allow isolation, invalidation, health and financial pressures and any other discouragement to prevent them from seeking God's direction. All ministers must protect and renew their vision regularly. One can only do this by scheduling quality time alone with God, seeking his presence and direction.

Get alone with God! Seek what he has for your life and ministry. Please, do not allow negative influences to rob your vision and career!

**9. LOW INCOME/LOW SELF-ESTEEM**

Many of our churches, due to low church attendance, cannot support a full-time pastor, even though many expect their pastor to continue his/her role as a full time. Many pastors are forced to become bi-vocational to meet their personal/family needs. Several factors contribute to this increasing problem:

**FACTORS:**

• Decreasing Church Attendance

• Increased Cost of Living

• Lack of Education/Instruction of Giving to Laity

• Mega Churches Drawing Church Members Away

• Lack of Skilled Training for a Second Job

• Guilt/Lack of Faith that Prevents Seeking a Second Job

These factors cause additional pressures for a minister to support his/her family as well as perform the duties of a pastor. All ministers desire to encourage others to live by faith and believe God for provision. When it comes to the pastor's provision, there are times when their provisions are not met. Is there something wrong with the pastor’s faith with what he/she is doing? Is it the fault of the laity? Is the leadership of the church genuinely concerned about the needs of the pastor? Is there added pressures from the laity to restrict a pastor from seeking outside employment to supplement their income? Is there a narrow mindset from the laity on how to treat and provide for their pastor? Has there been adequate teaching and training in this area?

Questions like these coupled with a lack of provision often lead to thoughts of failure, causing stress and anxiety in wondering how to pay their bills and having to feel they always must carry on with a smile for others to see. Ministers start out in the ministry with high expectations and often leave because of a lack of self-esteem. Did you know that 90% of ministers report they feel inadequately trained to meet the demands of the ministry, 70% report having a lower self-image now than when they first started and 50% of ministers will not even last 5 years! These are horrible statistics! Most of the ministers can think back of other ministers who started with them in the ministry and is no longer in the ministry. Why? Perhaps no one was around to offer encourage or financially support them when they needed help the most.

According to one survey, the occupation of pastor ranks near the bottom of the most-respected professions, just above “car salesman”. Feeling good about our self and meeting the needs of our family is very important to everyone. Many expect the pastor and his/her family to have a higher set of standards than they do and unfortunately, having to “live by faith” more in providing for their provision. God answers prayer but He often uses people. People must be taught to be obedient and available to be used.

Another factor is the fact that pastors are unable to obtain other employment because the duty of the ministry is demanding, they lack the necessary skills for other employment, or they may have health problems that prevent them from performing duties required for employment. These pressures, along with low self-esteem, cause pastors to leave the ministry in hopes of seeking employment to meet their family’s need. The other prevailing thought is by changing careers, they will not have as many demands as being a pastor and will have extra benefits, such as retirement, health insurance, vacation and appreciation of a job well done!

Pastors are often afraid of being honest with their church or leadership in addressing their needs. Let me be very clear…that does not show a lack of faith! Again, let me say God still answers prayer but He usually does it through people! This may allow others to be involved in blessing God's messenger or it may be instructing the church of the need for the pastor to seek outside employment to meet his/her needs because the church is unable to presently do so. In any way, do not give up. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and he will add the rest to you. God's will can be provided! Do not stay or feel alone. Do not be afraid to teach and share your needs!

**8. STRESS & BURNOUT**

***Stress and burnout are one of the leading causes for ministers to leave the ministry.*** When people think about stress, there usually attach negative connotations with it, but there is also a good stress.

**Good Stress**:

• Which is associated with feelings of joy, such as a birth of a baby, being a mother or
father, taking on new responsibilities.

• Fulfillment and achievement as to complete a degree through a long and grinding
process.

• Multi-tasking, constantly taking of someone, understanding that you are doing the right
thing and will have no regrets later.

• The long hours to build a career, pushing limits, and seeing the “light in the tunnel”
affect.

**Negative stress** usually involves prolonged and frequent transactions that take place between a person and his/her environment. There are many reasons for stress:

• The disparity between idealistic expectations and reality.

• The lack of clear boundaries—tasks never done, “I have to do everything” mentality.

• Peter Principle—feeling inadequate in leading volunteers.

• Conflict in being a leader—trying to please everyone.

