

PARATION FOR MINISTRY • WHAT AM I GETTING INTO? • HEALTHY PASTORS AND HEALTHY CHURCH
A LAYPERSON'S PERSPECTIVE • **NURTURING YOUR OWN FAMILY** • WHY EVERY PASTOR NEEDS
FOR • **BI-VOCATIONAL VERSUS FULL-TIME MINISTRY** • **REFLECTIONS OF A FEMALE PASTOR** • RI

MINISTRY WISDOM STUDY GUIDE

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• RESTORING FALLEN PASTORS
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CONTRIBUTORS:

Ramona Bethany, Curtiss Paul DeYoung, Edward L. Foggs,
David Hall, Keith Hall, Alvin Lewis, Sandra L. McNeese,
James L. Phillips, Bartholomew Riggins, Reginald G. Smith,
James Sparks, Maxwell Ware, Evelyn Price Wilson,
W. G. Robinson-McNeese,

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Introduction

This study guide is for pastors and ministers who are using the book *Ministry Wisdom* to lead and disciple individuals or groups in the process of ministry discernment and preparation. The Book of Proverbs reveals the basic concepts this guide seeks to convey:

- “Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance.” —Proverbs 1:5 (NIV)
- “Listen to advice and accept discipline, and in the end you will be counted among the wise.” —Proverbs 19:20 (NIV)

We would encourage you to seek God’s direction through prayer as you allow the Holy Spirit to prompt, prod, and prepare you to lead each session. Time spent with the Lord will infuse you with the knowledge, wisdom, and anointing you will need to lead your meetings. In addition, we encourage you to read and meditate on the chapter(s) you will be considering prior to each meeting. It is our desire and prayer that this study guide will help you and those you lead to learn from one another and increase your corporate wisdom.

Determine ahead of time how long your meetings will last. We would suggest one to two hours. If you decide to meet for longer than ninety minutes, be sure to allow for a coffee or refreshment break. Your study of some chapters may take more time to complete than others.

Be sure to set up your meeting space to allow for maximum dialogue among participants. Seating arranged in a circle or semicircle allows for good eye contact. If you have a large group, it may be wise to divide into smaller groups for most of the discussion.

Each group participant should have a Bible, a notepad or journal, and a copy of *Ministry Wisdom*, with the pertinent chapter read prior to your meeting. If you as the leader will be using handouts or a visual presentation, consider well in advance how you will prepare. Know where you are going in your session and how you will get there. In other words, work out a plan of how you want to approach your time together.

Make good use of this study guide. Try to anticipate the questions and issues your students will raise during your meeting, but keep in mind that some questions and concerns raised may require extra time to deal with.

Encourage those you meet with to freely participate in the discussion and activities. Help your students find practical ways to apply to their lives and to the lives of others what they have learned. Consider how this study will apply to your students and yourself. What personal and practical results will each individual experience?

We have provided goals to guide the discussion for each lesson. We have also identified relevant issues and concerns that should be talked about, as well as a section on formation strategies to help participants make personal application of the knowledge they have gained.

In his book *Spiritual Formation* (Chicago: InterMedia Publishing Group, 2009), Sam Bruce defines spiritual formation as “forming our inner lives and relationships with God in ways that transform our outer lives and relationships with other persons.” This process is expressed in becoming individuals who are inundated by God’s Word, immersed in prayer, and ignited through worship as they are shaped into people who are infused by God and bring honor, praise, and glory to him. Each chapter of this study seeks to help participants consider how they have been formed and are being formed for ministry and service.

As you meet, take some time to celebrate the new understandings, challenges, and resolutions you and the members of your group are discovering on your journey together.

1. Preparation for Ministry

Goals

1. Have participants share two or three highlights of their call to ministry.
2. Lead in a discussion reflecting on the benefits of formal and informal theological education.
3. Consider together Paul's calling as it is related in Acts 9:3–17, the importance of our own experience of a call to ministry, and just how dramatic one's call to ministry should be.
4. Help group members think about significant persons in their lives who have helped them confirm their call to ministry, and about their own spiritual gifts.
5. Share examples of how pastors and ministers should take care of their body, mind, and spiritual development.

Issues/Concerns

1. Have group members clarify their educational goals for ministry preparation (Bible/secular college, seminary, workshops, conferences, mentoring or apprenticeship, etc.).
2. Talk about how individuals who feel they have been called to minister in the church and the world can explain their ministry and gifts to others and encourage others to be open to a similar call.
3. Even pastors need a pastor, but many pastors have no one to turn to for spiritual guidance and support. Discuss: Just how important is it for those who pastor others to also have a pastor? To whom can/should a pastor or minister be accountable?
4. Lead group members in reading aloud in unison the following verses, which speak about the importance of being an example before the flock:
 - 1 Corinthians 11:1
 - Philippians 4:8–9
 - 1 Thessalonians 2:10
 - 1 Timothy 4:12
5. Spend some time dialoging about the importance of modeling Christ before people in your congregation and the world.

Formation Strategies

1. Have participants write down their formation strategies for achieving formal or informal education to enhance their ministry.
2. Discuss: What are the obstacles you need to remove as a pastor or minister to exhibit a better example before your congregation?
3. Discuss: Have you talked about your call to ministry with your spouse? If so, how did she or he respond to your conversation?
4. Discuss: In what ways have you dealt with doubts, discouragements, and distressful situations related to your call to ministry? Record your thoughts, and also include how you intend to deal with these distractions in the future.

2. What Am I Getting Into?

Goals

1. Challenge those whom you lead to discuss openly the affirmation of their divine ministry call.
2. Help members of the group process all segments of the worship service they may be called to be specifically involved in.
3. Discuss the role altar methodology plays in pastoral ministry and what training is needed to facilitate altar workers in the life of the church.
4. Talk about the importance of visiting the sick.
5. Carry on a discussion about the important role evangelism and leading someone to Christ plays in pastoral ministry.

Issues/Concerns

1. The author indicates that each pastor has been anointed to proclaim good news to the poor and proclaim freedom to those who are bound. How does that translate into today's culture?
2. Discuss: What might be your service and specialty in ministry? How does God make this known and active in your ministry efforts?
3. Discuss: When considering one's divine calling, what role does commitment have? What all is required of a person who commits to that call? Talk about some of the chapter's issues concerning the commitment of those who respond to God's call in order to fulfill the obligations of ministry.
4. The pastor's involvement is quite vital in the order of worship. Discuss some of the ways a pastor can play a key role in the worship service without monopolizing it.
5. When it comes to altar methodology, what are the key concerns that must not be overlooked as we intercede with others in prayer?
6. Several scriptures are given that serve as useful tools for those working at the altar. How relevant is training in effective use of the Bible for altar methodology? What other scriptures might be considered?
7. How important is etiquette when it comes to visitation? What are some of the major concerns the author discusses in this chapter?
8. If the issue of salvation is important to us, then how should we prepare ourselves for those who may ask, "What must I do to be saved?"
9. Discuss: What is your greatest concern as you embrace the challenge of pastoral ministry?

Formation Strategies

1. Discuss: What formation strategy will you develop as you affirm your calling in pastoral ministry?
2. Discuss: What area of ministry listed in this chapter do you need to develop the most? Why?
3. Challenge group members to commit to memory some of the Bible verses located on pages 24 and 25 in order to serve more effectively while working at the altar and for their own spiritual enrichment.
4. Discuss: What goals will you set for yourself for the next year to enroll in seminary or Bible college or take some online courses in order to improve your ministry?
5. Discuss: Whom do I need to partner with as a pastor or minister that will help me enhance my ministry? What kind of person do I need, as a mentor or friend, to help me?

