PASTORAL BURNOUT, FAILURE, AND THE VALUE OF RESTORATION

By Dean Davey, PhD

Introduction

After a lifetime of successful ministry, there he sat at his kitchen table with his head in his hands, weeping. Silently, I waited. It was a familiar scene witnessed throughout my research. Finally, he spoke, "If only I had someone to talk to, none of this would have happened." Now in his 60s, he recounted to me how only a few years ago he experienced symptoms of burnout and journeyed into *moral descent*. That fall cost him his ministry and nearly his life. "If only I had someone to talk to," he repeated solemnly, more to himself than to me.

Ironically, he was the pastor of a 5000+ member church and had seen decades of fruitful ministry. Surrounded by people who vied for his attention, he was still isolated and alone. Barna's recent study on the state of pastors found one in four pastors feel isolated and alone (Packiam 2022, 86), and perhaps would echo those words: "If only I had someone to talk to."

Isolation is one prong of the burnout trident that can spear the soul of pastors, deadening their desire to remain faithful to their values and their calling. Failure in ministry is the most traumatic (and potentially transformative) event in a pastor's life, and it often is precipitated by burnout (Davey 2019). Burnout has been identified as consisting of three dimensions: exhaustion (weariness), depersonalisation (isolation), and inefficacy (lack of accomplishment).

Burnout: A Pastoral Occupational Hazard

Burnout theory provides substantive insight when applied to a pastoral occupational context and the stressors experienced. It is helpful to begin by considering some of the factors that place pastors at risk and contribute to the crisis of failure. Whitson (2014) states that a Focus on the Family newsletter reported that their surveys of North American pastors indicate that 80 percent of pastors are discouraged or are dealing with depression and 40 percent report they are suffering from burnout, frantic schedules and unrealistic expectations. The Focus on the Family surveys also conclude that "1500 pastors leave their assignments each month, due to moral failure, spiritual burnout or contention within their local congregations" (4). A 2006 study of 744 USA Presbyterian ministers by Francis, Village, Robbins and Wulff (2011) revealed "one in three of the clergy (32%) reported a significant level of burnout . . . and only 29% considered themselves to be totally free from the

experience of burnout in their current call" (15). Recently, Packiam (2022) noted that 60 percent of pastors experience depression (86). More specifically, a study by Sutton, McLeland, Weaks, Cogswell, and Miphouvieng (2007) reported that 29.5 percent to 37percent of the participants know a pastor who had a problem that affected ministry; and 20.5 percent to 26.9 percent know a pastor who had a sexual problem while in the ministry (651-55). Another self-reported study, by Thomas and Sutton (2008), found 23 percent of clergy have engaged in extramarital sexual activity (311). The obvious question is what precipitates such dire statistics? What are the risk-inducing factors that pastors endure that contribute to these painful circumstances?

Risk factors

In the context of burnout studies, Schaufeli, Leiter and Maslach (2009) observe in relation to clergy:

> Cherniss and Kranz (1983) observed that burnout was virtually absent in monasteries, Montessori schools, and religious care centers where people consider their work as a calling rather than merely a job. They argued that such "ideological communities" provide a collective identity that prevents burnout from occurring because of social commitment, a sense of communion, contact with the collective whole, and shared strong values. Seen from this perspective, burnout represents the price paid of professionalizing the helping professions from "callings" into "modern" occupations. The frustration and disillusionment arising from a widespread, institutionalized clash of utilitarian organizational values with providers' personal or professional values contributed further to burnout. (207)

No longer are religious care centers and churches devoid of burnout. Schaufeli, Leiter and Maslach suggest that the professionalization of pastoral ministry may very well be an overarching risk factor for the change. The professionalization of the pastorate has been a concern for some (Piper 2013; Nouwen 2002), and yet churches appear to continue on a path of solidarity with a commercialized culture. To be clear, pastors must be trained and conduct themselves in a professional manner. However, the professionalization of the pastorate is the adoption and adaptation of the role toward cultural CEO organizational values and models. Such a corporate culture produces strain upon pastors and the specialization of their role. Additionally, the strain of personal goal conflict, compassion fatigue (Spencer, Winston and Bocarnea 2012), perceived social constraint (Proffitt, Cann, Calhoun and Tedeschi 2007), and loneliness (Scott and Lovell, 2015), become significant risk factors for pastors' well-being. These, along with personal insecurity, organizational

power-dynamics, congregational criticism and division, and unrealistic expectations all compound the risk factors for pastoral burnout.