• Trying to be a “servant” to everyone.

• Time management problems.

• Multiplicity of roles.

• Inability to produce “win-win” conflict resolutions.

• Lack of clear communication.

• Clergy being basically insecure, lonely, and too serious.

**CONTRIBUTORS TO STRESS:**

• Poor diet, too much caffeine, processed flour, refined sugar, poor exercise habits

• Career uncertainty, role ambiguity, role conflicts, role overload, long hours

• Psychological factors - loss of loved ones, divorce, marital/family problems

• Spiritual factors - despair of church not growing, jealousy, pornography, sexual
fantasies, sexual inappropriateness

Burnout is emotional exhaustion. It is similar to lack of motivation because it causes one to give up on something to which he/she was once passionately committed. Burnout is not usually found in “lazy” people. One of the characteristics of burnout is “burning a candle at both ends”. 90% of ministers report working between 55 to 75 hours per week and most ministers do not exercise nor take regularly scheduled vacations.

**CAUSES OF BURNOUT:**

• Working too hard without a break.

• Reaching a goal after long hard work and not having a vision or purpose to go forward,
such as after a building program.

• Feeling you have been betrayed by those you are serving.

• Feeling betrayed by others you are serving under.

• Feeling used or not cared for.

• Sin, unrepented or unconfessed.

• Wrong priorities of time and energy, becoming a workaholic.

• Unfulfilled expectations of success, recognition, or reward.

• Trying to do the job you are not called to do.

• Lack of adequate support, over your head.

• Lack of boundaries to protect your family.

**PREVENTION:**

• Awareness of potential problem—listen to those close to you.

• Maintain a consistent devotional life.

• Accept your limitations—Jesus is the only Messiah.

• Use common sense - think about how it is going to affect your family, physically,
mentally, financially, and spiritually. Are they getting better or worse?

• Balance what is most important in your life.

• Seek out and enjoy the simple things in life.

• Practice the Sabbath principle - take off work, take vacations!

• Deal with disappointments, forgive!

• Have someone you can talk to with problems - accountability partner.

• Do the ministry you are gifted and called to do.

• Nurture your family!!!

If you have stress and burnout, please get the help you need! Life is too short. Satan is working overtime to discourage and to keep ministers so busy and occupied that they are of no earthly good.

**7. FEELING NOT APPRECIATED**

Many pastors go through their ministry dealing with all sorts of difficulty. Some seem to go from one church to another, often labeling those who were troublemakers while others deal with continual issues of people unwilling for change, lack of vision and purpose, lack of dedicated workers, argumentative or controlling spirits, unreasonable demands, and financial and spiritual struggles.

Many pastors may also contribute to their own demise by being too rigid, unwilling to negotiate, distancing themselves from others, personality conflicts, lifestyle differences and an unyielding way of working with people.

Most pastors will face some or all these difficulties sometime in their ministry. While these may seem overwhelming at times, most are manageable and at the very worst, can conclude they are not a good match for that church. On a positive note, most pastors are willing to “roll up their sleeves” to work on issues, one at a time, hoping for change. Others may “jump ship” or be voted out too quickly. In either way, a pastor may or may not fully have control over his/her circumstances.

When pastors go through these difficult times, they often find excuses or reasons why people may or may not accept them. This may make him/her feel better in that situation but usually does not address the root of the issue. The real problem occurs whenever a pastor perceives these as personal attacks. Let me be very clear, there is a difference between people rejecting the message and those who reject the messenger. Often, ministers get confused between these two.

There is nothing wrong in reflecting on one’s experiences and learning from our mistakes. Overwhelming failures, insecurities and a lack of validation or appreciation of all the hard work a minister goes through, often brings thoughts of pulling out of the ministry altogether.

Note: Appreciation is a normal course that usually follows a job well done. Everyone likes to feel appreciated but in reality, no one has control over whether he/she receives any appreciation at all. The fact is some people do not show appreciation very well and our expectations may be higher than those around us. Some ministers have stated they work in a “thankless occupation” often perceiving their laity as having an attitude of “what have you done for me lately, pastor?” This sliding escalation of negative thought often leads to a minister contemplating about leaving.

To remain focused on one's calling, a pastor must guard against such negative thought. A better use of time can be seeking wise counsel and asking how they may deal with these problems. Most problems in the ministry are not unique, but rather “universal”. Those who may offer suggestions may have already come to that “crossroad” in their ministry and can encourage you in your hour of need.