3. Healthy Pastors and Healthy Churches

Goals

1. Set a goal for your class to complete this chapter within a reasonable amount of time. This goal should include enough time for group members to feel their questions and issues have been adequately treated.
2. Help group members identify characteristics of healthy congregations and pastors.
3. Assist participants in identifying and targeting areas to be addressed.
4. Challenge those called to ministry to develop pastoral leadership qualities.
5. Talk about ways to initiate programs of discipleship in the local church.

Issues/Concerns

1. Discuss: What, in your opinion, are the core values of your congregation (e.g., worship, fellowship, spirituality, accountability, ministry, governance, heritage, evangelism, etc.)?
2. How would you go about objectively discerning the culture of your congregation?
3. What would you do to change or improve your congregation's culture to improve its health?
4. Do your congregation's core values include intentional spirituality, mutual accountability, and/or compassionate ministry? Explain.
5. What unhealthy core values does your congregation possess?
6. The author points to certain skills a pastor should develop and master. Talk about how one sets and maintains a schedule that is devoted exclusively to sermon preparation (reading, writing, polishing).
7. The author talks about a quarterly retreat that is focused exclusively on sermon preparation. How does one develop a sermon series while balancing one's preaching schedule for the full edification of the body?
8. The author speaks about congregational discontent often finding its roots in personal strife. How would a leader seek to identify, address, and correct this behavior in order that the congregation might become healthy?
9. The author points out that "small church" thinking may be a hinderance to congregational health. What "small church" cultural elements could be eliminated or improved in your congregation (worship, prayer concerns, announcements, meetings, children's ministries, facility usage, etc.)?
10. The author speaks about authority and accountability in congregational governance. In your church, what legal, financial, and ethic parameters are given to pastoral leadership? What biblical models might underscore or devalue your position?
11. What communication systems should be put in place to best balance authority and accountability on the part of pastoral staff, leadership, and laypersons in the congregation?
12. The author stresses the importance of a systematic program of individual discipleship that includes teaching and practical application. What discipleship programs are good for a congregation to systematically teach doctrine, Bible study, prayer, spiritual growth, witnessing, etc.? How can such programs be documented? How can they be transferable? How can others be trained to teach this curriculum to others?
13. The author offers Luke 16:10–12 as an important passage that speaks into the life of every individual. Discuss: What "small stuff" causes time to be wasted in your life? In what areas are you undisciplined? What is your reputation among your peers? among your supervisors? among strangers you meet? How are "small things" positively and negatively affecting the more visible aspects of your life?

Formation Strategies

1. Working with others, develop a model for objectively determining the culture of your congregation.
2. As a pastor, or working on behalf of your pastor, encourage the church governance board to allow the pastor the use of a quarterly retreat for sermon preparation. Encourage the pastor to seek a mentor in developing this skill and to advise in assembling the necessary materials (books, space, time) for the retreat to occur. This should be completed within six months.
3. Explore governance models and create discussion for governing improvements that could be advantageous to congregational health. This should be completed within six months.
4. Develop a cadre of people who are willing to become “accountability partners.” These should be people who will “hold your feet to the fire” in order to discipline your life to more perfectly conform to the will, word, and way of Christ. This should be completed within two months.
5. Begin development or implementation of a curriculum for your congregation that deliberately includes the various aspects of discipleship.

4. A Layperson's Perspective

Goals

1. Identify and discuss with the group the key factors that can bring us to a place of approval with God despite our flaws and weaknesses.
2. Identify and discuss with the group what qualifies one for authentic leadership in pastoral ministry and how that shapes one's witness in the church/community he or she serves.
3. From the perspective of a layperson, consider how a church leader should cast vision, develop practical ministry strategies, and foster collaboration to meet ministry goals for successfully leading the congregation.
4. With group members, explore and cultivate a spiritual wish list that would benefit the greater church in relationship to the role of laity in the overall ministry of the church to its community.

Issues/Concerns

1. Discuss: What are the relevant concerns and issues based on what you have read in this chapter? What are some key questions that need to be asked and answered in your time together?
2. This chapter addresses qualities that merited God's approval of King David. Discuss how each relates to our ability to serve in the role of pastor and spiritual leader.
3. If, according to the author, it is the condition of a person's heart that most concerns God, what can group members do now that mirrors the servanthood heart of Christ as they minister in the life of the church?
4. Authentic leadership is personified in Jesus Christ. Discuss in detail each of the five practices that reflect Jesus' servanthood model.
5. Discuss: If *agape* love is the engine that drives the development of interpersonal relationships, what gets that engine start and running smoothly in your life?
6. The author lists five key observations, concerns, and convictions from the perspective of a layperson. Discuss the significance of each and identify practical solutions to address each one. You may want to single out one or two according to the time you have available.
7. Discuss: As spiritual leaders, how do we guide others to gain the professional help they need in their spiritually formative years?
8. How do we successfully lead others to follow the leading of the Spirit in ministry and in worship and give them permission to do so?
9. How can we cull additional spiritual help to avoid missed opportunities that create great teaching moments for those we minister with and to?
10. What role should capable parishioners play in serving as conference leaders, workshop presenters, and resource facilitators in the church? In what ways might a pastor seek out and use such individuals?
11. How can affirmation of lay ministry benefit the overall health of the church body? Where does such affirmation begin, and how important of a role does it play in pastoral ministry?
12. After reading the author's concluding remarks, what do you see as areas in your ministry that need priority attention at this point?

Formation Strategies

1. Discuss: What will be your spiritual formation strategy as you continue to live out your ministry calling?
2. How will you actively affirm your own ministry and also the role the laity play in the life of the church?
3. What do you see as key factors to further develop your hunger for God, and how will you include others to hold you accountable to do so?
4. Is there an area of spiritual formation that needs your attention today? If so, what steps are you going to take to make it become a reality in your daily walk with the Lord?

5. Nurturing Your Own Family

Goals

1. Help group members assess and determine the relationship between the pastor and spouse and what role that relationship plays in pastoral ministry.
2. Identify and discuss why “family first” is a vital perspective to employ when engaging in ministry.
3. Discuss the mandates of the Scriptures as they relate to parenting in the parsonage.
4. Work together to identify and understand the importance of personalities within the family and how they influence the emotional, physical, and spiritual resources we share with one another.

Issues/Concerns

1. Discuss: What can happen within the course of ministry when we seek to add our plans to God’s plans? What effect can this have on us and on our family?
2. Discuss the importance of the relationship between the pastor and his or her spouse and how important the partnership of sharing life is to the call to ministry. List some of the aspects the author brings forward and share to what degree these areas are focused on in group members’ lives.
3. The author talks about selfishness giving way to companionship. Discuss: How does this concept fit within the context of pastoring the local church and ministering to one’s family?
4. The author warns against the temptation of not putting one’s family first. What have you observed that can result from answering the call of God but putting one’s family last? Identify and discuss some of the issues that are spelled out in this chapter.
5. If children observe their parents and react to what they see, then what are some of the things they *should* see in us as we seek to pastor with a family? What are some of the things they *should not* see?
6. Discuss: Do you believe it is a pastor’s responsibility to model how one is to treat his or her spouse and family? If so, what are you currently doing that influences those within your ministry to follow your leadership in this area? If not, what *should* you be doing, without having to be told by others who are watching you, with respect to how you treat your spouse and family?
7. The author asserts that, since each child in the family is unique and different, then seeking to train each one up in the way he or she should go will require the time and attention that come from putting family in the first position of priority. Has this been true in your experience? Explain.
8. Discuss what it means to plant positive seeds and how that relates to your personal and church family.