Components of burnout

As previously mentioned, three primary components of burnout are recognized: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (cynicism/isolation), and inefficacy (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). In relation to pastoral ministry these elements are often influenced by various factors unique to a clergy role. Research shows that for pastors the components of burnout are influenced by spiritual, relational, and occupational factors (Chandler 2009). Where many who experience burnout typically relate contributing factors to work-life domains, such as workload, sense of control, inequities, and conflict within work relations (Maslach and Leiter 2008), the pastor has the added dimension of spiritual conflict and social implications (Spencer et al. 2012). Therefore, the components of burnout are the same, but the instigating variables such as "spiritual dryness" (Chandler 2009) or sense of isolation (Scott and Lovell 2015) are unique to the pastoral vocation.

Coping patterns

With the pastoral vocation containing the propensity for burnout and housing unique contributing factors, clergy have sought to employ coping strategies to assist them in staving off burnout. The question is which coping strategies have been effective. A concern noted in the literature is the lack of social support. At the same time, pastors seem to avoid social support networks (McMinn et al. 2005). Engaging in such networks can be perceived as "shameful" because it "shows" that one may not be secure, or "doing well" in their role.

The unique role pastors fulfill as representatives of the divine can elicit a sense of distinction and separation from others, along with an expectation to manage life stresses well (Proffitt et al. 2007). The role and this expectation can precipitate a pastor's unwillingness to be open and honest about a struggle, thinking it may discredit their position. Therefore, primary coping patterns for pastors involve intrapersonal, isolated acts (McMinn et al. 2005). As valuable as these can be, they limit a more robust and holistic approach to navigating the complexities of pastoral work. Such limited, individualistic approaches to coping may contribute to the unhealthy lack of social support. Could there be a better way to cope and thrive?

The development of positive psychology (Seligman 2002) has focused attention toward not merely surviving life's difficulties and trials but thriving through implementation of positive psychological practices. Positive psychology holds meaningful consideration for coping patterns in a pastoral context. The further development of Wong's (2010) Existential Positive Psychology (EPP) is especially pertinent for pastoral coping, as it embraces realistically both the positive and dark

sides of human existence. With the foundation of Logotherapy (Frankl 1969), EPP encourages a coping pattern that extends beyond a present situation and finds purpose in the challenge.[1] Coping that attributes spiritual veracity to circumstantial stressors is of particular value to pastors.

Assessing pastoral well-being

The twenty-first century has brought a resurgence of interest in assessing the well-being of pastors (Spencer et al. 2012; Parker and Martin 2011; Chandler 2009; Krejcir 2007; Luder 2014; McMinn et al. 2005; Whitson 2014). Recognition of the unique demands and pressures of pastoral ministry is growing. This interest, along with the awareness of the burgeoning number of pastors who are leaving ministry under duress (Whitson 2014), heightens the concern of care for pastors. While much popular literature attends to either personal themes of spiritual practice and perspective (Peterson 1992; Piper 2013; London and Wiseman 1994), or technocratic themes of functional leadership and systems (Maxwell 2007; Hartwig 2015; Schwarz 2000), more development is necessary in determining a construct of pastoral well-being. Based on Maslach's (2001) continuum of burnout-engagement profile, Parker and Martin (2011) conclude that pastors' well-being should be correlated to their level of engagement and assessed accordingly.

It is well documented that the pastoral role elicits dominant stressors on clergy at various levels, be they personal, relational, occupational, psychological, or spiritual. More than simply an occupation, the pastoral role projects the very identity of the individual. As well, being in a helping profession which seeks to service a variety of people's needs and expectations under a perceived divine-mandate places significant strain on pastors. If pastors have not developed healthy coping skills, their well-being can be adversely affected by these occupational demands.

To explicate this, a survey instrument of Scott and Lovell (2015) was administered five times over a period of 18 months. They utilized *T*-tests and *chi-squares* to note significant changes over time on the following five scales: loneliness (LS); compassion fatigue (CF); burnout (BT); daily spiritual experience (SE); and professional excellence (PE), with reliability ranging from α=.834 to .940. Statistical significance of $p<.01$ occurred on three scales (PE, CF, BT), and $p<.001$ on LS. Only SE lacked significant change.