Another way to keep focused is to seek God's approval and explore other possibilities to help educate others to show appreciation. Physical and mental demands can perhaps be manageable but when coupled with low self-esteem, lack of appreciation and a lack of measurable progress, ministers often feel they are a failure and question why they should stay in a place/occupation where they are not wanted?

To prevent this from spiraling out of control, one should consider the following interventions:

• Look and write down the small successes.

• Examine and think on the good things that are being/have been accomplished.

• Look for change in any church members because of your direct/indirect involvement.

• Find support and encouragement from others/friends/associates.

• Look for opportunities to help others.

• Walk and appreciate God's creation.

• Re-examine your calling.

• Exercise or be active in a hobby/craft.

• Teach Pastor Appreciation at your church. It is best to find someone who has a heart for
the ministry and can take this on to show appreciation to you as well as to prepare for the next pastor should God call you elsewhere.

While this is not an extensive list of interventions, these are merely intended for a pastor to think about his/her ministry. Your ministry is not about being appreciated; it is about following God's call. Too many pastors leave the ministry for the wrong reason, sometimes feeling unappreciated rather than examining why they are there. Jesus gave us a perfect example. He was hated and rejected. He warned us that others will do the same to us. Personal feelings, while very important, are not the determining factor of whether a minister stays in the ministry. Leaving may even constitute disobedience of not following through to the very end of God’s calling on your ministry as well as the church. Please refocus on your calling. Make sure you hear from the Lord. Seek help and look for the “good” in all things.

**6. CAN'T BE REAL—HAVE TO BE THE MOST SPIRITUAL!**

Many pastors struggle with the idea that they cannot be truly themselves. Pastors think their congregation perceive them as being the most spiritual, morally superior, and are void of any problems. Their families must be the most well-mannered and active in every program within the church.

While ministers should set standards high enough for others to follow and want to achieve, the very nature of double standards propel ministers to further distant themselves from others within the church. According to statistics, 66% of church members expect a minister and his/her family to live by a higher moral standard than they do. This pervasive thought lends itself unrealistic, and when accompanied by the demands of the ministry, ministers and their families feel an inward pressure to further distance themselves from others even more! 80% believe pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families and 94% report feeling pressures of being in the pastor's family.

These unrealistic demands and pressures cause struggles for many ministers. Most feel they “cannot afford” to be real, for the fear of others being disappointed. Some state they go through life wearing a mask, “acting” one way, “hoping” and “fearing” no one finds out who they really are. When these pressures are a prevalent way of thought or living, ministers are not using their talents and abilities that God has blessed them with. Many go through feelings of guilt and fear of trying to be “someone else” rather than just being “themselves”. There is such a tremendous waste of unused talent and ability, no wonder America is questioning the effectiveness of the church today.

Whether these written or unwritten demands originate from the laity or the ministry, one must wonder - Can a minister have their own identify or do they walk in someone else's identity? Is there a time in their ministry where they can relax and be “just themselves”? How can a minister find ways to alleviate their frustrations?

Boundaries: Most successful pastors have outlined boundaries around their ministry. These boundaries may include desires from the laity, such as leading by example to encouraging others to strive toward spiritual growth. Paul sets the same example in 1 Corinthians 11:1 when he says to follow him as he follows Christ.

Other parts of the boundary must also include some of their own personal wishes, such as their personality, talents, abilities, family times and all the time, not forgetting God's purpose and direction for their lives and the church.

“Being Real” is important for everyone. There is nothing wrong in “being yourself” around your family and close friends while maintaining a professional less-than open posture when you are around others who really do not know you yet. Too many times pastors and their families do not have anyone close enough around them to relax and just be themselves. 70% report not having a close friend.

The very nature of your occupation lends itself to being looked upon as the most spiritual, even though at times when you do not feel like it. There are ways to safeguard yourself from these feelings of guilt, pressure and thoughts and feelings of quitting or running away.

**SAFEGUEARDS:**

• Personal Devotion time alone for study and prayer.

• Set healthy boundaries around your ministry and family.

• Make personal time for family and friends.

• Educate your church/board.

• Delegate authority within the church leadership.