Formation Strategies

1. Discuss: What will be your spiritual formation strategy as you continue to live out your ministry calling?
2. Talk specifically about how group members will affirm their ministry and role while nurturing their own families within the context of pastoral ministry.
3. Discuss: What are some key factors in further developing your own spiritual formation in conjunction with that of your family?
4. Is there an area of spiritual formation that needs your attention today? If so, what steps are you going to take to make it become a reality in your daily walk with the Lord?

6. Why Every Pastor Needs a Pastor

Goals

1. Discuss the priority of prayer and the role it plays in the relationships of those in leadership in the church.
2. Talk about why it is important for pastors to developing a trusting relationship that can foster openness and honesty and result in spiritual growth.
3. Consider together the importance of time management as it relates to pastoral ministry and how this relates specifically to our relationships in the context of ministry.
4. Explore the importance of personal relationships and how they serve to create healthy ministry in the local church.

Issues/Concerns

1. The authors point out the frequency of pastors having a concern for their prayer life. Discuss: What priority do you personally place on prayer? How do you hold those you lead accountable with respect to their prayer life?
2. Identify and discuss some of the signs that a person might be struggling in his or her prayer life and how this person might address the issue.
3. Guilt can become a source of great stress in pastoral ministry. Discuss: What are some of the ineffective ways some pastors attempt to combat these feelings?
4. If we are living in a time where trust must be earned, then what might be the most difficult thing for a pastor or church leader to yield to in order to have a trust relationship with another pastor?
5. Why is accountability among believers so rare when it is so vital for sustained spiritual growth?
6. The authors point out that great comfort comes from knowing that someone is praying for you. Is there someone you know by name who is praying for you today? Is there someone you know by name whom you are praying for? Does this person know you are praying for him or her? Explain.
7. What role does time management currently play in your life and your ministry? Is it acceptable to ask other pastors how they are managing their time? What kind of relationship between ministry colleagues is necessary to do this? Do you have that kind of relationship with someone else? Explain.
8. If you feel there are not enough hours in a day to accomplish all that needs to be done, what might be a solution to your time crunch? How often should you utilize this time-management tool in your ministry?
9. The authors stress the value of building into your daily schedule a “break time.” Do you feel this is necessary? If so, why? If not, why not?
10. In the last section of this chapter, the authors write about the importance of personal relationships and the value they have on the development of healthy ministry in the local church. What steps have you recently taken (or could you take) to foster “connection moments” with other pastors?
11. Discuss the three-step process of engaging, exploring, and encountering and how this process applies to your personal relationship-building with other believers.
12. A key question in this chapter is, “How do we help one another?” What steps are you taking in your ministry to daily address this question?

Formation Strategies

1. Discuss: What can you see as some key factors in further developing your accountability relationships with other pastors or ministers? What are the obstacles? What is the potential?
2. Is there an area of spiritual formation that needs your attention today? If so, what is it, and what steps are you going to take to make it become a reality in your daily walk with the Lord?

7. Bi-Vocational versus Full-Time Ministry

Goals

1. Help readers understand the major differences between bi-vocational ministry and full-time ministry.
2. Assist group members in evaluating their own ministry models from the perspective of bi-vocational versus full-time.
3. Encourage prospective or current pastors/ministers to intentionally explore the model of full-time ministry if they are currently bi-vocational.
4. Invite readers, including ministers and laypersons, to imagine the possibility of greater effectiveness in Kingdom work focus when one is focused primarily on ministry rather than ministry plus secular work.
5. Brainstorm ideas for how full-time ministry can be funded.

Issues/Concerns

1. The author starts the chapter by denoting the need for more effective and efficient models for ministry both within the Church of God (Anderson) and other church groups in North America. Ask the members of your study group to write down their own evaluations and experiences concerning models of ministry effectiveness as it relates to their current place of ministry service.
2. Discuss the pros and cons of the models of ministry group members have experienced or are familiar with.
3. Encourage each participant to think about full-time ministry and how a model of full-time ministry can be more effective and efficient for ministry versus bi-vocational.
4. Have the group create an “ideal” dream model for full-time ministry if there were zero budget constraints.
5. Think about today’s culture in North America and in the church regarding ministry needs. Invite group members to identify and talk about those factors that could be defined as urgent and critical in order for a church to conduct significant outreach in a given community.
6. In light of the author’s case study with Faith Chapel Church of God, have each member of the group write down possible steps he or she would take to begin to move a congregation from bi-vocational to full-time ministry.
7. Encourage group members to talk about historical concerns as they relate to models of ministry and to give suggestions on how a local congregation may overcome these barriers to becoming a full-time congregation.
8. The author lists responsibilities for a full-time senior pastor. Discuss these responsibilities and give feedback on possible changes, additions, or subtractions from those listed. Talk about whether some of the responsibilities could be delegated to volunteers or part-time paid staff.
9. Review the list of roles for an administrative assistant and give feedback. Discuss the necessity of the senior pastor not also being the senior administrator.
10. With the group, consider other full-time staff positions and roles provided the funds are available for a full-time congregation model.
11. Have each group member respond to the author’s written position on tithing and the local church. Consider together the implications of tithing as it relates to funding full-time ministry.
12. Encourage group members to write down and share possible strategies for opening trust-fund and/or endowment accounts for a local congregation. Have group members share how a pastor or minister can help a congregation take advantage of a large donation over time versus spending the principal amount immediately.
13. Invite group members to think about a plan to help a local congregation that has appropriate funds to see the value of a full-time package with benefits for a pastor rather than holding on to the myth that a pastor may “become lazy” if we do not require him or her to work outside of the church.

Formation Strategies

1. Pray together for wisdom and guidance in leading a congregation to deliberate over financial matters, especially as it relates to pastors and full-time staff salaries and packages.
2. Seek the compassion of Christ to work in and through group members as they work to shift paradigms in the local church and help parishioners see the need for full-time ministry.
3. Ask God to increase group members' faith to get started toward moving from bi-vocational to full-time ministry in the life of the local church.

8. Reflections of a Female Pastor

Goals

1. Help group members identify and reflect on their personal beliefs about women in ministry.
2. Explore together the experience of “calling” and consider how the calling to pastoral ministry may be similar or dissimilar to other vocational callings.
3. Examine as a group how the response of others can affect church leaders’ development and pursuit of ministry.
4. Consider the reality of gender discrimination in the church and how it has changed over time.
5. Examine the cultural implications of Paul’s teachings on the qualifications of a bishop in 1 Timothy 3 and the reference to being “faithful to his wife” (v 2).
6. Consider together the role of gender in leadership.

Issues/Concerns

1. The author begins this chapter by referring to scriptures describing the calls of Jeremiah and Samuel to ministry. She then describes her own call to preach. Discuss: What is your own “call” story?
2. Does the experience of being called to ministry always involve hearing God speak? Explain.
3. The author asserts that, when God calls you, he will make room for your gifts. How has God made room for you to fulfill your calling?
4. The author describes the negative responses of others to her preaching and the fact that preaching and pastoring have historically been a “man’s world.” How has this changed over time? What has influenced the beliefs and attitudes of male pastors in particular to females in ministry? What are some beliefs and attitudes of females toward females in pastoral leadership?
5. The author describes being discriminated against because of her gender, not only in the church but in the educational world. What are some cultural practices that influence gender discrimination, especially in religious circles? What perpetuates the “good ole boys” club?
6. Several “blessings in ministry” are described. Select two of them and discuss how gender may have influenced them. How has God blessed *you* in ministry?
7. The author describes her “vision” as a pastor. What is *your* vision for ministry? How will you pursue it? What obstacles might you face?
8. The author mentions some traditional activities that women in the church may engage in. Why is it important for women in church leadership and women serving in what might be considered traditional roles to support each other?
9. The author points out that that “a woman was the first to carry the word, deliver the word, and then preach the good news of the resurrection” and that “women were the last ones to remain at the cross and the first ones to show up at the tomb, and Jesus himself gave them the mandate to tell that he had risen.” What does this suggest about how Jesus related to women?
10. The author begins and concludes this chapter by quoting lyrics from the hymn “Never Alone.” In what ways has God’s presence empowered you to overcome obstacles and sustained you?
11. The United States elected its first female Vice President in 2020. How might this influence the church? How have women served in key leadership positions in major religious organizations/denominations? Does the fact that there have been so few women in these positions imply that women are not qualified for these positions or that they are usually not considered? Discuss.