Bivariate correlations were run and found a strong correlation between loneliness and risk of burnout (.819 at $p<.01$) and between compassion fatigue and risk of burnout (.729 at $p<.01$). Loneliness and compassion fatigue also carry a very

[1] Frankl's "tragic optimism" presents a perspective that seeks to find meaning in the midst of suffering. This perspective strongly influenced Wong toward a more holistic approach of positive psychology that incorporates tragedy within a larger (existential) frame of reference beyond a present circumstance. This outlook enabled Frankl to cope with the horrors of Auschwitz and provides spiritual vitality to cope with life's difficulties today.

strong correlation (.872, $p<.01$) on daily spiritual experience which, if the pastor is healthy, can stave off burnout. Thus, "decreasing loneliness would be a good starting point" (89) for a clergy care program. Of all the factors, loneliness was most strongly and negatively correlated with professional excellence (-.757, $p<.01$). The report also noted that most increases in ministry satisfaction resulted from personal and private reflection, rather than from relationship with others, thus highlighting that even a positive ministry satisfaction aspect is still based in isolation.

Scott and Lovell (2015) conclude that isolation (loneliness) remains the single biggest issue for the pastors surveyed and that both loneliness and compassion fatigue significantly predict risk of burnout. While the scores improved over time, the final data collection still found pastors "feeling episodically overwhelmed, isolated, and unbalanced" (91). The pastors who reported feeling extreme closeness to God still reported feeling isolated from those around them. The authors conclude that "a solitary connection to God is the resource that pastors use most often for 'recuperating.' This dynamic may in fact reinforce social isolation, which contributes to the experience of burnout" (92). Scott and Lovell's research confirms, once again, that "having no one to talk to" becomes a gateway for burnout and ministry failure.

Profiles and personalities

Due to the painful and costly results of burnout, it would be helpful to identify early warning signs, so that effective preventative interventions could be implemented. Research demonstrates that preventative interventions are not merely precipitated by workplace conditions, but also by burnout profiles and personality. Montero-Marin et al. (2012) sought to differentiate particular subtypes within the three primary domains of exhaustion, depersonalization, and inefficacy to understand the "process by which the syndrome develops by means of the different burnout profiles" (4). They found that the frenetic subtype feels "stressed as a result of overload, mainly owing to the subject's [excessive] involvement and ambition," the underchallenged subtype experiences burnout via the "monotonous and unstimulating conditions that fail to provide the necessary satisfaction," and the worn-out subtype "give up when faced with stress or absence of gratification" (3). Each subtype correlates with the multi-dimensional theory of burnout and offers a typological approach to identify the predictive factors impinging upon each subtype producing burnout. The frenetic profile is associated with *exhaustion* due to excessive workload and effort, the underchallenged is associated with *cynicism* due to lack of enthusiasm and personal development, and the worn-out subtype with *inefficacy* due to apathy resulting from lack of control and acknowledgement of work done (3-4).

Maslach and Leiter (2016) developed a similar application relating to pastoral burnout. The *Overextended* profile (the frenetic subtype, *exhaustion*) needs to

address issues of workload, the *Disengaged* (underchallenged subtype, *cynicism*) needs to focus upon values and social relationships, and the *Ineffective* (worn-out subtype, *inefficacy*) needs to be empowered for impacting decisions and actions. A person-centered approach that customizes interventions for burnout may well be the best use of organizational resources to alleviate burnout and foster engagement (99). Maslach and Leiter's profile considerations are crucial in discerning best practices for burnout prevention.

Personality also provides understanding of burnout and prevention possibilities. Schwarzkopf et al. (2016) expose this through the correlation between narcissism and burnout. Identifying the relationship between narcissism and burnout as comparable to that of depression and burnout suggests that further research is needed. This identification also carries relevant clinical implications for treating those who suffer from burnout. Effective therapy may then include addressing vulnerabilities of narcissistic individuals, such as "recognition of one's limits, expectations and demanding attitudes, interpersonal vulnerability, desire for instant success, idealism, often unconscious competitiveness, and difficulties with accepting help" (31).

Of particular interest to this article is the connection Schwarzkopf et al. (2016) make to burnout in clergy, noting:

> In addition to organizational factors, intrapersonal factors such as high idealism, narcissism, and perfectionism have been suggested to be important for an understanding of burnout in the clergy (Grosch & Olsen, 2000). Investing excessive efforts in pursuit of high ideals and having high expectations from oneself lead to working too hard and doing too much, so EE and DP may follow when goals are not achieved (Maslach et al., 2001). (30)

Since it is not uncommon for clergy to be identified as struggling with narcissism disorder (Zondag 2004, 427-30), exploration into this personality type and overall well-being of pastors is crucial when considering burnout and its negative impact on *moral descent*.