**5. STRESS ON THE FAMILY AND HEALTH**

Most people never think about how the ministry demands affect the pastor and his/her family, especially long term. As mentioned before, 94% of the minister's families feel the pressures of the pastor's ministry. 80% report that it has negatively affected them. Children of pastors often report having negative experiences and many do not attend church anywhere today because of those negative experiences!

The minister's spouse often feels neglected for the “sake of the ministry”. A common statement made by the spouse is “My spouse loves the church more than he/she loves me!” An unexpected visit to the pastor's home by a church member, the endless hospital visits, the phone calls, complaints made by laity and vacation times cut short because of someone being in the hospital or passing away are only a few of the stressors a pastor's family face. If these escalate or continue over long period of time, further problems within the family may develop, which leads to another stressor. The pastor's family is not supposed to have any marital or family problems.

Please do not misunderstand, the pastor's family loves the church but resents it when it “steals their parent or spouse from their family time”. A pastor deals with so many people, problems, and issues. While most church members are considerate, many others are not, never thinking about intruding on the pastor's personal time or consider the number of calls they receive every day. The pastor and his family are truly on call 24/7.

Another note. The demands of the ministry often take its toll mentally, spiritually, and physically. Worry, stress, and neglect of one's health can further lead to stress and burnout as well as other more serious health problems, such as stroke, heart attack and cancer. Often, people will allow a minister to work as much as he/she can, without limitations. Usually no one is there to regulate, protect and keep track of a pastor from reaching danger limits, except his family. Too often, pastors will ignore the advice of their family for the sake of doing “God's work”. God never intended to work us 24/7. Jesus even needed rest!

Put things in priority: God First, Family second, and the church or your calling third. When your ministry is complete or over, you hope you will still have your family. Family is everything! Please guard and protect them. No one else will!

**SAFEGUEARDS OF PROTECTING THE FAMILY & HEALTH:**

• Place boundaries to protect your family.

• Make family time—no calls, except emergencies.

• Delegate a leader to take calls and duties.

• Take regular vacations (not just to relatives).

• Do special things with your family.

• Treat your family better than your church members.

• Limit and manage your time.

• Educate your church on the importance of your family.

• Continually tell your family how much you love them.

**4. LACK OF DENOMINATIONAL SUPPORT**

Pastors that are going through difficulties should have a safe place to turn for help. One of the logical places is with their denomination. Denominational leaders are quick to state they are there for the pastors. After all, they are the ones who may have encouraged them to be in the ministry in the first place and are the very ones who credentials the minister. So why are ministers not calling them for help?

One reason is that denominations have a dual relationship with their ministers. On one hand, they are the good guys - the ones for credentialing and cheering pastors up when they are together. On the other hand, they are a disciplinary group - the ones who terminate or places ministers on probation or suspension mostly to a sin issue. Most pastors report never hearing from their denomination unless it is due to a problem with the pastor.

Secondly, denominations are also concerned for the church. Because of this, many pastors often feel their denomination treat the laity more fairly, especially during church conflict or problems. Pastors report that denominations seem to” go overboard” with the laity in making “peace”, but has less-leniency toward the pastor, even with problems created by the laity. In denominational meetings, pastors hear that their denomination is there for them but when facing with a real problem or issue, pastors often feel otherwise.

Thirdly, pastors also report being unable to talk freely to their denominational officials for the fear of them “keeping track” of their activities. Ministers do not want their “bosses” to feel they are doing a poor job or are discouraged. When they meet again, they do not want to wonder if their denominational leader is thinking about past problems. When ministers have feelings and thoughts about leaving the ministry, can they honestly tell their boss? What if there is a sin issue, can they freely talk to their denominational leaders without fear of being terminated? If terminated, how will they be able to pay their bills? What about their reputation? Because of these fears, most ministers prefer to keep their problems/feelings to themselves.

As mentioned before, denominational meetings are usually designed to encourage and support ministers but often ministers find themselves surrounded with others, either in denial or portraying everything is “totally perfect” in their lives. Everyone seems to be “on top of the world”, smiling, laughing, and sometimes boasting of how well their church is doing. There may be a pastor in the same room, who is afraid of sharing, feeling unsuccessful, insecure, guilty for having feelings of wanting to leave the ministry and needs spiritual renewal. When, in fact, others are just like them but are afraid to ask for help! Even the most boastful minister, when alone, will admit they would like to know that denominations will support them not matter what.

