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### Three Miles Per Hour: Shifting from Performance to Heart Orientation among Seventh-day Adventist Pastors

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ABSTRACT

THREE MILES PER HOUR: SHIFTING FROM PERFORMANCE TO HEART  
ORIENTATION AMONG SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PASTORS

by

Royce A. V. Odiyar

Chair: Desrene L. Vernon

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Master's Thesis

Andrews University

College of Arts and Sciences

Title: **THREE MILES PER HOUR: SHIFTING FROM PERFORMANCE TO HEART ORIENTATION AMONG SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PASTORS**

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Name and degree of faculty chair: Desrene L. Vernon, Ph.D.

Date of completion: July 2022

This thesis examines the presence and impact of performance orientation among Seventh-day Adventist pastors. It identifies multiple factors involved in perpetuating performance orientation and includes strategies to shift from performance to heart orientation in life and pastoral ministry.

Using a mixed-method design, this research collected qualitative data via focus groups and quantitative data via an online survey. There was a total of eight focus groups with thirty-three participants, and the online survey gathered fifty-one responses. Focus group participants and survey respondents included both men and women from North America who were ethnically diverse.

The research revealed significant concerns regarding pastoral health and well-being in the areas of God, self, family, and friends. One notable finding was the problem of poor differentiation, which is a key factor perpetuating performance orientation.

The primary strategies identified in this research through which a pastor may shift toward heart orientation fit into the following three strategy sets: The first strategy set is proactive measures and are the responsibility of the pastor. It includes a strategy for spiritual growth, leveraging the concept of the generalized other, setting healthier boundaries, positive habit formation, and dialogue with local church leaders; the second strategy set adopts organizational health as a new metric for pastoral ministry; and the third strategy set involves five recommendations for how Seventh-day Adventist Church conferences—the employing organizations for Seventh-day Adventist pastors—can foster heart orientation environments for pastors.

If the principles and recommendations identified in this study are followed by pastors and conferences, the Bible makes it clear that pastors, their families, and local churches will abundantly prosper, and this research helps to corroborate this.

*Key words:* pastor, clergy, pastoral families, symbolic interactionism, generalized other, performance orientation, differentiation, spirituality, boundaries, beliefs, stress, expectations, health, habits, well-being, Seventh-day Adventist Church

Andrews University  
College of Arts and Sciences

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A Thesis  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

by  
Royce A. V. Odiyar

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to pastors—men and women who have given their hearts and lives to serving God and the church, often at great personal sacrifice. It is stories like yours that have compelled me to pursue a better, more sustainable future for pastoral ministry. Many of you remain in pastoral ministry not because it is easy, but because you are convicted this is the work for which God has called you. I pray that some of the insights and strategies in this study will lighten your load as you strive to be faithful to the end.

Change happens in degrees. Rarely, if ever, is change immediate. There are always factors behind the scenes preparing the way for change. In the area of health and well-being for pastors, gradually, there have been changes happening for decades. There have been pastors, leaders, and families, not to mention pastors' wives and now husbands, who have cried out for a better, sustainable way in order for pastors and their families to thrive, not merely survive in ministry. These reformers have paved the way; thus, to this group, I also sincerely dedicate this work—myself, other researchers, and pastors, we stand on your shoulders. Thank you for all you have said, done, and endured.



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First and foremost, I must acknowledge the One to whom I have strived to dedicate my life—my ABBA FATHER. There have been many times I have seen God at work in my life and each time this awareness draws me closer to Him in love and devotion. This research journey has been one of the most recent ways I have seen God involved in my life. One morning, during the final month of the research and writing process, when I felt overwhelmed, discouraged, and stuck, God came near to me. As I prayed, He lifted me up and reminded me that even if this project fell short in one way or another, He was with me and has been transforming me in the process. God has been too good to me and for this I praise Him.

On the human plane, I am grateful and indebted to all those who made this research possible. The participants, my committee members, my family and family-in-law, especially those who prayed for me, the churches I pastor, and the British Columbia Conference who allowed me the time necessary to finish this project. Furthermore, I must specially acknowledge my advisor, Dr. Desrene Vernon. She has graciously answered my million questions and been a constant source of encouragement. Her love for God and her students is evident and inspiring. Thank you.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

“The greatest work, the noblest effort, in which men can engage, is to point sinners to the Lamb of God. True ministers are co-laborers with the Lord in the accomplishment of His purposes” (White, 1915, p. 18). What is involved in the work of pointing sinners to Christ? Often, ministers of the gospel see their work as preaching and teaching the gospel with the goal of baptisms or church growth. Seventh-day Adventist pastors take this a step further and have answered the call to boldly proclaim *present truth* by striving to take the three angels’ messages to all the world. However, is the work of ministry merely or primarily about communicating a set of beliefs and measuring effectiveness numerically?

While Jesus was on earth, He announced that He came “to heal the brokenhearted” (Luke 4:18, NKJV). This text teaches that Christ’s mission to save included not just the mind but also healing of the heart. “Ministry is joining with God in the work of healing all ... areas of brokenness” (Santos, 2015, p. 15).

Therefore, the heart must be a central part, if not the primary focus, of the gospel commission. This might be why the new covenant is based on God’s law being written on our hearts (Jer 31:33). After all, Jesus said the two greatest commandments were love for God and love for others (Matt 28:38–39).

From this, one could logically conclude that the heart is a symbol of relationship. Human beings are designed for relationship, and the heart craves healthy, whole relationships—relationship with self, others, and God. This understanding leads to a heart orientation and perspective in life, which means the gospel ministry is much broader than is the teaching of cognitive truths with a focus on numerical results.

Furthermore, what about pastors? Do they need this ministry of heart healing as much as others do? What consequences result when pastors neglect their primary relationships with God, self, family, and friends? The tragic experience of Pastor Gábor Mihalec provides an insight of what happens when self and family are sacrificed for the sake of ministry.

We had been married for three years and had our first child, Viktor. A wonderful boy, six months old, he was the sunshine of our lives ... I was totally devoted to my church, serving God and His people full time. My idea at that time was that if I gave myself *fully* [emphasis added] to the Lord, He would take care of my family.

Fully packed Sabbaths, visitation on Sundays, Bible classes, seminars, and evangelistic meetings in the evenings during the week made up my habitual routine. Suddenly, dramatic changes took place in my wife. She began to lose weight inexplicably. She dropped from 132 pounds (60 kilograms) to 83 pounds (38 kilograms) in just a few months. She became very withdrawn and silent. She cried incessantly and became unable to care for our son and home. I literally saw life leaving her body. It was a real shock to me. Immediately, I recognized that it was, in great part, my fault. It was my wake-up call. (Mihalec, 2019, p. 11)



It is time for a wake-up call. It is time for pastors to realize self-care is essential—it is not optional—because it is part of the great commission. If pastors want to be faithful, effective ministers of God, they must care for themselves and their families. This will require a shift to heart orientation, where healing, health, and relationships are primary. To do this, we will need to take our foot off the performance gas pedal and reduce our speed to about three miles per hour. Jefferson Bethke (2019) who discusses this idea of slowing down, posits, “you can’t love someone when you’re going fast” (p. 179).

With that said, why is this so hard to do? What mindset and factors undermine self-care and prioritizing one’s primary relationships? How did Pastor Gábor and his family get into this situation? His story indicates that the underlying problem was the belief that “God’s work” comes before everything. In other words, even the primary relationships in a pastor’s life can and must be sacrificed to serve God “fully and faithfully”. However, is this what the Bible teaches? From where does this thinking come? Matthew 6:33 may seem to imply this: “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you”—but is this Jesus’ intention?

While the notion of ministry first, family or self second, is prevalent, this is a common misunderstanding of God’s will for His workers. Matthew 6:33 is not calling pastors to sacrifice health or their most important relationships but to be fully dependent on and surrendered to God. It is a serious mistake to view sacrifice and surrender as synonymous. There may be overlap, but to view them as synonymous could be fatal, as illustrated in the life of Pastor Gábor.

This helps to introduce the complicated nature of these issues in pastoral ministry. In the background and framework section of this chapter, performance orientation will be introduced as one of the key factors undermining health and well-being for pastors and their families. Now, let us turn our attention to the purpose of this study.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the presence and evaluate the impact of performance versus heart orientation in the lives of pastors and their ministry. Also, the study will seek to identify practical strategies for shifting to heart orientation and establishing/maintaining healthier boundaries in life and pastoral ministry.

### **Research Questions**

The three research questions that have guided this study are:

1. How healthy are pastors in the areas of relationship to God, self, family, and others, and what effect does this have on their families?
2. What type of internal or external factors affect the pastor's health in the areas of ministry and relationship to God, self, family, and others?
3. What strategies and kind of support would help pastors establish and/or maintain healthier boundaries in transitioning towards heart orientation in life and ministry?

### **Background and Theoretical Framework**

The supposition of this research recognizes a cultural orientation of performance that dominates society at large. This orientation is focused on results (or key performance indicators) and ascribes value to individuals based on their performance. According to Simon Sinek, this narrative "is the predominant business philosophy of the day. Hit the

goal, get the bonus. Hit the goal, get the bonus. Hit the goal, get the bonus. Under perform, out. That is a fear-based, dopamine-based system” (London Real, 2016, 4:50). And many, in business and society at large, thrive on this, seeking higher and higher pinnacles of success regardless of the cost or personal sacrifice.

Unfortunately, performance orientation has not remained in the realm of business or “Corporate America.” Over the past hundred years, this has become the pervasive societal norm (Covey, 2013). Discussing the issues of lifestyle imbalance or what Swenson (2004) calls “marginless living” (p. 13), he posits, “our economy and society are run by the driven” (p. 64). Swenson argues that the pain of progress is we live in a world where progress allows us to have “more and more of everything faster and faster” (p. 26). And what exacerbates the problem is most of us are blind to the driving forces of performance, progress, and overload “even when it has us by the throat” (Swenson, p. 64). The interesting thing is that marginless living “is a relatively new invention and one of progress’ most unreasonable ideas” (Swenson, p. 15).

Some important questions to consider are, How did we get here? How did performance orientation evolve, and why do we find it so difficult to extract ourselves from its clutches? Naturally, answers to questions like this are multifaceted and historical in nature. This research will briefly touch on the history and development of the problem and then focus primarily on various factors contributing to performance orientation. Two of these factors involve: (1) the generalized other of symbolic interactionism (interactionism), and (2) the role success measurements play in the performance mindset.

The concepts involved with symbolic interactionism were first explored by George H. Mead, a professor of philosophy who significantly influenced the field of

sociology. Later, the term “symbolic interactionism” was coined, and the ideas were synthesized by one of Mead’s devoted students, Herbert Blumer (Griffin et al., 2015, p. 54). Interactionism will be explored further in the “Definitions” section of this chapter and in Chapter 2. For now, here is a brief introduction of the role interactionism plays in the creation of what interactionists call “the generalized other” (Griffin et al., p. 60).

The generalized other is an organized set of information that the individual carries in her or his head about what the general expectation and attitudes of the social group are. We refer to this generalized other whenever we try to figure out how to behave or how to evaluate our behavior in a social situation. We take the position of the generalized other and assign meaning to ourselves and our actions.

(Kollock and O’Brien as cited in Griffin et al., 2015, p. 60)

Could it be that a generalized other composed of performance orientation exists in the minds of pastors? If so, this raises these questions: How did this generalized other develop in the mind of the pastor? Have societal norms of performance orientation been adopted and adapted by the church, leading to the formation of an ecclesiastical generalized other? Is it this sanctified generalized other that is promising pastors value and meaning through achievement—doing—rather than through intrinsic God-given value—His love and call in the pastor’s life?

If performance orientation exists in pastoral ministry and leads to serious negative impacts on pastors and their families, I believe this calls for a new paradigm—a shift to a healthier way of living as prescribed in the Scriptures. This will include a rejection of the false narratives and expectations that drive performance orientation and where production and results are no longer the primary focus.

Now, a person may be thinking, ‘Jesus teaches us that we must bear fruit; is this not advocating performance?’ In fact, Jesus goes on to say, “every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit ... By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit” (John 15:2, 8, NKJV). The key point of Jesus’ teaching is fruit bearing begins with a work He does in the heart, based on union and interconnectedness with God. The external fruit is the result of inner heart work. Yes, Christ’s standard is high, but He is promoting transformation from the inside out with an intense focus on being rather than doing.

Solomon understood the difference between being and doing and that *quality* doing is rooted in being. He instructed us, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (Prov 4:23, NIV). Rick Warren, a well-known megachurch pastor, once noted, “many pastors flame bright, then flame out” (1997, p. 36). Therefore, the wisdom of Solomon and the truth of the vine remain vital.

Many of us are familiar with stories of pastoral burnout, pastors leaving ministry or the church, and spouses and children being sacrificed on the altar of ministry. Are these results acceptable? Are they what God wants for His church, His pastors, and their families in order to fulfill the great commission?

If pastoral ministry is to have a brighter and more sustainable future, I believe a transformation from performance to heart orientation is necessary in the lives of pastors and the culture of the larger church structure.

### **Personal Interest**

As a pastor myself, this topic holds deep significance for me. I have personally struggled to establish and maintain healthy boundaries. I have experienced firsthand the

negative impact of this on myself and my family. I have been caught in the web of performance orientation and am still struggling to get free. Therefore, when I was selecting a research topic for my master's thesis, I wanted to study something that would help me grow as a pastor and be practical for other pastors in the field.

To go back even further, my interest in one aspect of this topic dates back to approximately 2009. At the time, I was a young pastor seeking to establish a strong, meaningful relationship with God, and the more I struggled, the more I realized I was not the only one struggling. I began my own simple research with one question: What barriers were preventing people from developing and maintaining an authentic relationship with God? As I visited and interviewed people, I started to notice patterns. I had probably interviewed fewer than a dozen people before I realized most people were struggling with similar challenges. After a period of deep reflection, study, and experimentation, I eventually developed a small group curriculum. In my research, I discovered two foundational principles and developed five practical tools for developing and maintaining a relationship with God. The first principle was based on intentionality, meaning a relationship with God will not spontaneously happen by itself. The second principle was to minimize barriers.

Initially, I had planned to expand on my previous research by focusing on pastors and developing more robust tools to aid them in their spiritual growth. However, the more I discussed the topic and explored it, the more I realized there would be at least two challenges. First, would I be able to find a receptive audience? There can be a lot of shame and pride around one's relationship with God when it is weak or on life support. Would pastors trust me and be open to outside help? Second, as I continued to reflect,

read, and counsel with David Sedlacek and others, I eventually realized a compromised relationship with God was a symptom of a larger problem: performance orientation to a significant degree.

Pastors are driven and burdened by a multitude of heavy responsibilities and expectations, including the growth and success of the church. This results in significant pressure to perform. Even if it is not explicitly stated by the church or anyone in the church, the message often communicated to pastors, one way or another, is “The buck stops with them.” In other words, a good pastor equals a growing church; a bad pastor results in a dying church.

John C. Maxwell, leadership guru and a former church pastor, reinforces this narrative on the first page of his classic book, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. Talking about “the law of the lid,” he says, “your leadership ability—for better or for worse—always determines your effectiveness and the potential impact of your organization” (1998, p. 1). I agree that leadership matters and pastors play an important role in the effectiveness of the church, but is this the full picture, and how much responsibility should be laid at the feet of the pastor? What affect does all this pressure have on the pastor’s ability to make his or her relationship with God top priority? What if a “good” pastor can grow the church and keep the saints happy but is struggling to have a quality relationship with God? Is this pastor successful, and in whose eyes? Consider the following reflection from Stephen Covey’s timeless book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*:

Many people seem to think that success in one area can compensate for failure in other areas of life. But can it really? Perhaps it can for a limited time in some

areas. But can success in your profession compensate for a broken marriage, ruined health, or weakness in personal character? True effectiveness requires balance. (2013, p. 169)

The more and more I study these themes and continue to face performance orientation pressures in my own work as a pastor, the more I am convinced that these unhealthy paradigms need to be exposed and addressed. Until conferences, churches, and pastors understand these truths and have tools to empower transformation, there will continue to be unnecessary casualties among spouses, children, and pastors.

### **Significance**

According to David Kinnaman, president of the Barna research group, the health and well-being of pastors “is a growing crisis for church leaders in America. Now is the time for the Christian community to come alongside their pastors to pray and support them so they can continue to lead in healthy ways” (Barna Group, 2021).

This is what makes research like this important. The decisions and direction taken now will have a significant impact on the sustainability of pastoral ministry.

I want to ponder for a moment the staffing needs of churches and schools. For years, there have been predictions about a significant shortage of pastors and teachers in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. Barna (2017) states, “Even more urgent, however, is the prospect of a massive leadership shortage in coming decades” (p. 15). As of 2022, due to trends indicating future shortages among Seventh-day Adventist teachers, an advocacy campaign has commenced, appealing for young people to consider teaching as a future career option (B. Perkins, personal communication, March 22, 2022).



The questions I ask are, could these shortages be affected by poor or bad experiences of children seeing their parents overloaded by working for the church or school? Pertaining to pastors, if this is the case, it seems Kinnaman's advice is even more timely. Therefore, it would be well for our church to do its best to create a safe, healthy environment for pastors and their families. This is not about making pastoral ministry attractive for the purposes of recruitment, but to remove barriers preventing legitimate pastoral candidates from following and sticking with God's call for their lives. Furthermore, I would like to highlight two primary elements that make this research significant.

***First: The Elements of Performance Orientation and Heart Orientation***

I would argue the primary element that makes this research significant is the supposition that performance orientation is a key factor negatively impacting the health and well-being of pastors and their families. The aspects of pastoral health and well-being have and are receiving significant attention. On the other hand, little, if any, research has been done directly addressing the issue of performance orientation in pastoral ministry.

Furthermore, language use is significant, which is why this research intentionally emphasizes and distinguishes performance from heart orientation. An understanding of social judgment theory (SJT) will help demonstrate this point. Muzafer Sherif, credited with the identification of this communication theory, posits "We weigh every new idea by comparing it with our present point of view" (Griffin et al., 2015, p. 178). According to SJT, as communication happens the words used to convey thoughts will fall along a continuum within a person's latitude of acceptance, rejection, or noncommitment. Social judgment theory is interested in persuasion, thus, communicating in such a manner that

the speaker's message will be received rather than rejected. The terminology *heart orientation* is unfamiliar to many, and thus SJT would conclude it is less prone to rejection. Pastors need hope that there is a better way. Heart orientation offers that.

Reflecting on the theme of spiritual growth and transformation, Ellen White (1880) says, "It is not purse power or brain power, but heart power we need" (para. 13). Heart orientation is heart power and has the power to transform pastors and ministry.

### ***Second: Symbolic Interactionism***

One of the most practical elements of this research is how interactionism, also classified as a communication theory, is operative in performance orientation, specifically through the concept of the generalized other. As previously introduced, the generalized other is a composite talking partner in a person's mind (Griffin et al., 2015, p. 60). This internal dialogue would be one way a person engages in intrapersonal communication.

In relationship to performance orientation, the generalized other pressures pastors with expectations, incentives, and false threats. When heeded, pastors are influenced to make poor choices and neglect some of the most important priorities in their lives.

However, there may be a better strategy than seeking to eliminate or hush the voice of the generalized other. I would suggest that God wants to substitute Himself in place of the generalized other—as the Divine Other. Those who learn to nurture interpersonal and intrapersonal dialogue with God, will learn over time what God truly wants and expects of them. They will find that He is not a cruel task master but a kind and loving Father who wants the best for His children, pastors, and churches.

The generalized other of performance orientation is based on fear and negative motivation. God as the Divine Other operates based on love and empowerment—these are two qualities of heart orientation.

### ***More About Significance***

In the “Background” section of this chapter, John 15 was introduced, which teaches that fruit production comes through abiding in Christ. God wants to greatly bless His people and church; thus, as the transformation to heart orientation unfolds, our churches and pastors will bear much more fruit.

Therefore, this research should not be seen as standing in the way of results but as a foundational step toward producing abundant fruit in the lives of our pastors and in our churches. Rick Warren makes a profound assertion: “It is possible for an unhealthy pastor to lead a growing church, but it takes a healthy pastor to lead a healthy church” (1997, p. 35). Should the goal be church growth or to develop healthier pastors? Or both? If the larger church organization wants both, the primary focus must shift to developing healthier pastors. This will lead to sustainable growth, not merely temporary numbers.

### **Scope**

This study touches on several key beliefs, factors, and stressors that impede pastors from establishing healthy boundaries. However, it is important to note that the elements included are partial. Some of the most common stressors will be discussed, and key strategies for establishing and maintaining healthier boundaries will be considered. For example, this study does not look at the stress of moving or mental health issues that pastors and their families face.

Additionally, the scope of this research includes pastors and/or chaplains but not spouses, children, church members, or conference leaders. Also, female pastors were included and encouraged to participate but the study does not specifically focus on unique issues facing female pastors.

### **Sample**

There was a total of eight focus groups with thirty-three participants and the online survey gathered fifty-one responses. This convenience sample for both the focus groups and online survey were made up of active pastors employed in full-time ministry, serving in three different church conferences in North America. Additionally, focus group participants and survey respondents were comprised of both men and women who were ethnically diverse.

### **Theoretical Framework and the Communication Context**

It is important to summarize the main theoretical framework and situate it within the communication context. This thesis intentionally distinguishes between performance and heart orientation and explores its connection with symbolic interactionism. Serving as a communication theory, interactionism is cross disciplinary but is dependent on ‘inter’ and ‘intra’ personal communication (see Figure 1).

Additionally, as already seen, social judgment theory (SJT) is a core part of this thesis on the cognitive level. Furthermore, social penetration theory (SPT) is utilized as part of the strategy for making the leap to heart orientation. These theories relate to aspects of interpersonal and intrapersonal communication happening within the larger framework of performance/heart orientation and symbolic interactionism.

## **Definitions**

### **Pastor, Minister, or Clergy**

These are titles that describe “a group ordained to perform pastoral or sacerdotal functions in a Christian church” (*Merriam-Webster*, n.d.). Within the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, we primarily use the titles “pastor” or “minister.” However, from time to time, I may refer to or quote from an author who uses “clergy.” Broadly speaking, these titles are synonymous, and I will use them interchangeably.

### **Health**

When I speak about health in this research project, I am speaking about the whole person, not just physical health. With reference to healthy boundaries and pastoral health and well-being, this includes all the elements of wholeness (social, emotional, intellectual, and physical). If I am specifically referring to one element of health, I will specify that; otherwise, all elements of total health are in mind.

### **Performance Orientation**

Performance is “a task or operation seen in terms of how successfully it is performed” (*Lexico*, n.d.). More specifically, success is evaluated based on the degree to which the desired results have or have not been achieved. It is important to note that the evaluation process is often based on extrinsic, arbitrary, and subjective value(s). In other words, one person may deem a task successfully performed while another person determines the same task as unsuccessful.

Usually, the desired results are quantifiable, like number of sales, number of new clients, revenue, website traffic, enrollment numbers, etc. Performance turns into a mindset or orientation when the value of the performer is tied to their accomplishments or

successes. Robert S. McGee discusses a parallel point in his book *The Search for Significance*: “self-worth equals performance plus other people’s opinions” (2003, chap. 5, 15:13). Thus, those who can achieve more and perform better are deemed of higher value in a performance orientation culture. A vivid example of this is when people believe they need to “sell themselves” in a job interview. The problem with performance orientation is people become quantitative resources used as a means to reach a goal. Have people become products? When this happens, what affect does it have on their identity and well-being?

### **Heart Orientation**

The primary focus of heart orientation views holistic health and well-being as the chief value to be guarded. A person with a heart orientation focus pursues health in every area of life, from one’s relationship with God and others to healthy minds and bodies. After all, the Bible tells us our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19). Therefore, true stewardship seeks to take care of every aspect of one’s life.

### ***The Heart Is Often Metonymous with the Mind***

In the biblical narrative, there is an interconnectedness between heart and mind. *The NET Bible* translational notes concisely explain, “The noun לב (lev, “heart”) functions as a metonymy of association for ‘mind’ and ‘thoughts’ (BDB 524 s.v. 3). It represents the center of the inner life where the volition and emotions join to bring about actions” (2019, Prov. 2:10, footnote G). Therefore, this study will often use the word “heart” with the mind in view.

Lastly, while I would argue that heart orientation is the biblical mindset, this does not mean the Bible disparages the importance of performance, results, or fruit, but for

growth and progress to be strong, lasting, and without side effects, it must come from a balanced life that intentionally cares for all aspects of a person's well-being.

### **Societal Norms**

These are social expectations that have been normalized by a cultural demographic. These expectations can be found within ethnic communities, workplaces, families, political groups, clubs, and certainly churches, and they govern how people interact when functioning within a given community.

### **Margin and Marginless**

These are concepts introduced by Richard Swenson (2004) in his book *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives*.

Swenson defines margin this way:

Margin is the space between our load and our limits. It is the amount allowed beyond that which is needed. It is something held in reserve for contingencies or unanticipated situations. Margin is the gap between rest and exhaustion, the space between breathing freely and suffocating. Margin is the opposite of overload.

(Swenson, 2004, p. 75)

Thus, marginless living is when we are overloaded.

### **Symbolic Interactionism**

This term was coined by Herbert Blumer and “captures what [George H.] Mead claimed is the most human and humanizing activity that people can engage in—talking to each other” (Griffin et al., 2015, p. 54). More specifically, symbolic interactionism (interactionism) explains how the concept of self is created through “meaning, language,

and thinking” (Griffin et al., p. 54) and then how this self interacts within a larger societal context.

### **Generalized Other**

Two of the key elements operative in interactionism are the generalized other and the looking-glass self. This research is primarily focuses on the generalized other, which “interactionists refer to the composite person in our mind with whom we are in dialogue as our generalized other. Our conversational partner is a blend of ... family, close friends, an outside authority figure—but also voices from the broader society” (Griffin et al., 2015, p. 60).

### **Differentiation**

This involves healthy independence and interdependence. According to Balswick and Balswick (2014) differentiation is, “the process of maintaining a separate identity while simultaneously remaining connected in relationship, belonging, and unity” (p. 4).

### **Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis (DA) is part of the textual analysis family (Berger, 2016; Brennen, 2017). The premise of this type of analysis is that words and language operate as symbols through which “our reality is socially constructed” (Brennen, p. 208) and as such must be interpreted. Stuart Hall, a cultural theorist, “defined texts as ‘literary and visual constructs, employing symbolic means, shaped by rules, conventions and traditions intrinsic to the use of language in its widest sense’. In other words, texts are things that we use to make meaning” (as cited in Brennen, p. 204). Therefore, if words are symbols, they are like containers that must be opened and unpacked. This is what we call the



“interpretive process,” and it is the focus of DA, which is why Merrigan and Huston (2015) claim DA is “most often associated with the interpretive paradigm” (p. 140).

Additionally, it is important to consider DA is different from conversation analysis (CA) in that DA looks at the broader context and not strictly at the conversation alone (Merrigan & Huston, 2015). N. Phillips and Hardy define DA as “discourse over time” (as cited in Merrigan & Huston, p.141).

### **Summation**

Chapter 1 has introduced the complicated nature of pastoral ministry and ongoing challenges pastors face as they attempt to establish and maintain healthy boundaries. Based on my own experience as a pastor and my present finding in this study, one of the first issues undermining health and well-being in a pastor’s life and ministry is the cultural drive to perform and achieve results, and these results are consciously or unconsciously viewed as the practical measure of success. While performance orientation is a cultural phenomenon external to the church, sadly, it has heavily invaded the church. This research will further argue that the concept of the generalized other found in the communication framework of symbolic interactionism holds a pivotal key and strategy for escaping performance orientation. In the next chapter, we will explore how this research project fits into the broader field of study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Performance orientation is pervasive in our world today. While there certainly is a place for performance and perhaps even performance orientation, there is no place for neglecting a person's most important relationships and priorities.

This literature review is focused on various aspects related to the problem of performance orientation. The areas under consideration are (1) the performance narrative in society at large, the church, the Bible, and the writings of Ellen White; (2) the effects of performance orientation in society at large, among pastors at large, and among Seventh-day Adventist pastors specifically; (3) the role of symbolic interactionism and success measurements in performance orientation among pastors; and (4) the heart narrative, boundaries, and strategies for making the leap from performance to heart orientation.<sup>1</sup>

#### **The Literature**

##### **An Overview of the Performance Narrative**

In the book *Margin: Restoring emotional, physical, financial, and time reserves to overloaded lives*, Richard Swenson (2004) excellently sets the stage for the rise of the performance narrative. Swenson aptly focuses on the word "progress," which he describes as the thief of margin (p. 25). While Swenson does not trace the historical

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<sup>1</sup> Please note, audio and video works have been used in this review and throughout this thesis. The indication of this may be seen by the time stamp included with the in-text citations.

details that got Western society into the mess of marginless living,<sup>2</sup> he blames the empty promises of modernity. The idea was that progress would improve our lives. While this is certainly true to a large degree, namely, in the areas of material and educational prosperity, Swenson demonstrates that social, emotional, and spiritual health paid a heavy price; he calls it the “pain of progress” (p. 15).

It was modernity, industrialization, and the incredible advances of technology that have accelerated humanity to “breakneck speed[s]” (Swenson, 2004, p. 22). Humans are certainly capable of amazing feats, but are all these feats and inventions for our good? Jefferson Bethke would conclude not always. Bethke (2019) cites the fascinating example of the invention and development of timekeeping. While the ability to count and keep time is certainly a beneficial advancement, it is worth asking, What were the side effects? Bethke reflects, “the dark side to our current timekeeping culture” is that instead of mastering time, we have become its slaves (p. 93). And it seems Bethke is not the only one who has noticed this; “In the Western world, the clock reigns supreme” (Merrill & Merrill, 2003, p. 141).

