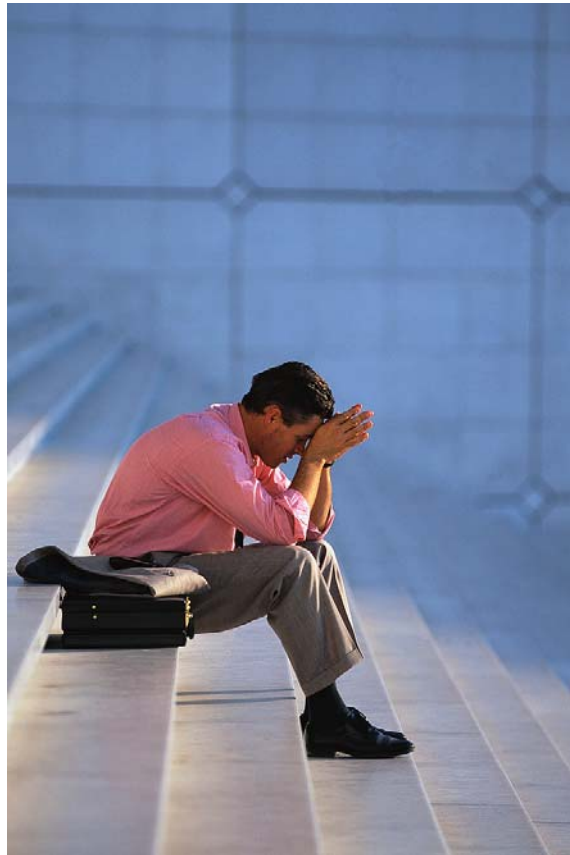




THE REALITY OF LIFE IN MINISTRY:

SERVING GOD IN A BROKEN WORLD





Welcome to

THE REALITY OF LIFE IN MINISTRY

Course Overview: This course is a study of everything they were afraid to teach you when you volunteered to serve Christ and His world. We will discover together:

- Who we are and how that will affect your service
- Many of the difficulties along the way in serving God in a broken world
- How to remain healthy, on-fire and spiritually alive in the midst of difficulties
- How to finish the race well

Course Goals: By the end of this course, we would like you to:

- Understand some of the trials you will face in your life in ministry
- Be sober about the attacks and difficulties you will face
- Have solid tools to fall back on in times of trial
- Know how to finish the race well

Follow-up Study: To obtain full credit and benefit from this course, we ask you to:

- a. Finish all Personal Study sections of the course manual.
- b. Read the follow-up reading on the Prepare International Website – www.prepareinternational.org - under this course title. There will be three or four articles posted under this course heading to study
- c. Write a Five page essay, typed answering the following questions:
 - Describe the three greatest things you learned in the course in detail.
 - How will you apply these things to your life and ministry in the future. Think of a specific situation that you would apply these truths and explain how you might use this new learning.
 - **On the last page of your paper:** What was the most important thing you learned from the reading assignment from the Website?

Sources: See Endnotes on last page.



1: Welcome to Life in the Ministry

Introduction

The first words in M. Scott Peck's book "The Road Less Traveled" provide a great opening to our topic. Dr. Peck opens his book with these words, "Life is difficult."ⁱ It's true. Ever since the fall of man, life has been hard. God said it would be and history has proven it to be true.

As Christian ministers, we understand that we are supposed to live victoriously, overcoming the difficulties of life by the power of the Holy Spirit. But we don't often talk about what it is like while we are learning how to be victorious. What about the times when we seem to be experiencing the "life is difficult" part more than the "victorious" part? What do we do when things go wrong? How do we keep our heads above water when the water is deep and we're not even sure we know how to swim?

Christian leaders have money problems, marriage problems, faith problems and emotional problems. The very people we are trying to minister to sometimes attack us. And from time to time we fail. When these things happen to us does it mean we are failures? Did we miss God? Are we being punished?

Welcome to the Ministry

The truth is, if you have been called into ministry, it will be difficult; sometimes to the point of crisis. It is an ongoing mystery that God not only allows us to experience these difficulties, he apparently considers them important to our growth and maturity. James 1:2 is clear on this point.

If we are going to successfully weather the difficulties that will inevitably come our way, we need to develop an understanding of what to expect. In this course we want to look at how difficulties affect three fundamental areas of our lives:

1. How difficulties affect our faith.
2. How difficulties affect our long-term relationships, and
3. How difficulties affect our emotional health.

Your capacity to minister over the long-term and remain a person of integrity depends upon these three areas; your faith, your relationships and your emotional health. I have seen very little written that addresses the reality that these three areas will be repeatedly tested and attacked. Furthermore, each of these three areas flows into the others. Your faith affects your relationships which affect your emotional health which affects your faith . . . you get the idea.