Fourthly, while denominational meetings are meant to support and encourage, they often bring in success stories of pastors with large churches of 5,000 or more. Pastors look at each other and state, “I am pastoring a church that does not have 5,000 in their town or community. How does this bring encouragement to a pastor looking for help and encouragement?” Pastors often state their denomination has lost “reality” of how to help their pastors to be successful.

Denominations should and can provide support that is needed for every pastor, but it is important to note that the denomination has the right to maintain the integrity of the ministry. This may mean disciplinary or probationary actions if needed to as to help the pastor in the long run. This action of discipline should be well communicated with someone from his/her denomination keeping in touch with the pastor to ensure he/she does not feel unwanted or pushed aside. In these situations, trust should be protected and re-built back. If the dual relationship exists, there are limited options that can be implemented.

**LIMITED OPTIONS:**

• Provide research from an outside source to identify stressors associated with their
 ministers.

• Offer educational support (not identifying any one person) on the stressors identified by
 their ministers. Other ministers can still benefit from the information, even though they
 may not be presently having that problem.

• Outsource the counseling and other resources to others to provide confidential help to a
minister in need.

• Be fair to both laity and ministers.

Denominations can be a solid force to the ministers but needs improvement. Too many pastors are leaving the ministry. One of the last statistics revealed America had over 1,700 ministers leave the ministry each month! There were over 1,300 who were terminated each month by their local church, many without cause - they wanted someone younger, older, did not like the music, etc. And many denominations are reporting an "empty pulpit crisis". Support is needed from various places but the one that makes most sense is denominational support. But denominations for the most past are about 10-15 years behind issues or statistics.

Ministers who feel they have no place to turn for help, need to find a friend or call a safe and confidential organization like PASTORAL CARE INC.

**3. MINISTERS HAVE A VISION, THE CHURCH DOESN'T**

Ministers believe they are “called” of God, to preach and carry a message to the people. Even during tough times, a minister can still love his flock and have compassion for them if there is visible progress being made. Ministers feel “led” to go into difficult places, such as, going to a church with a history of “getting rid” of a pastor every 3-4 years or going into a city where there is “spiritual disagreement” in the community. America seems to have churches on every corner, none of which gets along with one another, and many were started because of church splits or disagreements.

Ministers and their family “give all their energy and time” for the sake of the ministry. They work long hours, sacrificing to build the church, visit the sick, neglect family and personal time and sometimes suffers financially. Most pastors are willing to go beyond what most laity would ever consider doing. Yet all pastors desire the church to respond to God's purpose or direction for their church.

The most disheartening thing ministers go through is to feel they have a message and direction from God for their church, but the people are not willing to listen or respond. In one survey, ministers and laity were asked, “What is the purpose of the church?” 90% of the pastors state the purpose of the church was to reach the lost but when asking the laity, 90% report the purpose is to meet their own needs! Only 10% of the laity stated the purpose was to reach the lost.

No wonder churches are not making any difference in their communities - they are not interested in reaching the lost but rather are only interested in themselves! There is no unity in the things of God nor is there any vision. Is the church saying “NO” to God? Why is the minister unable to effectively convince people to change their vision to God’s vision? The Bible refers to the “last days” as being like the days of Noah. People are so busy with themselves that they overlook the principal goal of reaching the lost!

By the way, ministers are people too! They can become discouraged and feel that they are living in a land like Noah. Other statistics reveal America had 4,000 churches close last year and had over 3,500 people leave the church every year - people who were once in church but became hurt and discouraged by someone (Christians usually). So many ministers are worn-out mentally, physically, financially, and spiritually. When their time and efforts seem useless or without meaning, ministers often say, “what's the use!”

I can go into any church and in any denomination and ask three questions. I already know the answer beforehand. They are:

1. How many here would like to see souls won in the Kingdom of God? People all over the congregation would raise their hands and say, “YES”.

2. How many here in the congregation would like to see your church instrumental in wining souls into the Kingdom of God? I mean that people would walk through these doors and accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior? People all over the congregation would raise their hands and shout, “YES!”

3. Then I would ask the third question. What are you doing about it? Suddenly there is quiet all over the building. A building that was once united to see this happen and know the reason why the church is there in the first place—to see souls won into the Kingdom of God. The trust is…no one is willing to do anything. We are grateful for all God has done in our lives but ungrateful enough to share His message.