Formation Strategies

1. Are there differences between how women and men lead? Explain.
2. When women serve in key leadership positions such as pastor, is this in conflict with Paul's instruction that women should not have authority over a man (1 Timothy 2:12)? Explain. How can male pastors work against gender discrimination in the church?
3. How would you interpret Galatians 3:28–29 with respect to women serving in ministry? What is the nature of the oneness Paul referred to in these two verses?
4. Historically, the Church of God (Anderson) has embraced women serving in various leadership positions and roles. In comparison to the female population of your church group in general, what does the number of women serving in leadership say about attitudes in the church?
5. Are there leadership roles in your church group that women would meet with some resistance and reluctance if they attempted to assume? If so, what positions would these be, and why?
6. Are there places and positions in your church group that might be considered the “good ole boys club”? What might they be, and why?

9. Reflection of Retired Pastor

Goals

1. Challenge the members of your group to carry on a serious dialogue about the five issues the author said he wishes he would have dealt with prior to his retirement.
2. Work with group members to identify strategies for dealing proactively with negative issues in the church when they first arise.
3. Help group members develop the courage to confront people in their congregations who are difficult to deal with.
4. Talk with group members about people in their congregations who refuse to accept pastoral advice or help of any kind.

Issues/Concerns

1. Ask the members of your study group to write down three ways they would affirm people who did not do a job well but attempted hard to do so.
2. Ask group members how they would go about encouraging a proud leader in their congregation to seek the help he/she needs to do a more effective job.
3. In many churches, those who serve in leadership positions feel they are entitled to be a leader in spite of their ineffectiveness as a leader. Discuss: If you were a pastor, how would you approach a problem such as this in your congregation?
4. On page 87, the author lists four things he would do to deal with leadership incompetency. Discuss: Which of the four suggestions would you find the easiest to implement? Which would be most difficult to implement? Why?
5. The author describes “porcupines” who are leaders in the congregation or individuals who wield a great deal of influence. Spend some time in small groups discussing the four related personal questions from pages 88 and 89.
6. The author states that he would teach congregants how to better treat the pastor and the members of the pastor’s family. Discuss: How do financial problems, unfounded rumors, and internal conflict impact pastors and their families?
7. As a pastor, how would you deal with domestic violence if you knew it was taking place in your congregation?
8. Domestic violence can be initiated by either husband or wife. Discuss: How would you approach domestic violence if you were told the wife was the perpetrator? Why?

Formation Strategies

1. Have group members write down a formation strategy for commending people for what they do well and for what they try to do well.
2. Have group members write down formation strategies to help them become more aggressive in removing incompetence.
3. Discuss: What is your formation strategy for helping your critics and enemies find healing for their damaged emotions?
4. Discuss: What formation strategy would you develop to teach congregants how to treat the pastor, his or her spouse, and their children?
5. Discuss: What formation strategy do you need to develop to uncover and confront the domestic violence that takes place in many of our church families?

10. Preaching Wisdom from James Earl Massey

Goals

1. Help readers define “preaching.”
2. Reflect together on what it means to be a preacher.
3. Encourage group members to seek out mentor preachers and master preachers.
4. Invite readers to embrace aspects of the Black preaching tradition.
5. Instruct group members in preparing sermons that engage their listeners.

Issues/Concerns

1. Ask the members of your study group to write their own definitions of “preaching.” Invite them to share these definitions and then seek to create an agreed-upon group definition.
2. Encourage group members to offer reflections on how their upbringing, life journey, and temperament have shaped their understanding and practice of preaching.
3. Invite group members to share if they have a mentor in preaching. What characteristics does one look for in a preaching mentor (compared to other types of mentors)?
4. Have each participant name one master preacher he or she has admired and explain why.
5. For both mentor preachers and master preachers, name the advantages of seeking a diversity of races and cultures, gender, pulpit styles, etc.
6. If members of the study group come from a Black preaching tradition, ask them to share whether they agree with Massey’s assessment of Black preaching. What (if anything) did he miss? For group participants not from a Black preaching tradition, ask them to identify what about Massey’s description of Black preaching they find appealing and why.
7. Invite participants to share their creative processes for sermon preparation. Talk about the use of commentaries for Scripture texts, searching for illustrations, and any other tools for composing sermons.
8. Discuss what gives “life” to sermons.

Formation Strategies

Discuss the following suggestions for spiritual formation:

- *Scripture.* As expositors of the Word, we need to be immersed in the Scriptures.
- *Prayer.* As followers of Jesus, we need to emulate his prayer practices.
- *Devotion.* Scripture and prayer need devotional practices to make them applicable to us as individual persons. Remember, the preacher is first a person under God’s guidance. A good start is reading devotional writers who guide us into deeper experiences of prayer and deeper understandings of the Scriptures. (For example, Dr. Massey read the devotional works of Howard Thurman.)
- *Worship.* Personal and corporate worship allow God to speak to us and transform us in ways that are immediate and experiential.
- *Community.* Our spiritual journey must be lived in communion with others seeking God’s grace and growth. Sometimes God will speak to us through others. Find spiritual comrades. And find some other preachers to journey with as well.

11. Developing a Mission-Minded Congregation

Goals

1. Discuss how a sense of calling motivates us with a sense of mission.
2. Talk about effective strategies to accomplish the mission of a church.
3. Help group members focus on preparing those in their congregations to win the war they are engaged in.

Issues/Concerns

1. There are periods in the life of a nation or a people when it seems that nothing changes. There are other times when it seems that the world is changing so rapidly that it is difficult, if not impossible, to keep up. Discuss: What kind of period is your nation in currently? How about your church? Explain.
2. In the church, we have to successfully fulfill our mission or we will go out of business. It would be easy to simply decide to hang in there and make survival our goal, but there is a better way. Talk about ways to “light a fire” under the people in our congregations so that they become dissatisfied with the status quo.
3. An experience with a friend or family member can stir a person’s spirit. So can a sermon. Talk about what it might take to stir the hearts of pastors and ministers so that they share their excitement with the congregation.
4. Every minister and pastor will get bored or discouraged at times. For someone in this situation, how does God provide a way of escape? What effect does this process—both the discouragement and the escape—have on a congregation, and why?
5. Discuss: In your opinion, what makes a slogan or a mission statement catchy, motivating, and effective? Share some examples you have seen, or create some of your own.