How Difficulties Affect Our Faith

Consider the following questions: *What happens when you pray for healing, in faith, and nothing happens? What happens when you find yourself teaching or preaching on a subject that is not yet a part of your own life? What happens when you are trying to teach others to trust God but you are barely making ends meet? What happens when you find yourself despising your fellow Christians because they aren't willing to take responsibility for the success of your church (they won't give their time or their money)? What happens when your spouse approaches you and informs you that he or she cannot take it any more?*



We could use up several pages just asking questions like these. The point is, our faith is constantly under fire. If we want to grow in our faith to the point that we have what it takes to “break through” in our ministry, we must take a close look at James 1:2 and Romans 5:3-5. Furthermore we must embrace the reality of these scriptures.

	James 1:2	Romans 5:3-5
Attitude	Joy	Rejoice
Reality	Multiple Temptations	Tribulations
Result	Patience, complete, lacking in nothing	Steadfast, approved, hope that doesn't disappoint

How Difficulties Affect Our Relationships

This is, perhaps the most difficult area to honestly assess, because so many of us have given in to the temptation to neglect or even abuse our closest relationships and then try and spiritualize our actions. So many people have so many needs and ministering to them requires so much time. How can we possibly give our family the attention that they need and still fulfill our ministry? Good question. Ministers have been searching for the balance for years.

Just one month before writing this, I agreed to counsel with a spiritual daughter that is struggling with depression. After spending 4 hours in intense deliverance, we made some good progress and I was feeling hopeful. The session was at our home and my wife, going about her normal routine, came in and out of our session. When we emerged from the room I expected my wife to mention the progress we seemed to have made, but instead I could see she was angry. Not at all the reaction I was expecting. She expressed her frustration that I was spending multiple hours ministering to our spiritual daughter when I had not, as of late, spent an adequate amount of time with my physical children. As is often the case, she was right. I wanted to defend my decision, and make her feel bad for being so selfish, but the Lord quickly convicted me that I had lost the balance between ministry and my family.

Every year I get reports from Pastors who have resigned from the ministry because their ruined relationships have disqualified them from full-time ministry. Spouses become mentally unstable, children rebel, spouses and children leave the faith and the church, pastors divorce, pastors and pastor's wives have affairs; the list goes on.

So far we've just talked about family relationships, but what about ministry team relationships or discipleship relationships? Finding the balance between the needs of the ministry and our need to feed our primary relationships is one of the most difficult and necessary tasks of a minister.



How Difficulties Affect Our Emotional Health

Question: *When is a minister most susceptible to sin?*

Answer: Right after he has ministered in power.

When you are tired, you are weakened. When you are stressed, you are vulnerable; when you are empty, you are dangerous. Most pastors live their lives close to the burn-out line. This is not God's way and ignoring your mental and emotional health will harm more than just you. *Have you been hurt by church leadership? Have you been hurt by other church members? Have you experienced severe disappointment? Are you trying to minister to others without adequately dealing with your own hurt?* If so, there is a good chance that you will hurt and abuse those you are trying to minister to. Your emotional health is crucial to your long-term success. It is ridiculous to think we can administer healing and at the same time deny our own need for healing. We must attend to our own emotional health.

Finding the Balance

The purpose of this course is to boldly look into the "difficult side" of ministry so we can face our challenges and not be overcome by them. If we can learn to face the difficulties ahead of us, we will all still be around to witness the "breakthrough". Ministry is difficult, but God is faithful. Ministry is not for the faint of heart, but if God has called you then ministry is for you.



2: Learning to Know and Enjoy Yourself

How well do you know yourself? If you are like most people, your perception of yourself tends to be a combination of reality and wishful thinking; Like the man who, even though he consistently arrives late, insists that he is usually on time or like the woman who insists that she never gets angry, but seems to always be stabbing people in the back with her words.

When I teach, my students often reflect that I seem transparent and honest, without any pretense. If this is true, it is because I've come to understand four important truths:

1. **My God loves me, period.** He likes me and enjoys me without reservation and without respect to my behavior or performance. He just loves me. It's His nature – He can't help it.
2. **God made me with a specific personality.** I have strengths and weaknesses and God knew this when he made me. He likes how he made me and I can like how he made me as well.
3. **I live in a fallen world, and I have been marred by the sin-nature.** I make mistakes all the time and I sin, sometimes on purpose. The sin part I do not like and it continually bothers me, but the mistake part I've come to terms with and I just try not to take myself too seriously. I've learned to laugh at myself and acknowledge the less-than-perfect attributes that I display all too frequently.
4. **God is changing me into his likeness.** Every day that I walk with Him changes me; matures me; seasons me. He knows how sin has stained my life and He is bringing His perfection and displacing my imperfection.