Whether we use the words “performance,” “production,” “progress,” “speed,” or “hurry,” they all have one thing in common: “always giving us more and more of everything faster and faster” (Swenson, 2004, p. 25). Doing more is the goal and measure of success and progress. John Mark Comer (2019) summarizes the performance narrative well: “an overbusy, hurried life of speed is the new normal in the Western world” (p. 52). Therefore, the performance narrative is part and parcel of everything about which Swenson, Bethke, and Comer discuss.

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<sup>2</sup> *Marginless living* is when our limits have been exceeded (Swenson, 2004).

With this background, we will now look at the performance narrative through the eyes of society, the church, the Bible, and the writings of Ellen White.

### ***What Does Society At large Say About Performance?***

The interesting thing about the performance narrative is on the surface, it looks and sounds appealing. In fact, in the church culture, it even seems biblical, like God's "strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9, NKJV). The truth is there are two sides to the performance coin. The good side and the not-so-good side. On the positive side, we find self-improvement and growth. Stephen Covey's classic work *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, originally published in 1989, is one of the best examples of the positive side of the performance coin. The subtitle of his original version was *Restoring the Character Ethic*. Notice the focus is not merely performance and doing but transformation from the "inside-out" (Covey, 2013, p. 50). The Bible heavily affirms the kind of transformation that affects the core and heart of a person, but what is on the other side of the performance coin?

The other side of the coin also talks about transformation, but with an emphasis on surface or outward changes versus internal heart changes. It says, "be all you can be" ("Slogans of the United States Army," 2022), pursue your full potential, the sky's the limit, "think and grow rich" (Hill, 1937), dream big, and many other variations. It's important to note that usually, this kind of messaging is attached to images, ideas, and dreams of outward success and greatness. All of this is accompanied with a determination that says, "Do not let anything stand in your way, and you can be part of an elite class—just keep working." Now, this characterization tends towards an extreme expression of the performance narrative. However, the subtle, more widespread version is just as

problematic and, I would suggest, more deceptive and dangerous. Why? Because it looks good, sounds normal, and feels right.

Regardless of the packaging, the same message is received: the better you perform, the more successful you will be. While this may essentially be true, the question is, Should success be the primary focus and goal of our lives? Does success bring happiness? Does success enhance our relationships and overall health? Consider Stephen Covey's observations. In his chapter titled "Inside-Out," he reflects on the experiences of people he has met, many of which have been extremely successful yet not happy—people who "found themselves struggling with an inner hunger, a deep need ... for healthy, growing relationships with other people" (2013, p. 23). They had outward success but not internal or relational success. The problem with the performance narrative is it is easily blinded by the shiny attraction of something better for those who work hard enough.

The writings of John Maxwell, a household name in the world of leadership development, talk a lot about performance strategies and how to be successful. Consider a few of his titles: *The Winning Attitude*, *Becoming a Person of Influence*, *How Successful People Think*, etc. Why is all the focus on achievement? Even though his books and concepts are often taught in a semi-holistic framework, seeking to improve people at a heart level, this objective is often eclipsed by human nature, which desires to keep climbing the ladder of success. It seems like self-help books of this nature teach us to *use* ourselves for some type of greater gain, indicating we are not good enough and must continue endlessly striving.

This may sound critical, but the message is clear: success is the goal, and happiness and satisfaction are sure to follow. Often, the motivation in the pursuit of

success is significance, happiness, or self-worth. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Robert S. McGee observes that “self-worth equals performance plus other people’s opinions” (2003, chap. 5, 15:13). The better a person performs, the better impressions he or she makes, thus increasing acceptance in the eyes of peers or employers. The concept of self-worth and acceptance plays a huge role in the performance narrative, which is why it is so attractive in our world today. This will be expanded later in the context of symbolic interactionism.

One example, from an early voice in the business world, might help to establish how deep and enduring the message of performance is rooted in our society. The timeless bestseller by Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, originally published in 1936, was a cutting-edge, life-changing book. It taught people how to win and succeed in business. Many of its teachings and observations are simply based on natural cause-and-effect principles of engagement in the field of communications. Many of the lessons taught are beneficial, but could there be an underlying issue of misplaced motivations?

Covey (2013) tells of a turning point in his life and family when he was doing research for IBM along with an “in-depth study of the success literature published in the United States since 1776. [He] was reading or scanning literally hundreds of books, articles, and essays in fields such as self-improvement, popular psychology, and self-help” (p. 26). During this period of research and reflection, it struck him that there was a marked difference in the definition and pursuit of success after World War I. From this, Covey concluded that much of the post-World War I success narratives were based on superficial motives.

Filled with social image consciousness, techniques and quick fixes—with social Band-Aids and aspirin that addressed acute problems and sometimes even appeared to solve them temporarily, but left the underlying chronic problems untouched to fester and resurface time and again. In stark contrast, almost all the literature in the first 150 years or so focused on what could be called the *Character Ethic* as the foundation of success—things like integrity, humility, fidelity, temperance, courage, justice, patience, industry, simplicity, modesty, and the Golden Rule. (Covey, 2013, p. 26)

Covey posits that the post-World War I success narratives were based on what he called the “personality ethic” versus the “character ethic.” I find it interesting to note that both books by Dale Carnegie and Napoleon Hill were published after World War I—the first in 1936 and the other in 1937, respectively. Could Covey be right? Even Carnegie’s (*How to Win Friends and Influence People*) and Hill’s (*Think and Grow Rich*) book titles raise questions about motivation.

Lowell Thomas, a famous American writer, actor, broadcaster, and a friend of Dale Carnegie, wrote the original introduction for Carnegie’s book. In this reflection, he highlighted that learning to speak and influence people was the “shortcut to distinction” (as cited in Carnegie, 2010, p. 293) that Carnegie needed to pull himself up by the bootstraps. However, Thomas adds that Carnegie’s goal and “main job was to help people conquer their fears and develop courage” (as cited in Carnegie, p. 296)—sounds good, right? There is no question that at least Carnegie’s book had a positive impact in the lives of countless people, but it seems it was part of a trend for the last 100 years that took the performance narrative to an excessive level, leaving people void of deep, lasting

success and fulfillment. In addition to the books already mentioned by Carnegie and Hill, consider this short list of titles that fit within the performance narrative literature:

1. *Rich Dad Poor Dad* (Robert T. Kiyosaki, 1997)
2. *Extreme Productivity: Boost Your Results, Reduce Your Hours* (Robert C. Pozen, 2012)
3. *What the Most Successful People Do Before Breakfast* (Laura Vanderkam, 2015)
4. *The Productivity Project: Accomplishing More by Managing Your Time, Attention, and Energy* (Chris Bailey, 2016)
5. *Tools of Titans: The Tactics, Routines, and Habits of Billionaires, Icons, and World-Class Performers* (Timothy Ferriss, 2016)
6. *Leadershift: The 11 Essential Changes Every Leader Must Embrace* (John Maxwell, 2019)
7. *Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones* (James Clear, 2018)
8. *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap ... and Others Don't* (Jim Collins, 2001)
9. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change* (Stephen Covey, 2013).

I want to draw special attention to the last four books mentioned above, which were intentionally placed at the end of the list for ease of reference. It is important to note that subjectively, any performance literature could be used for negative or positive ends. However, some books clearly lean in one direction. Covey's book has been used for both



positive and negative purposes, but truthfully, it has had an enormously beneficial impact. If a person does not come to this conclusion after reading Covey's classic work, one certainly will after reading *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families*. In this volume, the focus is applying the seven habits in families to build healthy relationships. Covey shares that it was in the family unit where the habits were "really learned" (2014, p. 2).

Based on Swenson's assessment that progress leads in one direction of "always giving us more and more of everything faster and faster" (2004, p. 25), I would suggest one of the challenges with books that fall on the negative side of the performance coin is they purposefully or unwittingly promote acceleration. While they may say "slow down," their actions of providing tools of acceleration speaks louder than their words do. Let us consider Maxwell again. He says, "You've heard that good is the enemy of great, but best is the enemy of better" (2019, p. 27). He goes on to say we must push ourselves to be better and better. This is not necessarily problematic, but the whole tenor of this book is to equip leaders to be more and more productive. It is as if, the goal and need of personal growth and leadership is to learn to juggle more and more balls efficiently rather than simply juggling fewer balls. Covey clearly challenges readers to slow down while providing tools for efficiency, but Maxwell is often blurry.

Now, I would be amiss if I suggested Maxwell does not teach higher values than mere performance and temporal ambitions. After all, one of Maxwell's achievements was writing a leadership study Bible. He is a sincere believer in God and a person of faith, but it seems many of his books leave themselves vulnerable to be tangled up with the negative side of the performance narrative.

James Clear (2018), a new voice in the field of self-improvement and self-help, is focused on the power of “building good habits and breaking bad ones” (cited from the subtitle of his book). In his introduction, he states, “The strategies I cover will be relevant to anyone looking for a step-by-step system for improvement, whether your goals center on health, money, productivity, relationships, or all of the above” (p. 10). Certainly, this is a book that falls into the performance narrative, but the question is, On which side? That depends. As it relates to the principles of breaking and forming habits, this book is neutral and very practical. From the standpoint of achievement and success, Clear, a college athlete before becoming a writer, seems to harness habits for the purpose of making a name and being great. Are these not various types of superficial success? In his final section, he discusses “Advanced Tactics: How to Go from Being Merely Good to Being Truly Great” (p. 215). I discerned nothing in his final chapters about higher values and relationships. Everything seemed primarily inward-centered for the purpose of outward success. However, one interesting finding emerged between Clear’s book and two other sources.

A thread of performance orientation connected Clear’s book to Maxwell’s *LeaderShift* and D. A. McAdams’ article in the January 1972 *Ministry Magazine*. McAdams (1972) article was titled “Plateau Performance.” Here, he argues that leaders or pastors need to have a *dynamic* determination (p. 9). Without this determination, leaders will plateau; they will be busy, but “the results of [their work/program will] not show much progress”—they will not reach new heights of success (McAdams, 1972, p. 9). He argues that for leaders to continually grow and improve, they must have determination. Maxwell basically says the same thing, challenging his readers to

“cultivate the dissatisfaction required to get better” (2019, p. 27), and Clear discusses how to achieve and maintain “peak motivation” (2018, p. 231) for the purpose of becoming excellent. It all sounds good, to the extent that life and relationships are kept in balance and people are not basing their value and identity in what they do. However, the negative side effects of the performance narrative often lead to eclipsing the most important priorities in life.

To conclude this section of the review, let us look at one more piece of literature. *Good to Great* is a fascinating example of the performance narrative because it is one of the books I would describe as a crossover. It seems to make the leap from a performance narrative, focused on individual greatness and success, to collective greatness and success based on enduring principles and values. However, I must note that at least one instance from this book provides a sobering and serious reminder about the dark side of the performance coin. Collins (2001) records the story of “Colman Mockler, CEO of Gillette from 1975 to 1991” (p. 23). Mockler was determined to push the company forward amid fierce threats and challenges. His leadership was successful, and he enabled Gillette to make the leap from good to great; however, he did not live to see it. After “sixteen years of struggle, Mockler crumpled to the floor [of his office], struck dead by a massive heart attack” (p. 25). What contributed to his death? Was it preventable? Was Mockler’s life in balance, or did he give too much of himself to his work and the company? While we may not have the answers to these questions, it’s insightful to consider what Collins says about “level 5 leaders,” of which he considered Mockler to be. “Level 5 leaders are fanatically driven, infected with an incurable need to produce *results*” (p. 30). Results are

necessary and should be pursued, but at what cost? If results and success require the sacrifice of health, life, or relationships it is simply not worth it.

The paradox of books like *Good to Great* is the principles are often solid and sometimes even biblically sound, but somewhere in the process, the pressure and allure of the performance narrative overpowers the higher virtues embodied in the principles taught. As I reviewed Collins work, I was on the fence until I came across this statement:

Enduring great companies don't exist merely to deliver returns to shareholders. Indeed, in a truly great company, profits and cash flow become like blood and water to a healthy body: They are absolutely essential for life, but they are not the very *point* of life. (2001, p. 194)

Statements like this raise the bar for a nobler motivation than mere public greatness or success. Later in the book, Collins responds to a question posed by one of his ex-students attending a seminar he was leading. The question was, “Why should I try to build a great company?” (2001, p. 205). Initially puzzled, Collins finally responds by first saying it is no harder to build a great company than it is to “settle for just letting things wallow along in mind-numbing mediocrity” (p. 208). In fact, Collins argues that the pursuit of greatness is energizing—making work fun and actually giving meaning and purpose to one's work, which is the second reason he believes we should pursue greatness.

These practical truths and higher values break the mold of superficial performance leading to emptiness and brokenness in a person's life. However, a person will always find that for which he or she is looking. And if the pull to perform and do more fills a person's temporary needs, that person will often get caught in the

performance trap, as Robert S. McGee (2003) discusses in his book *The Search for Significance*.

At this point, various aspects of the performance narrative, both positive and negative, have been identified. Minimally speaking, the positive side of the performance coin is self-improvement and growth. The negative side is when improvements are merely superficial behavior changes for the primary purpose of rewards and outward success. True success is holistic in nature without negative side effects on a person's health or relationships. The following sections will now build on this larger performance narrative.

### ***What Does the Church Say About Performance?***

Before we get into this section, it is important to note that when I speak about the church, this is a general reference to church culture at large (inside and outside the Seventh-day Adventist Church). However, most of the examples cited will be drawn from within the Seventh-day Adventist cultural context.

Now, when it comes to the matter of performance and the church, this is a tricky topic. The reason is the church is quick to condemn secular culture and many of its trappings, especially when it comes to wealth and success. One easily accessible example of this is the "prosperity gospel." Most churches condemn this because it misrepresents the truth of Scripture. Yes, God wants us to prosper (3 John 1:2) and experience abundance (John 10:10), but this is first and foremost an inward/relational blessing. Furthermore, the teaching of the prosperity gospel ignores the importance of suffering and sacrifice also taught in the Bible (2 Tim 3:12; Matt 16:24). John Piper condemns the

prosperity gospel in a 2006 sermon reflecting that it appeals to superficial self-serving. “I’ll take your Jesus if the payoff is right” (Piper, 2006).

It may be easy to condemn this type of selfishness and materialistic pursuit, but what if selfishness is cloaked in the garb of working for God as a minister? As we already saw, the foundation of the performance narrative is not directly or even chiefly tied to wealth or material prosperity. The performance narrative, specifically performance orientation, in large part, is about recognition, acceptance, and self-worth. Let us turn our attention now to examples of the performance narrative within the church.

Speaking about the call to pastoral ministry, the *Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Manual* says, “This call demands a full-time, life-consuming devotion” (Ministerial Association, 1992, p. 17). While it is certainly necessary and noble to be fully devoted to the cause of God, what does this mean? Is the idea complete? Is it balanced? It seems statements like this create a potential trap because of how commitment is defined. Statements like this elevate personal sacrifice while neglecting the need for balance and health in ministry. Therefore, this type of sacrifice and commitment becomes part of the performance orientation metrics for ministry success.

The previous statement emphasized one important quality of ministry while neglecting to mention other equally important qualities. Now, we will look at a statement that specifically devalues the role of the pastor in the home while elevating performance.

Always work hard and never leave the impression that you don’t earn your salary. Reject that old joke that “ministers work only one day per week” and never let your actions contribute to its perpetuation. When ministers spend their days baby-

sitting so their spouses can work (“moonlighting during daylight”), they lead their members to conclude that they are overpaid. (Cress, 1995, p. 25)

The late James A. Cress (1995) was a high-profile Seventh-day Adventist leader who sincerely cared about pastors. While I certainly agree that complacent pastors must be held accountable, what about the those who are burning the candle at both ends, striving to be “faithful” to the flock of God while neglecting their little lambs at home? Furthermore, Cress seems to be championing performance orientation in ministry while undermining commitment in the home. Statements like this, intended or unintended, shame pastors when they choose to put their family above ministry. And what pastor wants to be “guilty” of spending “too much” time at home “baby-sitting” (incidentally, this is a misunderstanding of parenting)? This creates an unnecessary false dichotomy.

Many more examples of this type of unnecessary conflict between ministry, family, and self-care could be examined, but another area that must be surveyed is the plethora of skills and expectations in pastoral ministry.

This is another significant challenge facing pastors in ministry. According to Michael McBride, pastors are expected to be the “‘preacher, educator, evangelist, scholar and theologian, administrator, counselor, promoter, financier, etc.’, not to mention plumber, groundskeeper, and church school recess coach” (as cited in Aka et al., 2022, p. 116). These expectations are based on many legitimate needs within churches, but the unspoken message the pastor hears is ‘You have been hired; it’s your job.’ Not only do these expectations create overload, but they also feed the performance mindset based on reward when the job is “well done.” And the sad reality is pastors feel trapped because

they are not empowered to set boundaries; after all, the call is “life-consuming” (Ministerial Association, 1992, p. 17)

What’s the solution? While these messages may not be intended and many churches and church leaders have become understanding of the plight of pastors, the roots are deep. Furthermore, there remains a disconnect and perhaps a hope that if pastors become more efficient or master certain core skills, all will be well.

As recently as 2015, during the North American Division Called Convention, a refined and encompassing list of expectations were rolled out. Notice, “Pastors who are the most effective in [the mission of reaching their world for Christ with hope and wholeness] are proficient in identifiable core qualities of ministry” (Satelmajer & Williams, 2015, p. 6). The companion book released at this ministerial convention, along with a newly launched continuing education program and platform, aimed to equip pastors in the following seven core qualities: character, evangelism, leadership, worship, management, scholarship, and relationship.

Please pause and ponder the following question: It may be necessary for healthy growing churches to have these qualities present in the leadership of the church, but is it possible or should it be expected for pastors to exhibit all these qualities?

When it comes to the performance narrative inside the church, there is a dichotomy that often exists. The church recognizes the need for rest, health, and boundaries. Yet, there is a work that needs to get done, and laborers are few (Matt 9:37). Thus, it seems the default strategy becomes to stretch all available workers while hoping to hasten the second coming of Jesus (2 Pet 3:12). Perhaps it is akin to the old saying “Pike’s Peak or bust”—the idea being the end justifies the means because Jesus is coming



soon. However, this is not sustainable. Thankfully, there are voices within the church and a growing movement towards establishing a sustainable ministry environment. One of these voices is Rich Carlson (1996): “I recommend a special ‘rest day’ for the pastor. ...[A] day just for you as a pastor ... [providing] a deeper kind of ‘rest’” (p. 22). Nevertheless, on the flip side, we find conference leaders telling pastors the Sabbath is one of their days off; this perpetuates the dichotomy.

### ***What Does the Bible Say About Performance?***

One could argue that many of Jesus’ statements demonstrated a type of disregard for family relationships, like when He said, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:60, NKJV). What standard for ministry is Jesus advocating here? Or what about when He said, “I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work”; later, Jesus adds, “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” (John 9:4; 20:21, NKJV). Does Jesus expect us to neglect family and work tirelessly because a time is coming when we can no longer work? After all, He said to rich young ruler, “Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor ... and come, follow Me” (Luke 18:22, NKJV). What about Jesus’ declaration that we are not worthy of Him and cannot be His disciples if we do not hate father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters—even our own lives (Luke 14:26)? According to Jesus, the road to life is narrow and difficult (Matt 7:14); therefore, we must count the cost and pick up our respective crosses (Matt 16:24).

Likely, many more Bible statements and teachings of Jesus could be referenced, but there are questions: How does this fit with the problem of performance orientation and overload in pastoral ministry? Is Jesus promoting a type of performance orientation

and self-abnegation that would lead to burnout, fractured families, and pastors' kids leaving the faith? Certainly, Jesus' statements add complexity and room for misunderstanding, but thankfully, truth is not based on single passages or even a group of passages. Truth is first examined based on its micro context, then its macro context within the larger framework (of the book or letter of which it is part), and then within the context of all of Scripture.

For the purposes of this research, we cannot do an in-depth analysis on what the Bible teaches about performance and missional expectations for pastors and gospel workers, but we must not forget Jesus also said, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt 11:30, NKJV). Then, we must consider the question Paul asked: "for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?" (1 Tim 3:5, NKJV).

What about Proverbs 4:23, which says, "Guard your heart"? Why would the Bible employ the word "guard" unless our hearts were subject to attack and corruption? In other words, could this text be teaching that a greater regard needs to be placed on the vulnerability of life and health? This type of emphasis may help us shift our thinking away from the presumptuous idea that we can neglect our own needs and the needs of our families and somehow be immune from the natural results of such neglect. This verse indicates healthy hearts are the foundation of healthy, vibrant lives. For those who want to be effective ministers of the gospel, the biblical mandate is to guard your heart and rule your own affairs well. By doing so, one is enabled to faithfully serve the church of God.

While we cannot shirk our responsibilities as workers for Christ—and following Christ certainly does require sacrifice—we must remember God has called us to join Him

in His work. “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit” (Zech 4:6, NKJV). This verse reminds believers and gospel workers that they are utterly dependent on the power of God to be effective workers. Working harder is not the point. In fact, according to the insight given to Ellen White (1855a), God does not need our efforts to carry out the plan of salvation.

God could have reached His object in saving sinners without the aid of man; but He knew that man could not be happy without acting a part in the great work in which he would be cultivating self-denial and benevolence. (p. 382)

This raises the question, If service for God is designed to be a blessing, why are pastors burning themselves out, ruining their health and families?

As we have seen, the Bible has a holistic, sustainable view when it comes to responsibilities and priorities for pastors. Yes, a person can find verses that support a performance orientation mindset in the Bible, but ultimately, God’s desire is to heal broken hearts, not work them even harder.

### ***What Does Ellen White Say About Performance?***

The previous section concluded with a profound insight from Ellen White. After considering what society, the church, and the Bible have to say about performance, let us now briefly examine how Ellen White’s writings have influenced and shaped the performance orientation mindset in the church.

I would suggest that Ellen White was not influenced by performance orientation, nor did she promote it, but many of her statements could certainly be used to advance performance orientation, when isolated from the larger emphasis of health, pervasive in

her writings. Thus, the following statement could be used in favor of performance orientation:

The minister who is a co-worker with Christ will have a deep sense of the sacredness of his work, and of the toil and sacrifice required to perform it successfully. He does not study his own ease or convenience. He is forgetful of self. In his search for the lost sheep, he does not realize that he himself is weary, cold, and hungry. He has but one object in view,—the saving of the lost. (White, 1915, p. 16)

Those blinded by performance orientation would see this as an unequivocal endorsement that no sacrifice is too great in the work of Christ. Furthermore, it may seem there is a contradiction between this statement and the previous one in 1855. How should these be understood together? First, it cannot be denied that this statement endorses self-sacrifice. Also, this is a strong reminder for God's workers to be faithful and not neglect their missional responsibilities. Nevertheless, what else does Ellen White say?

Some ministers spend many hours in apparent ease, and it is right that they should rest when they can; for the system could not endure the heavy strain were there no time for letting up. There are hours in the day that call for severe taxation, for which the minister receives no extra salary, and if he chooses to chop wood several hours a day, or work in his garden, it is as much his privilege to do this as to preach. A minister cannot always be preaching and visiting, for this is exhaustive work. (White, 1946, p. 660)

These three statements are merely a sample, but how should one proceed?

Regardless of the statement toward which a person may gravitate, the resolution between

these passages is the same: circumstances. None of these statements are to be taken as normative benchmarks by which the other or any other statements about ministry and self-stewardship are to be measured. Taken to extremes, each of these statements would be harmful to ministers and the work of God. Therefore, we must always be dependent on God for wisdom and guidance in all situations and remember His priority is to always build up and restore individuals and families. The following statements make this clear:

“[The minister] may look upon his home duties as of lesser importance; but in reality they lie at the very foundation of the well-being of individuals and of society” (White, 1915, p. 204). Ellen White expanded on this in the book *Ministry of Healing*:

The restoration and uplifting of humanity begins in the home. The work of parents underlies every other. Society is composed of families, and is what the heads of families make it. Out of the heart are ‘the issues of life’ (Proverbs 4:23); and the heart of the community, of the church, and of the nation is the household. The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences.” (1905, p. 349)

If this is true for every Christian home, then certainly, this must be of equal or greater importance in the minister’s family. Furthermore, not only does the work at home matter greatly to the individuals in that home, but there is a ripple effect well beyond the family. And the point that cannot be missed or neglected is ministry begins in the home. In other words, if pastors neglect their ministry in the home, no amount of good outside the home can make up for this lack. Furthermore, Ellen White (1855b) notes that greater effectiveness in ministry results from prioritizing personal health and well-being.

A few hours of manual labor each day would tend to renew the bodily vigor and rest and relax the mind. In this way the general health would be promoted, and a greater amount of pastoral labor could be performed. (White, pp. 264–265)

These are not insignificant points. True effectiveness in ministry begins with self-care and nurturing healthy, happy families. Which may be way Paul says, “if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?” (1 Tim 3:5, NKJV).

This first part of the literature review has considered how these four dimensions—society at large, the church, the Bible, and the writings of Ellen White—have contributed to the performance narrative over time. Each of these influences have been instrumental in the formation of a culture of performance orientation within the church. While performance orientation is often destructive, performance is not negative in and of itself. There is no excuse for complacency or waste, in life generally, and certainly not in pastoral ministry. The Bible and the writings of Ellen White clearly express high expectations and an equal urgency in calling God’s workers to give their best. Therefore, the principles of discipline, stewardship, and sacrifice must be faithfully executed without being taken to extremes.

## **The Effects of Performance Orientation**

### ***How Has Performance Orientation Affected Society at Large?***

Strangely, the effects of performance orientation are not always clearly seen or discerned. Furthermore, even when a person or family experiences negative effects from work and life overload, these are often justified as necessary or temporary. In my home, we often say, “This too shall pass”—sometimes, it does; often, it does not. With that said,

what is the state of society? How are people and families being affected by performance orientation?

**First, Relationships.** Swenson (2004) indicates, “Polls reveal many Americans are no longer confident their children will have a better life than they did” (p. 24). This does not sound very hopeful. Unfortunately, according to Swenson’s perspective, things are not headed in the right direction.

Our relationships are being starved to death by velocity. No one has the time to listen, let alone love. Our children lay wounded on the ground, run over by our high-speed good intentions. Is God now pro-exhaustion? Doesn’t He lead people beside the still waters anymore? ...Certainly one cannot blame all the pains of the world on lack of margin. But it is fair to say that the lack of margin is a much greater component of our pain than most realize. (Swenson, 2004, p. 27)

Fortunately, since this was written, I believe society is realizing more and more there is a serious problem. However, motivation and resources to empower change are limited, which is another barrier and part of these complex issues.

**Second, Health.** In addition to primary relationships being affected by performance orientation, according to Reed and Wallace (2007), physical health has also been compromised:

The *Lifestyle Disease* is characterized by a group of harmful behaviors practiced over time, which result in a decreased quality of life and ultimately the onset of chronic illness leading to premature death ...At the root of the lifestyle disease is a frenzied rhythm of overdrive. Even if you don’t consider yourself “ambitious,” whether or not you decide you “want it all,” our modern society demands that you

pick up the pace. We're constantly asked to do more in less time. And unless we choose to intentionally slow down and experience what's most important in our lives, turbo becomes our natural setting. It becomes our lifestyle, and we adopt compensating, harmful behaviors to survive. Our time is short so we don't exercise, get enough sleep, eat healthfully, or deepen our relationships. (Reed & Wallace, 2007, pp. 6–7)

Where does this stop? That depends. The negative impact of performance orientation sets in motion a domino effect and without intervention, the subsequent dominos will continue to fall at the rate of the imbalance that exists in a person's life.

Thus far, we have seen that performance orientation affects relationships and physical health, but it does not stop there.

**Third, Trust.** Another area negatively impacted is the work environment. Performance orientation is supposed to be good for results in business, but according to Simon Sinek, an influential voice in contemporary leadership and the business world, this is not the case. Rather, performance orientation creates an unhealthy culture of competition and distrust in the workplace. This happens when results are valued above the individual health and well-being of co-workers.

We've literally created cultures in which every single day everybody comes to work and lies, hides, and fakes and we're asking our youngest generation to work and succeed and find themselves and build their confidence and overcome their addiction to technology and build strong relationships at work. We're asking them to do this, and these are the environments we've created. We keep saying to them



you're the future leaders. We're the leaders now, we're in control, what are we doing? (Sinek, 2016, 24:41)

The following three areas of relationships, health, and now trust, specifically in working environments, have been identified as being negatively affected by performance orientation. If society at large is experiencing these consequences, it is safe to conclude pastors must also be struggling in these areas. Therefore, as a point of comparison, we will first look at these areas as a template.

### ***How Has Performance Orientation Affected Pastors at Large?***

**First, Relationships.** According to Barna (2017), “nearly half of pastors face some sort of relational risk. [Forty three percent] of pastors are at high or medium relational risk [in the areas of] ... marriage, family, friendships or other close relationships” (p. 11). Furthermore, “The leading factor that pushes pastors into the relational high-risk category is that ministry at their *current* [emphasis added] church has been difficult for their family” (Barna, p. 37). According to Barna, there is a connection between satisfaction in ministry and the impact it has on family or other important relationships in the pastor’s life. Fortunately, “for the most part, pastors present a positive picture” (Barna, p. 16), but as will be seen, there are significant reasons to be concerned.