**SAFEGUARDS TO PREVENT LEAVING:**

• Go back to the reason why you are there. Are you there to satisfy man or God?

• Look at examples in the Bible where ministers were not listened to or appreciated.

• Work as a team to accomplish these goals, recruit one from your church or another
church in the community.

• Ask advice from a seasoned minister.

• Understand you are delivering a message. If they don't reject it, it is not your problem.

• Don't develop a Messiah complex.

• Understand your limitations, get help if needed!

• Approach the vision differently. Be creative!

• Don't fear what others will think. Do this in obedience to God.

• Get rest when you are weary. Our physical and mental bodies are limited.

• Maintain an active devotional life.

• Get away from negative people.

• List your goals and review them every day.

• Laugh, listen to uplifting music.

**2. Lack of Validation and Drive.**

The lack of motivation is different from lack of vision. A pastor who lacks vision may still be motivated to continue. Usually the lack of vision, lack of self-esteem, lack of validation (little or no works to show for their efforts), and financial pressures are contributors in leading pastors to the point where they face a lack of motivation or drive to continue. A lack of motivation takes away all desire, will and drive to perform any operations associated with the ministry. In other words, the ministry demands have taken their toll on the “person”, the minister, to the point of not caring whether he/she ever preaches again or commonly states, “What is the use?”

• Depression can be a prelude to a lack of motivation. Major depression has
characteristics of lacking drive and energy to perform duties; being withdrawn and not wanting to be around others; often having long periods of time preferring to sleep.

• Traumatic events, such as fighting or confrontations with church members over
insignificant issues, over time may also cause ministers to give up.

• Lack of vision or motivation to change by church people over time can contribute to a
pastor thinking they are just “spinning their wheels”, not making any difference. Validation gives

People who experience a lack of motivation have often ignored the “warning signs”. Too many times a pastor has not taken a vacation or sought help that will bring about healing and restoration. Many of our pastors have “pushed aside” previous other warning signs and kept going for the sake of the “ministry”. Pastors are not machines, nor invincible, nor a God! Even Jesus needed a rest from time to time. He had to leave the crowds, the people who demanded too much, and even from those who tried to deceive or hurt him. How much more do we need as humans to get away for a much-needed rest! When we take care of ourselves, we can then take care of others!

Motivation is the “gasoline” that drives the car. One never gives up on the car but rather seeks to provide the fuel necessary to continue down the road. Ministers often leave the car (calling) prematurely without seeking ways to be “refueled”. It takes courage to endure without motivation, but in, God will either redirect one's path or change the people “in the way”. One may have to re-examine his/her calling and purpose, where they are today, and seek ways to be re-fueled!

***A couple of more things to consider:***

• Surround yourself with others who can add “fuel” to your life because they care. There is
strength in numbers.

• Exercise, such as walking or playing sports can be helpful in dealing with stressors
associated with a lack of motivation.

• Be able to share personal problems with a close friend will allow a person to “vent”
his/her frustrations and hopefully receive good counsel from a person who really cares about the ministry and the pastor as a person.

• Take a short trip and change your environment. Shop in a new store that you have
never visited before, take a different route to and from places, change your routine.

• Seek joy. Most of the pastors have told us that they have somehow lost their joy. Listen
to positive teachers, uplifting songs, be around people who are joyous, and somehow change how you think and talk. Look for the positive in anything even though it is not obvious. We are often “snared” by our talk. Life and death (outcomes) are often determined by our words and what we believe.

• Most of all pray and carve out “quality” time with the Lord. Some things only come
through prayer and fasting (and self-reflecting). Quitting or siting on a pew may not be the answer you need. It may seem a good idea at the time, but it will never satisfy your soul or fulfil your calling.

• Understand that God never promised our calling would be easy. Even though we like to
please others, we must understand that our calling is not to please man but ultimately must please God. We are the messenger. If people do not accept the message, it is nothing personal. They are not saying no to you but to God. Release any thoughts or personal feelings otherwise.

The ministry can be very taxing and stressful. It can also be very rewarding! If you are experiencing some of these warning signs, please seek help from someone who can help you get through this issue or contact Pastoral Care, Inc. at www.pastoralcareinc.com

**1. BEING ISOLATED OR FEELING ALL ALONE**

People often ask us, “How could this be a reason for a minister leaving the ministry?” After all, ministers seem to have plenty of people surrounding them on a weekly basis. In truth, ministers often report feeling isolated, not having the close fellowship they see laity have or perhaps they once had before entered the ministry.