Formation Strategies

1. Generational characteristics and changes are being recognized and documented more and better than ever. Talk about the distinguishing characteristics of the Builder, Boomer, Buster, and Millennial generations and effective strategies for reaching and teaching members of these groups.
2. Discuss the necessity of an effective strategy for a mission-minded church and how we can unite around the realization that we are here to change the world, its culture, and its people—and the fact that this will take the best effort we can put forth.
3. Talk about how an effective church can be a megachurch or a house church. Why is doing something different just for difference’s sake not a satisfactory approach?
4. Talk about the importance of a prayer emphasis for discerning the mind of God, including the necessity for key decision-makers in congregation to spend much time in prayer.
5. Discuss: How have you seen a certain “sacredness” develop around age-specific, gender-specific, or relationship-specific ministries? How can we change the focus to create ministries that best serves this day and time?
6. Jesus was quite plainspoken in his instructions to his followers in Matthew 28:19–20. How effective is the church’s present structure and functioning in facilitating disciple-making? Why? Why are ministries and meetings typically centered on a “come” mentality rather than an emphasis on “go”? How can we do some needed shifting of priorities and structure from being so program-oriented and centered on self-promotion? How can we involve people in *doing* ministry together rather than in listening-oriented ministries?
7. Discuss: As we transition to the things required for effective ministry in this century, how can we honor and respect members of older generations who have yesterday’s values and priorities?

8. Discuss: How much time do you think it takes time to effectively change the culture or “way of doing things” of a church? Why? How do we change the values of the congregation, and why is this a necessary part of the process?
9. How can pastors and ministers help lay leaders be aware of societal and religious trends? Why is teamwork important? How about building consensus? How about relevancy? Discuss.
10. Christ was the champion disciple-maker, and his followers changed the world. The apostle Paul built on his model and was wonderfully successful. We may not do it exactly as they did, but with this basic model, we can achieve a significant level of success. How can we emulate the model of mentorship that has been set before us? What does the establishment of vital relationships have to do with it?
11. The author asserts the importance of an overall statement that makes it clear what your church’s primary reason for existence is. Discuss: What is your church’s vision or mission statement? How accurate is it? How well do the leaders in your congregation follow and promote this statement? Explain.
12. Discuss: How can your church think “outside the box” in offering a meaningful and relevant worship experience?
13. Discuss: How important are small groups in your congregation? How can you encourage greater promotion of and participation in small groups for discipling people in the way of Jesus?

12. The Pastor as Key Steward

Goals

1. Talk with group members about the importance of stewardship in the life of the church and particularly in the lives of pastors.
2. Explore together key New Testament passages describing the concept of stewardship.
3. Discuss the scope, extent, and boundaries of our stewardship as pastors and church leaders.

Issues/Concerns

1. The author begins this chapter by describing some Greek words that are used in the New Testament in reference to the administration, stewardship, or management of goods. Discuss: As a pastor or church leader, what possessions belonging to God have been placed in your care?
2. According to the author, stewardship involves every area of life. If this is true, why do we focus primarily on money when discussing stewardship?
3. The author lists the following as various components of our stewardship: talents and giftedness, freedom, instruction, time opportunities, possessions, influence, and relationships. Based on what is written in this chapter, consider each component and describe three ways that you as a pastor or church leader might manage that component of stewardship.
4. Jesus taught on stewardship in several parables, found in Luke 12:42–48; Luke 16:1–15; Luke 19:11–27; and Matthew 25:14–29. Read each passage and discuss: What are the similarities between these parables? How do they differ? What is the main point to be applied?
5. Discuss: What are some talents and abilities that most pastors and church leaders have been given? What are three ways we can develop and use our talents and abilities as pastors or church leaders?
6. The author asserts that God’s Word enables us to think clearly and soberly, guiding us in every area of life. Discuss: Why do we sometimes follow conventional wisdom instead of turning to the Word of God? How can we “saturate” our minds with the Word of God?
7. How we use our time is a crucial component of stewardship. With the demands of our busy schedules and the tyranny of the urgent and unexpected crises, how can a pastor or church leader use his or her time wisely and maintain consistency in godly pursuits—for example, worship, prayer, Bible reading, and meditation?
8. In the section on the stewardship of opportunities, the author talks about the challenges and choices of life that require us to exercise faith in God and in ourselves. Ask group members to describe recent challenges that required risk-taking. Why are leaders sometimes reluctant to take risks?

Formation Strategies

1. In addition to the stewardship of possessions, the author describes the stewardship of influence and indirectly the stewardship of relationships. We live in a time when some pastors and church leaders demonstrate moral failures and poor examples of the Christian leadership that ministers of the gospel are called and expected to provide. Discuss: How can our example as pastors/ministers of congregations help to influence other leaders and church members for the good? How about people in the community and beyond the church?
2. A necessary element of stewardship is freedom of choice; we are each free to choose what we will do with the resources that have been entrusted to us. Discuss: How can we make good choices and avoid poor stewardship that results from making poor choices? As pastors or ministers, how can we make the choices that will have the best impact on the lives of the people entrusted to our care?

3. Pastors and ministers are the key stewards charged with the responsibility of helping to train, inspire, direct, and cultivate the best qualities in the leaders and members of their congregations. Have group members describe some of the ways they will develop strategies to equip the leaders and members of their churches to become more effective and complete disciples of Christ.

13. Church Administration

Goals

1. Work with participants to memorize the acrostic FORWARD and explain briefly how they would utilize these principles in the church.
2. Help group members identify several ways they can combine factual reasoning with faith and to share examples of how they would articulate fact and faith in a sermon.
3. Help students set up an organizational plan that could be used with the members and leaders in their congregations.
4. Talk specifically about knowing when to exercise discernment as a leader in the congregation to avoid conflict and confusion.
5. Help group members view church administration through a spiritual lens and to know that effective administration is essential to having a healthy and thriving church.
6. Talk about how certain areas of good business practices and leadership principles must be blended with faith to aid us in moving the church FORWARD.
7. Challenge group members to view their role of leadership as David did with management ability that includes integrity, skill, and proper organization.

Issues/Concerns

1. Discuss: What clues do you gain from the chapter about how to move a congregation forward when it is stuck in traditions, culture, and/or unbiblical practices?
2. The leaders in some churches refuse to change from the way they have always done things. Discuss with group members how they would deal with such persons in order to bring badly needed change.
3. Discuss: How do you guard against the church operating with an iron-fisted business model instead of as a place of outreach and mission?
4. Have students work in pairs or small groups to prepare and then present brief summaries/explanations of the FORWARD model.
5. The author emphasizes the importance of prayer as demonstrated by Nehemiah in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. Spend time discussing why prayer is crucial in administering the work and ministry of the church.
6. In assessing the facts, one must make the determination between what is faith and what is speculation. Have group members write down five key factors from the chapter that they should pray about as they move forward in congregational leadership.
7. Discuss: How do you get “buy in” from key church leaders when you are approaching a challenging issue concerning finances, policy, or organization? What is the most important attribute of a leader in the congregation, and why?
8. In assessing a situation, what filter do you typically use? Do you see things through “rose-colored glasses” or always “black and white”? Is there a balance? Discuss.
9. Discuss: Is a church budget spiritual? Where does it fit in the FORWARD acrostic?
10. How does delegation fit into church administration? When you delegate authority, does this also include responsibility? What does the saying “the buck stops here” mean to you?
11. Discuss: Where does one draw the line between lay-leadership participation and lay-leadership takeover of major church decisions? What does “stay in your lane” mean to you?

12. Discuss the relationship between a pastor's responsibility to preach and teach and also be involved in the fiduciary responsibilities of the church.
13. Why is it important for a pastor to have an employment contract?