**Second, Health.** Coming back to the assessment by Reed and Wallace (2007) regarding lifestyle disease, we are reminded that this is a serious problem for society at large, but what about pastors? Reed and Wallace list the following behaviors as some of the most harmful that lead to lifestyle disease:

- Poor eating habits
- Little or no physical exercise

- Lack of sufficient or fulfilling sleep
- Sustained exposure to unbuffered stress
- ... smoking or drug use
- Minimal or no personal playtime or time for solitude
- Limited family or meaningful relationship time
- Lack of spiritual connection (2007, p. 6)

Unfortunately, many of these behaviors are common among pastors; especially consider the first four listed above (poor eating habits, little or no physical exercise, lack of sufficient or fulfilling sleep, and sustained exposure to unbuffered stress). A recent study by Lifeway Research highlights the aforementioned areas of concern:

More than half of pastors say they find consistently exercising (59%) and avoiding over-commitment and overwork (55%) to be challenging in their ministry. Slightly less than half say they struggle with eating right (49%), taking time away from their job for hobbies or other interests (47%) and consistently resting (45%). (Earls, 2022)

If these statistics are not alarming enough, “One in five pastors has struggled with an addiction—most commonly, to porn—while almost half have faced depression” (Barna, 2017, p. 11). Unfortunately, Hough et al. (2019) confirms that “the physical and mental health conditions of clergy are approaching crisis levels, with clergy experiencing higher rates of depression, obesity, and chronic disease than comparable Americans” (p. 187). Heck et al. (2018) also cites these and many other health issues as part of the larger related problem of “chronic stress” among clergy (p. 117).

**Third, Trust.** According to Sinek, society has created workplaces where people are afraid and cannot thrive because of the lack of trust. Patrick Lencioni, author of *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* (2002) and *The Advantage* (2012), argues that teamwork is the single greatest advantage in business. On what is teamwork based? Trust. Lencioni (2005) says, “Based on my experience ... no quality or characteristic is more important than trust” (p. 13). The question is how does this apply to pastors and pastoral ministry?

Performance orientation, by definition, erodes trust because the focus is on results, not relationships. Trust is the foundation of relationships, and when relationships are used as a means to an end, trust will always be weak. Trust is complex, and the way it is affecting Christianity and pastors today is multifaceted. Consider the following findings: “Less than a third of Christians said they ‘definitely’ consider a pastor a ‘trustworthy source of wisdom.’ As you might expect, a mere 4 percent of non-Christians think of pastors in this way. That’s a pretty bleak picture” (Packiam, 2022, p. 34).

How did churches and pastors get to this point? Could it be that performance orientation has played a role? While there may not be a direct correlation, according to Packiam (2022) regaining trust will involve “doing the right thing for the right reasons for a really long time” (p. 36). And I would argue that means investing in relationships, not results. Kelly M. Kapic adds, “One of the most healing and powerful actions pastors can undertake for their congregations is to appreciate more fully the people God has gathered there” (2022, p. 12). If performance orientation made this mess, it appears heart orientation will heal the wounds.

**What About Spiritual Health?** For pastors to be effective in their ministry and calling, they must be spiritually stable and able to give out of the abundance of their

personal relationship with God. Many examples could be cited, but the experience of megachurch pastor Pete Wilson illustrates the principle well. When Wilson resigned as the senior pastor of Cross Point Church in Nashville, Tennessee, he told his congregation, “leaders who lead on empty don’t lead well and for some time now I’ve been leading on empty.” He went on to say, “I’m tired. I’m broken, and I just need some rest” (as cited in Blair, 2016).

According to Peter Scazzero, the big reason for a pastor’s struggle to prioritize spiritual health is because of performance orientation. He labels it as “activism,” positing that pastors “have inherited a history of activism ... [which] can also be a liability.” Scazzero’s conviction and passion is for pastors to develop spiritual disciplines of “being (instead of doing),” but this is “difficult for most of us who are heirs to evangelicalism’s activist impulse” (as cited in Barna Group, 2017, p. 33).

**Finally, The Point of No Return.** Each of the references and statistics discussed in this section have applied specifically to those in active ministry, which means they do not account for those who have left pastoral ministry. Barna Group (2017) reports that “three out of four who [are currently serving as pastors] say they know at least one fellow pastor whose ministry has ended due to burnout” (pp. 25–26). Lifeway Research (2015) claims:

Small segments have left the pastorate, current pastors say. Two percent shifted to non-ministry jobs, and 5 percent stayed in ministry but switched to non-pastoral roles. Combined, those two groups account for known losses of less than 1 percent a year. (Green, 2015)

Is this fake news, misinformation, or valid differences in research? Regardless of the apparent contradiction, Lifeway Research finds that more than half of ministers “find the role of pastor frequently overwhelming” (Green, 2015). The consensus is pastoral ministry is difficult, which means serious efforts need to be taken by the church to support and retain pastors, especially considering future shortages due to “the ‘graying’ of America’s clergy” (Barna Group, 2017, p. 15).

### ***How Has Performance Orientation Affected Seventh-day Adventist Pastors?***

Seventh-day Adventist pastors are not exempt or immune from the culture of performance orientation that has affected society at large, including Protestant Christianity. While the church culture, of which I am a part, is certainly unique, Adventist pastors face many of the same challenges as do those from other denominations. I will again commence with the three areas of relationships, health, and trust, as it relates to Adventist pastors.

**First, Relationships.** The experience of Pastor Gábor Mihalec, discussed in Chapter 1, while perhaps extreme in certain ways, is a common example of how Adventist pastors neglect and sacrifice their families, prioritizing ministry above family.

This is not a new problem, and many have recognized it, including the church leadership. “Too many Adventist ministers preach against addiction while they themselves are being addicted—to work!” (Ministerial Association, 1992, p. 36). However, this raises an interesting question: Is the church speaking out of both sides of its mouth? On one hand, the *Minister’s Manual* says, the call to ministry is to be a “life-consuming devotion” (Ministerial Association, p. 17)—give all, hold nothing back—ministry is not a job; it is a calling. On the other hand, “don’t over work.” Logically, these

two comparisons are not in conflict, but practically, the pressure to perform within the church has not been adequately mitigated, and how language is used matters.

The story of Jerry Page, a well-known leader in the Adventist Church, will reinforce both the performance orientation problem and the side effects it has on relationships. Page reflects on the outward success he was experiencing as a young pastor when called to serve as a conference president by age 36:

I was very young for that leadership position and seemingly very spiritual and “successful.” Only one little problem. Janet [his wife] was struggling in her spiritual life after many years of attempting to develop a relationship with Jesus. She just silently kept doing pastoral wife duties and taking the kids to church, looking good on the outside but dying on the inside.

The day I was elected president was a high day for me, but Janet was home praying it would not happen! Here is where my “self” problem became visible again. I had my own devotional time and tried to be a spiritual leader for my members. But while I was so focused on ministry and trying to be “good” at it, I was very insensitive to my wife’s situation. (Page, 2022, p. 8)

This experience illustrates many of the points already discussed yet also raises the question of support. Where is the support for young pastors and their families? On other occasions, Page has shared publicly the challenges in his home and marriage, and like most pastors, he and his family were left to figure it out on their own—with God.

Speaking about the importance of support and intimate friendship in pastoral ministry, the *Minister’s Manual* asks, “Where does the pastor find intimate friendship? Hopefully, your spouse is your best friend” (Ministerial Association, 1992, p. 29). Aka et

al. (2022) also recognize that pastors' families, "including spouse, usually provide one primary avenue of social support" (p. 115). However, this raises an important question: If pastors are overloaded and not prioritizing their families and especially their spouses, is it possible to have or maintain this intimacy as a source of support?

**Second, Health.** As has already been demonstrated, there are serious consequences when a pastor neglects their health and well-being. Naturally, the same is true for Adventist pastors. During the 2019 year-end meetings of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, the topic of longevity was discussed. Raymond Jimenez reported that church employees have a much higher mortality rate than the general public has (Nadadventist, 1:57:10).

How can it be that our church is known for having Blue Zones (Buettner, 2012) where Seventh-day Adventist members in the United States live seven-to-eleven years longer than the average American lives, yet our pastors and other church employees are dying significantly sooner than does the general public? Coming back to Jimenez, he explained that church employees do not get sick after retiring; rather, during their working years, their health has been compromised. Along the way, they develop diseases and then suffer from the results during retirement, which leads to an early death (Nadadventist, 2019, 1:59:15). I can personally testify to witnessing this in the lives of retired pastors. This is tragic yet, I believe, preventable.

**Third, Trust.** The question is, What quality of trust exists in ministry for Seventh-day Adventist pastors, and what impact does this have on their well-being?

First, it is important to delineate between the two basic levels of structure in the Adventist Church. This includes the local church and the state conferences. Adventist

churches are directly under the control and supervision of the state conferences and have limited autonomy. Thus, if trust and healthy church environments are to exist, trust must be nurtured at the local level and between the pastor/church and the conference.

According to Sedlacek et al. (2014), when trust exists between the pastor and members, as well as the pastor and conference, and the pastor has trusted friendships, this increases confidence, and stress is “reduced” (p. 70) in ministry.

Certainly, statistics or experiences could be cited demonstrating a lack of conference support and the effects of distrust in ministry, but thankfully, there are positive experiences that can be celebrated. One pastor tells a remarkable story of a time when some members of the church were “pretty upset,” and instead of the conference president siding with the church members, he stood behind the pastor. The president said to the pastor, “I defended you to the hilt. You are one of mine, I picked you. I am going to defend you’... [The pastor said] ‘It was a turning point in my life’” (Sedlacek et al., p. 60). The conference president’s redemptive response changed this pastor’s life. That’s the essence of building trust. This is the kind of support pastors need if they are to thrive in ministry. Sedlacek et al. emphasized, “The specific type of support” pastors need “included the conference administration being accessible, defending them in times of conflict, and using a Biblical approach to conflict resolution” (p. 70).

**What About Spiritual Health?** Jerry Page’s experience touched on spiritual health, and according to Sedlacek et al. (2014), this is a common struggle. “Many [Adventist] pastors find it easier to talk about God and work for Him, but that their personal spirituality lacks true, satisfying and renewing intimacy with God” (as cited in Heck et al., 2018, p. 127). Adventist pastors are struggling to both make “time for



personal devotions” (Sedlacek et al., 2014, p. 14) and experience quality time with God, as previously mentioned.

The following testimony provides a candid reflection of the performance problem in the Adventist Church and its effect on spiritual health:

As a young pastor you quickly learn you’re rewarded for doing, not being. And so, the minute you wake up, the pressure to accomplish, to do some measurable tasks that the conference would acknowledge that you were actually doing your job, is tremendous. It takes a lot of self- discipline to say ‘Forget that. I’m going to walk with God and I’m going to spend the morning with Him or several hours with Him. (Sedlacek et al., 2014, p. 46)

As we have seen, it seems performance orientation affects every area of a pastor’s life, including their relationship with God—and Adventist pastors are not exempt. Thus, I believe it is time for the Adventist Church to realize that input [self-care] equals output [results]. If pastors are not taking care of themselves and their families, then health and well-being will be compromised, and ministry results will be diminished.

In this second part of the literature review, we have seen the effects of performance orientation in society at large and in the church. The effects range from brokenness in family relationships to devastating results like illness and premature death.

## **The Role of Symbolic Interactionism and Success Measurements in Performance Orientation Among Pastors**

### ***The Role of Symbolic Interactionism in Performance Orientation***

The study of social interactions, the formation of self, and personal identity are highly complicated matters. This study addresses these matters at a basic level, trusting

that sufficient clarity and connection has been made between interactionism and performance orientation.

As a starting point, it is worth noting that “Symbolic interactionism or interactionism, for short, is one of the major theoretical paradigms in sociology” (Quist-Adade, 2019, p. 19). While other social theories may help explain factors affecting performance orientation, the reason I find interactionism helpful is because of the concept of the generalized other.

As discussed in the “Definitions” section of Chapter 1, the generalized other is a collective embodiment of “cultural norms and values” (Quist-Adade, 2019, p. 95). The significance of the generalized other is that we individually engage in mental “self-talk” with our respective generalized others as we decide how to relate in social situations (Griffin et al., 2015, p. 57, 60).

The question is, how does interactionism and the generalized other relate to performance orientation? I would suggest, as first mentioned in Chapter 1, it is reasonable to conclude that in the minds of pastors, there is a generalized other of performance orientation. This generalized other contains an “organized set of information” (as cited in Griffin et al., 2015, p. 60), including expectations, norms, and values of how pastors are to behave and be. It is this generalized other, composed of various expectations, norms, and values collected from within society and church culture that pressure and influence pastors as they respond in life and ministry.

In a fascinating paper, Tammy L. MacLean (2008) discusses the potential role of interactionism in organizational misconduct. “A symbolic interactionist perspective argues that socially constructed ‘frames’ shape organization members’ choices and

behaviors in uncalculating, unthinking ways rather than organization members being driven by amoral, rational choice” (p. 5). MacLean applies interactionism on the unconscious level, arguing that conscious evaluation and responses in work settings are overpowered by the organizational culture or “frames” within which employees learn and operate—this seems to be the generalized other at work.

If this is true, could it be that the pressures and expectations in ministry are significant enough that pastors are not even fully aware of the factors influencing their responses? I believe the answer is yes, with the caveat that ‘misconduct’ or specifically in the case of pastors—‘unhealthy choices’ often lead to negative outcomes sooner rather than later. In other words, the feedback pastors receive from family or short-term results of poor health choices bring greater levels of awareness along the way. Thus, pastors have the opportunity to course-correct more readily. However, it seems the pull to perform (conscious or unconscious) is very strong for many pastors.

Perhaps one of the overpowering factors is a level of fear or intimidation towards conference and church leadership. Aka et al. (2022) address this concern, noting that pastors often do not reach out for help. Even if “they have valid concerns, pastors don’t want to be perceived as weak or incompetent” (p. 120).

It is time to recognize the role performance orientation played in shaping this type of culture. Furthermore, it is worth noting that in the last ten years, it has become popular to talk about church as a safe place, but if the work environment for pastors is not safe, we must ask, is it possible for church to really be a safe place for members?

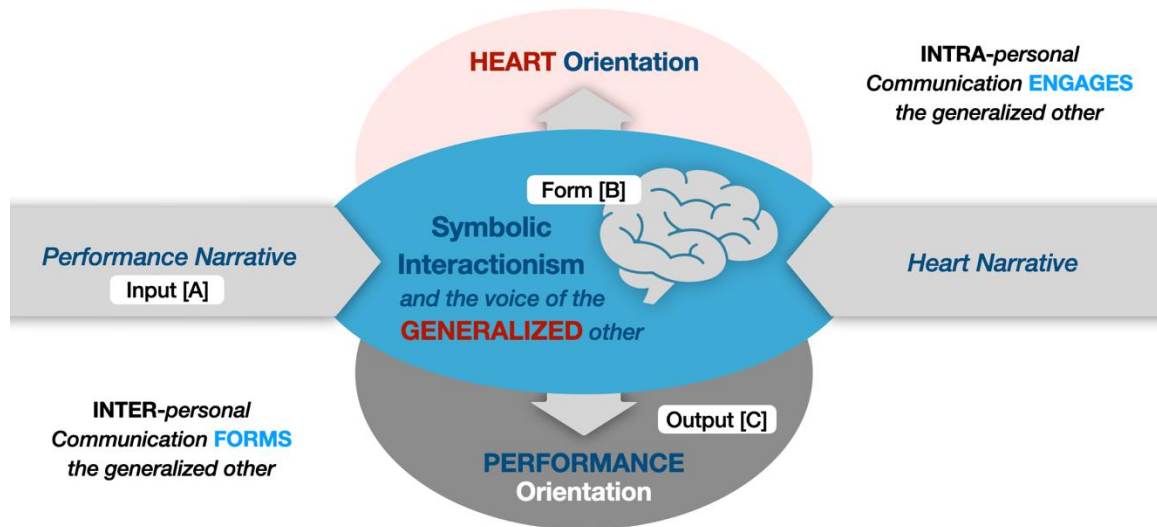
Jim Hawkins was asked, “How would you like to see the church change to be a place where honesty really is the best policy?” (As cited in Barna, 2017, p. 51). This was part of his response:

The family of God should be the place where we can expect to find people like us—honest about our brokenness, hopeful for restoration—who trust the communion of saints ... If we can find a way to do church like that, pastors will be first in line. (As cited in Barna, p. 51)

To be clear, the reason these examples have been cited are not merely to demonstrate weaknesses and problems in the church and pastoral ministry but to illustrate the pathology of the disease. Interactionism teaches that culture is learned through symbols and the use of and interaction with these symbols. This learning happens through various means, often involving interpersonal communication. According to interactionist, this begins in childhood, “particularly through play and games” (Nickerson, 2021). All of this forms a narrative that communicates the values and expectations held in common by members of a given society. If the orientation of a given society or subculture is performance based, the input will be a performance narrative (see Input [A], Figure 1), thus forming a generalized other of performance orientation in the mind of an individual (Form [B]), and this results in an output of performance orientation in a person’s life.

**Figure 1**

*Symbolic Interactionism and the Formation of Performance Orientation*



As noted, interpersonal communication plays a key role in part A and B as the generalized other is formed, and then intrapersonal communication (internal self-talk with one’s generalized other) is operative between part B and C, thus influencing the behavior and responses of individuals. Input equals output, thus as depicted in Figure 1, this same process works with the heart narrative or any other input.

According to the Bible, church and ministry can be the safe place God desires it to be—a place where people can bear one another’s burdens (Gal 6:2) and live their best lives (John 10:10). I believe interactionism and the generalized other will play a key role in this. If it contributed to creating the current environment of dysfunction, then it must also be part of the solution. Now, let us consider the biblical dimension.

**Biblical Correspondence with Symbolic Interactionism.** From the beginning of creation, we were taught “it is not good that man should be alone” (Gen 2:18, NKJV). A summarization of Karl Marx’s thoughts regarding humanity is we are “fundamentally social beings” (Quist-Adade, 2019, p. 37). While Marx, Mead, and probably Quist-Adade

are not theists, their observations match the truth revealed in the Word of God.

Furthermore, as social creatures created in the image of a triune God, we influence one another. Whether we call this “socialization” or something else, the result is the same.

One could ask, In what direction do we shape each other? Could it be that the story of Adam and Eve disobeying God demonstrates an initial form of symbolic interactionism and the generalized other of performance orientation in its infancy?

Another biblical connection that will prove helpful is Paul’s discussion of the body of Christ in his letter to the Ephesians. Here, we find Paul talking about social community structures and the impact they have on those who are part of the body of Christ. What makes Paul’s statements fascinating is He also described a divine vertical element at play within the church community. He taught that the formation of individuals and identities within the church community happens inside a larger sphere. Notice, individual believers “grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ” (Eph 4:15, NKJV). In other words, the body of believers *in* Christ form a divine social-spiritual culture that “builds” up the body *of* Christ (Eph 4:12, 16, NIV) and shapes individuals who are part of this body.

This comes back full circle to the social-spiritual influences at play in Genesis 2 and 3. The Bible teaches God created Adam and Eve to help one another make healthy choices. Satan’s aim was to influence Eve towards self-dependence and the dark side of the performance coin. Once Eve made the choice to disobey, she was no longer a purely positive social force to help Adam but instead became a social threat and hinderance to him. Could these social-spiritual interactions describe a degree of correspondence with the symbolic interactionism? Does God work through these social-spiritual dimensions?

If so, what role does the generalized other have? I believe “yes” is the answer to these questions, and these concepts will be applied in the fourth section of this review.

### ***The Role of Success Measurements in Performance Orientation***

Measurement, evaluation, and assessment often carry significant weight in determining value. Often, the value of something is determined by its ability to be measured. Whether this is true or not is not the point. The point is society and the church have developed standards of measurement and evaluation that determine success in life and ministry. Therefore, if we are going to shift from performance to heart orientation, we will have to measure things differently.

According to Swenson (2004), “Americans have a widespread perception that inextricably associates our overall well-being with our material and cognitive status” (Swenson, 2004, p. 28). This is one of the ways society measures success. However, Swenson goes on to argue that there is a better definition of progress—a better metric for measuring success:

Under the new understanding of accounting, we would not call it progress if we gained in wealth but lost in relationship; we would not call it beneficial if we improved in estate but injured the psyche; and we would not call it profitable if we achieved a promotion but lost spiritual integrity. (Swenson, 2004, p. 30)

As Swenson continues to develop this paradigm shift, he cites the wisdom and conviction of William Wilberforce, the English statesman who was instrumental in the abolition of the slave trade in England. Wilberforce also recognized success is much more than material prosperity or fame. He had a much higher, nobler vision of success

and progress. “Above all, measure your progress by your experience of the love of God and its exercise before men” (as cited in Swenson, 2004, p. 34).

Before moving on, I believe it’s necessary to stress that if the goal is to move from performance to heart orientation in pastoral ministry, then relationships and love must be the foundation when it comes to considering a new paradigm for measuring effectiveness in ministry.

**What Is Being Measured and Why?** Before considering an alternative to the standard success metrics of performance orientation, it is important to have an honest conversation about what is currently measured and valued within pastoral ministry.

If we decide that success means that a pastor baptizes 50 people every year, the church grows by 100 percent each year, the tithe increases by 100 percent each year, and the church plants a new congregation every three years, then if that is not happening, the pastor appears to be unsuccessful in our eyes, and probably in his or her own eyes also. (Smith, 2004, p. 19)

The above reflection by Dennis Smith summarizes well the most common success metrics in the church: growth and giving. There are few conference presidents or church members who would not be happy with their pastor if these goals were met on a regular basis. With that said, Smith (2004) asks a pertinent question: “what if God does not call each pastor to do exactly the same kind of ministry as every other pastor?” (p. 19). When conference leadership expects the same results from all its pastors and each of its congregations, this demonstrates that the conference values these outcomes more than it values the individual gifts and talents of each pastor and congregation. The focus becomes on performance—doing whatever it takes to achieve the numbers. There may be



good spiritual reasons for pursuing growth and giving, but one of the greatest side effects of this framework for success is it results in the prostitution of the church, to one degree or another. Giving matters, but the church is not a business. Therefore, it cannot use the same measures of success.

In a phenomenal article by Archibald D. Hart (2002), discussing *The Perils of Pursuing Success*, he strikes at the heart of the issue when it comes to what is important and what God values most.

I believe that God wants our obedience and faithfulness, *before* our service. He is more interested in what we are *becoming* than in what we are *achieving* for Him.

In the final analysis, God is not in the success business, but in the refining business (see Job 23:10). (Hart, 2002, p. 16)

This is the direction in which the churches and pastors need to be moving if we are going to be successful in the eyes of God and escape performance orientation.

Earlier in this chapter, I introduced the book released at the 2015 Called Convention. Consider the following statement, which refers to the seven core qualities—character, evangelism, leadership, worship, management, scholarship, and relationship: “These benchmarks are critical for an effective ministry” (Satelmajer & Williams, 2015, p. 5). We could debate whether effectiveness is the same as success or not, but if we are honest, I believe most of us would agree that this book is concerned with empowering pastors to have a successful ministry. Is that bad? That depends. Hart (2002) suggests that if motivations for success can remain “pure,” which he posits “is not easy” (p. 14), then perhaps there is no harm.

I believe the intentions for pursuing the seven core qualities are good, and certainly, there is nothing wrong with the qualities themselves, but this raises some challenging questions: Why is it so important for pastors to have all these qualities? Why is it necessary to have an “effective ministry”? Is this what God is expecting of ministers? The more I have researched performance orientation and pondered the complicated nature of success and effectiveness in ministry, it seems to me that institutionalism is one of the major reasons behind the pressure to perform in ministry.

What is institutionalism? As defined by Merriam-Webster (n.d.), it is an “emphasis on organization (as in religion) at the expense of other factors.” Is it safe to say if the responsibility to maintain the church’s institutions, buildings, employees, and all its other trappings was not a factor, the pressure on the conference leaders and pastors would be greatly diminished? The next question may not be a comfortable one, but I believe we cannot ignore it: Who benefits more from pastoral success and effectiveness, the institutional church or the mission and kingdom of God? While we seek to maintain the church institution, we must first and foremost do everything possible to mitigate the side effects of performance orientation. Thus, how and what we measure in pastoral ministry is of utmost importance.

Much more could be said about success measurements and performance orientation, but it is time to look at solutions to the problem.

### ***New Metrics for Pastoral Ministry***

Where does a person start? How far should one search in seeking to determine a new metrics?

In the book *How Will You Measure Your Life?*, Clayton M. Christensen et al. (2012) say, “Work can bring you a sense of fulfillment—but it pales in comparison to the enduring happiness you can find in the intimate relationships that you cultivate with your family and close friends” (p. 82). In the first two parts of this book, Christensen et al. (2012) consider how people can find happiness in their careers and relationships. It is an insightful and fascinating book that recognizes the centrality of relationships as the metric for pursuing happiness and fulfillment.

Therefore, any conference or pastor desiring to shift the metric for pastoral ministry away from numbers-based evaluations, which reinforce performance orientation, needs to seriously consider systems that prioritize relationships.

In my research, I have come across a handful of resources that offer helpful elements for shifting the metrics in pastoral ministry. However, there is one system I believe offers the most potential. Let us look at several other options first.

**First Element: Make Investing in Discipleship a Top Priority.** Robert E. Coleman, an evangelical, distinguished scholar, professor, and prolific author on the topics of evangelism and discipleship, provides an important insight into metrics. While Coleman does not specifically outline a measurement for evaluating priorities or effectiveness in ministry, he points us to Christ. What was Christ’s method? What made Him effective? “Men were to be his method of winning the world to God” (Coleman, 1993, p. 27). Christ discipled a small group of men who would then change the world.

Coleman argues that Jesus had no other plan. “Here is where we must begin just like Jesus. It will be slow, tedious, painful ... but the end result will be glorious, even if we don’t live to see it” (Coleman, 1993, p. 38). Coleman is essentially arguing that

success measurements need to shift from a focus on results to the deep development or discipleship of people. Yes, results matter, and our churches can and should grow, but this cannot be mistaken as the true measure of success. As a side note, this touches on a helpful distinction between “lead” and “lag” measures when it comes to results. Lead and lag measures are part of *The 4 Disciplines of Execution*, developed by McChesney et al. (2016), which teach the importance of measuring the lead factors (e.g., discipleship), which are responsible for the lag results (e.g., baptisms). This is consistent with the biblical principle that you reap what you sow (Gal. 6:7).

**Second Element: Develop Robust Support-Accountability Systems.** Melena (2018) has developed the *Supportive Accountability Leadership* model. This model considers four different styles of leadership, ranging from low supportiveness/accountability to high supportiveness/accountability. “Leaders who manage with supportive accountability know that great performance flows out of a strong supervisor-employee relationship based on mutual trust, caring, and respect” (Melena, 2018, chap. 1, para. 9). Notice the emphasis on relationships and trust. This type of support and accountability is necessary for pastors to do their best in ministry.

However, my critique of the *Supportive Accountability Leadership* model would be its emphasis on performance, success, and results. Sinek (2016) claims that too often, employers want to know “how can I get the most out of [my employees]?” He pleads that the narrative needs to change to “how do I help my people be at their natural best” (26:09). It may be that this is what Melena intends, but it is a reminder that language and emphasis matter.

**Third Element: Coaching to Help Pastors Clarify Personal Vision and Values, Delegation, Personal Growth for Production Capability, and Healthier Boundaries.** Stephen Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* offers ample material from which a person could find better metrics for prioritizing relationships. The challenge is that Covey has not specifically identified an alternative metric within the book. If asked, he may say the measure of personal effectiveness should be based on living out one's mission statement. He believes this is fundamental because "your mission statement becomes your constitution, the solid expression of your vision and values. It becomes the criterion by which you measure everything else in your life" (2013, p. 137). However, from a leadership standpoint, Covey may say that to delegate is what should be measured. "Effective delegation is perhaps the best indicator of effective management simply because it is so basic to both personal and organizational growth" (2013, p. 188).

Covey (2013) also argues that "effectiveness lies" in what he calls *P/PC Balance*. "P stands for production of desired results ... PC stands for production capability" (p. 62). The concept of production is easily understood, but the idea of a person's capability to produce is, in large part, the theme of his book. When individuals or organizations fail to invest and build up people ("the producers"), production will inevitably be affected.

Out of fairness to Covey, the best course of action may be to allow his teachings and principles to inform any alternative metrics for pastoral ministry, recognizing character development and relationship transformation are the essence of his book.

In addition to what Covey's materials bring to the table, Cloud and Townsend (2017), Swenson (2004), and Bethke (2019), among others, promote the importance of

boundaries to foster healthy relationships in work and life. While this may not be an adequate standalone metric for pastoral ministry, it fits well with a coaching metric, which would help pastors establish and maintain healthier boundaries. For instance, Bethke (2019) passionately defends the sacredness of time by arguing, “When we treat time the same way we treat the earth—something to exploit, use, and squeeze every last drop of life from—that’s truly wasting time” (p. 100). He further states, “It’s not about being selfish or weird or introverted. It’s about creating a life centered around priorities we care about most, making sure they don’t fall by the wayside. There simply isn’t time for everything” (p. 101).

**A Better Alternative.** As previously discussed, any new metric for pastoral ministry needs to prioritize relationships in order to reinforce heart orientation.

In the context of business, Patrick Lencioni provides a framework for what he calls organizational health. For Lencioni, the foundation of organizational health is healthy relationship—specifically rooted in trust. These concepts are primarily captured in his two books, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* and *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business*.

I would argue the model he outlines provides an outstanding process for creating healthy, productive churches and is a better alternative for measuring pastoral ministry in a constructive way.

Until this point, when talking about new metrics for pastoral ministry, I have purposely avoided the words “success” and “effectiveness,” simply because I believe it is important to keep as much distance between a new method for measuring pastoral ministry and the negative attachments to current performance orientation metrics that are

focused on numbers or other key performance indicators. There is nothing inherently wrong with success in pastoral ministry or desiring efficiency and effectiveness, as long as true success is the focus and effectiveness does not lead down the slippery slope of performance orientation. I clarify this point because I cannot change Lencioni's words and the context within which he is operating, but like Stephen Covey and Jim Collins, I believe Patrick Lencioni truly prioritizes foundational values, character, and relationships above superficial, reward-based systems of success. Let us now consider his framework.