Burnout as a Factor in Ministry Failure

In the sample group for the *Phenomenological Study of the Spiritual Formation and Restoration of North American Pastors who Experienced Moral Descent* (Davey 2019), two primary domains were prominent in relation to ministry failure: Secrecy/Isolation and Stress/Burnout.

Secrecy and isolation

Secrecy and isolation were noted by 75 percent of the participants as a critical factor contributing to *moral descent*. The unfortunate reality in this avoidable factor is that the pastors felt they had no one to share their struggle with. For instance, Dan[2] had taken the risk and tried to share his struggle, but his experience, like so many, was the following: "I tried to talk to some people about my struggles, but the response was either diminished or shamed, about a half a dozen people who I opened my heart to, and it was just, don't talk about it – it was just so awkward, or they would literally shame me. So, I just shut down." This is far too common because the church does not have the spirit or the mechanisms in place to handle the raw reality that a leader can struggle with significant issues. Sam picked this up, saying, "A lot of times, pastors are struggling, [and] when they try to tell the church, [it] honestly doesn't know what to do with that information. There aren't systems in place; there aren't people with a lot of experiences to help." Some denominations urge their pastors to be part of accountability groups, but Jason simply looks at them as limited confessionals, and refers to them as "accountability inoculation." David also explained: "Even in accountability pastor groups, the one I was in for the last 10-12 years of my ministry – we talked about a lot of things, we talked about leadership, and we cried with each other over things that had happened in our church, or maybe a family member, but we didn't talk about sex. For whatever reason that didn't develop."

Many pastors wished they had had someone to be completely honest with. With an imploring tone Josh admitted, "I never had someone like that, and I never trusted anyone . . . I wish I had had someone." He paused to collect his emotions and then added,

> There are many pastors and church leaders that are struggling with moral issues, but they have nowhere to go, they have no one to talk to. Because if you talk to someone, you'll lose your *(pause)*, you'll lose your position. So, the only other choice is to just be quiet; internalize it; isolate yourself. Those are all bad things to do, but we don't give any other options. And there has to be some other options provided, how to help people who are struggling.

A number of the participants also admitted that part of the challenge is that pastoral ministry often perpetuates this requirement to wear a mask and promote a particular image. As 78-year-old John reflected, "What was crucial about me in those years is that nobody knew me, they didn't know what I was struggling with; I was unknown. I understood that's what pastors did; they maintained a distance from the church." Evan confessed, "I didn't know how to open my heart vulnerably. I didn't know how

[2] Pseudonyms have been utilized throughout to ensure anonymity and confidentiality

to be real, all I knew was how to put masks up." Joe said similarly, "It was like we all wore masks, and were really afraid to be honest about anything . . . everyone had a façade . . . I lived my life with a façade most of my ministry." The pastoral role perpetuates the need for secrecy and hiding when struggling with temptations. Sam summarized well a pastor's feelings: "You're so consumed about what people think of you, you're so consumed about having the right image in front of everybody, and you get into situations that the image is all that matters." Those interviewed noted that hiding while maintaining an image is a key proponent of stress and burnout as a precursor to *moral descent*.

Stress and burnout

Of all the contributing factors mentioned in the interviews, stress and burnout garnered the most comments, with 85 percent of the participants acknowledging the impact this had upon their *moral descent*. A number of respondents described an experience of burnout similar to that of Chris, "I was just kind of dead inside and not knowing why." As Evan explained, "I was running on fumes, and I was just so hollowed out. I had nothing to give, nothing I could do, and was scared to death." Vick articulated this feeling when he admitted, "I was starting to feel like I was broken on the inside, like something was broke, but couldn't figure it out though."

There were pressures in ministry impacting the pastors, as Sam explained. "It was quite stressful and demanding; it was a crazy time in my life. The church was going through a lot of changes; we were in a building program." The pressure was typically generated by the church culture, and often self-induced, as Joe mentioned. "The pressure came from the performance orientation. We could never be enough, could never do enough, we were never good enough, always compared ourselves." In retrospect, a number of participants could agree with Rachel's comments. She admitted, "(I was) having to prove myself, and mostly prove myself to myself. So, I could never say no, I could never, not engage in something because maybe somebody would think that I wasn't good enough."