Formation Strategies

1. Have each participant select some terms from the FORWARD acrostic and make a written statement of how these concepts apply to spiritual formation: transforming our inner and outer lives and shaping us into people of God who are inundated by the Word, immersed in prayer, and ignited through worship.
2. Discuss: What strategy would you use to help your congregation work together to accomplish the church's mission? What did Nehemiah do when he was confronted by opposition? Do you agree or disagree with Nehemiah's approach? Why?
3. Discuss: Should every church meeting be opened in prayer and a Bible passage read and discussed before the meeting begins? How would that set the tone for a meeting? Where does this approach fall in the FORWARD acrostic?
4. Talk about specific strategies to address the changing church culture as the result of COVID-19. How will the church function now in a post-pandemic world? Will it become more evangelistic, or will it direct its resources toward brick-and-mortar and programs that have little to do with evangelism and outreach?
5. Discuss: How is the gift of discernment used in your congregation?
6. Talk about specific ways the church can fulfill its assignment of sharing the good news of redemption and restoration of the lost through Spirit-led, anointed people and purposeful programs geared to reach the lost.

14. Effective Leadership

Goals

1. Help group members define or describe leadership from a biblical perspective.
2. Help group members understand the specific elements that are essential to effective leadership in the church.
3. Talk about how we can embrace qualities that will enhance our effectiveness as leaders.
4. Consider with group members what might be necessary to develop an appetite for the continued exploration of effective leadership options and possibilities.

Issues/Concerns

1. Discuss: What attitudes have you observed that leaders sometimes have about leadership? What causes these attitudes?
2. Discuss: What, in your, opinion constitutes effective leadership? Why do you say so? Describe the similarities and differences between effective leadership in the church and in the secular world.
3. Talk about how people's attitudes can be changed to reflect more clearly a biblical understanding of leadership.
4. Discuss the eight qualities the author focuses on as essential elements of effective leadership.
5. Ask group members to describe some of the adverse or negative results of ineffective leadership.
6. Talk about specific things churches can do to develop, encourage, and support effective leadership.

Formation Strategies

1. Discuss: If you are a minister or pastor, what measures do you think you could undertake to enhance your own effectiveness as a leader in the church?
2. Ask group members to cite or share examples of times when they believe they demonstrated effective leadership.
3. Discuss the relationship between effective leadership in the church and spiritual formation—forming our inner lives and relationships with God in ways that transform our outer lives and relationships with other persons.
4. Leadership necessarily involves us with others. Dr. John Maxwell once observed that if no one is following you, you are just taking a walk. In other words, if no one is following you, you are not leading. How do group members respond to this idea?
5. There are spiritual resources that, if drawn from and applied to our lives, will enhance and strengthen our leadership. These include the study of biblical characters who demonstrated good leadership (or lack of it), prayer, personal and corporate worship, and interaction with other leaders who may encourage and/or challenge our patterns of leadership. The most effective leaders are not an island to themselves; they engage with other leaders to experience “iron sharpening iron.” Discuss which of these resources group members feel are most important and why.
6. Ask students to list four or five ways they will endeavor to sharpen their leadership skills. Discuss: How can you develop an environment for training more effective leaders in your congregation?

15. The Pastor and Family Ministry

Goals

1. Identify with group members things that pastors, ministers, and other workers in the local congregation can do to minister more effectively to families.
2. Talk with group members about specific programs and ministries to strengthen families and individuals in relational, spiritual, and personal growth.
3. Discuss the effectiveness of family-life education in congregations group members are or have been a part of.
4. Help participants develop a “total view” of their ministry to families.
5. Talk about specific family-oriented programs that can benefit the local church—for example, marriage enrichment, marital and family counseling, retreats for couples and families, and so forth.

Issues/Concerns

1. Discuss: If you were to evaluate the ministry to families in your congregation on a scale of *1* to *10*, how would you rate you congregation? Why?
2. Pastors are very busy taking care of individuals and families in their congregations. Imagine Mark 8:36 as applied to pastors and ministers regarding their own families: “What good is it for pastors to gain all the families in their congregations, yet forfeit their own families?” Talk about this idea, and discuss how pastors and ministers can nurture their families spiritually, socially, psychologically, etc.
3. There are any number of marriages in the local church where couples have deep and dangerous conflict. Discuss: Besides the pastor, who else in the congregation might provide marital counseling? What percentage of the pastor’s sermons should be focused specifically on nurturing family relationships, and why?
4. On pages 140 to 141 are listed fourteen family-related concerns. Encourage the members of your study group to check all the ones that are a part of their congregation. Spend time discussing the concerns that were checked and the ones some did not check.
5. Because of COVID-19, many churches began having Bible classes online with great success. Talk about how the various concerns from the list of fourteen could be addressed online.
6. In Luke 11:1 there is a reference to prayer. The three verses that follow it contain what we know as the Lord’s Prayer. The importance and primacy of prayer cannot be overstated. The old adage “The family that prays together stays together” is true. In these critical times that we live in, families need to be taught and told to pray. Ask the members of your group to make a prayer list of the following people they will pray for over the next two weeks: the President or Prime Minister, a specific family member, a friend (saved or unsaved), someone who is physically ill, someone who is unemployed and needs a job.

Formation Strategies

1. The biblical concept of family transcends the physical family. We are members of the family of God. Much of this chapter focuses on the nuclear family. However, because the church is a family united in Christ, it is incumbent upon all Christians to see and treat the church as the true family of God. Discuss: What strategies do we need to implement in order demonstrate that we are the family of God—racially, socially, spiritually? List specific ways we can illustrate to the world and to ourselves that we are God’s family.
2. One motto used by the Church of God (Anderson) has been “We are a united church for a divided world.” Challenge your study group to give some examples of how your own church group has or has not lived up to such a standard of unity.

3. The proportion of older adults is increasing rapidly in our society and in many of our churches. What kinds of programs could be developed to meet the needs of active older adults and also those who are inactive and are confined to their homes or live in nursing homes or retirement centers?
4. Talk about the kinds of seminars, workshops, and conferences for bi-vocational pastors that could be offered at the national, state, and local levels for those who have not attended seminary or Bible college in order for them to learn some basic skills in counseling, family relations, conflict management, and interpersonal relationships.

16. Ministry to the Sick and Shut-Ins

Goals

1. Help group members clarify roles and relationships in staffing a program for the sick and shut-ins.
2. Talk about how group members might organize their own “senior camp.”
3. Discuss the importance of record keeping, registration, and resources for ministry to senior adults and the specifics required for establishing these elements.
4. Have group members craft their own mission statements for a program for seniors.
5. Spend time discussing how to write creative and concise goal statements.

Issues/Concerns

1. Talk about the importance of personal care for senior saints. Caring for the sick and shut-ins may mean offering assistance in bathing, washing the hair, or dressing. How can relatives or friends assist? How about hiring a trained aide for a short period of time each day? How can church finances be used to help in this area?
2. Senior saints may need help with regular chores such as housecleaning, yard work, grocery shopping, and laundry. Some grocery stores and drug stores will take your order over the phone and bring the items to your home. There are cleaning and yard services you can hire, or maybe someone you know has a housekeeper or gardener to suggest. Some housekeepers will help with laundry. Some dry cleaners will pick up and deliver your clothes. Discuss: How can you obtain information on these options and make the connections with those who need these services?
3. How can we make sure our senior saints are eating nutritious meals? Talk about the possibility of sharing cooking with a friend, having a potluck dinner with a group of friends, or having meals at a nearby senior center or house of worship. Some delivery programs will bring hot meals into your home for free or at low cost. What other options may be available?
4. Discuss money management with respect to seniors. What if shut-ins are worried about paying bills late or not at all? What if health-insurance forms are confusing? How can volunteers, financial counselors, or geriatric care managers offer assistance? Who else can help?
5. How can you assist senior saints with healthcare issues? What about those who forget to take their medicine? How about those who have just gotten out of the hospital and still need nursing care at home for a short time?