Lencioni (2012) argues that "The key ingredient for improvement and success is not access to knowledge or resources, as helpful as those things may be. It's really about the health of the environment" (The Case for Organizational Health, "Understanding Organizational Health", 9:21). If success and results are that for which most people are looking in business as well as the church, according to Lencioni, this is the wrong approach. He argues that healthy environments must be the focus and measure of true success. His experience has demonstrated repeatedly that healthy teams outperform smart or rich teams any day at any time. To illustrate this further, Lencioni provides a practical comparison that nicely resonates with those in pastoral ministry:

The same phenomenon can be seen in families. Healthy families—the ones where parents give their children discipline, affection, and time—almost always improve over the years, even when they lack many of the advantages and resources that money can buy. Unhealthy families, the ones without discipline and unconditional love, will always struggle, even if they have all the money, tutors, coaches, and technology they could ever want. (The Case for Organizational Health, "Understanding Organizational Health", 8:54)

Lencioni (2012) gives three reasons why “organizational health just isn’t very sexy” (The Case for Organizational Health, “Understanding Organizational Health”, 12:26). Looking at his second reason, the answer is organizational health is difficult to measure. Organizations would rather have objective data that is consistent and easy to measure. Nevertheless, Lencioni is confident that an organization that wants the best results must focus on health.

How is this achieved? It starts with building vulnerability-based trust. This is the foundation of functionally healthy teams. “Vulnerability-based trust is predicated on the simple—and practical—idea that people ... aren’t afraid to admit the truth about themselves” (Lencioni, 2005, p. 14). This is different from what Lencioni calls “predictability-based trust.” The first is trust based on relationship; the second is trust based on actions or performance. Healthy teams are deeply vulnerable, honest, and open with each other. They do not “engage in the kind of political behavior that wastes everyone’s time and energy” (Lencioni, 2005, p. 14).

Lencioni’s model (2012) for establishing organizational health includes the following four disciplines: (1) build a cohesive leadership team, (2) create clarity, (3) overcommunicate clarity, and (4) reinforce clarity (The Four Disciplines Model, see Figure 2). Lencioni declares upfront:

An organization doesn’t become healthy in a linear, tidy fashion. Like building a strong marriage or family, it’s a messy process that involves doing a few things at once, and it must be maintained on an ongoing basis in order to be preserved.

(2012, The Four Disciplines Model, 0:03)



## Figure 2

### *The Four Disciplines Model for Establishing Organizational Health*



This will be new, different, and countercultural, but I believe with all my heart this must be the new playbook for our churches and pastors. The reason is simple: “Turning an unhealthy company [or church] into a healthy one will not only create a massive competitive advantage and improved bottom line, it will *also* [emphasis added] make a real difference in the lives of the people who work there” (Lencioni, 2012, *The Case for Organizational Health*, “Understanding Organizational Health”, 16:23). This is the advantage our churches need to thrive in challenging and constantly changing times, and, as Lencioni highlighted in the previous quote, it is the key to a sustainable ministry where pastors can thrive in a heart-orientation environment. This can be the new metric for pastoral ministry.

In this section of the literature review, we looked at symbolic interactionism and success measurements and how they related to performance orientation. In reverse order, we observed that the current measurements for effectiveness in pastoral ministry perpetuate performance orientation. These metrics are a partial reflection of what society

and the church values. It has been said, “You measure what you value,” which seems to indicate the values and expectations pastors face in ministry are part of an ecclesiastical generalized other of performance orientation, which influences how pastors navigate ministry.

The good news is there is hope. First, the metrics can be changed; and second, there is a biblical alternative to the generalized other of symbolic interactionism. In the next and final section of the literature review, the concept of the generalized other will be applied in the context of the Holy Spirit.

## **The Heart Narrative and Strategies for Establishing and Maintaining Healthier Boundaries in Pastoral Ministry**

### ***The Heart Narrative***

*The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, by Peter Scazzero (2015), argues that many church cultures have unspoken commandments that contribute to and perpetuate the lack of health and well-being of its leaders. One of these commandments gets right to the central issue of the heart narrative. “What you *do* is more important than who you *are*” (Scazzero, 2015, p. 49). While some may debate that what a person does is most important, Scazzero believes our hearts, characters—who we are—is what makes us valuable and important, first and foremost, in the eyes of God.

David and Beverly Sedlacek (2014) corroborate this, teaching that performance orientation “is rooted in the inability to differentiate between being loved for who we are and loved for what we do” (p. 202). Who we are—our identity—is the core of the heart narrative. For those longing to escape the frenzied pace of performance orientation, this

heart truth must be embraced more and more. With this basic foundation for the heart narrative, I will now address the heart orientation concept, defined in Chapter 1.

Identity is at the core of the heart narrative and heart orientation. From a biblical perspective, our identity is rooted in being children of God (1 John 3:1a), made in His likeness (Gen 1:27). Expanding on this, the apostle Paul emphasizes we are children of God made in His image, and that God wants to live in us. “Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you ... therefore glorify God in your body” (1 Cor 6:19–20, NKJV). This leads us to another important element of heart orientation: relationship.

This research was inspired by Proverbs 4:23, which teaches us that the heart must be guarded at all expense. This means a person’s heart is of utmost value. Why? Because “everything you do flows from it” (NIV). Who you are affects everything you do, especially one’s relationships. Therefore, a heart-orientation focus is concerned with each aspect of people’s lives, from who they are to their most important relationships and even stewardship of their physical bodies.

Heart orientation is centered in identity and lived out in relationship. This brings us back to the concept of God living in us. In John 15:4, Jesus illustrates this truth and expresses His desire for us to abide in Him. There can be no deeper, richer relationship with God than by abiding in Christ. And if Christ is in us, and we are in Him, could we be any safer and securer? As we abide in Christ and become one with Him, there is no better or greater way to guard our hearts.

From this foundation of safety and connection, Jesus teaches that next comes production. Connection first, production second. When we are connected to the vine like a branch, we will then bear much fruit (John 15:5). All our doing will flow from the

heart—from our connection—our abiding in Him. Those who experience this type of connection will, like Christ, be able to rise above the abuse and cultural expectations designed to sever this essential connection with God.

*The Desire of Ages*, by Ellen White (1898), provides a profound insight regarding the experience of Jesus while on earth:

In the heart of Christ, where reigned perfect harmony with God, there was perfect peace. He was never elated by applause, nor dejected by censure or disappointment. Amid the greatest opposition and the most cruel treatment, He was still of good courage. (p. 330)

This is an experience God wants each pastor to have. Those who abide in Christ will not seek external approval or affirmation as they become rooted in Him. The heart orientation focus offers this hope.

As surveyed and discussed in the earlier section about the performance narrative, we recognized that symbolic interactionism provides an explanation for the formation of a performance-orientation generalized other (see Figure 1). This internal talking partner is a manifestation of external collective expectations, which is constantly evolving based on the culture that surrounds each of us. As people grow and develop, they become keenly attuned to the voice of this generalized other. This generalized other greatly influences how a person interacts within a given community.

The Bible offers an alternative. The Scriptures teach that through the Holy Spirit (John 14:26), God speaks to us and impresses truth upon the mind—the heart. Instead of pastors or believers listening to the voice of the generalized other of performance orientation, we may connect with and nurture the voice of God through heart orientation

and union with Christ. We may replace the generalized other with God as the Divine Other. As we learn to abide in Christ and have Him abide in us, His voice will grow louder and clearer over and above the voice of any form of cultural expectations or generalized others. With that said, how does a pastor make this transition—this leap?

Now that a theoretical foundation has been laid considering the heart narrative and its connection with symbolic interactionism, it is time, in this final section of the literature review, to consider other practical resources that will help in reaching these goals and shifting to the heart orientation paradigm.

### ***Strategies for Making the Leap from Performance to Heart Orientation***

For this section to be most helpful and practical, the literature will be organized in three steps: heart, habits, and help.

**Step 1: The Heart.** If a person is going to make the leap from performance to heart orientation, the literature points in one direction: it starts with the heart. This truth and context have already been developed, but I will now highlight how this takes place.

Consider the following Bible verses: “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Ps 119:11, NIV). The best way to replace the voice of performance orientation is to starve it and feed the voice of God. Pastors are specifically challenged by Ellen White to rise early “and economiz[e] their moments.” By doing so, “ministers can find time for a close investigation of the Scriptures. They must have perseverance, and not be thwarted in their object, but persistently employ their time in a study of the word” (White, 1885, p. 289).

Proverbs 29:25 provides an essential insight. “The fear of people becomes a snare” (NET), “but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe” (NIV). This biblical insight

lends weight in favor of the concept of the generalized other. These are collective voices that plague a person's mind with fear and anxiety. If we are to escape these fears, we must pursue the experience of abiding in Christ. By hiding God's Word in our minds and hearts, we will be in Christ, and He will be in us. Word by word and verse by verse, His voice will grow stronger and stronger, liberating us from the generalized other of performance orientation. There is no fancy formula for this process to take place. It takes discipline, commitment, and time.

Covey (2013) teaches us this is a process that happens from the inside out. According to Scazzero (2015), the transformation process of becoming an emotionally healthy leader begins with our identity—an understanding of and confidence in who we are. The baptism of Christ illustrates the significance of identity. Christ had not yet *done* anything when the voice of God the Father echoed from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt 3:17, NKJV). And what was Jesus' response? In the words of Jonathan Martin, “Jesus did something truly remarkable: He believed Him” (as cited in Bethke, 2019, p. 118). Consider for a moment how much would have been at risk if Jesus did not believe and have confidence in His identity. We must learn and internalize the truth that “What I do matters. Who I am matters much more” (Scazzero, 2015, p. 50).

Heart orientation begins with identity and transformation from the inside out. For this to happen, it must be our “first priority and goal to seek his face and do his will each day” (Scazzero, 2015, p. 50). “Communion with God through prayer and the study of His word must not be neglected, for here is the source of his [the minister's] strength. No work for the church should take precedence of this” (White, 1855c, p. 47). When we

daily prioritize our time with God and our minds are infused with the Word of God from start to finish, we will possess the key for gaining freedom from performance orientation.

**Step 2: Habits.** The next step to liberate ourselves from the prison of performance orientation is to establish healthy habits and boundaries. The reason habits and boundaries are vital is because according to Cloud and Townsend (2017), “boundaries define us. They define *what is me* and *what is not me*” (p. 31). Thus, boundaries really flow out of a person’s identity, which means if a person’s identity is in crisis, one’s boundaries and life will be in crisis also.

Perhaps one of the best starting points for step two is clarity. This may be seen as transition between Step 1 and Step 2. Before a person can begin establishing habits and healthy boundaries, they must know what they want to accomplish and where they want to go. They must have a vision. This was briefly discussed under the third element for a new metrics for pastoral ministry. It is incredibly valuable and essential to identify one’s values, passion, mission, and vision. It does not have to be complicated, but it is important to have a written plan and/or vision. This creates clarity and accountability. Once a person has a vision of any size, they can then begin establishing habits and boundaries to make the leap from performance to heart orientation.

One of the best books about boundaries is the updated classic work of Henry Cloud and John Townsend (2017). What sets their book apart from most others is the comprehensive approach. As professional psychologists and leadership consultants, they have a breadth and depth unmatched by many. They look at the psychological aspects, the step-by-step daily routines, and the tips and tricks along the way; and finally, they include an evaluation process for staying on track.

It seems to me that one of the most important habits or boundaries a person needs to implement is learning to slow down. And this begins with the hard work of learning to say “No.” If a person wants to slow down, it is essential to say “No”—a lot. Bethke would argue that “If you’re not saying no to good things, you’re probably not saying no enough” (2019, p. 95). Related to this discussion is an important distinction between what Covey (2013) calls “third versus fourth generation time management.” The key element to third-generation time management was the focus on efficiency. While efficiency is a good thing, it is not the key to slowing down. Covey argues, “The efficiency focus creates expectations that clash with the opportunities to develop rich relationships, to meet human needs, and to enjoy spontaneous moments on a daily basis” (p. 159). Therefore, the shift from third generation is a shift from “focusing on *things* and *time*, fourth generation expectations focus on preserving and enhancing *relationships*” (Covey, p. 159). Thus, to escape performance orientation, a person must not become more efficient; they must slow down to about three miles per hour. “Three miles per hour is the average speed of someone who is walking purposefully yet gracefully” (Bethke, p. 179).

Bethke (2019) adds, “for some reason I see Jesus walking that speed as well. Just the right speed to intentionally take him somewhere. But also, the right speed to be perfectly interrupted” (p. 179). It is time to join the movement to speed up by slowing down. I have a hunch: we will be more effective, and our relational impact will be incredibly stronger, because love “goes about three miles per hour” (Bethke, p. 178).

There are many more habits and boundaries which could be considered, like the “Pareto Principle” that teaches leaders to focus their “attention on the activities that rank in the top 20 percent in terms of importance, [they] will have an 80 percent return on



[their] effort” (Maxwell, 1998, pp. 176–177). Covey (2013) and others talk about investing your best energies and time in quadrant II, which represents important but not urgent priorities. Then there’s Covey’s definition of proactivity: “the ability to choose your response” (p. 78)—which leads to a conversation about a person’s circle of concern versus their circle of influence. Covey argues, “Proactive people focus their efforts in the Circle of Influence” (p. 90).

Now, I will conclude Step 2 by directing you to a short list of recommended books and one tip for implementing new habits and boundaries. “It’s commonly accepted that it takes about twenty-one days to develop a new habit” (Reed & Wallace, 2007, p. 45). And James Clear would emphasize, “Habits are the compound interest of self-improvement ... They seem to make little difference on any given day and yet the impact they deliver over the months and years can be enormous” (2018, p. 16).

Here is a short list of titles I recommend: *Boundaries* (Cloud & Townsend, 2017), *Margin* (Swenson, 2004), *The Search for Significance* (McGee, 2003), *To Hell with the Hustle* (2019), *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families* (2014), *Atomic Habits* (Clear, 2018), and *Life Matters* (Merrill & Merrill, 2003).

**Step 3: Get Help.** Making the leap to heart orientation will not be an easy feat, but with the right help, all things are possible. First, walking with Jesus every day is essential. He promises us that His “strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9, NKJV). Then, a support and accountability team or person is always a great idea. This can include a friend, spouse, or coach, but I believe the most important help will come from the church.

As discussed earlier, trust and organizational health may be the best option for an alternative metric for pastoral ministry, and what better way to begin establishing that trust and health than at the foundational level? If the pastor will make the first step and go to his or her local church leaders and be vulnerable about their needs, the needs of their family, and their weaknesses—this has the potential to initiate deeply positive change.

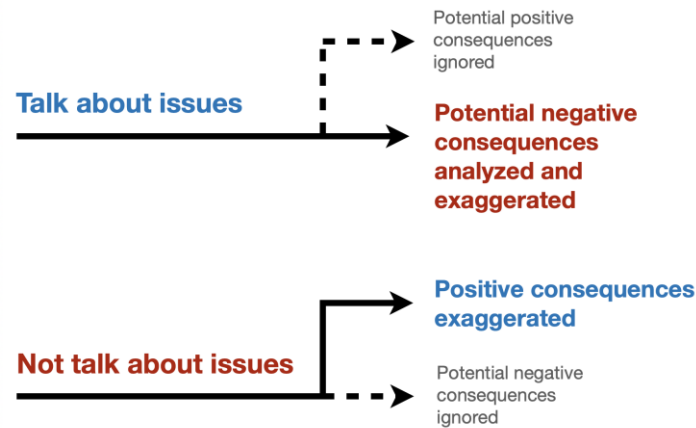
Vulnerability is always risky, and some members or local leaders may try to manipulate the pastor or sabotage the process, but if the goal is health and balance in life and ministry, the involvement of local church leaders and elders is invaluable.

Galatians 6:2 says we are to, “carry each other’s burdens” (NIV). This is interpersonal relationships at its best, and the sooner the church becomes part of the heart orientation journey, the more effective and lasting these transformations will become.

For some pastors, this suggestion may seem like a death trap. The idea of exposing oneself to this level of transparency and risk may be unfathomable, especially when the expectations and the demands of the church are often a big part of the problem for pastors. While this may be true, and while these types of conversations may seem impossible or extremely awkward, according to Jim Collins, they are non-negotiable. “You absolutely cannot make a series of good decisions without first confronting the brutal facts” (Collins, 2001, p. 70). Whatever the context, frankness and honesty are irreplaceable. Then why are people afraid to have these types of candid conversations? Fernando Bartolomé provides a very helpful insight. He says, “people focus on the potential negative consequences of exploring issues ... without analyzing equally thoroughly the possible benefits” (1983/2000, p. 88). In Figure 3, Bartolomé depicts how people often reason when faced with difficult conversations.

**Figure 3**

*Discussion Distortions*



If only we acted on faith rather than fear of consequences many constructive conversations would happen in our churches and homes. Communication is key to healthy interpersonal relationships, and this takes time. Social penetration theory teaches that people are like onions, and it explains “how relational closeness develops” (Griffin et al., 2015, p. 97). This communication theory goes on to explain that intimacy is the result of deep penetration through the superficial layers of the “onion” to the core, which involves beliefs and concepts of self. It is important to note “the main route to deep social penetration is through verbal self-disclosure” (Griffin et al., p. 97). Yes, this is risky, but it is the basis of nurturing trust and organizational health.

During the process of these conversations, be sure to educate and remind the church leaders that shifting from performance to heart orientation is mutually beneficial. It will be for the best good of the church as well. According to White (1878), spiritually healthy pastors will have results. “The praying minister, who has living faith, will have corresponding works, and great results will attend his labors, despite the combined obstacles of earth and hell” (White, 1878, p. 50). Health and abiding in Christ is always a

winning solution. Churches and pastors that understand this will make shifting to heart orientation a top priority.

Lastly, as a person pursues health, boundaries, and nurturing heart orientation, “Keep in mind that life is a process of becoming. Navigating well is not something you can expect to do perfectly every day. But it is something you can expect to improve in” (Merrill & Merrill, 2003, p. 185). This principle aptly applies to the change process and also for getting local leaders on board. It will be a process; it will take time; it will be hard; and mistakes will happen along the way; but transformation is sure.

### **Summation**

This literature review has looked at four key areas related to this thesis. First, multiple dimensions of the performance narrative were reviewed. Second, the effects of performance orientation in society and among pastors was considered. Third, the connection between performance orientation and symbolic interactionism and success measurements was discussed. And finally, the heart narrative, boundaries, and strategies for making the leap from performance to heart orientation were examined.

In summary, the performance narrative over the last 100 years has evolved to focus on superficial behavior changes for the purposes of achieving a type of success. For many, to one extent or another, this has created an idolized drive to succeed no matter the impact. One significant factor that has perpetuated performance orientation in pastoral ministry are the metrics that value giving and growth above the health of the church, the pastor, and the pastor’s primary relationships. Certainly, pastoral ministry requires personal sacrifice and faithfulness but constant overload and stress undermines pastoral health and well-being, not to mention diminishing returns for the church.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design—Mixed Method**

This research is primarily designed using a qualitative-interpretive paradigm. However, there are at least two quantitative elements that make this a mixed-method study. The primary qualitative feature for data collection was the use of focus group interviews. Eligible participants were pastors involved in full-time active ministry. The goal was to have up to ten focus groups with four-to-six participants in each group.

Also, an online survey was developed as the primary method for quantitative data collection. However, both the focus group and the online survey had qualitative and quantitative elements.

#### **Focus Groups**

##### *Structure of the Focus Groups*

Researchers have demonstrated that with these types of qualitative studies, “saturation ... is often reached at 15 to 25 participants” (Sigvartsen, Sigvartsen, and Petersen, 2014, p. 17). Sigvartsen et al. (2014) go on to say only minor variations in responses appeared after 15 participants. Thus, the goal was to have a minimum of 25 participants in total.

The groups were designed to meet for 90 minutes, and the interview session included a series of moderated questions, with one activity in the form of a handout (see

Appendix A). After the session, an email was sent to each participant with the following two questions (see Appendix B):

1. Was there anything you did not share that you wish you had the opportunity to share? If so, you may email me your response.
2. Are there any suggestions or improvements you would like to share with the moderator? If so, please email me your response.

### ***Focus Group Participant Selection and Criteria***

Participation was voluntary, based on a convenience sample, and the recruitment process leveraged my personal networks. The criterion for participation was being a Seventh-day Adventist pastor in active service. Chaplains were not excluded but were not intentionally recruited. Pastoral families (spouses and children) were not intentionally included in this study. Additionally, conference administrators were not included as participants in order to maintain a safe sharing environment during interviews.

### **Quantitative Data**

#### ***Quantitative Focus Group Questions***

The quantitative elements of the focus group sessions included several semi-consistent quantitative questions and a quantitative worksheet activity completed during the focus group session.

#### ***Online Survey***

The main method for quantitative data collection utilized an online survey via Google Forms (see Appendix C). Personal emails or identifiers were not collected. The survey included a demographic section asking general questions like gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, children or no children, and the state or province in which they

live. These questions were general enough that personal identities would not be discernable.

This survey was sent out to both focus group participants and non-focus group participants. However, the focus group participants were provided with a version of the survey that had a unique URL, enabling me to see if all or most participants filled out the survey. It was not a requirement for focus group participants to complete the survey, but the additional data from the focus group participants provided a wider convenience sample and an opportunity for further triangulation.

### ***Research Instrument***

The nature of this study (boundaries, health, and well-being in the life and ministry of pastors) is well suited for the focus group method of investigation— “more recently, qualitative researchers have used focus groups as a primary research methodology” (Brennen, 2017, p. 64). With focus groups as the primary method of data collection, the goal was to look for “meaningful relations to be interpreted” (Brennen, 2017, p. 4) as part of a larger discourse.

The focus groups method allowed participants to interact with each other and share valuable information and insights about their experience while also discovering common elements in one another’s stories.

The online survey serves as an important complementary approach for validating the data collected in the focus groups and providing a more complete backdrop. However, it is important to note that with respect to the online survey and any quantitative elements during the focus group interviews, I choose not to use any tested

survey instruments or questions. I believe this was both a benefit and a limitation (which is discussed later in this chapter).

### **Discourse Analysis: A Structure for Interpretation**

In the “Definitions” section of Chapter 1, Discourse Analysis (DA), as part of the textual analysis family (Berger, 2016; Brennen, 2017), was primarily defined as the process for unpacking words, which are symbols through which “our reality is socially constructed” (Brennen, p. 208).

Teun A. van Dijk, a preeminent scholar in the field of DA, states there are three main dimensions that must be individually considered during the analysis process and studied in relationship to each other: “(a) *language use*, (b) the *communication of beliefs* (cognition), and (c) *interaction* in social situations” (as cited in Berger, 2016, p. 172).

Thus, DA has been used as the process and structure for interpreting the data, and the three dimensions of DA will receive special attention in Part 2 of Chapter 4.

Furthermore, it is important to restate, as discussed in Chapter 1, DA is the study of “discourse over time” (as cited in Merrigan & Huston, 2015, p. 141). According to Dijk (2009), properly understood, discourse is focused on context. Minimally speaking, Dijk further explains that context involves either “verbal ... [or] non-verbal” context (p. 2). The non-verbal element of context specifically involves social situations (Dijk).

Each of these elements will be at play, either implicitly or explicitly, throughout the discourse analysis process. In Chapter 4, key points of intersection and differences between the literature review and findings have been discussed as part of the larger discourse. The analysis has provided helpful insights to better understand performance orientation and challenges in pastoral ministry.



## **Analysis Steps and Elements**

### ***Focus on Participant Responses Related to Research Questions***

The three research questions driving this study can be summarized as follows: 1) *assessment* of pastoral health and well-being, 2) internal/external *factors* affecting pastoral health and well-being, and 3) *strategies* and *support* for establishing and/or maintaining healthier boundaries as pastors transition towards heart orientation in life and ministry. The analysis process has classified participant responses, within the three areas mentioned above (language, beliefs, and interactions).

### ***Keywords and Concepts***

The primary keywords and concepts that have been considered in the analysis process are health, stress, boundaries (or lack of it), priorities, expectations in ministry, support or lack of support by conferences, goals, ambitions, performance, and strategies and ideas for finding balance.

### ***Patterns, Counterexamples, and Highlights***

Common patterns that emerged between participant stories and experiences were: stress caused by work demands and expectations, lack of perceived care and concern from conference leadership (past or present) for the health and well-being of pastors, policies or lack of permission from conferences to take two days off per week (not including Sabbath), the struggle of immigrant pastors in developing friendships due to language and cultural barriers, the struggle for pastors to differentiate (approximately 3 in 4 pastors [75.8%] struggle to prioritize at least one significant relationship/priority in their lives), and the impact a lack of autonomy has on pastors. Additional highlights include the experiences of female pastors, approximately 30% of pastors self-identifying

as introverts, a concern regarding millennial pastors limited to traditional roles, and other findings and counterexamples that will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

### ***Symbolic Interactionism***

The theory of symbolic interactionism and the generalized other are aspects describing key parts of the socialization process. This analysis uses symbolic interactionism as an insight to discern correlations between the priorities and responses of participants and their beliefs. I will be seeking to determine if there is a pattern of beliefs that fit within either the performance or heart orientation paradigms.

### ***QDA Miner***

QDA Miner is a data analysis software developed by Provalis Research. During the discourse analysis process, I used this software to code focus group transcripts as well as the qualitative questions from the online survey. With this software, I was able to search all data sets for key words and compare various relationships. I organized my codes based on the three research questions (assessment, factors, strategies/support), in addition to a special code category for counter examples.

### **Internal Validity**

This study has examined the manifestation of performance orientation among pastors and in churches and its relationship to pastoral health and well-being. However, this is not a predictive study looking at cause and effect. Therefore, internal validity has been based on the consistency of the findings within the data collected. Furthermore, triangulation with prior studies and the quantitative data collected have been used as a corrective lens to minimize biases or misinterpretations of the data.

## **Ethical Considerations**

### **Focus Group Orientation, Consent Forms, and Confidentiality**

Prior to the commencement of the focus groups, each participant was given an overview of the study (see Appendix A), along with a consent form (see Appendix D). The consent forms were either signed and emailed or presented to me in person. The consent form included participant name, email, and phone number. Before the focus group session, I conducted a brief phone orientation with each participant to answer any questions or concerns about the research and find out if they had any privacy concerns or a conflict of interest relating to other potential participants.

At the start of each focus group session, the following was discussed and provided in the form of a handout: the purpose of the research, session guidelines, confidentiality of the moderator and participants, and a handout containing the planned focus group questions (see Appendix A). Also, the group was informed that each participant had the right to decline answering any questions and could leave at any time if they desired.

Each session also began with a prayer, and following the focus group session, a follow-up email was sent with two reflection questions (see Appendix B).

### **Conflict of Interest**

For the sake of privacy and transparent disclosure on the part of participants, no church administrators or leaders were involved in the selection of participants or included as part of the focus group sessions.

Another potential conflict of interest is that I functioned as both the researcher and moderator for each focus group session. The reason this is important to disclose is because I am also a pastor with firsthand experience regarding the issues being

researched. This will be discussed more under the “Limitations” section of this chapter, but as it relates to ethical considerations, it is important to note that I intentionally aimed to remain as neutral and objective as possible during the focus group discussions. Furthermore, for any participants who were friends and colleagues, I was strictly confidential and intentional not to disclose any previous history or personal information during the focus groups.

### **Data Privacy and Security**

All video and audio recordings and transcriptions have been in my possession alone. The online survey data is accessible through my Andrews University Google Drive account. All sources of data, along with manuscripts and other research documents, have been stored on my computer, backup hard drive, and in online cloud storage. Additionally, the video recordings were uploaded to [www.gotranscript.com](http://www.gotranscript.com) for transcription processing. The raw data have been kept secure and confidential, and the only other people who may have access to the coded data are the members of my supervisory committee.

## **Limitations**

### **Research Design**

#### ***Untested Instruments***

I chose not to use a tested instrument for the focus group questions or the online survey. The reason is this gave me the opportunity to customize the questions for my specific research. Despite not using a tested instrument, I carefully designed and compared my questions to other surveys and instruments.

### ***Triangulation***

The sources used in the triangulation process include the literature review, focus group interviews, worksheet activity, and online survey. The online survey was designed as a mixed quantitative and qualitative questionnaire and originally intended to be used to collect a larger convenience sampling, however that did not go as planned. Yet, I would argue, the data collected from available source is ample and has provided reliable and significant insights.

### ***Researcher-Moderator-Pastor***

While my experience as a pastor, husband, and parent naturally provides advantages like unique insights into the lives of other pastors and their families, it also means I have struggled with blind spots and biases. However, the literature review has helped me identify blind spots and enabled me to recognize personal biases more readily. Additionally, through careful listening and analyzation of participant stories and experiences their voices became more distinct.

Another strategy I employed during the focus group session was to intentionally reiterate what participants were sharing to ensure I had a correct understanding. Lastly, prior to beginning the focus group interviews, I conducted three pilot focus group tests among Andrews University students. This helped me refine the focus group questions, practice moderating, and identify techniques for reducing personal bias.

### **Recruitment**

#### ***Interviewing Peers***

In full disclosure, I was previously acquainted with almost 50% of the focus group participants. The problem with this, of course, was the familiarity factor and my

ability to listen to the stories they were sharing without filtering it through my known history of these individuals. However, in several cases, being familiar with participants was also an advantage as it provided additional context.

### ***Institutional Support***

I acquired institutional support from two conferences, both of which distributed the online survey to their pastors. In the end, it was much harder to get institutional support than I anticipated, mostly because conferences did not return my calls or follow through with my requests; I also had one conference deny my request.

### ***Survey Overlap***

My survey was distributed among two conferences in December of 2019. Around the same time, I started hearing there was another survey, with a similar focus and questions, had been sent out to all Seventh-day Adventist pastors in North America. When recruiting pastors and discussing my survey, it became apparent that some confusion existed as to which was my survey. I believe this affected the number of surveys completed for my research.

### ***Transferability***

This study was designed and conducted among Seventh-day Adventist pastors in North America. While I believe much of this research is based on broad principles, these principles or strategies cannot be generalized to all pastors, conferences, other parts of the world, or denominations.