Stress and burnout are a common experience of pastors (Whitson, 2014). Regardless of the cause, they have significant implications for the health of pastors and their ability to avoid *moral descent*. Part of the challenge in identifying the damages of stress is that working hard and being successful in ministry can often cloak the symptoms of burnout, but in the end, they begin to take their toll. Holly captured this well when she shared:

> There was always drive, more people, more programs, more of this or that. So, it was very stressful, we were breaking ground and people were coming, great things; but at the same time our family system was being severely hijacked... So, add that not only to the stress of ministry and the brokenness

we carried, but also the repetitive behaviour of the cycle of addiction. Yes, we were broken, damaged and sinking.

Holly acknowledged, along with nearly all other participants, that it is often family relationships that suffer first from stress and burnout.

Advice for Pastors to Avoid Moral Descent

In identifying the contributing factors to *moral descent*, the participants were asked what advice they would give to young pastors. Although this is not the only advice offered, two primary themes were highlighted in their responses: Authentic Transparency, and Healthy Ministry Boundaries.

Authentic transparency

Ninety percent of participants emphasized authentic transparency as the best advice to give young pastors to assist them in their ministry experience. This transparency is to be applied in three primary domains: True accountability, Preemptive counseling, and Self-awareness.

Healthy ministry boundaries

A common complaint of the pastors was the constant demand upon their time and emotional resources. Many expressed that they were unable to maintain healthy boundaries in relation to the occupational expectations, which often precipitated feelings of burnout. Sam suggested that part of self-awareness is "having an honest assessment of whether this is the right vocation for me." The pastorate requires the capacity to establish healthy boundaries around expectations and relationships. Many pastors find this difficult on their own while dealing with the pressures and demands of daily ministry. They need someone close to assist them in this. Today's pastors do not simply need theological cartographers, leadership technicians, or cultural surveyors. They need mountain guides who will journey with them through the peaks and valleys of their ministry's tumultuous terrain.

Research shows that critical to a pastor's well-being is "to have someone to talk to," someone a pastor can be entirely transparent with, without reprisal or fear of judgement; someone who truly listens without the desire to fix, and compassionately understands from walking a similar journey. In short, pastors need friends: mentoring friends, good friends, transparent and true friends. Instead, after three decades of ministry, the author observes that pastors often seek heroes (aka, celebrity pastors) to emulate, and in doing so, perpetuate an inherent mimetic desire (which inevitably turns to rivalry – see Girard 2001). Could there then be value in restoring a depressed and fallen servant of God to a place of mentorship and

guidance (see 1 Kings 19)? A servant of God who has walked that painful journey and would not elicit mimetic rivalry. Could this be a springboard to authentic and transparent mentorship for pastors?

Elijah: The Model of Failure and Restoration

Ironically, after witnessing firsthand God's provision of deliverance and victory, Elijah is terrified by a threat on his life. His response is flight, running from Mt. Carmel in Israel's far north to Beersheba in the far south of Judah. His fear takes him into the first recognizable stage of burnout: depersonalization. "When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he *left his servant* there, while *he himself* went a day's journey into the desert" (1 Kgs. 19:3-4, *italics added*). Elijah isolates himself, and then expresses his cynicism with, "I have had enough, LORD... Take my life" (v. 4). Elijah echoes his sentiment of inefficacy, "I am no better than my ancestors" (v. 4), and then, emotionally exhausted, "he lay down under the tree and fell asleep" (v. 5). All three elements of burnout—depersonalization/cynicism, inefficacy, and emotional exhaustion—are prominent at this stage in Elijah's life.

Twice God asks, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" and twice Elijah responds by explaining his feelings of inefficacy and isolation: although zealous for the Lord, he has not been able to bring about spiritual and societal change and feels utterly alone (1 Kgs. 19:10, 14). Characteristic of God's gentleness, what restores and renews Elijah is a gentle whisper re-assigning him into a role of mentoring and friendship, a hopeful affirmation of God's transformative work and the reality that Elijah is not alone.

Most common and popular uses of this story focus on the recommissioning of Elijah, utilizing the story as a source of encouragement for burned out and discouraged leaders. Nelson, Fretheim, Rice, and Brueggemann contend for this case (Throntveit 2016, 126, 128). However, other biblical literary scholars, including Cogan, Childs, and Cohn propose that Elijah's decommissioning is reticent within the text (Lockwood 2004, 52). Similarly, Robinson (1991), Lockwood (2004) and Throntveit (2016) vociferously denounce the egocentricity of Elijah and call for his disqualification and dismissal from ministry.