If we are to truly reach our nations for the kingdom of God, we must learn to face ourselves. More than that, we must learn to enjoy ourselves. We all have plenty of faults; it comes with the territory. Our only hope of rising above our faults is through the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, so let's learn to "count it all joy" as we walk through life.

Let's take a look at 2 areas that affect how you see yourself:

- Your Identity
- Your Personality Style

Identity

If a blind person came to you and asked you to describe yourself, what would you say? Think about it. The attributes and characteristics that we would normally use to describe ourselves would not mean much to a person who can't see. If I were to ask you, "who are you?" you would likely run up against the same challenge. What characteristics do you use to define yourself?



Discussion: Pretend that you have been asked to answer the question, “who are you?” to a blind person. In small groups, practice trying to describe yourself to each other. After your description, check each other. Based on your description would the blind person really know you?

I’m tall, with brown hair that is beginning to grey. I’ve got a lopsided smile and an infectious laugh. I love people, but I also love being alone.

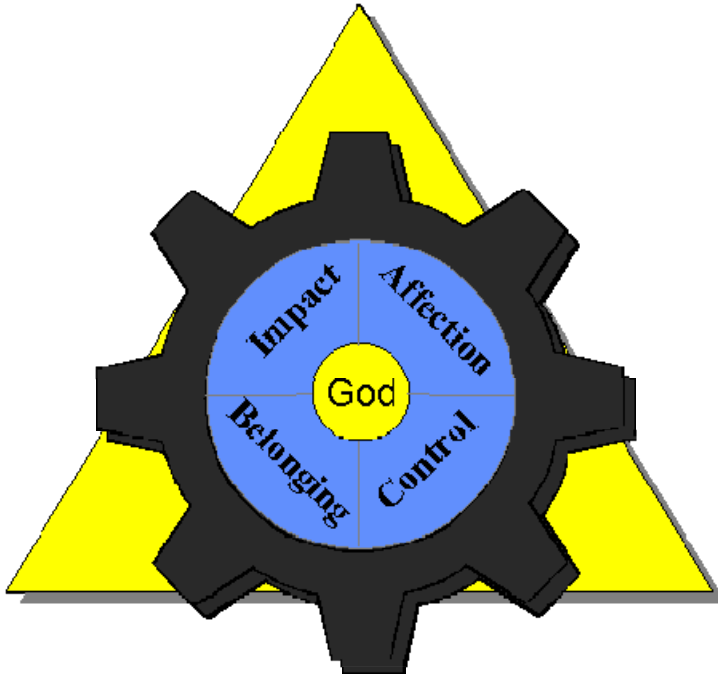
Sometimes we let our physical characteristics fill our sense of identity. But do your characteristics define you?

I’m a Pastor, I’m a policeman, I’m a teacher, I’m an engineer. Many times we define ourselves through what we do. But does your occupation define you?

How about your experiences? I’m successful. I’m a failure. I’m unloved. I’m alone. How do your experiences shape your identity? All of these are ways that we fill in our sense of identity, but none of them address the core question, “who are you?”.

Before the fall of man, Adam and Eve had no “inherent needs”. God’s presence surrounded them. They were ultimately secure in their surroundings. They knew where they belonged and affection flowed freely between each other and God. They knew their purpose and their significance in the order of things. But all that changed at the fall. God’s presence was withdrawn and death entered the world. What has once been Adam and Eve’s natural strengths, because they were living in the perpetual presence of God, now became intense needs. Security turned into a desperate need for security. Belonging transformed from a fact to desire. Affection became uncertain and conditional, and man’s ability to influence the world became subordinated to Satan’s dominion. This catastrophic turn of events left mankind with four enduring and innate needs:

- The need for Control (security)
- The need for Belonging
- The need for Affection (love and recognition)
- The need for Impact (to make a difference, leave a legacy, take dominion) ⁱⁱ



Of course, the ultimate answer to the cosmic search to fill these needs is to satisfy the very cause of these needs – the absence of God’s presence. If we can learn to seek the presence of God to fill our needs, we will find our needs met at the deepest level. No imitation, no temporary fix, no coping mechanism. I am His and He is mine. Everything else flows from that truth.

Neil T. Anderson, in his book “Victory Over The Darkness”, sums it up well. *“The only identity equation that works in God’s kingdom is you plus Christ equals wholeness and meaning.”*ⁱⁱⁱ

Purpose and meaning are the core issues that identity speaks to. If we are to successfully navigate the difficulties ahead of us, we must be secure in who we are – children of God, sons of the most high God, co-heirs with Christ, the bride of Christ!! Is this how you see yourself?