### ***COVID-19***

As a subpoint under transferability, it must be noted that the data collection for this study happened in December of 2019 and January of 2020, just before the COVID-

19 pandemic unfolded. Therefore, the question could be asked, Has this global crisis altered the environment of pastoral ministry and the expectations of pastors in ways that would affect the validity of the findings or transferability of this study? I would suggest the pandemic intensified the challenges of pastoral ministry and revealed a clearer picture of what pastors and their families have faced all along.

### **Summation**

This research is based on a mixed-method approach, using both qualitative and quantitative data. The primary methods of data collection involved focus group interviews and online survey responses. Both the online survey instrument and focus group questionnaires were developed by me and based on the research questions; they also referenced other available instruments.

The analysis involves discourse analysis and identifies specific language use, communication of beliefs, and interactions within social situations.

All ethical standards governing human subjects in research were followed in this research to protect the human subjects involved.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### Sources of Data Collection

##### **Source Number 1: Focus Groups**

###### *Focus Groups Participant Composition*

I conducted eight focus groups with a total of 33 participants involved in full-time, active pastoral ministry in North America. The participants were conveniently recruited from two conferences. The composition of these groups included pastors who were seasoned, ready to retire, young, ethnically diverse—and five of which were women. In three focus groups, there were participants who worked together in a multi-pastor church. There were no instances when a senior pastor and associate pastor were part of the same focus group.

###### *Location and Setting of Focus Groups*

Of the eight focus groups, seven of them were conducted in churches; the other, in a school library. All settings were confidential, and most of them quiet, except for the school library, which had some outer background noise from children in the hallways. During the focus group, I provided light refreshments and snacks for participants to have as they desired. The food provided served as an incentive for people to participate and helped set a more comfortable and relaxed environment.

Each focus group session was designed to run for approximately 90 minutes. As expected, most of the groups did not start on time; therefore, most groups ran late and



went an additional 10–30 minutes longer than what was originally planned. In all instances, as the moderator, I checked in with the participants to determine their flexibility and gain permission to extend the interview. There were two instances where participants had to leave before the session ended. Additionally, there were three instances in two groups where participants arrived after the session had already begun and two instances in two different groups where a participant joined by speaker phone until he arrived in person.

Following each focus group session, a follow-up email was sent to each participant (see Appendix B). There were two follow-up responses that were not anonymous but have received the same level of privacy and confidentiality as have the other data collected (see Chapter 3, “Data Privacy and Security”).

### **Source Number 2: Online Survey**

In addition to the focus groups, I also developed a primarily quantitative survey. As noted in Chapter 3, survey data collection was based on convenience sampling. The survey was made available to focus group participants and distributed as a convenience sampling of pastors in two conferences. I was able to collect 51 responses, which were almost evenly divided among three conferences; however, 26 of these respondents were also focus group participants (see Appendix E, “Online Survey Full Tabulations”).

### **Source Number 3: Priorities/Boundaries Worksheet Activity**

During each focus group session, I had participants map out important relationships and priorities in their lives. Step one was to list items on small pieces of sticky note paper. In step two, items were to be placed on a map with a horizontal line in the middle of the sheet. Above the line represented relationships or priorities for which

the individual had already established boundaries to protect them. Below the line were items for which they wanted to establish boundaries. In step three, instructions were given to draw a vertical line forming a left and right column. The left column was to be labeled high priority, the right column, low priority. This would form two quadrants on the left: the top quadrant (Q1) represented established boundaries—high priority; the bottom quadrant (Q2) represented boundaries a person wants to establish—high priority. Then, the right column, top to bottom would be (Q3) established boundaries—low priority and (Q4) boundaries a person wants to establish—low priority (see Appendix A, Worksheet Activity). The quadrant in which I was most interested was Q2 because I wanted to know what was preventing someone from establishing boundaries around an item that was high priority like family, friends, health, self-care, etc.

### **Explanation of Analysis**

The data analysis has been divided into two parts. The first part summarizes the findings in relationship to answering the research questions. This initial analysis, in part one, does not specifically reference discourse analysis (DA); however, it is present. For example, part one includes elements of language use (boundaries, priorities, time struggles), communication of beliefs (measures of success, differentiation), and interaction in social situations (family and member interactions, weekly time off). Each of these is part of the DA framework and central to the findings and analysis in part one.

Then, part two highlights additional findings that fall within the DA framework. What makes part two unique is not merely the analysis of additional findings but also the pursuit to discern significant correlations between symbolic interactionism and the three dimensions of DA.

## Part One: General Findings

### Research Question 1 (Assessment): How Healthy are Pastors in the Areas of Relationship to God, Self, Family, and Others, and What Effect Does This Have on Their Families?

While elements of the data seem to indicate an optimistic outlook regarding the health of pastors, it is fair to conclude, there are legitimate concerns regarding the health and well-being of pastors and their families (see Appendix E, “Online Survey Full Tabulations”). Again, one could argue on paper that pastors are relatively healthy, but is that satisfactory? Should pastors be merely average or surviving when it comes to health and well-being? Consider the following sample (see Table 1). From this data, a person may conclude that approximately 1 in 3 pastors is healthy based on these four areas, but what about the other 66.6% of pastors who are struggling to a greater degree?

**Table 1**

*A Brief Look at Personal and Family Boundaries Among Pastors*

	Question 7—To what extent do you...							
	7.1 [...struggle to establish healthy personal and family boundaries?]		7.2 [...have difficulty finding time for yourself and your family?]		7.9 [...help others at your own expense or the expense of your family?]		7.10 [...have difficulty saying “no” to someone or something?]	
<b>To a very large extent</b>	7.8%		9.8%		19.6%		3.9%	
<b>To a large extent</b>	25.5%		29.4%		17.6%		21.6%	
<b>To a moderate extent</b>	33.3%		27.5%		37.3%		45.1%	
<b>To a small extent</b>	21.6%	33.3%	25.5%	33.3%	19.6%	25.5%	23.5%	29.4%
<b>To a very small extent</b>	11.8%		7.8%		5.9%		5.9%	

The two-thirds majority who are struggling to a moderate or greater extent, this alone is reason enough for serious concern regarding pastoral health. However, I believe the problem is more serious based on three reasons, which will be examined now.

First, the top 33% shown in Table 1 are not the same pastors represented in each of the four categories. For example, in the first category, question 7.1, six of the seventeen pastors who claimed to struggle to a small or very small extent (establishing healthy boundaries for self and family) reported in the next question, 7.2, they have a moderate challenge finding time for self and family. Regardless of whether this presents a contradiction, the statistics continue to break down from there. This does not mean there is not an acceptable level of health and well-being among a certain percentage of pastors; rather, it demonstrates that these issues are complex and not straightforward. To further illustrate this, pastors may prioritize time for self and family on one hand but then, on the other hand, help others at their own expense or that of their families (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

*A Second Look: How Those in the Question 7.2 That Answered “to a small/very small extent” Answered Question 7.9*

	Question 7—To what extent do you...	
	7.2 [...have difficulty finding time for yourself and your family?]	7.9 [...help others at your own expense or the expense of your family?]
To a very large extent	NA	NA
To a large extent		3
To a moderate extent		10
To a small extent	13	3
To a very small extent	4	1

The second reason for concern regarding pastoral health is the impact it has on their families. It is noteworthy that 43.1% of pastors believe their families are positively affected by pastoral ministry. Additionally, 27.5% of pastors indicated their families were negatively affected, 11.8% were indifferent, and 17.6% were not sure how their families were affected. I was surprised to see what seemed to be a high percentage of those reporting their families were positively affected. These statistics raise at least two

questions for me: Have spouses and families become conditioned to less-than-ideal circumstances in pastoral ministry? And why were 17.6% of pastors unsure? It is safe to reason that a portion of the “not sure” responses would translate to additional families being both positively and negatively affected. For those negatively affected by pastoral ministry, this makes the problem of pastoral health even more serious.

Consider an example of a family positively affected by pastoral ministry. One focus group participant passionately exclaimed, “My wife is very supportive of my ministry. She’s got a huge ministry background. My wife’s been around ministry all her life. Her dad is a pastor; her brothers are pastors ... [and] her uncle is a pastor” (FG.A2-4). Despite this claim, the same pastor, moments later, talked about the tears and pain of his wife due to sacrifices made because of ministry. Then later, in another context, he also admitted, “I do not have good boundaries, and I think my family does suffer because of that” (FG. A2-4).

I do not know if this participant would have answered that their family was positively affected by pastoral ministry, but I would like to suggest this may be an example of conditioning. Conditioning may be negative or positive, but even if it is positive, it is not the true measure of health or fulfillment in life and pastoral ministry. However, the negative side of conditioning is when spouses and children grow to accept and adapt to unhealthy expectations and practices in ministry. Even if this may be considered “normal” by those who survive, it is not the same as thriving in ministry. Conditioning has its limits and not all are able to keep hanging on. One focus group pastor who had been divorced shared about their lack of boundaries as a workaholic and

“how detrimental that was to [their] family life” (FG. B3-3). This leads to the third reason for concern regarding pastoral well-being.

Before getting to the core of the third reason, it may be helpful to consider the following question asked of all focus group participants: Day to day, week to week which relationships in your life do you struggle to prioritize the most (God, self, family, or friends)? The responses were as follows: family and friends at 28.6% each, God at 23.2%, and self at 19.6% (see Table 3). Additionally, the survey asked, “How often do you take at least one day off?” Almost 40% of pastors responded occasional or rarely. This will be discussed further later in this chapter (see Research Question 3, “Weekly Time Off”). While these statistics may not adequately assess the health of pastors or its effect on their families, it does indicate which areas are of greatest concern. Furthermore, from the focus group discussions also came many sobering and even tragic stories regarding the impact of pastoral ministry on oneself and family. Now, let us look at the third reason for concern in more detail.

Regardless of the positive side of the statistics, the brutal facts clearly depict that many pastors struggle with health and well-being based on internal or external reasons. To quantify this, I separately reviewed responses from each focus group participant and was able to identify at least one area of significant concern in over 75% of participants (25 of 33 participants). I define an area of significant concern based on the negative impact and the effort required to manage or overcome the specific issue. While this is not exactly precise, I was cautious to not include any participants who seemed minimally stressed by their issue(s) or appeared to be managing in a sustainable way with little or no ripple effects in their lives (three participants met this criteria). While all participants

indicated areas of concern, most of the time, it was clear if an issue was significant in their lives; and for those about whom I was not sure, their issue was not included as a significant concern (this represented five participants). Therefore, the following areas of significant concern are representative of the three out of four pastors struggling with at least one of these internal or external factors. Some of these areas included identity, self-worth, being oneself in ministry, pressure or shame related to expectations and success, boundary issues and saying no, job overload, burnout, neglect of physical health, prioritizing one's relationship with God, loneliness from friendship needs, relationship and family needs and expectations, lack of autonomy in ministry, disillusionment and cynicism towards the institutional church, and confusion over goals and ambitions personally and/or in ministry.

Many of these same findings were also reflected in the responses to questions 11–14 from the online survey (see Appendix E). These additional challenges listed are not based on the same criteria above, but they are worth noting. Question 11 asked, “In your experience, what is the hardest part about being a pastor?” Responses: lack of support, the juggling act of ministry, always on call, lack of commitment or participation from church members, lack of management training for operating churches—one respondent noted churches are like running “small businesses” (Online Survey-ID#15)—being misunderstood, struggling churches, being a people pleaser, dealing with conflict and toxic people, politics with the conference, finances, and not receiving a livable wage. These two lists reflect a many of the common factors affecting pastoral well-being. Certainly, stress related to moving districts and other things could have been mentioned. However, based on the survey plus the focus group interviews, pastors indicated these

areas of concern have a noticeable negative impact on their health and well-being, which means there is ample reason for serious concern regarding the health and well-being of pastors and the impact on their families.

***Additional Findings Related to Research Question One***

Now that a valid case has been made concerning the health and well-being of pastors, the remainder of this section will briefly expand on the following areas: the spiritual health of pastors, spouses and children, measures of success according to pastors, and female pastors.

**The Spiritual Health of Pastors.** The survey data is clear (see Table 3). A high majority of pastors participate in prayer and personal Bible study on a daily basis (88.2% and 56.9%, respectively, plus an additional 33.3% reported participating in personal Bible study weekly).

**Table 3**

*Three Looks at the Pastor’s Relationship with God*

	Question 1 – How often do you participate in the following:			Focus Group Question – Day-to-day, week-to-week which relationships do you struggle to prioritize the most?		Focus Group Worksheet Activity – About prioritizing their relationship with God pastors said...
	1.1 [Personal prayer]	1.2 [Personal Bible study (not for sermon preparation, etc.)]				
Daily	88.2%	56.9%	God	23.2%	They Have Adequate Boundaries	37.5%
Weekly	9.8%	33.3%	Self	19.6%	They Want to Establish Boundaries	40.6%
Occasionally	0.0%	5.9%	Family	28.6%	[or] They did not include a Corresponding Response	21.9%
Rarely	0.0%	2.0%	Friends	28.6%		
Never	0.0%	0.0%				
NA	2.0%	2.0%				



While these numbers are positive, they may not paint the full picture. As has already been demonstrated by the focus group data, almost 1 in 4 pastors (23.2%) struggle to prioritize their relationship with God (see Table 3). Additionally, when data from the worksheet activity (source no. 3) is considered, we learn 37.5% of focus group participants indicated they had adequate boundaries established around their personal time with God, while 40.6% said they wanted to establish healthy boundaries in order to not neglect this priority in their lives (see Table 3).

Spiritual health is the cornerstone of pastoral ministry (Acts 6:4), which may be why 98% of pastors rated personal time spent with God as the most important measure of success in pastoral ministry. However, this remains an area of concern among pastors in spite of understanding its significance.

**Spouses and Children.** The impact of pastoral health on pastoral families has been briefly discussed already. However, each of the following areas need attention and improvement: family worship, family time, and date time for the pastoral couple.

During the focus group sessions, a majority of participants with children living at home indicated it was a challenge to prioritize family time. One participant with grown children related an experience as a young pastor when he had been almost consumed by ministry, often working 90-hour weeks. Finally, his wife said things had to change. Therefore, the necessary changes were made as quickly as possible, and one day, when spending time with his kids, he said, “I looked at those kids and I said, ‘Man, they’re great kids,’ ... ‘But who are these kids?’ It just dawned on me that I had lost six or seven years [of their lives]” (FG. A4-4). Based on this experience and others like it, it seems to

me that it would be well for conferences to explore ways of reducing the responsibility and workload of pastors with young children during their formative years.

Finally, if pastors are going to thrive in ministry, they must first thrive at home. Healthy families will lead to healthy churches. One participant said in a follow-up email, “to be honest we do a disservice to our congregations when we don’t [take care of self and family]. We are less productive when we do not take R & R [time]” (FG. A1-1).

**Measures of Success According to Pastors and Their Perception of the Conference.** Questions 2 and 3 from the online survey asked pastors to indicate how important certain priorities were as measures of success in ministry. Then they were asked to rate the same items based on what they believed the conference would consider the most important measures of success. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 compare the top ranked items from the options that were available.

**Table 4.1**

*What Pastors Believe Are the Most Important Measures of Success in Pastoral Ministry*

Question 3 [Comparison to Table 4.2]—Rate the following according to what YOU believe are the most important measures of success in pastoral ministry:										
	2.11 [Personal/devotional time spent with God]		2.6 [Number of people you are discipling]		2.10 [Time spent with family]		2.9 [Number of members (or non-members) involved in church ministries and activities]		2.4 [Church attendance]	
Combined Ranking	1		2		3		4		5	
Very Important	84.3%	98.0%	39.2%	90.2%	52.9%	88.2%	49.0%	88.2%	25.5%	88.2%
Important	13.7%		51.0%		35.3%		39.2%		62.7%	
Somewhat Important	2.0%		9.8%		9.8%		11.8%		9.8%	
Not Important	0.0%		0.0%		2.0%		0.0%		2.0%	

**Table 4.2**

*What Pastors Believe the Conference Considers the Most Important Measures of Success in Pastoral Ministry*

Question 3 [Comparison to Table 4.1]—Rate the following according to what you believe the CONFERENCE considers as the most important measures of success in pastoral ministry:												
	3.3 [Amount of tithe collected]		3.2 [Number of baptisms]		3.4 [Church attendance]		3.5 [Number of Bible studies you are conducting]		3.11 [Personal/devotional time spent with God]		3.10 [Time spent with family]	
Combined Ranking	1		2		3		4		5		11	
Very Important	72.5%	92.2%	58.8%	92.2%	45.1%	86.3%	27.5%	80.4%	41.2%	76.5%	27.5%	66.7%
Important	19.6%		33.3%		41.2%		52.9%		35.3%		39.2%	
Somewhat Important	7.8%		7.8%		13.7%		17.6%		19.6%		19.6%	
Not Important	0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		2.0%		3.9%		13.7%	

An important highlight in Table 4.1 is that 88.2% of pastors believe time spent with family is an important or very important measure of success—ranked third in importance. However, in Table 4.2, pastors indicate they do *not* believe time spent with family is a most important measure of success in the eyes of the conference (see Table 4.2 and Appendix E for full comparison). In fact, time spent with family was ranked last. Nevertheless, in fairness, a future study would need to examine what conference leaders and presidents believe is the most important measures of success in pastoral ministry.

**Female Pastors.** I had the opportunity to include five women in three of the eight focus groups. Thus, I was able to explore their unique perspective related to this study. When specifically asked, it became clear that pastoral ministry is harder and more difficult for women because they are still breaking new ground. Thus, they may need to have firmer boundaries or risk being domineered by church members, either intentionally or unintentionally. One pastor said, “And through it all, I’ve still been able to do my job.

I produce as much as my male counterparts. I get baptisms, I do what I need to do just to say that women are just as equipped” (FG. B2-5). Another female pastor said, “I feel as if I have to work doubly hard to prove that I can pastor” (FG. B2-4). Notice the emphasis on performance. This seems out of character for women who are naturally more relationally minded and heart orientated. However, based on my observation, at least four of the five female participants struggled with performance orientation factors to a moderate or large extent. This corresponds with Barna’s (2017) findings, which convey female pastors have more difficulty in the area of “work-life balance” (p. 84).

Female pastors also deal with issues of disrespect relating to their title, as some members will not address them as “pastor”. On the flip side is the effect of conference leaders celebrating female pastors. While comments like, “This is the first female pastor in this conference, region, or church” is intended as a sign of respect and affirmation, these pastors indicated it unwittingly places extra weight on their shoulders.

**Research Question 2 (Factors): What Type of Internal or External Factors Affect the Pastor’s Health in the Areas of Ministry and with Relationship to God, Self, Family, and Others?**

The first research question evaluated the health of pastors and its impact on their families, while also introducing some of the areas and factors affecting pastoral health. These areas can be divided into internal and external factors in the following manner:

- Internal factors: identity, beliefs, differentiation, priorities, strengths, and weaknesses
- External factors: expectations, boundaries, support, barriers and limitations, communication, and conflict

Each of these factors significantly impacts a pastor’s ministry and their most important relationships. From the online survey, we will now look at some of the top factors causing stress in pastoral ministry.

**Table 5**

*Areas of Stress Among Pastors*

	Question 4 —To what extent do the following items cause you stress in pastoral ministry?						
	4.3 [Conflict resolution]	4.5 [Church politics]	4.6 [Personal finances]	4.8 [Conference expectations]	4.9 [Having to say “no” ...]	4.10 [When people think badly about you]	4.11 [What you think the Conference thinks about you]
To a very large extent	21.6%	19.6%	13.7%	11.8%	7.8%	15.7%	15.7%
To a large extent	31.4%	<b>31.4%</b>	17.6%	27.5%	13.7%	21.6%	15.7%
To a moderate extent	<b>35.3%</b>	27.5%	<b>29.4%</b>	11.8%	<b>45.1%</b>	<b>29.4%</b>	<b>29.4%</b>
To a small extent	7.8%	17.6%	15.7%	<b>37.3%</b>	25.5%	25.5%	25.5%
To a very small extent	3.9%	3.9%	23.5%	11.8%	7.8%	7.8%	13.7%

Based on a summary of Table 5, adding together the responses to “To a very large extent” and “To a large extent,” the top six areas causing stress for pastors in ministry are conflict resolution (52.9%), church politics (51%), conference expectations (39.2%), when people think badly about you (37.3%), what you think the conference thinks about you (31.4%), and personal finances (31.4%). One of the things that makes these examples interesting is they each have elements relating to internal and external factors, perhaps excluding personal finances.

***Money Matters for Pastors***

What about money? Over 60% of pastors say personal finances cause stress to a moderate or larger extent. Based off what has already been demonstrated in this paper, one could argue that performance orientation can have impact on a pastor’s relationship with their finances. This could happen if a pastor allows their drive to succeed and/or finds value based on whatever they may be doing, rather than being good stewards of

their finances. Like significant relationships in one’s life, personal finances cannot be neglected without leading to stress.

### ***Differentiation***

This is a key concept that has been discussed throughout this paper, primarily through the lens of symbolic interactionism. While the concepts are not synonymous, there certainly is overlap. In reference to Table 5, which displays some of the top stressors for pastors, it is interesting to note that differentiation is a common thread linking most of these factors. Pastors who struggle to see their identity separate from a given issue will have higher levels of stress as a result.

Learning to establish healthy boundaries, saying no, not being held captive to opinions of members, and matters of identity—each of these areas is heavily affected by differentiation. One pastor reflected, “Until maturing a little more, the church was my ‘wife’ – but now my wife knows she is my wife – any [*sic*] my kids are getting to know that also” (Online Survey-ID#16). Apparently, there was a time when this pastor saw the church as part of their identity. This is an example of poor differentiation, which will be examined further, based on additional data from the online survey (Table 6.1).

**Table 6.1**

### ***Differentiation Among Pastors***

	Question 7—To what extent do you...					
	7.3 [...depend on sources outside yourself to find meaning, identity, and value?]	7.4 [...feel distress when others think badly of you?]	7.5 [...make decisions based upon what others will think?]	7.6 [...have difficulty accepting criticism?]	7.8 [...sometimes feel as if you do not know who you really are?]	7.10 [...have difficulty saying “no” to someone or something?]
<b>To a very large extent</b>	3.9%	9.8%	2.0%	2.0%	3.9%	3.9%
<b>To a large extent</b>	15.7%	23.5%	13.7%	11.8%	5.9%	21.6%
<b>To a moderate extent</b>	<b>31.4%</b>	<b>33.3%</b>	27.5%	31.4%	15.7%	<b>45.1%</b>
<b>To a small extent</b>	23.5%	27.5%	<b>45.1%</b>	<b>41.2%</b>	27.5%	23.5%
<b>To a very small extent</b>	25.5%	5.9%	11.8%	13.7%	<b>47.1%</b>	5.9%

An evaluation of questions 7.3, 7.4, and 7.10 seem to indicate that a majority of pastors struggle with issues related to differentiation, which means these factors affect the health of pastors (Research Question 2) and also provide additional insight pertaining to Research Question 1, the assessment of pastoral health.

While studying the data, it was fascinating to discover that the level of a person’s education does not seem to improve one’s ability to set healthy boundaries or differentiate (see Table 6.2). These percentages represent 12 pastors with post-graduate degrees in theology or ministry. Coincidentally, these pastors are equally divided among the convenience sample taken from three conferences.

**Table 6.2**

*Comparison of Pastors with Post-Graduate Degrees to Table 6.1*

	Question 7—To what extent do you...					
	7.3 [...depend on sources outside yourself to find meaning, identity, and value?]	7.4 [...feel distress when others think badly of you?]	7.5 [...make decisions based upon what others will think?]	7.6 [...have difficulty accepting criticism?]	7.8 [...sometimes feel as if you do not know who you really are?]	7.10 [...have difficulty saying “no” to someone or something?]
To a very large extent	8.3%	16.7%	8.3%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
To a large extent	8.3%	8.3%	0.0%	16.7%	8.3%	16.7%
To a moderate extent	25.0%	25.0%	16.7%	16.7%	25.0%	58.3%
To a small extent	33.3%	50.0%	75.0%	50.0%	50.0%	25.0%
To a very small extent	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	16.7%	0.0%

This comparative evaluation was based on the categories found in Table 6.1. Columns 1, 2, 4, and 6, highlighted in yellow, reveal that greater than 40% of these participants struggle to a moderate or greater extent in these areas. Perhaps most significant is that 75% of these pastors with post-graduate degrees have difficulty saying “no” to someone or something. I believe it is safe to conclude that regardless of educational status or knowledge, truth about oneself and learning to establish healthy boundaries is about heart work, which requires time and intentionality.

**Research Question 3 (Strategies/Support): What Strategies and Kind of Support Would Help Pastors Establish and/or Maintain Healthier Boundaries in Transitioning Towards Heart Orientation in Life and Ministry?**

Analyzing the data based on the first two research questions has helped demonstrate the level of health and well-being among Seventh-day Adventist pastors in relationship to the significant domains of God, self, family, and others. The corresponding impact of pastoral health on their families has also been considered. Then, several of the factors affecting pastoral health were examined. Now, we will look at two key findings regarding strategies and support opportunities available for pastors seeking to establish healthier boundaries as they shift towards heart orientation.

***Proactive Considerations for Pastors***

When it comes to establishing healthy boundaries and shifting towards heart orientation in pastoral ministry, pastors must be proactive. Society and even the church is not going to be the difference maker without pastors taking primary responsibility for their lives and situations. While I agree that conference leadership must do more to support pastors, it will always start and end with the pastor's own personal choices. Let us use education as an example.

While I do not fully agree with the following observation, this pastor makes an important point about education: "I would not blame ministry per se ... In my experience most of the time I messed up my health [by lack] ... of basic training/education of [*sic*] handling life" (FG. B3-3). The strength of this argument is that even if churches and conferences established healthier ministry environments and provided education to help pastors, ultimately, pastors would have to make the choice to be proactive in their own



development and follow through with knowledge received. Perhaps this is why the following pastor, also struggling with significant imbalance and well-being in ministry, said, “from my perspective, I don’t think the conference has any role in my boundaries. My lack of boundaries come from ... inside of me ... the tendency to base my identity upon what I do and what I produce” (FG. B2-1). This comes back to the issue of personal beliefs and differentiation. Yes, conference leadership should play a role in encouraging and supporting pastors, but ultimately, pastors must take the lead, especially in cases where conferences do not prioritize pastoral health and well-being.

The question is, what can pastors do to be proactive and take responsibility for their own health and well-being? A good starting point for this is the ideas discussed in Chapter 2, under the “Heart Narrative” section dealing with the leap to heart orientation. Many of these same points were discussed by focus group participants, especially the areas of forming good habits and being disciplined. Consider physical health habits as an example. During the focus group, a worksheet activity was conducted. From the worksheet, 15 participants indicated they wanted to establish boundaries around various aspects of health. Identifying health as an important priority that needs to be nurtured and protected is an essential first step. Next, a plan must be established, and once a plan is in place, then the hardest part begins. Being disciplined and proactively responsible is one of the most important parts of a transformation process.

### ***Weekly Time Off***

Based on a casual observation, it was not uncommon for pastors to claim they work 60 or more hours per week. Again, this comes back to the essence of the first research question, how healthy is it for pastors to work this many hours, and which

relationships are being neglected as a result? There are often multiple factors driving long hours in ministry; one of these was described by a young pastor referring to the sacrifice and commitment of their members: “As a leader, it’s really tough to be like, ‘Yeah, I have a day off,’ ‘cause they work all day, and then they work for the church all night”. This pastor went on to explain the dichotomy which results if they do not “keep up” (FG. B4-1).

Regardless of the reason or motivation for working long hours, the bottom line is pastors need rest and weekly times off to rejuvenate and be at their best. With that said, how are pastors doing in this area? According to survey question 1.8, almost 60% of pastors take at least one day off per week (see Appendix E). That is reasonable; however, about 30% of pastors indicated they occasionally take one day off, and about 8% said they rarely take one day off. Thus, just under 2 out of 5 pastors do not take time off on a weekly basis, which the overall data indicates is correlated with various aspects of performance orientation, including church and conference expectations.

During the discourse analysis process, two clear themes emerged from the focus group data with reference to weekly time off. First, there is a growing number of pastors who are adamant that they need and deserve two days off per week. Second, many pastors perceive or have been told they are only permitted to take one day off per week.

It was reported that a conference leader said pastors get two days and “Sabbath [is] one of the days off” (FG. A1-4). In my own experience, I heard of a conference leader who encouraged pastors to take off one-and-a-half days. While that is certainly an improvement, it seems to demonstrate a systemic lack of understanding and desperation. I humbly ask, Do conference leaders truly believe working an extra day or half day per

week will really provide sufficient gains in comparison to the losses? Not to mention this inadvertently confuses the essence of pastoral ministry. Are pastors on the clock? If so, whose clock? I am not suggesting there should no be time policies in ministry, but how these are established must primarily take the health and well-being of pastors into account, rather than financial concerns or fears of complacency.

**Disclaimer:** From this point forward, noticeable attention will be placed on the role of conference leaders to do their part in creating healthier ministry environments for pastors and their families. However, this does not release pastors from their personal responsibility (see Appendix F, summary of Recommendations for the Conference and Pastors)—and this is not an attack on conferences or individual leaders. I personally believe most conference leaders sincerely care about pastors and want to help them thrive. The problem is performance orientation has affected every level of church organization, and this systemic issue directly compromises organizational health and the individual health and well-being of pastors. Therefore, leaders and pastors cannot be afraid to openly and humbly dialogue and work together to find solutions.

**Recommendation No. 1: Two Days off per Week—*Not Including Sabbath.***

This first recommendation emerges directly from the research and is not ranked in order of importance. Furthermore, it is not intended as a quick-fix solution but part of a larger shift from performance to heart orientation. Two days off per week would allow pastors sufficient time to recharge. One participant said, “if I take my Sunday, Monday I’m ready to go to work Tuesday. I have felt like I’ve had a rest, a break” (FG.A4-2). Sufficient time away to rest is a win-win for pastors, churches, and the conference because when pastors are healthy, they will likely be more productive, thus bearing more fruit.