Admittedly, Elijah's egocentricity is displayed in elements of self-pity that are clearly present in the text. Elijah's egocentricity may be revealed through his confession that he is no better than his ancestors. Perhaps this confession is an indication that he thought he was or at least would be better than his ancestors (Lockwood 2004, 53; Robinson 1991, 533). Elijah's complaint of inefficacy and isolation take no heed of the previous chapter's victory nor of the prophets Obadiah successfully protected (1 Kgs. 18:4, 13). Elijah's responses clearly reveal his egoic distortions.

Elijah's response to the Lord's question is like that of many experiencing burnout—an expression of a melancholy mood, as opposed to an accurate representation of present reality. Where certain scholars interpret his repetitive response to the Lord's inquisitive question as reason for his disqualification from ministry, his response is typical of a person struggling with burnout. The Lord provides a continuous gentle whisper of healing, physical refreshing, a realignment of perspective on reality that Elijah is not alone, and the establishment of a support team. These are the stepping-stones needed for returning to ministry after experiencing burnout. Simply discrediting Elijah, decommissioning, and dismissing him from ministry, is contrary to the scriptural emphasis of Kings that follows, depicting his continued ministry.

As well, such a speculative, harsh treatment of Elijah's poor character (Lockwood 2004) seems contrary to the elevated status the New Testament allots him, in that he and Moses stood with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-13). Within this Elijah narrative, Robinson (1991) notes numerous parallels between Moses and Elijah. The 40-day and 40-night journey to Mount Horeb parallels the Moses story where deliberate linkage is made between the two: Elijah hides in a cave just as Moses hides in the cleft of the rock. Both expect to encounter God as he passes by, with their faces covered (Lockwood 2004, 54-55). Certainly, Elijah's paralleled status with Moses would preclude a simplistic view of dishonorable discharge as some scholars propose from this passage. Negative treatments of Elijah's character are similar to the way that many churchgoers treat their pastors who fail in ministry and could reveal ignorance of burnout process and factors. Even amongst scholars, a typical knee-jerk response is one of decommissioning and dismissal of those who fail (Sutton and Jordan 2013), be they Elijah or pastors today.

However, God does not do this to Elijah. God did not need Elijah to anoint and appoint others (specifically Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha). God could have decommissioned and dismissed Elijah. Instead, he reassigns him to a new task following his burnout experience. Perhaps an alternative perspective is to do away with a simple dualistic approach to the text of recommission or decommission. Rather than seeing the appointment of Elisha as a decommissioning of Elijah as some have suggested, could this act be perceived as a reassigning of Elijah to an alternative ministry focus? That is, following his burnout and renewal, is it possible that God reframes Elijah's life with a whisper and reassigns him from the role of a "frontline minister" to that of mentor and enabler of the next generation of ministers? Elijah's posttraumatic growth enables him to release control of the leadership mantle, anointing and appointing others (Hazael and Jehu) and mentoring Elisha. Rather than concluding a discouraging dismissal of Elijah by decommissioning him, the Lord reassigns him to a new role of empowering and

mentoring others. This honors the character of Elijah, the status scripture endows him, and the call God placed upon his life, as well as illustrates ministry burnout and the implications for healing and reassignment to ministry that could accompany it for the benefit of others. This alternative also correlates well with the pattern of sharing with others what has been gleaned from personal experience (2 Cor. 1:3-4) and affirms the biblical pattern of growth through suffering (Heb. 5:8) and power through weakness (2 Cor. 12:9).

Conclusion

Could there be value in restoring a depressed and fallen servant of God to a place of mentorship and guidance? The common practice concerning failure is judgement and banishment from the "loving and forgiving" Christian community. Is there is a place for evangelical orthopraxy to line up with evangelical orthodoxy? How might reassignment produce authentic Christian communities who are not afraid to engage the dark sides of life? Perhaps reassignment might help provide pastors with "someone to talk to."

The fallen servant, like the prodigal son, has lost his "image" and is forced into a frame of authenticity. When a fallen servant owns brokenness, there are no walls of pretense; instead, there is a genuine offer of life-hospitality that offers space for others to simply be. The restoration of such an individual is allowing grace to have the final word; it is turning around that which was intended for evil into a healing balm for others.

The present generation is longing for authenticity. Covering shadows, or dismissing those who remind us of them, produces a community of image rather than a community infused with a transformative kind of authenticity generated by the redemptive presence of Christ, that welcomes the fallen and safeguards honest transparency. Propping up leaders who have attained a "righteous life" may cause more pastors to hide their brokenness rather than transparently address its root cause. Restoring a fallen servant provides a platform for authentic ownership of brokenness and the redemptive and restorative grace of God despite the suffering of failure.

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