Formation Strategies

1. Work with group members to come up with specific steps to change the culture of the local church so that ministry to the sick and shut-ins is a priority.
2. Talk with group members about strategies and techniques to connect with senior saints who might be resistant to your help for one reason or another.
3. Discuss with the group ways to involve senior saints—even the sick and shut-ins—in active ministry in the church, so that these individuals feel and understand that they are gifted by God and have something to contribute to the body of Christ.
4. Talk about reasons ministry to the sick and shut-ins should not only be the responsibility of the senior pastor or one designated staff member or volunteer in the church.
5. Research together to create a list of local community resources that can be of help to the sick, shut-ins, and other senior saints in your church.

17. Prison Ministry

Goals

1. Challenge group members to consider specifically how they might personally and corporately step up to provide hope and help to those who are incarcerated.
2. Invite group members to identify the benefits of prison ministry that speak most strongly to them, and why.
3. Examine together the various guidelines for prison-ministry volunteers and why these guidelines are important.
4. Consider together the connection of poverty and socio-economic challenges with the abuse of alcohol and drugs, and how this can lead to both physical and spiritual imprisonment.
5. Talk about how churches can network with criminal-justice systems to provide assistance to the incarcerated and thereby improve the community at large.

Issues/Concerns

1. The author describes homelessness and exposure to drugs and alcohol as a part of his childhood. Discuss: How can churches assist the community in addressing homelessness, alcohol and drug abuse, and other social problems such as unemployment, poor education, teen pregnancy, healthcare disparities, crime and violence, etc.? What Scripture passages inform us on God's view of ministry to the oppressed and marginalized (e.g., Matthew 25:35–40)?
2. It is stated in this chapter that prison ministry benefits the community as a whole because it can lead to transformation that breaks the vicious and repetitive circle of crime. When is the best time to intervene in assisting repeat offenders? In addition to prison ministry, how can this be accomplished?
3. Discuss what can make the incarcerated susceptible to cults and various non-Christian religions and gangs. How can believers shed light on false beliefs and the appeal of belonging that cults, non-Christian groups, and gangs seem to offer?
4. This chapter suggests that prison ministry can be instrumental in assisting individuals in understanding why they became incarcerated and whether there might be a better way to live. Talk about why it is important to plant and nurture seeds of faith in the lives of those who are incarcerated and others experiencing seemingly hopeless situations. In addition to sharing from the Scriptures, what are some practical ways (within prison guidelines) to encourage persons who are incarcerated?
5. Discuss: When considering starting a prison ministry, why is it important to first ascertain whether it is something God is calling you to do? How can we discern God's leading in this area? What pitfalls or challenges can be avoided by knowing this is God's will?
6. The author recommends approaching prison ministry by first speaking with those in authority in the institution and sharing with them a vision and plan for ministry. He further suggests shadowing an existing prison ministry to "see how they do things." Are there other prison ministries in your area that you can shadow or at least discuss prison ministry with? Can you partner with these ministries? Discuss.
7. The author describes several benefits to prison ministry, such as improved inmate behavior, decreased expense to taxpayers as a result of fewer incarcerations, and helping inmates fulfill their right to practice their religion. Discuss the various benefits with your group. Which is most important, and why? What may be some other benefits not mentioned?
8. In preparing people to minister in prison, why is it important to know the background of those wanting to minister, their previous criminal history, and their fears? What are the implications of previous criminal involvement? What could be the attitude or mindset of inmates serving longer sentences in prisons, rather than those serving shorter sentences in jails? Why is it important to be aware of this?

Formation Strategies

1. Discuss how the fact that an inmate is an “offender” and has broken the law can interfere with our ability to regard this individual as a “whole” person. What ideas about the legal system might shape how a prison minister may view an offender? What beliefs about God’s grace and justification may influence how the prison minister views an offender?
2. Brainstorm about other things prison ministers should keep in mind when presenting a plan for prison ministry to their congregations. How can they address fears and concerns that other volunteers may have?
3. It is important to encourage inmates in their potential to becoming fully functioning and law-abiding citizens. What might interfere with having this belief?
4. According to the author, what special precautions should female volunteers keep in mind? How might gender interfere with prison ministry?
5. What other precautions must all volunteers take in order to avoid “relaxing the rules”? How do prison ministers build rapport without becoming “too familiar”?

18. Considering Retirement

Goals

1. Discuss participants' historical views about the retirement of pastors/ministers in contrast with new understandings about making strategic and sound retirement decisions.
2. Talk with group members about how they can be more proactive in thinking and strategic in planning for their retirement.
3. Discuss specific things future pastoral retirees can do to avoid a socio-economic collapse during their retirement years, and the variables that can impact this.
4. Emphasize to participants the need to adopt a healthy and wholistic lifestyle during our working years if a similar lifestyle is to hold during our retirement years. For example, are the pastor's current salary and benefits sufficient to pay for his or her children's college tuition? Is there enough investment to sustain the pastor after retirement?
5. Discuss how pastors can prepare mentally and emotionally for retirement. What are the pitfalls to be avoided? Can (or should) a pastor have the option to just "walk away and forget it"? Why or why not?
6. Talk about how to help pastors (and future pastors) identify and celebrate significant others who have (or will) play important roles in assuring pastoral success.

Issues/Concerns

1. The pastoral retiree will be greeted with many new freedoms. These freedoms do not mean one will engage in mindless relaxation; there will be opportunities as a retired pastor to render service in a variety of ways. Talk with group members about some of the services they anticipate rendering upon retirement. Should a retired minister be financially compensated for services to churches and other organizations? Why or why not?
2. Discuss how, in the event of a pastor's sudden death, his or her family might be financially compensated and supported.
3. Followers of Christ should keep growing toward perfection—and this includes pastors and ministers as well! How can a retired pastor or minister continue to grow spiritually?
4. Talk about the amount of influence a retiring pastor can or should have in the selection of the new pastor and on the congregation in general after his or her retirement.

Formation Strategies

1. The divine infusion of worship, including music, the preaching of the Word, and other forms of ministry, should continue with primary importance in the pastoral retiree's spiritual diet. Talk specifically about that the "church life" of a retired pastor might look like.
2. There are a number of pastors who believe that, as long as one is able to carry on an effective ministry, has favor with members of the congregation, and enjoys a reasonable portion of health and strength, there is no need to retire. Is there a right time or wrong time to retire? Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a long-term pastorate.
3. Some pastors refuse to retire due to insufficient retirement income and pension. Others refuse to retire because they live in the church's parsonage and do not own their home. Spend twenty minutes or so discussing how a congregation can help a pastor avoid not having a pension or a home to live in when he or she retires.

19. Resolving Conflict

Goals

1. Encourage participants to examine and understand the meaning of biblical conflict.
2. Talk about how the choices we make can result in far-reaching consequences of conflict.
3. Discuss in small groups specific situations in the church where conflict may actually lead to a healthier church.
4. Talk about specific new and healthy ways of becoming a victor in conflict rather than a victim of it.
5. Summarize the various dimension of conflict and how, if conflict is not properly managed, the stages can lead from one to another—and ultimately to disastrous results.
6. Engage in an open dialogue about racial conflict in our nation, in the world, and in our churches.

Issues/Concerns

1. Conflict is a universal reality. And just as the COVID-19 pandemic has spread to the far reaches of our planet, touching and disrupting millions of lives, conflict—once it escalates out of control—leads to damaging outcomes that are often difficult to predict. Define and discuss some of the other comparisons that can be made between COVID-19 and human conflict.
2. The author describes four types of conflict: individual, relational, spiritual, and global. Discuss ways these kinds of conflict are related and similar to one another, and ways they are different.
3. Work together to identify how the four types of conflict have an influence on the church. Discuss: In your opinion, which of these kinds of conflict impacts the church the most, and why?
4. Identify ways we can work find solutions to address the race problem in our churches. Group members should be able to give clear rationales for their ideas.