Thankfully, there are conference leaders who understand the need for rest. One such leader said to a pastor in the field, “‘you guys are paid a 40-hour work week. Figure it out’. And he said, ‘no matter what ... future presidents [tell you], you’re paid for five days a week, eight hours a day’” (FG. A4-5).

Pastors are not ignorant of this. The problem is the culture within the church often frowns upon pastors taking two days off—if Sabbath is not one of them. One focus group participant, earnestly in need of two days off per week, essentially argued that conferences base vacation pay on five days per week. Thus, based on labor laws, a pastor can only be required to work five days per week. Must it come to forcing the hand of conferences? Or should a pastor take two days off despite what their conference thinks? The problem with this is pastors may struggle with feelings of shame by not having explicit permission (see Part 2, “Guilt Versus Shame, a Mistaken Identity”). Neither option is ideal; thus, a change is necessary.

Coming back to the earlier point about proactivity, even if conferences started promoting two days off per week, would pastors actually take two days off? As already shown, approximately 2 in 5 pastors are not taking off one day per week. The answer to the previous question by one focus group participant was “No!” “Every time there’s a holiday Monday, the rest of my week is cramped because ... demands don’t disappear with that holiday” (FG. A1-2). If pastors were to take two days off per week, not including Sabbath, that would mean they have four workdays outside of Sabbath hours in which to manage all responsibilities and demands. While this may seem like an impossibility, there are pastors already doing this. However, most pastors will likely continue to struggle with this unless something changes. And that is the point: something

needs to change. The whole premise of this research is pastors need to shift from performance and incessantly trying to achieve everything that “needs” to be done and learn to evaluate and prioritize the most important responsibilities and relationships—period. As discussed in Chapter 2, it is time to create a culture within the church that moves at the pace of about three miles per hour (Bethke, 2019). In other words, we need to slow down and pursue heart orientation.

Finally, if the three aspects of heart, habits, and help, discussed in the final section of the literature review, are applied here, this provides a solid starting point for pursuing heart orientation.

We have seen that for pastors to establish healthy boundaries, it starts at the heart level. It involves identity and differentiation. Pastors first need to take responsibility for areas within their circles of influence and not stress about things inside their circles of concern (Covey, 2013). While there is a place for petitioning the conference to support their workers better, pastors must begin with changing things directly within their control, no matter how difficult. It starts with the heart and moves into habit formation and boundaries. Again, this requires personal responsibility. However, we know for pastors to experience optimum growth and transformation—to make the leap to heart orientation—outside help will be needed. In Chapter 2, help from accountability partners, spouses, coaches, and the pastor’s local ministry team were suggested, and now we have seen that external help must also come from local conferences.

## **Part Two: Discourse Analysis and Correlations with Symbolic Interactionism**

Now that a general overview of the data has been completed, the remainder of this chapter will analyze additional findings by focusing on the discourse within the focus

groups. Other data will be leveraged as needed, but the primary goal will be to unpack the meaning contained in the words and themes and also consider potential correlation with symbolic interactionism.

## **Use of Language**

### ***How Does a Person See Oneself?***

One of the first questions of each focus group session was, Describe yourself in three-to-five words. This task was designed to be a simple icebreaker but also provide insights and context for each participant. It was during this exercise that approximately 30% of participants described themselves as being introverted. Let us briefly consider the meaning and symbolic value of this word.

**Introverts.** An introvert is defined as a “reserved or quiet person who tends to be introspective and enjoys spending time alone” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Several participants who described themselves as introverted also echoed this reflection: “pastoral ministry forces me to have extroverted characteristics” (FG. B1-4). In view of this research, questions arise: How does performance orientation affect introverts? Are the voices of the generalized other amplified, and do they cut against the grain of peace, rest, and solitude for the introvert needing space and margin to reenergize? Introverts by nature are not “go go go,” but performance orientation is. Several mentions in the data indicate introverts are negatively impacted by performance orientation, especially when they are chasing the urgent. One introvert experiencing this at the time of the interview said, “everything within you, [is] screaming, you’ve been putting out, now you need some time by yourself” (FG. A2-3). This pastor also indicated that especially during their earlier years in ministry, they would even lie to get time for themselves. Another introvert

reflected on their dichotomy of being drained by their pastoral duties and then having little to give to their family (Online Survey-ID#25). Alternatively, it was interesting to note that one focus group participant who described themselves as an introvert seemed to be energized by the balance and control, they were experiencing at that point in their ministry.

**“A Man Seeking the Lord”.** This is how focus group participant B4-3 described themselves. It is critical to recognize this is not merely a description of an individual; but of a pursuit. This pastor desires to experience God and commune with Him. As a person considers the larger picture, there is an emptiness in the world, in society, and in our hearts—even in the hearts of pastors. Performance orientation consumes; it does not fill. However, a person seeking the Lord desires to be filled. This same participant later expressed the feelings of turmoil and nausea one day as Sabbath approached and the pressure of sermon preparation and overloaded, unfinished responsibilities loomed. Determined to reconnect with God, this pastor testified it was like God said, “Forget your sermon, forget your responsibilities. Just connect with Me ... and you use [this power] for yourself” (FG. B4-3). This is a key aspect and focus of heart orientation; the need of countless pastors, both men and women, to pursue God and flee performance orientation.

**Goal-Oriented.** This is a description used by a number of participants. And even though there is nothing intrinsically wrong with goals and goal setting, an excessive emphasis thereof lends itself to performance orientation. The questions a person must ponder are, Why? Why is this goal or these goals important for me? Is the goal about me? While watching a Paul McCartney concert, one pastor said, “You know God, if I was to be really honest, I’d love to be a rock star and have the adulation of millions”; this pastor

continued by pondering, “I think that’s maybe part of the reason why you get into ministry in the first place” (FG. A4-4).

What about pastor’s goals? Are these goals about the need for recognition? A justification that they are good enough? There is a tension with goals I have not figured out, but to the extent a person’s goals can have a higher purpose than selfish motivation, goals are amazing. In the “Heart Narrative” section of Chapter 2, I referenced an Ellen White statement: “In the heart of Christ ... reigned perfect harmony.” After that statement, she added, “It is the love of self that brings unrest” (1898, p. 330). If one’s ultimate goal is to have the confidence, peace, and harmony with God like Christ had, one must be cautious that their temporal goals do not undermine this nobler pursuit.

### *The Vanity of Squeezing*

The word “squeeze” was used six times in two focus groups by three participants. Certainly, this was not a dominant theme by measure of frequency, but it represents a larger phenomenon in our culture that also plagues pastoral ministry. Additionally, the word “juggling” came up three times, along with being stretched thin and a variety of other ways to describe how maxed-out pastors are in their lives and ministries. This reminds me of questions already posed in Chapter 2: For what? Why are we pushing ourselves so hard?

One story during a focus group conversation that caught my attention was when a pastor was explaining that they cannot take days off, as there were too many demands in their ministry. As hard as they tried to “squeeze them in,” this pastor said, “I don’t squeeze them in on a regular basis” (FG. A2-3). When a pastor is this overloaded, trying harder is rarely the solution; rather, a paradigm shift is required.



### ***Guilt Versus Shame—a Mistaken Identity***

Shame is one of the chief feelings that performance orientation uses to steal margin from pastors. Upon careful, analysis it was fascinating to realize that in almost every instance, when pastors talked about shame, they used the word guilt.

“It’s important to distinguish shame from guilt. Guilt is about something I *do* ... not a reflection of my entire person. Shame, on the other hand, is about who I *am*” (Scazzero, 2015, p. 203). Pastors need rest, time off, vacations, anything that will create margin and opportunities to rejuvenate. When pastors take time for themselves, they have done nothing wrong—thus, they are not guilty. Then, why do they feel guilty? The truth is they are not feeling guilt but shame when doing one of the very things they need most.

Often, when pastors attempt to slow down, shame crashes their peace. It is through the voice of a hundred saints, that the generalized other of performance orientation shames pastors with countless unfinished task that “need” to be done. The generalized other of performance orientation is a cruel task master, but Jesus, the Divine Other says, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28, NIV).

### ***Promotion and Permission—Conference Leadership Can Make a Difference***

While pastors recognize they cannot expect the conference to solve many of their struggles, most pastors agree that conference leadership should be more involved and intentional in supporting their well-being. Furthermore, I would posit that conference leaders have a tremendous responsibility and influence in the lives of pastors. Referring to self-care and healthy boundaries in ministry, one pastor suggested that conference leaders should focus on “promotion and permission”:

Promotion ... they tell the church, “These are the expectations of the pastor. These are the expectation of the family” ... And then, permission from the Conference to the pastor, “These are the things we allow you to do, do ‘em. And you’re free to do them and you don’t have to worry about it.” (FG. B2-3)

**Recommendation No. 2: Promotion and Permission.** If this recommendation was placed in order, it would be first, then recommendation number one would be a subset of number two. The key element of the second recommendation involves an intentional focus on heart orientation. Consider the liberation an employee feels when they know they have the full support of their employer or boss. It is hard enough for pastors to disconnect from the mental demands of ministry, never mind the pressure or feelings of shame for prioritizing their own needs and the needs of their families.

With symbolic interactionism and the generalized other in mind, I want to suggest that conference leaders, along with pastors, need to create a new collective voice: the voice of heart orientation. And doing this will involve a revolutionary shift to one degree or another.

### ***A Revolutionary Shift***

King Solomon taught us that “there is nothing new under the sun” (Eccl 1:9, NIV). This may not be a revolutionary idea, but it certainly has the potential to be a revolutionary shift.

I want to pose the following question: What is the role, ministry, or mission and vision of the conference? Based on a simple generalization, it seems that each level of church organization, including conferences, has assumed the responsibility for carrying out the great commission. Additionally, conferences play an important role in providing

support and resources for local churches. While this may sound good, a problem arises when conferences are more concerned with outreach and evangelism than with the leadership development of pastors and doing everything possible to support them. In fact, pastors are counselled that their responsibility is to support conference initiatives and programs and “hopefully conference leaders” (*Minister’s Manual*, 1992, p. 64) will help and support pastors during difficult times. This may seem like a mischaracterization but the practice in the field is not much different than the written policies.

According to Simon Sinek (2016), there is also another problem. He says, what usually happens in organizations is employees are promoted to leadership and management roles because they excelled at their jobs. When this transition happens, many new leaders and managers fail to understand or affirm the truth that “great leaders are not responsible for the job, they’re responsible for the people who are responsible for the job, they’re not even responsible for the results” (4:19). Does this sound familiar? This is exactly what happens in the church when a pastor is called to serve in the conference. And while there is nothing inherently wrong with the process, the challenges arise when leaders do not understand their jobs. This is why it is worth reflecting on the question, what is the role, ministry, or mission and vision of the conference?

**Recommendation No. 3: Reframe Mission and Vision.** For those tempted to defend the current model and reject this recommendation, it would be well to imagine what it would be like if conferences reframed their primary mission and vision from focusing on the great commission to focusing on laborers in the field tasked with carrying out the great commission. What would happen if the insights of Sinek and others were intentionally, consistently, and genuinely applied in the relationship between the

conference and the pastors in the field? I believe this could revolutionize pastoral ministry, creating an atmosphere of trust and loyalty rarely seen in most organizations, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church—and the corresponding evangelistic results would be outstanding—all this, by reframing mission and vision with a focus on leadership development and the well-being of the pastor.

### **Communication of Beliefs**

Various factors related to beliefs and identity have been discussed already. Thus, it is not necessary to repeat them here. What I would like to do is highlight a question discussed in the focus groups that revealed a belief which may be common among millennial pastors: What are your personal goals and/or aspirations? As the discussion developed around this question, one millennial pastor shared the following concern:

I don't know if our conference leaders are aware ... [that] my generation feels this way. There's several, at least five parties that I went to seminary with [who have] resigned from ministry. Not because of any immorality, just because they're feeling led by God in other areas. When I ask them, why did you resign? ... [They said] "there's more to me than just being a pastor ... I feel like God can do more with me." (FG. B1-4)

### ***Called, but to What?***

Notice the belief communicated by these millennials. They have been called, but to what? What is profoundly important, from this testimony, is that millennials who were initially impressed that God was calling them to pastoral ministry now believe God is calling them to something more (this will be discussed further under "Autonomy").

Consider this next response with reference to conference expectations, while asking, what belief is this millennial communicating?

I just feel as though I'm just a person that has to put numbers on a board. So, I'm your mass producer, but at the end of the day, I'm losing my mind ... Just treat me as a person, as if I matter. (FG. B2-5)

Something has tragically gone wrong when pastors believe they are just a number and do not matter in the eyes of the conference. Sadly, it seems these beliefs and concerns transcend generations. Two other pastors, from earlier generations, reflected a similar sentiment as voiced by millennials. One of these pastors said of the conference, "they don't really care about my health" (FG. A4-4). Thus far, a discourse has been identified that highlights how pastors are affected when they are not valued for who they are. The next two stories illustrate this from the standpoint of bereavement.

**In Memory of ... or Forgotten?** During two interviews, two focus group participants spoke about how their parents, who were serving as pastors and had died when they were young.

In the first instance, participant FG.A3-2 expressed how the church leadership fulfilled their obligations based on policy, but not out of a genuine care for their families overall well-being. For them, this experience shaped beliefs of spiritual distrust in leadership, as exhibited by this statement, "the church can forget you, why should you be killing yourself [for them]" (FG. A3-2).

The other pastor talked about the timing of their parent's death, which happened six months before being eligible for certain financial benefits. In the wake of this death, the governing committee voted not to give those benefits. The participant implied that

these leaders had the power to act compassionately but did not. Experiences like these have significant impact and shape the beliefs of individuals. In these instances, the result was a lack of trust toward the institution, to the point that pastors may fear being “solely dependent” on the church and sense the need to “build ... boundaries to protect” themselves (FG. B1-4). These are serious and even disturbing issues that need to be remembered and from which the church needs to learn if they are to move forward responsibly.

**Recommendation No. 4: Pastors Matter More.** Each of these recommendations is designed to facilitate a systemic shift towards heart orientation at the conference level down to the local/pastoral level. What makes this recommendation important and unique is the focus on the individual needs and value of pastors. Unfortunately, experiences like those discussed above are not yet an issue of the past. Situations like these and others continue to communicate to pastors a lack of genuine interest and value towards themselves from church leaders. As emphasized in the disclaimer, I believe there are many genuine, caring leaders and administrators in the Adventist Church. However, this does not automatically fix the problem. Somehow, our conferences and pastors need to have these difficult conversations and do whatever it takes to fix the problems.

Leadership and ministry are messy, but I would urge administrators to always err on the side of people first, policy second, because pastors matter more. That is how trust and loyalty are built.

### ***Autonomy***

It is important to discuss the issue of autonomy in further detail. Consider the following comments from one focus group participant; the context was comparing the

advantages available to a CEO or an entrepreneur but unavailable to pastors. A person working as a CEO would have an assistant, or as an entrepreneur, there would be freedom to ...

... be okay with lower profits, lower sales, like you could make those calls really independently. I feel like we're stuck in the middle of being this entrepreneur/CEO, but not having your assistant and not having full autonomy.

(FG. A1-2)

This participant expressed regularly struggling with overload in ministry, but they believed if sufficient help was made available or sufficient autonomy was given for governing church responsibilities, then there would be a much higher likelihood of establishing healthy work-life balance. However, too often, this is not the case, and pastors are left feeling stuck and discouraged.

Regardless of the reasons contributing to limited autonomy in ministry, it is necessary to first recognize the impact this has on pastoral health; and second, action must then be taken to empower pastors and remove as many limitations as possible.

Revisiting the testimony by focus group participant B1-4—who spoke about some millennials, in traditional pastoral roles, are feeling called to be more than pastors—we must ask, Why is this? Initially, the analysis went in the direction that some pastors do not believe they are valued and thus need to protect themselves in ministry, but could another reason millennial pastors (and others) feel drawn from or compelled to leave ministry be the result of limited autonomy?

**Recommendation No. 5: Empower Pastors with Autonomy.** This recommendation is based on the simple need to engage more millennials in pastoral

ministry or those who think outside the box. Thus, it may be well for conference leaders to heed the advice from Michael McBride: “By giving pastors a degree of professional autonomy, administrators can assist them in minimizing the effects of role conflict and ambiguity. And conversely, by stifling their pastors’ autonomy, conference administration or local church leadership subject them to increased stress” (as cited in Aka et al., 2022, p. 119).

Not only is autonomy important for health and well-being among pastors, but a lack of autonomy may also be part of the reason some pastors are looking elsewhere. To expand on this point, there is not a lack of opportunities available at the local church level; rather, it seems the issue of rigidity may be preventing pastors from living out their full calling in ministry. There needs to be a place for visionaries and entrepreneurs within pastoral ministry. Simon Sinek (2016) would say we need to “create the right environment” (6:57), and when we do, we will get the right people because they will be inspired and empowered. Without creating this environment, not only will our churches risk losing some of their best leaders, but it will also discourage others God is calling to pastoral ministry. Perhaps it would help to be reminded that the church is God’s, and if we follow His way, even if it is different or new, God will bless abundantly more than we could ever imagine.

### ***Do Pastors Need Friends?***

One more belief that must be considered is that of relationship and friendship in pastoral ministry. It has often been noted that pastoring is a lonely business, but what happens when pastors believe they do *not* need friends? I was surprised to find two



pastors clearly articulated this belief. They had a level of hesitancy or uncertainty, when responding, but it seemed clear these pastors believed they did not need friends.

On the other hand, another pastor, who was highly advocating the need for friendship, shared this keen insight: “exposing yourself to your friend, being vulnerable, shows your relationship with God. If you can’t be vulnerable with a friend ... then ultimately you have a lack of trust in God.” They were adamant: “There’s a correlation” (FG. B4-3).

The right question may not be, Can pastors live without friends? but rather, Would they thrive in deeper and richer ways as a result of prioritizing and making time for friendships? Building real friendship is not easy; as mentioned above, it is a risky, vulnerable process exposing oneself. By contrast, it is much easier to produce and perform in ministry because performance is predictable; relationships are not. However, for those who choose to slow down and commit to the process of building deep friendships, not only will these pastors enjoy its rich rewards, but I believe they will have found a key for making the leap to heart orientation. When a person, by experience, values deep friendship above all else, they will have tasted freedom from performance orientation and significantly nurtured their relationship with God. Like focus group participant B4-3 said, *there is a correlation*.

### **Interactions in Social Situations**

In this part of the chapter, discourse analysis has been highlighted. At this point, the first two elements of DA have been considered: language use and communication of beliefs. Now, two stories will be examined, which highlight the third element of discourse analysis: interactions in social situations.

### *Expectations*

This first, quite humorous story is of how a pastor handled the criticism they were facing regarding the style of their clothing. However, first, it is important to note the social and emotional implications of these types of situations. Let me illustrate it this way: If an employee comes to work wearing something for which a co-worker does not care, it is unlikely the co-worker will say anything, and if he or she does, it will mean little to that employee from a work standpoint. It may have an impact on their friendship but not on the employee's work. However, if the boss says something, it could have a significantly negative impact on the employee.

One of the unique challenges of pastoral ministry can be summarized by the question, Who is the boss? Is the pastor the boss? The conference? The church board? Or one of the many church members who consider it their responsibility to hold the pastor accountable to certain standards? Regardless of a person's beliefs or convictions regarding dress standards in the church for members or pastors, the point is clear: The social impact of church members pressing their expectations on pastors can trigger huge repercussions, especially for pastors struggling with poor differentiation.

The way this pastor handled the situation demonstrated they were able to rise above the social pressure and establish a clear boundary. The pastor simply said one Sabbath, from the pulpit, "Listen, if you are willing to buy my wardrobe, then you can tell me what to wear" (FG. B1-4). This pastor did not ignore the issue or defend a certain style. They did not try to reason with those being critical but set a simple, monetary boundary.

## ***Breaking the Mold***

A pastor shared of a time in their ministry when they had been struggling trying to keep everything going; they were putting in 100% effort, spread thin, doing everything themselves, not seeing any results, and not working in their area of giftedness. Finally, they realized a radical change was needed.

Digressing for a moment, it is important to address the issue of strengths and weaknesses. While I did not collect data on pastors working outside their areas of strength, I believe this is another potentially serious factor affecting pastoral well-being. Imagine a task that is a regular source of stress and discouragement for a pastor. This task falls within a pastor's area of weakness. It may only be a single task or responsibility, but the stress it causes will negatively impact the overall ministry experience. Think about a physical injury: We know an injury in one part of the body is felt through the rest of it. This is how it can feel and affect a pastor who is not empowered to work in their areas of strength.

Coming back to the story, this pastor realized the problem and what needed to be done. For things to change, they had to make two incredibly hard decisions. First, this involved cutting their losses, liquidating significant resources, and completely changing the service they were providing to the community. Second, they realized they were not gifted to work as the head pastor of the church, and they proceeded to hire a lead pastor under whom they would then be working. This pivot would have been impossible for many pastors. I say this because practically speaking, it is true; however, I hope this story will give courage to all pastors to not be afraid to do whatever it takes to change their stories, regardless of what their struggles may be.

The conclusion of the story is remarkable. These changes made a world of difference. This pastor said, “my ministry flipped and then I started getting results” (FG.A2-1). It is amazing what happens when a person is enabled to work in one’s areas of strength. Barna (2017) says, “One important aspect of pastoral leadership is recognizing one’s weaknesses and empower others to take up the ministry slack” (p. 104). It takes courage to be vulnerable and break the mold, but it is a potential game changer, especially in the areas of mental health, well-being, and thriving in ministry.

We have seen two examples of social interactions in different situations. These interactions create and communicate meaning, directly impacting self and social relationships. It is during social interactions that symbolic interactionism is operative. As has been discussed at different points in this thesis, as a person is socialized in a cultural context, that person learns to understand the social norms and expectations; it is these expectations that form a generalized other; and it is this generalized other with which an individual internally dialogues to determine how to respond and behave within society.

In these last two examples, we witnessed pastors who were able to resist the voices pressuring them to perform and act in a certain way, especially in the situation of the pastor who pivoted to a new form of ministry. This pastor was being told, “Don’t rock the boat” (FG.A2-1), but they knew God was calling them in a different direction and they were able to heed His voice and break free from the voices of performance orientation.

### **Summation**

The goal of this chapter was to identify the extent to which the research questions were answered from the data collected.

Research Question 1 addressed the area of assessment. It asked, How healthy are pastors in the areas of relationship to God, self, family, and others, and what effect does this have on their families? the data is clear and consistent: There is significant reason to be concerned about the health and well-being of pastors and their families. This does not mean all is gloom and doom. We have seen that approximately 40% of pastoral families have been positively affected by the pastor's current ministry. That is significant and should be celebrated. We have also seen that pastors are optimistic, and positive attitudes go a long way. In addition, it has been shown in the literature and this research that there are conference leaders who really care. These are reasons for hope. However, at the same time, we must recognize and address the serious problems. What about the remaining 50–60% of pastoral families not positively affected by ministry? For those negatively affected, the impact cannot be overstated.

The second research question pertained to factors. It asked, what type of internal or external factors affect the pastor's health in the areas of ministry and with relationship to God, self, family, and others? some of the top internal factors affecting the pastor's health are self-worth, shame related to expectations and success, and challenges with differentiation. Some of the top external factors are job overload, conflict resolution, church politics, neglect of physical health, lack of management training for operating churches, struggling churches, personal finances, etc.

A summary of the internal factors could be organized into these groupings: identity/beliefs, differentiation, priorities, and strengths/weaknesses; and for external factor groupings: expectations, boundaries, support, barriers/limitations, and communication/conflict.

One of the most serious factors affecting pastoral health is a pastor's relationship with God. According to this study, almost 1 in 4 pastors has a significant struggle in maintaining a consistent relationship with God. Furthermore, approximately 40% of pastors indicated they need to establish healthier boundaries in their relationship with God. Also, Heck et al. (2018), Barna (2017), and Sedlacek et al. (2014) indicate that not only is it difficult for pastors to prioritize devotional time with God but experiencing closeness and quality in their time with God is also a concern.

Perhaps the most significant finding related to Research Question 2 is the extent to which a lack of differentiation in the lives of pastors affects key areas of life and ministry. If pastors are to thrive in ministry, they must overcome the barrier of differentiation. It was fascinating to discover that a pastor's level of education does not seem to improve one's ability to differentiate or set healthy boundaries.

Research Question 3 related to strategies and support. It asked, what strategies and kind of support would help pastors establish and/or maintain healthier boundaries in transitioning towards heart orientation in life and ministry? Building on the three aspects of heart, habits, and help developed in Chapter 2, the data showed that proactivity plays a significant role in helping pastors make the leap from performance to heart orientation. Pastors may have the best education, but if they do not take responsibility and do the hard work of establishing healthy habits, no amount of external help will be sufficient.

However, this chapter also explored five important insights and recommendations that emerged from the discourse analysis process. The five recommendations are opportunities and strategies to help conferences create healthier working environments for pastors. The following recommendations were highlighted throughout this chapter as

they emerged: (1) support and promote two days off per week (not including Sabbath); (2) promote and permit pastors to pursue personal and relational health as the most important priority and responsibility in ministry; (3) reframe the mission and vision of the conference; (4) pastors matter more—create heart environments of trust and loyalty, prioritizing pastors over policies and performance-based expectations; and (5) empower pastors with autonomy at the local level.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### Overview

This has been an extremely rewarding journey. I have learned many things along the way, and even though I would certainly make many changes the second time around, I am excited about the overall product. There were times when I did not see the light at the end of the tunnel, and I was confused as to how this would all come together, but it has. Beyond completing this research, it has also been a life-changing experience for me as a pastor seeking a healthier way to live and lead at home and in ministry.

I am convinced this research provides valuable insights for the broader conversation regarding pastoral health and well-being. In this chapter, we will highlight the most important contributions and findings of this thesis. To set the stage, let us consider one more highly significant discourse shared by a focus group participant.

After the opening remarks, icebreakers, and an initial conversation had transpired, we arrived at the leading question: *Which relationships, on a daily or weekly basis, do you struggle to prioritize the most?* The first participant responded by saying they struggled the most with prioritizing their family. As we explored their reasons and experience, I asked a follow-up question: *Have you noticed any negative impacts on your family from your years of ministry?* Immediately, the same pastor expressed regret and that they wished they could go back and change things. As the story unfolded, we were able to praise God for His love and mercy. Despite the pain this family had experienced



in ministry, God had blessed them. An important side note is that God specializes in bringing beauty out of ashes, but He greatly prefers to spare us from as much pain and heartache as possible.

As the conversation continued, this pastor shared that years later, their kids “expressed that they were really deprived.” And then they said, “one negative effect [was] ... my daughters said they will never marry a pastor. And my son said that he will never be a pastor” (FG. A1-3). I can imagine how devastating that would be for a pastor who had given blood, sweat, and tears to God and the church for so many years, to then realize how much it had hurt their family and children. This pastor understood it was their fault and took responsibility, but that did not lessen the pain. If that story flooded me with emotion and deeply hurt me as a father, how much more does it hurt God to see all the harm done in ministerial families in His name and for the “good” of the church? This must break God’s heart, yet most of the time, it is not given a second thought.

In *The Signs of the Times*, February 9, 1882, Ellen White argued that when ministers neglect their home responsibilities, especially when it comes to child rearing, there is a great injury caused in the world and the church, “which outweighs *all* [emphasis added] the good that their labors accomplish” (p. 69). It is time for us to recognize this and say, “Enough is enough.”

### **The Urgency of Shifting from Performance to Heart Orientation**

In Chapter 1, part of this quote from David Kinnaman was cited regarding the desperate need for intervention in the lives of pastors:

This is a growing crisis for church leaders in America. Now is the time for the Christian community to come alongside their pastors to pray and support them so

they can continue to lead in healthy ways ... More than ever, the Church needs resilient leaders who are humble, agile, rooted in prayer and who are committed to being healthy as an essential aspect of effective leadership. (As cited in Barna Group, 2021)

I believe this crisis is as serious and perhaps more so for Seventh-day Adventist pastors. It is time to raise the banner high and say, “There is a better way.” I believe the better way is heart orientation. “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (Prov 4:23, NIV). This is the biblical call—the urgent call—to proactively guard and fight against an emotional, spiritual, and relational pandemic leaving many of our most important relationships on life support and ventilators.

The thesis of this research is that performance orientation is a cultural obsession that has affected almost every area of life, especially in North America and other developed territories. This orientation has penetrated the church and pastoral ministry, and if we are going to guard our hearts and protect our most important relationships, we must make the shift from performance to heart orientation.

To make this shift, it will cost something. Nonetheless, making this shift is invaluable. Richard Swenson illustrated this in his own life when he said, “Decades ago I paid the ransom ... a decision that cost me significant income. Yet it was one of the wisest purchases I’ve ever made” (2004, p. 16).

### **New Metrics for Pastoral Ministry**

One of the key strategies explored in this research for making the shift from performance to heart orientation is developing a new metrics for pastoral ministry. This

was discussed in detail in Chapter 2, under the section “The Impact of Symbolic Interactionism and Success Measurements on Performance Orientation Among Pastors.”

In a synopsis, any new measurement must be based on relationships and trust. Arguably, these are the most important values in life. Without relationships, life is empty, and without trust, relationships are meaningless. Various options and elements were discussed of how to engineer a new metric, but I believe organizational health, as framed by Patrick Lencioni (2012), provides the best potential for a new metric. We measure what is valuable; therefore, the metrics must change. This change will lead to healthy relationships, which leads to healthy pastors and healthy churches, and that is a haven for which the world is desperate.