Pastors only get close to their parishioners on a professional basis, working with them daily or weekly, often counseling them on several different issues, trying to mend or encourage others on their marriage, career, finances, health, and spiritual walk.

It also seems as if a pastor's work is never done. One older statistic report that pastors work between 55 to 75 hours a week, often burning a candle at both ends. Most of the calls a minister receives will never be on checking on how he/she is doing as a pastor but mostly focuses on the problems of the church or in the lives of the parishioners. Complaints seem to come in daily. Another stressor reveals that 40% of the minister’s report having serious conflict with a parishioner at least once a month! Over time, pastors report feeling that others are only caring about themselves, complaining about most everything, and have attitudes of “what have you done for me lately”. They give so much time to others but who is there for the pastor?

Most pastors report not having the freedom to share their problems/concerns with anyone. Ministers cannot tell their congregation that they feel their jobs are overwhelming at times or they have had thoughts about leaving the ministry. After all, this is their spiritual leader, how can a minister be discouraged? Secondly, they cannot share these feelings with other ministers - too many churches are in competition with one another. This may be the ammunition another pastor or church need! Thirdly, when ministers attend denominational meetings, pastors often give “praise reports” when they are around others. Pastors who have problems cannot share these due to others believing something must be wrong with a minister who has problems. Where can a minister go for help and encouragement? In truth, most ministers endeavor to try to cope with things and if untreated, will usually lead to burnout, losing all motivation and having thoughts that nobody cares!

With all the mounting pressures and conflicts, long hours, thankless efforts, stressors affecting their families and lack of support, many pastors feel they are alone and have no place to turn. Many seek support in other ways, often inappropriate, which cause them to leave the ministry and destroy their lives. Others will seek employment elsewhere. Even the business world seems more supportive to them and their needs than those in the ministry.

Becoming isolated, feeling alone, or thinking that no one cares whether you are successful or well taken care of, is the leading problem for a pastor to leave the ministry. ABSOLUTE TRUTH! NO DISCUSSIONS! We have found this true whether a minister is caught up with a fault or just left the ministry. **Whenever a pastor starts to isolate him/herself from others, this is the prime indicator that something is wrong**. There is no accountability, connectivity, or feeling if they have a special part in the ministry.

While this is the #1 reason, it is #1 to OVERCOME!

People may ask why is this #1 when it may be the easiest to overcome? Again, the reason is very simple - ministers do not have a friend or mentor whom they can trust! Too often ministers keep feelings, thoughts, concerns, problems, sin, discouragement, depression, and loneliness all inside. Sometimes pastors feel they can talk to their spouses, while others are afraid to share too much with their spouse because they fear their spouses may hold negative thoughts about the laity, sometimes causing marital problems.

Another reason for distrust may lie in the fact that many of our pastors have been severely wounded by other ministers, not keeping things shared in confidence to themselves. A seasoned pastor once shared with us that, “We have buried our wounded by not keeping things shared to ourselves”.

A pastor needs a friend!!! One that will be able to support and encourage them in all things throughout their life!

**SAFEGUARDS:**

• Find a friend or mentor you can trust

• Be accountable to others or find an accountability group

• Stay connected with other pastors in your area or denomination

• Understand that we need one another, and your ministry plays an important part

Refer to the last 3 Reasons to keep you in the ministry. Review things to consider and Safeguards. Please remember you are very important in the Kingdom of God.

Paul often refers to our walk/ministry as to running a race. Philippians 3:13 & 14 says, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”. The enemy often uses people, events, and situations to prevent us from reaching that mark. We can become too busy, unorganized, tired, suffer physical and financial strain, be unappreciated, seeing no results and many, many more. These still do not eliminate the overwhelming question, “WHO ARE WE DOING THIS FOR?”

If you are a pastor, let me encourage you to stay “true” to your calling. Our bodies are limited, and we can be tired in well doing. The real fact is that you may need a friend or someone to talk to whenever you have feelings of leaving the ministry. If you do not have a friend or anywhere else to turn, please turn to PASTORAL CARE INC. We care about you and so does God! Call us if we can help.

May God bless your ministry!

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