Formation Strategies

1. On page 186, the author mentions twelve sources of congregational conflict. Most of these sources potentially exist in nearly every congregation. Break into small groups, with each group choosing three or four of the conflict sources and discussing what steps a pastor could take to attempt to address them.
2. Ask students to imagine that there is a member in their congregation with whom they are constantly embroiled in conflict. They have attempted to resolve things with this person several times, but without success. Discuss: What new strategy might be used to resolve the conflict?
3. Both Jesus and Paul instructed us to love our enemies and do good to those who are confirmed enemies. Yet we know that it is difficult to love and do good to someone who responds with damaging and distressful behavior. Spend time in your group reviewing Matthew 5:43–45 and Philippians 2:3–5 and coming up with solutions for how to carry out these mandates.
4. The writer of this chapter has included a chart illustrating the progression of conflict and the successive movements it takes if it is not addressed in its early stages. Ask each group member to examine the chart, identify a conflictual situation he or she is acquainted with (within our outside of the church), specify where on the chart the situation currently falls, and explain how he or she might approach resolving this conflict.

20. Restoring Fallen Pastors

Goals

1. Work with students to clarify and define the true biblical meaning of restoration.
2. Have group members cite examples from the Bible and from their own lives of various ways restoration took place.
3. Explore together how different denominations, movements, and fellowships deal with restoring ministers to right relationships in the local congregation or ministerial service.
4. Have each group member identify what he or she feels are the pros and cons of restoring pastors/ministers.
5. Identify biblical and theological examples of grace, forgiveness, love, redemption, mercy, and compassion.
6. Work together to devise a plan for restoring a pastor or minister to good standing in his or her local congregation and in the broader church.

Issues/Concerns

1. The author states that restoring ministers in the church can be a landmine that is both dangerous and difficult to navigate. He also notes the various positions held by different Christians bodies with respect to pastoral restoration. In small groups, spend some time elaborating on the reasons why restoration is such a controversial issue in so many churches.
2. Seven biblical characters are mentioned on pages 190 to 192 who were transgressors of God's commandments. Their sins ranged from lying to murder. Yet in spite of their sins, each person was apparently forgiven and restored to God's favor. Discuss: Which of these characters would you have the most trouble restoring, and why? What contributes to your reluctant attitude?
3. Simon Peter denied Jesus, severed the ear of the high priest's servant, and lost faith when he walked on the water, yet Jesus affirmed Peter's restoration in Luke 22:31-32. In spite of all of his flaws and failures, Peter preached a soul-stirring sermon on Pentecost. If you were on a committee to examine all the factual information and consider restoring Simon Peter, what would be your final decision? Would you have recommended that he be the keynote speaker on the Day of Pentecost? Why or why not?
4. Are there pastors/ministers who would yet be in the ministry today if members of the clergy and the laity had shown them love or restored them? Under what circumstances should a pastor consider resigning his or her pastoral position? Under what circumstances should a church ask the pastor to resign his or her pastoral position?
5. Talk about the way churches consider (or don't consider) the pastor's family when deliberating about how to respond to a pastor or minister's misdeed. What about his or her salary? How about benefits (health insurance, auto payments, house payments, etc.)?
6. Discuss: Why does it often seem more difficult to forgive or restore pastors or ministers in the church than laypersons? How (if at all) does the nature of the sin committed play a part?
7. Identify and discuss any situations where, because of the nature of the deed committed, it may be better for a pastor to leave the congregation rather than to continue on as its pastor.
8. Galatians 6:1-10 is presented as a biblical model for restoring a brother or sister in Christ. The writer admonished the church at Galatia first by addressing them as "brothers and sisters." Next, he appealed to a particular class of Christian: those who "live by the Spirit." Why is it impossible for a carnal-minded person to engage impartially in the delicate surgery of restoration or to help bring healing and hope to a fallen brother or sister?

Formation Strategies

1. Present the following scenario: Students have been asked to be members of the committee to restore a fellow pastor. Challenge them to identify, given their current state of mind and past experiences, any preconceived biases they will need to overcome and pray about before accepting this assignment. What sin would they find the most difficult to forgive, and why?
2. Discuss: What is a reasonable amount of time for a minister or pastor to remain inactive from serving in the ministry after a moral failure? Why?
3. In Matthew 18:15–35, Jesus taught about the essence of forgiveness. We are told how we should seek to restore a brother or sister in the Lord who has sinned. Sometimes what starts out as a private problem between two people ends up out in the open for the whole church to deal with. When Peter approached Jesus and sought further clarification about the meaning of forgiveness, Jesus challenged Peter's traditional understanding of the boundaries of forgiveness with new insight. Discuss: How often are you willing to forgive a person who repeatedly offends you, and why? How does your approach line up with Matthew 18:15–35?
4. Read Galatians 5:19–21 and Ephesians 5:3–12. According to these passages there are some sins for which, if a person continues to commit them, forgiveness is not an option. Spend time discussing how one may block forgiveness by maintaining certain types of behavior. Do you believe forgiveness is conditional or unconditional? Why?

21. COVID-19 and Other Crises

Goals

1. Spend time with the group carrying on a serious dialogue about how COVID-19 and other serious illnesses or crises impact the church's ministry. Talk specifically about the areas of worship, outreach, and available resources.
2. Talk about what it would take to develop the courage to have a frank conversation with someone when healing is likely *not* going to happen for him or her.
3. Talk about God's mercy and God's vengeance, and where or whether each might show up in cases of illness, crisis, or death.

Issues/Concerns

1. The authors of this chapter indicate that it would have been good to give more time and attention to working diligently with those who feared the pandemic, in order to help educate them and calm those fears. Ask the members of your group to list three ways they should have reacted sooner.
2. Ask class members how they would help seniors better understand and cope with the use of technology (e.g., Internet meetings) as it is utilized for church functions.
3. Work together to write potential job descriptions for various volunteers in the church, communicating clearly and explicitly what is expected of those who serve during a pandemic or other crisis.
4. Discuss: How would you approach leading a congregation to secure a part-time staff person or volunteer to coordinate and oversee the church's volunteer personnel and services for times of crisis?
5. The authors point out specific ways churches were impacted during the COVID-19 crisis. Discuss: In what other ways was your local church affected? What remedies were you able to offer to your congregants, your surrounding neighborhood, your city, and beyond?
6. Discuss: What is the most significant experience you had during the pandemic? What are some joys you experienced? In what ways have your experiences influenced your faith in God? in the scientific community? in local, state, and national health authorities?

Formation Strategies

1. The book *Spiritual Formation* offers a useful filter for understanding how, by the grace of God, we might grow and benefit during times of crisis. We are challenged to be open to having our inner lives and relationships with God transformed in ways that transform our outer lives and relationships with other persons, assisted by the Word, prayer, and worship and shaping us into people who are "infused by God." Discuss: How did your experience during the COVID-19 pandemic shape you so that you are better able to help people in your congregation and your community during future times of crisis?
2. Ask participants to share with the group their strategy to lead the church during the next pandemic or time of crisis. What would they do the same in the future? What would they do differently? Why?
3. A great majority of churches had to discontinue their worship services and Bible classes during COVID-19. Engage the members of your class in a dialogue about what changed in the attitudes and actions of parishioners and pastors/ministers during this time.