### **Symbolic Interactionism and the Generalized Other**

Another key strategy for shifting from performance to heart orientation is the heart work that must individually happen in the life of each pastor. There are various theories of social formation, one of them being symbolic interactionism. This research has found symbolic interactionism to be a helpful framework for explaining the way cultural expectations are communicated interpersonally and intrapersonally through self-talk, as well as how this leads to the perpetuation of performance orientation.

Interactionism involves an internal communication and reasoning process. This internal reasoning or dialogue that takes place is with what interactionists call “the generalized other.” According to interactionists, each of us have various composite others in our minds that influence how we as individuals respond in social situations. It is also at this level where differentiation is operative. Healthy, differentiated individuals can see separation between who they are and their value, distinct from the cultural expectations

and generalized other of performance orientation. The good news is God promises to be part of this internal heart work (Proverbs 6:22, 7:1; John 14:26). For pastors struggling with being versus doing, God will help with the differentiation process as they learn to abide in Him, hear His voice, and depend on Him. Thus, they will find freedom from the generalized other of performance orientation and be free to make decisions that lead to peace and health in life and ministry.

### **Heart, Habits, and Help**

For a pastor to experience freedom from performance orientation in ministry, the heart work just described must take place in one's life day by day. As this work begins and continues in the heart, pastors are enabled and empowered to form healthy habits and boundaries in life and ministry. Stephen Covey (2013) and others describe this as a process that starts from the inside out. This is the work of transformation that starts in the heart and works its way out into our habits and boundaries. To fully make the leap from performance to heart orientation in pastoral ministry, external help is valuable and will be needed: first, help from God, others, and the larger church body. It is time for the church and conference leaders to understand their roles and responsibilities in helping support and promote healthy behaviors and create healthy environments in pastoral ministry.

### **A Call for Conferences to Create Heart Orientation Environments**

This thesis has considered various opportunities and responsibilities church leaders and conferences have in supporting health and well-being among pastors. More than that, it is time for conferences to realize health and well-being is a fundamental responsibility and the foundation of faithfulness and fruitfulness in pastoral ministry.

Practically speaking, this thesis identified five opportunities in the form of recommendations. These are opportunities for how conferences can support and promote the health and well-being of pastors and their families: (1) support and promote two days off per week (not including Sabbath); (2) promote and permit pastors to pursue personal and relational health as the most important priority and responsibility in ministry; (3) to do this most efficiently, there must be a revolutionary shift—a reframing of the mission and vision of conferences from focusing on the great commission to focusing on the workers responsible for the great commission; (4) pastors matter more—create heart orientation environments of trust and loyalty, prioritizing pastors over policies and performance-based expectations; and (5) empower pastors with autonomy at the local level.

This will be a significant shift for conferences and pastors, but the sooner these changes are made, the better for everyone. Society has begun to see the need for human flourishing and well-being. This is the emerging trend, and the church should be leading the way. After all, Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted (Luke 4:18); that’s part of the great commission. Pursuing heart orientation is a win-win for everyone. If we want to finish the work and see Jesus come, this cannot be done effectively without pastors and their families being strong and healthy.

### **Suggestions for Further Studies**

#### **Improvements**

Most of the limitations of this research have already been discussed in chapters 1 and 3. In this conclusion, there are two aspects I would like to highlight that could have been improved. First, during the data analysis process, I discovered various weaknesses

in the customized instrument I used for collecting quantitative and qualitative data. At the quantitative level, two areas that could have been stronger were the assessment of spiritual health among pastors and the identification of top stressors in pastoral ministry. These improvements would have provided a clearer and more objective picture of the needs and opportunities for growth among pastors. Second, qualitatively, during the focus group sessions, I would have been more specific with fewer questions. Naturally, the focus group sessions became dynamic, which made it difficult to stay within time limitations and, at the same time, consistently cover the same points between groups. While these improvements would have certainly enhanced the research, there was still an abundance of helpful data in the data sets.

### **Future Research**

One of the next big steps in research is to develop a step-by-step transformation process for pastors and conferences to make the leap from performance to heart orientation. This is something that needs to be tested and piloted at the church and conference levels. I am confident this thesis will help in that process.

### ***Performance Orientation***

Measure the extent to which performance orientation is present in Seventh-day Adventist Churches. What factors, including institutionalism, affect performance orientation in the church? How is performance orientation caught and taught in family and church culture from childhood?

### ***Pastoral Level***

How passionate and fulfilled are pastors in ministry? What are the goals and aspirations of pastors? What makes pastors feel alive? It was sad to see and hear how

oppressed pastors can feel in ministry when they cannot live out their dreams or be themselves. How can churches and conferences foster entrepreneurial and visionary environments for pastors in ministry? A practical evaluation of pastoral responsibilities, on a week-to-week basis, through the lens of the early church and the book of Acts. Also, a fascinating study would examine the priorities and effectiveness of pastors who take two days off per week.

### ***Conference Level***

What are the common expectations, priorities, and support structures that conferences have for pastors? What is the quality of relationship between pastors and conference leaders—this would be a deeper, two-sided examination of the relationship between conference leaders and pastors in the field. How can Patrick Lencioni’s model (2012) for establishing organizational health, be applied on the church and conference level to develop heart orientation environments?

### **Final Thoughts**

What if a new goal were adapted, based on Matthew 6:33, which said, “Seek first the care and development of pastors at all costs, and all these things will be added unto the church and conference—pressed down, shaken together, and overflowing”? What if pastors simply slowed down to three miles per hour and learned to love freely and deeply—not for the sake of results but for the joy and fulfillment of relationships? How would it impact the pastor, his/her family, the work of God, and the world? I believe God would bless His people and church abundantly; this would bring “all other blessings in its train” (White, 1898, p. 672).

In conclusion, consider this profound truth that every pastor should take to heart: “The central task of pastoring is wholeness” (Knott, 2021, p. 2). Therefore, “We don’t have to be afraid to step away, to lay down the loads we carry. We don’t have to fear the silence that may come when we choose moments of peace over progress. Rest is not a sign of weakness if it’s the very thing that makes us strong ... when we are at rest, the most important work is being done” (*Magnolia Journal*, 2020, p. 61).

Pastor, do you desire and long for health and wholeness in life and ministry?

If so, it is time to set your speed control to three miles per hour.



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## Appendix A

### Focus Group Handout—Front

#### Study Overview

The purpose of this study is to design a heart orientation framework that assists pastors in establishing and/or maintaining healthy boundaries in their life and ministry. This study will also assist pastors in developing effective strategies for communicating healthy boundaries to congregants.

#### Definitions:

- Boundaries = the borders we set to protect the most important priorities in our life. When we talk about boundaries, we are specifically referring to how a pastor uses their time in relationship to these priorities. We are not talking about in appropriate relationships (e.g. with members of the opposite sex) but simply stated when to say yes, and no in order to promote the best health possible for the pastor and their family.
- Health(y) = this term simply refers to overall well-being physically, spiritually, mentally, and relationally.
- Ministry = the pastoral responsibilities that are often all-absorbing of the pastors' time, attention, and best energies. While we recognize that the pastor's family is their first flock and part of their ministry and must receive the pastors time, attention, care, and best interest. We are not including family in the definition of ministry in order to better distinguish healthy boundaries between life/family and ministry. However, life and ministry properly prioritized and managed do not have to be in competition but in cooperation.

#### The following research questions will guide the focus group discussion.

1. How healthy are pastors in the areas of relationship to God, self, family, and others and what effect does this have on their families?
2. What type of internal or external factors affect the pastor's health in the areas of ministry and with relationship to God, self, family, and others?
3. What kind of boundaries would help pastors establish healthy practices in the area of ministry and with relationship to God, self, family, and others?
4. What additional support and tools would help pastors implement and maintain healthy boundaries?

#### Introduction & Guidelines

- Thank you for your participation...
- I want this to be a safe environment. Therefore, it is important that no one feel judged or criticized. There are no right or wrong answers. Please be open and honest about your experiences and I challenge each of us to encouraged and support one another regardless of the nature of your experiences. As a result of participating I hope you will feel inspired and more equipped to establish healthy boundaries and be freer to seek support and tools for needed growth areas.
- This is completely confidential, your identities, stories or comments will not be shared with anyone. And any information used for the study will be coded and not traceable back to an individual.
- Do not feel obligated to share if you are not comfortable with any question or part of the discussion. You are also welcome to leave the group at any point if you choose to.
- Again, I will keep our discussion completely confidential, and I am asking that each participant maintain the highest level of confidentiality. If I make anyone feel that way, please let me know and hold me accountable.
- Please keep your responses brief and I will be seeking to encourage equal participation.
- **Silence mobile devices.**

## Focus Group Handout—Back

### Focus Group Questions

1. Tell us your name...
  - a. family status (married? and/or kids?)
  - b. how long you have pastored (or been in ministry)
  - c. and how you would describe yourself in 3-5 words
2. Talk about one of your personal goals and/or aspirations.
3. Day to day, week to week, which relationships in your life (God, self, family, friends) do you struggle to prioritize the most?
4. See definition of boundaries below. Which definition do you like the most and why? or what do boundaries mean to you?

**Exercise:** Brainstorm any values, priorities, goals, things or relationships that are important to you. Then organize these items based on which are already established in your life VS ones you want to establish or improve.

Tape a horizontal line on the wall...

- a) "established" — above the line (1)
- b) "want to establish" — below the line (2)

5. What factors are keeping you from establishing boundaries for the items in quadrant 2?
6. What kind of boundaries would help you establish and protect these important items in quadrant 2? (Write boundaries in right column)
7. Which of these boundaries would be non-negotiable or hard boundaries and why? And what would qualify as a negotiable or soft boundary? (Label X=non-negotiable, N=negotiable)
8. What has helped or would help you to establish healthy boundaries in life and ministry?
9. Discussion about *Heart Orientation* and possible framework to help pastors.

#### Definition of Boundaries

Taken from a presentation by David Sedlacek, PhD, LMSW, CFLE, Professor at Andrew University

1. A means of protecting myself without offending others
2. The fence around my yard that keeps my stuff in and other people's stuff out
3. A line beyond which I won't go AND behind which others aren't allowed to come
4. A barrier that keeps good, positive, helpful things in and bad, negative, harmful things out

# Worksheet Activity

Boundaries to Establish...												
Label												
1	Want to Establish	Established	2									

## Appendix B

### Follow-up Email to Focus Group Participants

Hi Ladies & Gentlemen,

Thank you again for your time on [Friday](#). Your participation and feedback was greatly appreciated.

**If you have not completed the online survey and can still do that I would be grateful.** Please [click here](#) to complete the survey.

Finally, if you have any feedback that you didn't have the opportunity to share during our discussion, please feel free to respond to the following questions:

1. Was there anything you didn't share that you wish you had the opportunity to share? If so, you may email me your response.
2. Are there any suggestions or improvements you would like to share with the moderator? If so, please email me your response.

**Note: I am including the focus group questions if you need it to jog your memory.**

God bless each of you and I look forward to being in touch.

Sincerely,

Royce Odiyar, Andrews University Student  
Mdiv and MA in Communications

Phone: [269.759.0614](tel:269.759.0614)

Email: [odiyar@andrews.edu](mailto:odiyar@andrews.edu)



## Appendix C

### Online Survey Questions

5/31/22, 3:08 AM

Pastoral Survey on Life and Ministry

#### Pastoral Survey on Life and Ministry

Survey #2b.FL

\* Required

##### Overview

\*\*\*IMPORTANT: please read informed consent below and then indicate if you are willing to take the survey.

The purpose of this study is to design a heart orientation framework that assists pastors in establishing and/or maintaining healthy boundaries in their life and ministry. This study will also assist pastors in developing effective strategies for communicating healthy boundaries to congregants.

It is estimated that this survey will take about 15 minutes. This survey contains 11 multiple choice type questions, 4 short answer questions, and 10 demographic questions.

Please take your time to respond to these questions openly and honestly. This is entirely anonymous and your privacy is of the utmost importance.

\*PLEASE DO NOT take the survey more than once.

## Informed Consent

Pre-Requisite: this survey is for ACTIVE pastors or chaplain for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Please do not complete this survey if you do not meet the criteria.

You are being invited to participate in a research study titled: Designing a Heart Orientation Framework for Healthy Pastoral Boundaries

This study is being done by Royce Odiyar from the Andrews University. You were selected to participate in this study because you are an active pastor or chaplain in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey/questionnaire. This survey/questionnaire will ask about time use, ministerial practices, family interactions, beliefs and habits, ministerial concerns, and demographic questions---and it will take you approximately 15 minutes to complete.

You may not directly benefit from this research; however, we hope that your participation in the study may give you an opportunity to reflect on personal and ministry practices and see where you can improve or encourage other ministers.

We believe there are no known risks associated with this research study; however, as with any online related activity the risk of a breach of confidentiality is always possible. To the best of our ability your answers in this study will remain confidential. We have minimized any risks by not asking for personal identifiers and by not collecting names or contact information. Should any identifiers be disclosed in the short answer section we will be sure to code that information and dispose of it properly.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. We are requiring that most questions be completed but if you are not comfortable with any questions you are free to withdraw at any time.

If Applicable - For surveys covering sensitive subject matter, including steps you will use to minimize any potential risks or minimizing risks. Please include the following statement in the informed consent AND include a debriefing form at the end of the survey:

As researchers we are not qualified to provide counseling services and we will not be following up with you after this study. If you feel upset after completing the study, or find that some questions or aspects of the study triggered distress, talking with a qualified clinician may help. If you feel you would like assistance please contact the helpline at the Kettering Counseling Care Center (937-395-8149 or 866-634-0493).

In the unlikely event of injury resulting from this research, Andrews University is not able to offer financial compensation nor to absorb the costs of medical treatment. However, assistance will be provided to research subjects in obtaining emergency treatment and professional services that are available to the community generally at nearby facilities.

My signature/selection below acknowledges my consent to voluntarily participate in this research project. Such participation does not release the investigator(s), sponsor(s) or granting agency(ies) from their professional and ethical responsibility to me. In the case of an emergency please call 911.

If you have questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact the researcher's advisor Desrene Vernon-Brebnor (269-471-6468 or [desrene@andrews.edu](mailto:desrene@andrews.edu)), as well as, the researcher himself, Royce Odiyar (269-759-0614) or [odiyar@andrews.edu](mailto:odiyar@andrews.edu). If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Andrews University IRB Office at (269) 471-6361 or [irb@andrews.edu](mailto:irb@andrews.edu).

By clicking "I agree" below you are indicating that you are at least 18 years old, have read and understood this consent form and agree to participate in this research study.

\*\*\*Please print a copy of this page for your records.

1. Do you voluntarily agree to participate? \*

Mark only one oval.

- Yes, I participate in this survey freely of my own choosing *Skip to question 3*
- No, I do not wish to participate in this survey *Skip to question 2*

**Okay, thank  
you for your  
honesty.**

The reason you are seeing this message is because you choose not to participate in the Pastoral Survey on Life and Ministry.

\*\*\*We have one OPTIONAL follow-up question...

2. Would you mind telling us why you do not want to participate in the survey?

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### Multiple Choice Response Section

## 3. 1. How often do you participate in the following \*

*Mark only one oval per row.*

	Daily	Weekly	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	NA
<b>Personal prayer</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Personal Bible study (not for sermon preparation, etc.)</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Reading for personal pleasure or development</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Family worship</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Physical Exercise</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Date night with your spouse</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Family time</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Take at least one day off from pastoral ministry</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Spend time with friends</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Call friends or family for social/quality time</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



4. 2. As a measurement of success in pastoral ministry, how important are the following areas to YOU? \*

Mark only one oval per row.

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
<b>Quality of your preaching</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Number of Baptisms</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Amount of tithe collected</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Church attendance</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Number of Bible studies you are conducting</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Number of people you are discipling</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Number of visits you make</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Number of hours you work</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Number of members (or non-members) involved in church ministries and activities</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Time spent with family</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Personal/devotional time spent with God</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. 3. As a measurement of success in pastoral ministry, how important do you think \*  
the following areas are to the Conference?

Mark only one oval per row.

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
<b>Quality of your preaching</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Number of baptisms</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Amount of tithe collected</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Church attendance</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Number of Bible studies you are conducting</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Number of people you are discipling</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Number of visits you make</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Number of hours you work</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Number of members (or non-members) involved in church ministries and activities</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Time spent with family</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Personal/devotional time spent with God</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. 4. To what extent do the following items cause you stress in pastoral ministry? \*

Mark only one oval per row.

	To a very large extent	To a large extent	To a moderate extent	To a small extent	To a very small extent
<b>Sermon preparation</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Board meetings</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Conflict resolution</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Visitation</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Church politics</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Personal finances</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Family conflict in your home</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Conference expectations</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Having to say "no"...</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>When people think badly about you</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>What you think the Conference thinks about you</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. 5. How likely is it that you will stay in pastoral ministry until retirement? \*

Mark only one oval per row.

	Very likely	Likely	I am not sure	Unlikely	Very unlikely
<b>Select One:</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. 6. If you were to leave pastoral ministry what would be the reasons? \*

Check all that apply.

- Financial pressures
- Health issues
- Dissatisfaction with my work
- Family reasons
- Burnout
- Church politics
- Move on to another kind of ministry
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

9. 7. To what extent do you... \*

Mark only one oval per row.

	To a very large extent	To a large extent	To a moderate extent	To a small extent	To a very small extent
...struggle to establish healthy personal and family boundaries?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...have difficulty finding time for yourself and your family?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...depend on sources outside yourself to find meaning, identity, and value?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...feel distress when others think badly of you?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...make decisions based upon what others will think?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...have difficulty accepting criticism?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...have a hard time being spontaneous?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Spontaneous:**

...sometimes feel as if you do not know who you really are?

...help others at your own expense or the expense of your family?

...have difficulty saying "no" to someone or something?

10. 8. To what extent do you feel you are giving adequate time and attention to the following areas? \*

Mark only one oval per row.

	To a large extent	To a moderate extent	To a small extent	To a very small extent
<b>Pastoral ministry responsibilities</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Your family</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Relationship with God</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Home duties/chores</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Time for self</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. 9. How is your family affected by your current ministry? \*

Mark only one oval per row.

	Positively affected	Negatively affected	Indifferent	Not sure
<b>Select One:</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. 10-A. Do you have any children who are struggling with or not practicing their faith? \*

Mark only one oval.

- Yes  
 No  
 Not applicable

13. 10-B. If yes, why? \*

Mark only one oval.

- Because of ministry  
 Unrelated to ministry  
 Not sure  
 Not applicable  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Short Answer Section

Please note, your input is very valuable and we hope you can make time to respond to these questions, but if you do not have time, please type NTA for "no time to answer". Thank you very much for your help with this survey!

Definition of Boundaries = the borders we set to protect the most important priorities in our life. When we talk about boundaries, we are specifically referring to how a pastor uses their time in relationship to these priorities. We are not talking about in appropriate relationships (e.g. with members of the opposite sex) but simply stated when to say yes, and no in order to promote the best health possible for the pastor and their family.

14. 11. In your experience what is the hardest part about being a pastor? \*

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15. 12. Describe how boundaries or a lack of boundaries has affected any significant relationships in your life (e.g. God, self, family, others)? \*

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16. 13. What are the factors (beliefs, emotions, or fears, etc.) that impact your ability to adequately meet personal, spiritual, or family needs? \*

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17. 14. What kind of support (name who/what) or tools would help you establish and maintain healthy boundaries in life and ministry? Please be as specific as possible. \*

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### Demographic Section

18. 15. I am currently an ACTIVE Seventh-day Adventist Pastor or Chaplain (if other please explain). \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Pastor

Chaplain

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

19. 16. What State, Province, or Region do you live in? \*

---

20. 17. How many churches are part of your pastoral district? (If you are not a pastor, indicate NA). \*

---

21. 18. Gender? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Female

Male

22. 19. What age grouping are you part of? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

20-29 years old

30-39 years old

40-49 years old

50-59 years old

60-69 years old

70-79 years old

80+ years old

23. 20. Ethnicity? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Asian

Black

White (Caucasian)

Hispanic or Latino

Multi-ethnic

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

24. 21. Marital Status? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Married
- Single
- Divorced
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

25. 22. Do you have children? If so how many? (Indicate NA if you do not have any children). \*

\_\_\_\_\_

26. 23. Highest Level of Education? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Bachelors in Religion, Religious Studies or Pastoral Ministry
- Masters in Divinity
- Post-Graduate Degree in Theology or Ministry
- Bible School
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

27. 24. From question 23, which degree/training prepared you the most to set and maintain healthy boundaries? \*

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5/31/22, 3:08 AM

Pastoral Survey on Life and Ministry

**Thank you  
very much  
for your  
participation!**

If there are any personal struggles that you are experiencing in pastoral ministry or in your marriage, please seek the appropriate help.

Below are two resource links that may be helpful, but our best recommendation is the Clergy Care Services website (<https://www.ketteringhealth.org/counseling/>) or helpline 937-395-8149 or 866-634-0493 at the Kettering Counseling Care Center--this service will provide many helpful resources.

- <http://www.nadministerial.com/links>
- <https://truestep.org/>

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## Appendix D

### Consent



#### PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This research study is in partial fulfillment for my Masters of Arts in Communication at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. *Please read this consent document carefully before you decide.* Your participation is greatly appreciated.

**Research Title:** Designing a Heart Orientation Framework for Healthy Pastoral Boundaries

**Purpose of Study:** The purpose of this research is to design a heart orientation framework that assists pastors in establishing and/or maintaining healthy boundaries in their life and ministry.

**Duration of Participation in Study:** I understand that total participation time will be approx. 90 to 120 minutes. Including pre-group survey and call, focus group discussion session, and optional post-group reflection.

**Benefits:** safe environment for pastors to share concerns or challenges related to ministry. This can also result in relationship building and networking among pastoral colleagues.

**Risks:** this study does not anticipate substantial risk. The only potential risk is loss of confidentiality on the part of participants. Therefore, the participants will be strictly asked to respect confidentiality of all group members.

**Voluntary Participation:** Participation in this study is completely voluntary, refusal to participate, or to discontinue participation, will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**Confidentiality:** I understand that the information I have given will be used only for the said purpose disclosed to me and that my identity in this study will not be disclosed in any published document. I also understand that the researcher will keep the records safe and secured from the reach of any person.

**Contact Information:** I am aware that I can contact the researcher's supervisor Desrene Vernon-Brebnor (269-471-6468 or [desrene@andrews.edu](mailto:desrene@andrews.edu)), as well as, the researcher himself, Royce Odiyar (269-759-0614) or [odiyar@andrews.edu](mailto:odiyar@andrews.edu) for answers to questions related to this study. You can also contact the IRB Office at [irb@andrews.edu](mailto:irb@andrews.edu) or at (269-471-6361).

**STATEMENT OF CONSENT**

**In the unlikely event of breach of confidentiality resulting from this research, Andrews University, participating Conferences, or the principal investigator is not able to offer financial compensation nor to absorb the costs of any material or non-material damages.**

[Initial] \_\_\_\_\_ *I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. Therefore, I consent to take part in the study.*

[Initial] \_\_\_\_\_ *I also give consent for the focus group session to be recorded (audio and video) for transcription and analysis purposes.*

Full Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator: Royce Odiyar – Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: This consent form will be kept by the researcher for five years beyond the end of the study.*

## Appendix E

### Quantitative Data—Online Survey Full Tabulations (Questions 1–10)

Quantitative Data – Online Survey Full Tabulations (Questions 1–10, pp. 1 of 3)

Question 1		How often do you participate in the following:									
		1.1 [Personal Bible study (not preparation, etc.)]	1.2 [Personal prayer]	1.3 [Reading for personal pleasure or development]	1.4 [Family worship]	1.5 [Physical Exercise]	1.6 [Date night with your spouse]	1.7 [Family time]	1.8 [Take at least one day off from pastor in ministry]	1.9 [Spend time with friends]	1.10 [Call friends or family for social quality time]
Daily	45	29	16	23	19	0	11	1	0	7	
Weekly	5	17	22	13	17	8	22	30	7	17	
Occasionally	0	3	10	10	9	29	13	16	29	18	
Rarely	0	1	3	1	5	9	2	4	13	9	
Never	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	
NA	1	1	0	3	0	4	3	0	0	0	
<i>Respondents</i>	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	
Daily	88.2%	56.9%	31.4%	45.1%	37.3%	0.0%	21.6%	2.0%	0.0%	13.7%	
Weekly	9.8%	33.3%	43.1%	25.5%	33.3%	15.7%	43.1%	58.8%	13.7%	33.3%	
Occasionally	0.0%	5.9%	19.6%	19.6%	17.6%	56.9%	25.5%	31.4%	56.9%	35.3%	
Rarely	0.0%	2.0%	5.9%	2.0%	9.8%	17.6%	3.9%	7.8%	25.5%	17.6%	
Never	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.9%	0.0%	
NA	2.0%	2.0%	0.0%	5.9%	0.0%	7.8%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	

Question 2		Rate the following according to what YOU believe are the most important measures of success in pastoral ministry:									
		2.1 [Number of Baptisms]	2.2 [Quality of your preaching]	2.3 [Amount of tithe collected]	2.4 [Church attendance]	2.5 [Number of Bible studies you are conducting]	2.6 [Number of people you are discipling]	2.7 [Number of people you visit]	2.8 [Number of hours you work]	2.9 [Number of members (or non-members) involved in church ministries and activities]	2.10 [Time spent with family]
Very Important	12	15	6	13	5	20	8	25	5	27	43
Important	24	28	20	32	23	26	25	25	20	18	7
Somewhat Important	10	6	22	5	20	5	16	16	16	5	1
Not Important	5	2	3	1	15.7%	0	2	5	0	1	0
<i>Respondents</i>	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51
Very Important	23.5%	29.4%	11.8%	25.5%	9.8%	39.2%	15.7%	49.0%	9.8%	52.9%	84.3%
Important	47.1%	54.9%	39.2%	62.7%	45.1%	51.0%	49.0%	49.0%	39.2%	35.3%	13.7%
Somewhat Important	19.6%	11.8%	43.1%	9.8%	39.2%	31.4%	31.4%	11.8%	31.4%	9.8%	2.0%
Not Important	9.8%	3.9%	5.9%	2.0%	5.9%	0.0%	3.9%	0.0%	9.8%	2.0%	0.0%

Question 3		Rate the following according to what you believe the CONFERENCE considers as the most important measures of success in pastoral ministry .									
		3.1 [Quality of your preaching]	3.2 [Number of baptisms]	3.3 [Amount of tithe collected]	3.4 [Church attendance]	3.5 [Number of Bible studies you are conducting]	3.6 [Number of people you are discipling]	3.7 [Number of visits you make]	3.8 [Number of hours you work]	3.9 [Number of members (or non-members) involved in church ministries and activities]	3.10 [Time spent with family]
Very Important	7	30	37	23	14	8	8	12	9	14	21
Important	30	17	10	21	27	31	29	24	27	20	18
Somewhat Important	14	4	4	7	9	9	12	12	13	10	10
Not Important	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	3	2	7	2
<i>Respondents</i>	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51
Very Important	13.7%	58.8%	72.5%	45.1%	27.5%	15.7%	15.7%	23.5%	17.6%	27.5%	41.2%
Important	58.8%	33.3%	19.6%	41.2%	52.9%	60.8%	56.9%	47.1%	52.9%	39.2%	35.3%
Somewhat Important	27.5%	7.8%	7.8%	13.7%	17.6%	17.6%	23.5%	25.5%	25.5%	19.6%	19.6%
Not Important	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	5.9%	3.9%	5.9%	3.9%	13.7%	3.9%

Quantitative Data –Online Survey Full Tabulations (Questions 1–10, pp. 2 of 3)

Question 4

	To what extent do the following items cause you stress in pastoral ministry?										
	4.1 [Sermon preparation]	4.2 [Board meetings]	4.3 [Conflict resolution]	4.4 [Visitation]	4.5 [Church politics]	4.6 [Personal finances]	4.7 [Family conflict in your home]	4.8 [Conference expectations]	4.9 [Having to say "no"....]	4.10 [When people think badly about you]	4.11 [What you think the Conference thinks about you]
To a very large extent	6	3	11	0	10	7	7	6	4	8	8
To a large extent	5	4	16	4	16	9	8	14	7	11	8
To a moderate extent	25	20	18	13	14	15	13	6	23	15	15
To a small extent	11	17	4	16	9	8	8	19	13	13	13
To a very small extent	4	7	2	18	2	12	15	6	4	4	7
<b>Respondents</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>51</b>
To a very large extent	11.8%	5.9%	21.6%	0.0%	19.6%	13.7%	13.7%	11.8%	7.8%	15.7%	15.7%
To a large extent	9.8%	7.8%	31.4%	7.8%	31.4%	17.6%	15.7%	27.5%	13.7%	21.6%	15.7%
To a moderate extent	49.0%	39.2%	35.3%	25.5%	27.5%	29.4%	25.5%	11.8%	45.1%	29.4%	29.4%
To a small extent	21.6%	33.3%	7.8%	31.4%	17.6%	15.7%	15.7%	37.3%	25.5%	25.5%	25.5%
To a very small extent	7.8%	13.7%	3.9%	35.3%	3.9%	23.5%	29.4%	11.8%	7.8%	7.8%	13.7%

Question 5

	5. How likely is it that you will stay in pastoral ministry until retirement? [Select One]
Very likely	23
Likely	9
I am not sure	13
Unlikely	3
Very unlikely	3
<b>Respondents</b>	<b>51</b>
Very likely	45.1%
Likely	17.6%
I am not sure	25.5%
Unlikely	5.9%
Very unlikely	5.9%

Question 6

	6. If you were to leave pastoral ministry what would be the reasons?	Percentage of Participants (n)	Move on to another...Min
Financial pressures	6	11.8%	61.3%
Health issues	9	17.6%	
Disatisfaction with my work	10	19.6%	
Family reasons	10	19.6%	
Burnout	17	33.3%	
Church politics	14	27.5%	
Move on to another kind of ministry	31	60.5%	
I would not leave pastoral ministry (adjusted response)	2	3.9%	
Other (see responses below)	5	9.8%	
<b>Other Responses</b>			
By God's grace, I would not leave.			
If for some reason I don't meet the Conf expectations/approval my unfaithfulness			
Asked to leave			
The culture of the denomination isn't conducive to good quality of life pr. esently or after retirement			

Note: Of 31 participants who said, if they were to leave pastoral ministry the reason would be to "move on to another kind of ministry," 19 of these (61.3%) also had a reason for leaving (the most common being burnout). It seems that these individuals are committed to serving God but question if it is sustainable for them to remain in pastoral ministry as the mode of this service.

Note: for purpose of accuracy I excluded one participant who checked off all the possible options. However, a question that may be worth considering is, of the other 11 people who did not indicate an additional reason for possibly leaving pastoral ministry, could they have additional reasons?



Quantitative Data – Online Survey Full Tabulations (Questions 1-10, pp. 3 of 3)

Question 7

To what extent do you....	7.1 [...]struggle to establish healthy personal and family boundaries?]	7.2 [...]have difficulty finding time for yourself and your family?]	7.3 [...]depend on sources outside yourself to find meaning, identity, and values?]	7.4 [...]feel distress when others think badly of you?]	7.5 [...]make decisions based upon what others will think?]	7.6 [...]have difficulty accepting criticism?]	7.7 [...]have a hard time being spontaneous?]	7.8 [...]sometimes feel as if you do not know who you really are?]	7.9 [...]help others at your own expense or the expense of your family?]	7.10 [...]have difficulty saying "no" to someone or something?]
To a very large extent	4	5	2	1	2	1	2	2	10	2
To a large extent	13	15	8	12	7	6	8	3	9	11
To a moderate extent	17	14	16	14	17	14	16	8	19	23
To a small extent	11	13	12	14	23	21	11	14	10	12
To a very small extent	6	4	13	3	3	6	7	24	3	3
Respondents	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51
To a very large extent	7.8%	9.8%	3.9%	9.8%	2.0%	2.0%	3.9%	3.9%	19.6%	3.9%
To a large extent	25.5%	29.4%	15.7%	13.7%	13.7%	11.8%	15.7%	5.9%	17.6%	21.6%
To a moderate extent	33.3%	27.5%	31.4%	33.3%	33.3%	31.4%	21.6%	15.7%	37.3%	45.1%
To a small extent	21.6%	25.5%	23.5%	27.5%	45.1%	41.2%	21.6%	27.5%	19.6%	23.5%
To a very small extent	11.8%	7.8%	25.5%	11.8%	13.7%	13.7%	37.3%	47.1%	5.9%	5.9%

Question 8 (Survey Groups 1-3) + (Survey Group 4) — Results may not be valid see full tabulations for further assessment

Pastoral Ministry and Mission	What areas of your life ACTUALLY receive your best time and attention?			3 of 3 (God/Family/Ministry)	2 of 3 (God/Family/Ministry)
	8.1 (Make only 3 selections). [1]	8.2 (Make only 3 selections). [2]	8.3 (Make only 3 selections). [3]		
Your Family	19	6	11	36	97.3%
Relationship with God	5	17	10	32	86.5%
Non-Church Social Activities	13	9	6	28	75.7%
Church Social Activities	0	1	2	3	8.1%
Home Duties/Chores	0	1	2	3	8.1%
Self	0	2	5	7	18.9%
	0	1	1	2	5.4%
	37	37	37	37	

Pastoral Ministry responsibilities	To what extent do you feel you are giving adequate time and attention to the following areas?			Home duties/chores	Time for self
	Your family	Relationship with God	Relationship with		
To a large extent	7	2	4	1	0
To a moderate extent	6	6	6	8	8
To a small extent	1	4	4	2	4
To a very small extent	0	0	0	3	2
Respondents	14	14	14	14	14
To a large extent	50.0%	14.3%	28.6%	7.1%	0.0%
To a moderate extent	42.9%	57.1%	42.9%	57.1%	57.1%
To a small extent	7.1%	28.6%	28.6%	14.3%	28.6%
To a very small extent	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	21.4%	14.3%

Question 9

9. How is your family affected by your current ministry? [Select One]	Positively affected	Negatively affected	Indifferent	Not sure
Respondents	22	14	6	9
Positively affected	3.9%			
Negatively affected		43.1%		
Indifferent			27.5%	
Not sure				11.8%

Question 10-B

10-B. If yes, why?	Because of ministry	Unrelated to ministry	Not sure	Not applicable	Other
Respondents	3	4	2	38	4
Because of ministry	74.5%				
Unrelated to ministry		5.9%			
Not sure			7.8%		
Not applicable				3.9%	
Other					7.8%

Question 10-A

10-A. Do you have any children who are struggling with or not practicing their faith?	Yes	No	NA
Respondents	12	25	14
Yes	23.5%		
No		49.0%	
NA			27.5%

# Qualitative Data—Online Survey Responses (Questions 11–14)

**Qualitative Response Questions 11–14**

Survey Response ID	11. In your experience what is the hardest part about being a pastor?	12. Describe how boundaries or a lack of boundaries has affected any significant relationships in your life (e.g. God, self, family, others)?	13. What are the factors (beliefs, emotions, or fears, etc.) that impact your ability to adequately meet personal, spiritual, or family needs?	14. What kind of support (name who/what) or tools would help you establish and maintain healthy boundaries in life and ministry? Please be as specific as possible.
1	Enough time to do everything.	Because my wife & I put God first, our marriage is a blessing.	God is faithful to provide grace for every need.	My wife is my co-worker and aids me in this.
2	I find it challenging to minimize the negative impact of my ministry on my family.	Can't think of an example.	Truly believing and practicing the priority of God/family/others.	Mentoring relationship with an experienced spiritual leader and close friendships.
3	Getting my priorities straight.	NA	Learning to trust God implicitly.	Mentorship
4	Moving a church from maintenance to missionary	Boundaries are healthy. Secured my relationship with God, family, ministry...	Past wrong decisions involved huge factors that God used to help me prioritize my daily.	"Closest prayers and 'juggling' have allowed me to understand my priorities better. Also, asking God to help me 'live in the moment' and appreciate what's at hand. Lastly, putting the phone or other electronics down when home, which has enhanced my family interaction as husband and father.
5	Having over multiple churches that are very pastor dependent and trying to get them to be unified in Christ and His mission. It feels like babysitting.	Having a lack of boundaries has hurt my personal time spent with God because I tend to take calls, texts, etc. and do too much. I'm doing to handle the message. I've also found myself taking on the tasks of church members in order to "grow" the church and have success, which again has hurt time with God and my spouse.	Fear of failure	I think team ministry would be incredibly helpful. I've noticed that whenever I've been a part of some form of team ministry where others help carry the burden of the work, it makes having boundaries much easier.
6	Having no one I can go to talk with without them thinking I'm losing it.	I feel guilty when I have to choose between family and church.	Not sure	Someone I could confide in and trust their advice.
7	Dealing with indifference of people in and out of church.	Sometimes we think that an activity is good (and it can be) but takes time that could be used better.	finances	1. Work schedule 2. Set priorities.
8	Loss of respect for authority	Pls	N/A	Wife and accountability partner
9	getting people to take seriously their relationship with God in practical every day decisions.	Throughout my ministry I have made it a priority to have quality family time when my children were still at home. This made some members upset because they thought I didn't take my "responsibilities" seriously when it came to always being available for them. I think it very important to have clear boundaries in such matters whether it makes some people upset or not.	I don't know if or how this impacts my ability to adequately meet the listed "needs" (what does adequately really look like?), but some of the big factors I wrestle with is how to deal with tough issues in a church or a person's life in a manner that is in harmony with what I believe to be Biblically correct without causing a major conflict in the local church which then becomes a conference issue because the church or membership has to be the one. Sometimes the church has to be the one to deal with the issues. I've been running smoothly instead of dealing with issues Biblically.	For me the biggest tool would be to have a trusted friend who would check in with me at regular intervals and question me as to how things are going and hold me accountable to goals, etc. we have discussed in these areas.
10	Juggling the demands/expectations of the churches, the conference, myself, and my family.	At the moment in time my lack of boundaries have negatively impacted my personal spiritual walk while boundaries around family time has positively impacted that area of life.	NTA	Support from ministerial/district supt. to on a semi regular basis sit down and discuss these boundaries and areas of concern and prayerfully work together to create a plan and being accountable to it. Perhaps better done every 6 months by the district supt. since there is already an annual review process with ministerial department and some pastors would likely not be comfortable opening up as much to someone from ministerial department.
11	Dealing with individuals who have strong personalities or lack of understanding or disregard for the pastors role/position in the church in relationship to their own.	Initially it affected it quite a bit. Over the years I have learned to establish healthy boundaries that have positively impacted my family and my churches.	I believe the emotional aspect impacted my ministry the most early on. However, after several CPE courses, I have developed a better awareness of myself and others which has helped my ministry and family.	Until I moved to this conference I did not feel that I had considerable support from my leadership (the conference ministerial department). Now, I do and it's great. It honestly helps in the development and understanding of my ministry. The feedback provided is an asset. Also, not least by any means, but my personal devotions have helped me in so many ways. I cannot overemphasize the need of that time with the Lord. I have found that the more time I spend in prayer, the more help I receive to provide the support that my members and myself need.
12	Trying to strike a right balance for family time, God time, work time, & trying to uphold boundaries for family time against the constant interruptions of family/personal time.	Lack of boundaries has negatively impacted family relationships & spirituality. Strong boundaries has frustrated -365 if you are around rather on staycation/vacation, etc.	That I desire God to be supreme in my devotion & service, & my family's need in priority. THEN ministry. It has helped me in understanding my own family needs, although I should give MORE emphasis to family	Having a ministry coach who would check in with me quarterly guide me as I establish goals, & then ask quarterly how they are going. I would also encourage devotion to my family, & making sure to encourage these are precedents to higher effective ministry.
13	There is always more that can and needs to be done, so you never able to be completely satisfied with what you are doing. I have a lot of Bible studies, professional development, church planning that can be done and needs to be done. So accepting that you will never be able to complete and that there will always be more can cause a great deal of stress and imbalance.	Having the boundary that I will almost always eat one meal and have at least one worship with my family a day has been a great blessing.	I suppose that the fear of not doing enough in ministry impacts my ability to meet my own personal and sometimes family needs.	Accountability from the conference office requiring that a day be taken off per week

Survey Response ID	11. In your experience what is the hardest part about being a pastor?	12. Describe how boundaries or a lack of boundaries has affected any significant relationships in your life (e.g. God, self, family, others)?	13. What are the factors (beliefs, emotions, or fears, etc.) that impact your ability to adequately meet personal, spiritual, or family needs?	14. What kind of support (name who/what) or tools would help you establish and maintain healthy boundaries in life and ministry? Please be as specific as possible.
14	Ministering to those with family issues, or those that need professional counseling from a social worker.	A lack of boundaries in my personal schedule of activities and events has affected my personal time with God. I cheat myself by studying the Bible for sermon prep and devotion at the same time.	NTA	Mentorship from a lifestyle coach that understands pastoral ministry. At times I feel unqualified for certain tasks and it either shuts me down or causes me stress because it takes me longer to figure things out when it pertains to situations I'm not familiar with.
15	Appropriate training and education for the entire scope of running a church. These are to a certain extent small businesses.	I am a workaholic. It took a long time to note that I struggle with work-life balance. Lack of clarity on how to measure whether I'm being responsible or successful in pastoral duty also contributes.	Lack of fair, consistent, and "universal" accountability for my job. Members are either unclear or all over the map on what to expect from their pastor.	Regular professional reviews. Everyone being clear about what is expected from a pastor. Financial incentives for healthy behaviors. For the conference to also be clear to the limits of their powers and accountability.
16	Knowing who you are and where you are going	Until maturing a little more, the church was my "wife" - but now my wife knows she is my wife - any my kids are getting to know that also.	managing interruptions adequately, not being distracted by information that could be useful and giving God the "first" priority consistently	A great head elder that is experienced and wanting pastoral success. Conference leadership that gives Godly advice and Godly friends who check in on you regularly as you check in on them too.
17	All the expectations	NTA	My faith in God and knowledge of the Bible gives me a lot of strength.	Schedules and firm commitments
18	Finding time for Family	At times personal devotion and time with family suffers due to administration and pastoral duties that demand a lot of time to keep the work going forward.	The fact that it is difficult to balance things out	Listening to my wife! But there is so much to do!
19	Finding Support	Allowing People to criticize my wife	Financial	.
20	Time management	Seems like the boundaries created by being a pastor keep me out of a lot of things.	So much random administration that needs doing	Secretary
21	Moving on personal convictions that may contradict the views of the church organization.	I think having boundaries positively affects relationships with God, self and family - being able to give intentional time to those that need to come in priority in your life.	Distraction of things that are not in my field. For example, hearing to deal with mental health issues of students and families because of a lack of resources supporting this avenue of health.	Counseling, i.e. someone to share heavy topics with other than God.
22	Unreasonable expectations	Establishing and maintaining boundaries has triggered conflict in the past	n/a	The conference can do a better job establishing an enabling environment
23	To see people leaving God and the church	Improper dealing with a professional matter from the side of co-workers that really hurt and left some scars. It has caused lost trust that still affects me and my wife. We had full confidence before. However, I am aware that church workers are humans and make mistakes. No one is perfect.	Firm confidence in God's presence in my life and His guidance in ministry. Sincerity/honesty in all my dealings with members and with the organization	Probably more care from the side of the conference/organization. Personal touch is more important than all the programs, statistics and administrative requirements. We should be more movement than administration
24	Pastor is (usually) a lonely "rider" - pressure from the conference, pressure from the church members, pressure from the family, pressure from the secular society, and other colleagues are not (usually) willing to join the forces in support, listening, praying, etc. (On the regular basis/weekly).	If I don't set up clear boundaries between my family and friends and time for God, I can easily lose the balance, and lose my precious time with God (which makes the right balance in every relationship).	Lack of time, too much work, lack of the church volunteers.	Weekly support of fellow pastors (small group of 2-3 for prayer and talk); better communication and support from the Ministerial department (director); training in different practical areas of life and ministry (personal finances, time management, etc)
25	Dealing with people. People can be the best thing in the world or the worst, and sometimes their the same person.	There is often tension on the boundaries. Sometimes church pulls for all my attention, sometimes family demands more time, trying to maintain the balance is both a struggle and a blessing. Sometimes my family feels neglected, but I do try to show them they are a priority. I am an introvert though so sometimes when I've been immersed in church and dealing with people, I feel like I need to be alone to recharge and personal quiet time. This can be hard for my family members to understand at times, especially my wife knows this, but she still feels like I am disengaging, and this may feel hurtful for her.	sometimes I'm just tired. Tired of people, tired of reading, tired of praying, tired of preaching. This is also a tendency to compare oneself with others, either positively or negatively. I find more often than not that this is unhelpful, but it is still a trap I find I fall into.	Not sure. I do find that a deep devotional life helps immensely, but sometimes it is quite hard to maintain that depth.
26	Being Misunderstood. Lack of attendance to special seminars by me or guest pastors that would benefit the congregations in so many ways; i.e. health, relationship seminars, training reaping etc.	My children being expected (at least the perception is there) to attend all youth activities because they are the pastor's kids. It seems there has to be a legitimate reason for absence.	My wife not wanting to have devotions together with me, until two weeks ago which surprised me, by the way she is not against me being a pastor. She would insist I have them with my kids, but she would not participate with me, only rarely. I finally said I am not doing them with them until she joins. She says she does not feel like a devotions can you be considered a partner then all of sudden she started having devotions with me. One problem, when I ask her to pray - she won't, she says you pray, so I do and she prays to her heart's content. This does impact me but still God blesses. I do believe my ministry would be even more successful if she would be willing to. Of course she prays privately. My dilemma in my ministry affects but does not destroy my ministry.	Literature related to this topic and administrators informing our congregations.

Survey Response ID	11. In your experience what is the hardest part about being a pastor?	12. Describe how boundaries or a lack of boundaries has affected any significant relationships in your life (e.g. God, self, family, others)?	13. What are the factors (beliefs, emotions, or fears, etc.) that impact your ability to adequately meet personal, spiritual, or family needs?	14. What kind of support (name who/what) or tools would help you establish and maintain healthy boundaries in life and ministry? Please be as specific as possible.
27	High expectations to fulfill what is equivalent to multiple unique roles/jobs.	Spouse feels they use the best of me. Less available time for self-care, family or friend relationships.	Fearing tired. Fearing failure or being assessed ineffective.	Personal trainer. Time management coach. Greater commitment and dedication from church volunteers. Change in conference formula for funding a second pastor. Priorities set with Church leaders and accountability/collaboration to relinquish a task when a new one is added.
28	Lack of social network	Not enough time to invest in relationships with God, family, self and others	Fear of losing your job due to inefficiency/productivity, then not meeting financial needs	Conference affirmation and trust in you as a professional
29	Sermon Preparations / Holding Evangelistic Series	boundaries are good and has many times help save my marriage	depression/discouragement is hard to handle	Having a prayer partner/mate friend who I could share anything and know that he will support me and lift me up in prayer
30	Religious expectations put on you. Like meeting your quota of baptisms	Your personal health	Fear guilt shame	Mentors
31	Dealing with conflict. Trying to keep everyone happy. Issues with staff.	I find it hard to do something for myself. It's always about pleasing the lead pastor. Ministry is very demanding here. I work for validation, I suppose. ?	It's always about ministry first. People / programs are important. Has to be done with excellence. Family can wait until Saturday night or Sunday. I feel too busy to spend adequate time on personal, spiritual or family needs. It's happens, but it's definitely second fiddle.	Professional counselling, which I have used. A lot of this is my own issue. My perfectionist personality makes ministry difficult on me. I bring some of these feelings on myself.
32	Accomplishing all that is required or presumed it is the pastor's roles.	Family-- Early and late phone calls (before or after 10pm)	Guilt because I'm being paid by the tithe of hard working members	Support from the conference to remind members pastor does not work 24/7
33	Difficult measures of success. Business relationships are much clearer. Sometimes church grows and I'm not sure why. Other times you think you are killing and church shrinks.	My devotions struggle	Ability to say no, to prioritize the million priorities	Better scheduling and training. Also, small groups would be great.
34	Conflict resolution	Family	Finances	Visit from administrators
35	This is a very difficult question to answer. Part of it has to do with the question itself. It fails to recognize the holistic nature of pastoral life. Everything is interrelated. And it never ends. So it is very difficult to identify "the hardest part" of ministry. Nonetheless, I will say this. You have to be organized enough to schedule your daily life and discipline enough to follow through. And in addition you have to have enough backbone to not allow the isolation and loneliness so inherently a part of pastoral life to get you down. Beyond all that you have to be utterly dependent upon the local church but which rewards those who are successful by pulling them out of the local church ministry into the isolation of the office. In the end, pastoral ministry is not for the faint of heart.	My wife and I are currently both engaged in full-time ministry. Setting boundaries has become a source of increasing stress. She doesn't know when to stop. On the other hand, have become increasingly reticent to engage. After almost 30 years of ministry I have become quite strict at choosing my battles. Here's what I'm discovering. Neither approach is healthy. No when you say no people get upset. Workaholic is the one addiction that Adventism applauds. Expects even.	Exhaustion. Burn out. The doubt and frustration that arises from working for a church that is so clearly human. Lack of financial resources.	I've often said to people that if it wasn't for my wife I don't think I would have ever been able to make it in ministry. So if I was talking to a group of young pastors I would tell them to make sure that their home life is healthy and happy. Successful ministry and true boundaries start there. As Jesus once said, what does it profit a man if he gains the world but loses himself? I would encourage young pastors to develop a peer group of like-minded professionals with whom they could meet on a regular basis for mutual support and encouragement.
36	The political challenges with balances conference and church issues.	Setting boundaries has been positive for me with balancing my family with ministry.	None that I can perceive at this time.	The conference should provide some guidelines that could be helpful whenever they employ a pastor.
37	Other people's expectations. Motivating others to be involved in ministry.	There are times where my work for God conflicts with my walk with God. Sometimes the business of doing church causes me to put my personal relationship with God on the back burner for a moment.	Guilt of not working enough (based on what I think other peoples' expectations are) some times leads me to sacrifice other areas of my life.	Check ups from my ministerial director might help. More financial support for self care.
38	Pastors not being paid a livable wage, politics, I've outgrown the ministry context, struggle with transitioning ministry	Boundaries has enhanced my life	Na	Social life, books, ministerial being adequately trained and oriented
39	The isolation stemming from people thinking you are "different" than they are because you're a pastor.	In the past, allowing myself to be accessible at all times created tension in the home with my family. I had to learn to cut myself off from people periodically.	My faith has been what has kept me in ministry and available to my family. It is personally strong.	For ministerial directors to let our churches know that pastors need and will take a day off weekly.
40	Leading an apatheistic church. Our people are satisfied in their spiritual apathy.	It has caused a rift in my family relationships.	None. I just have to do it.	None. I have found that a discipleship group of 3 men who have the same spiritual desires and goals have helped me.
41	Dealing with people & the culture of adventism to not accept change	Well lack of boundaries has affected my relationship with God more than other parts	My drive for personal goals outside of ministry could impact my ability to meet needs	I've already started organizing my months, weeks, and days to make sure each area of my life receives importance.
42	Expectations, the hours, and learning to not carry unnecessary burdens.	In the beginning very much so, nearly divorced my wife. As I've sought help I'm improving my ability to say no and moderate.	I'm not the Messiah -- Jesus is. He is in full control and I'm not able, but He is able. Learning to let go has been huge.	Recovery groups outside the denomination in anonymous formats, counseling, and forming friendships outside the church and faith.
43	Being a female pastor brings about feeling the need to prove oneself, society thinks otherwise. Also, feeling pulled in all directions - everybody wants or need something!	Many things are done at night - board meetings, prayer meetings, small group, etc. When I need to be in attendance, sometimes I am out three nights a week or even weekends. So sometimes I'm headed out to the meetings, they just show a little bit of sadness that will be gone. Also, since my husband is the head deacon, he has difficulty saying no to many things - hence sometimes, we feel really stretched.	I believe that my faith in God and relationship with Him is very much needed in order to survive the "ministry". Hence, when things start fraying at the edges and I put my foot down to say "no", I do it because I know that God did not send me into ministry to see my family fall apart.	Honestly, give pastors paid time off of at least a week off to be with their families. NOT the time off that we regularly earn with our paychecks, but a separate week! Perhaps even a raise in pay so we don't struggle to survive off of a meager salary!

Survey Response ID	11. In your experience what is the hardest part about being a pastor?	12. Describe how boundaries or a lack of boundaries has affected any significant relationships in your life (e.g. God, self, family, others)?	13. What are the factors (beliefs, emotions, or fears, etc.) that impact your ability to adequately meet personal, spiritual, or family needs?	14. What kind of support (name who/what) or tools would help you establish and maintain healthy boundaries in life and ministry? Please be as specific as possible.
44	accepting my own worth and value as a person called by GOD	Everything seems so mixed up It has made me say yes to missing out on memories and events that will never come back.	headquasy	community of safe friends
45	Negativity of church members and conference expectations		Depression fear of failure	Mentor coach open conference dealings
46	Preaching and being "on" when you had to make hard decisions in the week or something happened in the week that stresses me out and I have to give the word.	Lack of boundaries affect my relationship with God greatly! If I don't perform/become Superman, I will be fired, people won't like me, I will lose all that I have.		Telling my staff team that I am taking more vacations and heading out with my wife.
47	Dealing with toxic people, church politics, conference unrealistic expectations, Unhealthy Adventist culture and traditions, dealing with church established unbiblical culture	I go through seasons, sometimes I do better other times worst. In the beginning of pastoral ministry, it did affect my marriage...it then went on to impact my marriage and family through the stressors caused by ministry pain and pain giving members	Insecurity, fear of not being liked, feeling of not being good enough	A safe space where I can adequately grieve loss and confront my false beliefs about God, myself and others
48	Dealing with stupid things :)	I've been through a divorce	Health	Coaching
49	NTA	For the most part, I guard my time alone with God. Even when life gets busy, He is my rock. Having healthy habits and a healthy routine including exercise and breakfast are daily habits that I guard. I also guard my time with my wife and neglect what I need. I often don't invest enough in relationships because there isn't much left after work etc.	NTA	I've been wanting to read the book Boundaries. I think setting goals and letting my prayer partner hold me accountable.
50	As an associate the buck doesn't stop with me. The most challenging aspect is when decisions are made that are poorly planned or poorly executed and then dealing with the aftermath.	I have a relationship with a coworker that is incredibly toxic. The way I deal with this person, I am starting to lose control had given this person. I am starting now to define boundaries for myself and it has made my mental health better but increased stress for me at the workplace but I'm not tolerating the things I previously tolerated.	I think the biggest impact on my ability to meet needs is a time when I was overwhelmed with my obligations as through the roof right now. I find myself running out of time (or at least energy) to try and complete all the things on my list.	Honestly, I feel like quitting my job would be the best thing for me and I'd stay home and do things that give me good health. I'd do laundry, cleaning, child-rearing, and overall personal health.
51	You're always on call	My job and my husband's job are both leadership positions. Because we are always "on" we wake up really early to get the time we need with each other and with Jesus. The time of day when no humans need anything from us in either leadership position. So it's caused us to form our lives around our leadership positions.	If the church is going fast, so should I. If I'm asking them to do something to a certain level, so should I.	The app "hours" to track how many hours you're actually spending. And a counselor or mentor; it's like built in time for yourself and they can help advocate for yourself.

Quantitative Data—Online Survey Demographic Tabulations (Questions 15–24)

	15. I am currently an ACTIVE Seventh-day Adventist Pastor or Chaplain (if other please explain).	16. What State, Province, or Region do you live in?	17. How many churches are part of your pastoral district? (If you are not a pastor, indicate NA).	18. Gender?	19. What age grouping are you part of?	20. Ethnicity?
Pastor	49	Region 1	1 Church	Male	20-29 years old	Asian
Chaplain	1	Region 2	2 Churches	Female	30-39 years old	Black
Other: both...	1	Region 3	3 Churches	51	40-49 years old	White (Caucasian)
	51	Other	NA	90.2%	50-59 years old	Hispanic or Latino
Pastor	96.1%	Region 1	Error	Female	60-69 years old	Multi-ethnic
Chaplain	2.0%	Region 2	1 Church	51	70-79 years old	Other
Other: both...	2.0%	Region 3	2 Churches	49.0%	80+ years old	Asian
			3 Churches	23.5%	20-29 years old	Black
			NA	2.0%	30-39 years old	White (Caucasian)
			Error	2.0%	40-49 years old	Hispanic or Latino
					50-59 years old	Multi-ethnic
					60-69 years old	Other
					70-79 years old	0.0%
					80+ years old	0.0%

	21. Marital Status?	22. Do you have children? If so how many? (Indicate NA if you do not have any children).	23. Highest Level of Education?	24. From question 23, which degree/training prepared you the most to set and maintain healthy boundaries?
Married	47	1 Child	Bachelors in Religion, Religious Studies or Pastoral Ministry	Bachelors
Single	2	2 Children	Masters in Divinity	Masters
Divorced	0	3 Children	Post-Graduate Degree in Theology or Ministry	Post-Grad
Other: Dating, Engaged	2	4+ Children	Bible School	Other
	51	NA	Other	None
Married	92.2%	1 Child	Bachelors in Religion, Religious Studies or Pastoral Ministry	NA
Single	3.9%	2 Children	Masters in Divinity	51
Divorced	0.0%	3 Children	Post-Graduate Degree in Theology or Ministry	Bachelors
Other: Dating, Engaged	3.9%	4+ Children	Bible School	Masters
		NA	Other	Post-Grad
				None
				NA
				37.5%
				5.9%

## Appendix F

### Recommendations for the Conference and Pastors

#### For the Conference

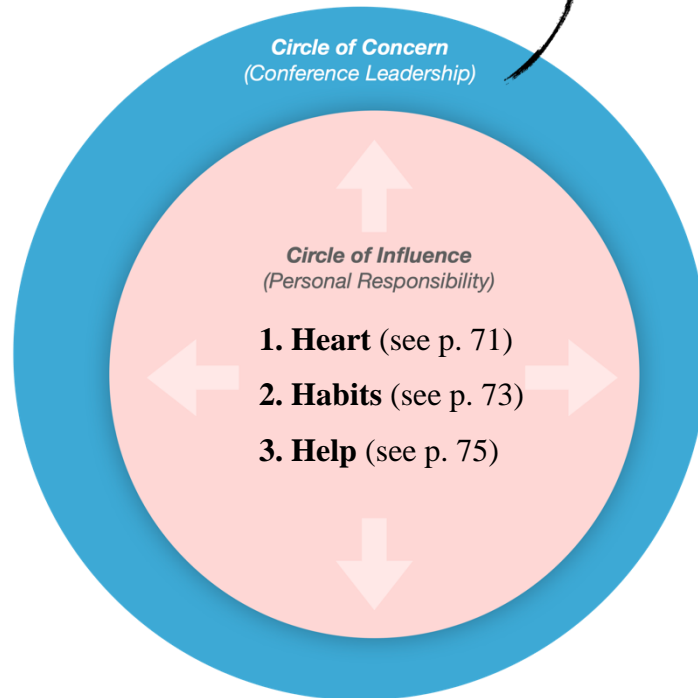
No. 1: Two Days off per Week—Not Including Sabbath (see p. 110)

No. 2: Promotion and Permission (see p. 116)

No. 3: Reframe Mission and Vision (see p. 118)

No. 4: Pastors Matter More (see p. 120)

No. 5: Empower Pastors with Autonomy (see p. 122)



#### For Pastors

In summary, it cannot be overstated that pastors have an equal, if not greater, responsibility toward their own health and well-being. Covey (2013) represents individual responsibility as the circle of influence with the goal of expanding one's influence in the areas over which they have control, but the circle of concern is out of a person's control.