Bible Study: Read the following passages and ask yourself, “is this me?” 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10; I Peter 2:9-10; I John 3:1-2

Neil Anderson makes an important observation, *“No person can consistently behave in a way that is inconsistent with the way he perceives himself.”*^{iv} If your identity is not rooted in Christ, then you can pretend for a little while, but you won’t be able to keep up the charade. You’ll try to perform your way into God’s favor and you’ll burn out.

On the other hand, if your identity is rooted in Jesus and you understand at your core that you are a son of God, then your ministry will generate out of a natural flow of supernatural life. Your strength will renew and your spirit will remain strong for the long-term.



Application: Answer the following questions about yourself:

1. How do I see myself?
 2. Where do I get my identity?
 3. Am I absolutely secure in my identity in Christ or does most of my identity come outside of Him?
 4. Have I accepted myself and learned to enjoy who God has made me?
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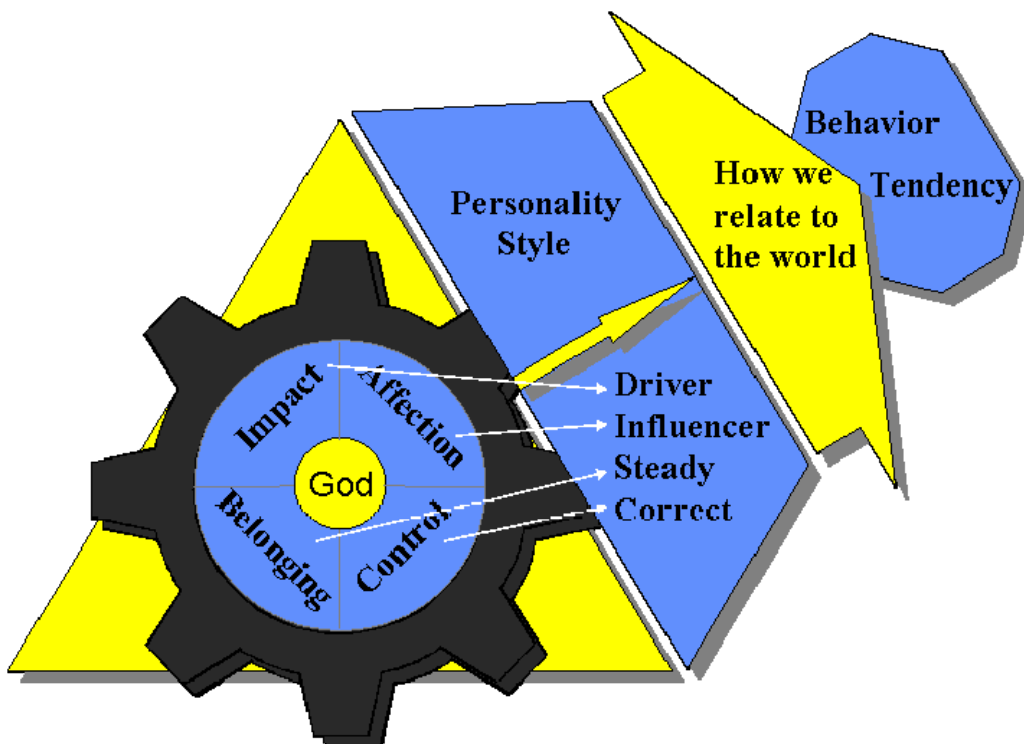


3: Understanding Your Personality

Personality

Our individual personalities are made up of a combination of attributes that God has assigned to each of us and how we each respond to the quest to fill our 4 needs (as described above). All of us have all four needs; **the need for control, the need to belong, the need for affection and the need to make an impact.** However, each of us has one of the four that rises to the top. One of the four is more important to you than the others. This becomes your driving need, but more importantly this driving need reveals your personality style.

1. The need for Control = a cautious/correct personality trait
2. The need for Belonging = a steady/stable personality trait
3. The need for Affection = an Influencing personality trait
4. The need for Impact = a directing/dominant personality trait



As we begin to discover our own personality style, we need to remember a few things - even though many of us share similar styles and traits, our own combination of styles is 100% unique. There is no one else with exactly the same personality as you. Many people try and reject personality profiles because they feel it violates God's unique design of each individual. These people refuse to be labeled. While I can understand the concern, this approach is a mistake. Personality profiles do not reduce an individual's uniqueness, it simply highlights differences and similarities in how we tend to see the world and respond to it.



There are no personalities that are better than others. The world tries to rank personality styles and place worth on some over others. This is nonsense and is the cause for a lot of the problems we experience in the workplace. God made each personality style to compliment the other styles. God made us to live in community so that we would need each other. God is community and so are we.

There are several excellent tools we can use to gain insight into your personality type. Two of the most reliable are the Myers-Briggs temperament sorter and the DISC personality profile. Here we will use the DISC profile because it is shorter and easier to complete.

DISC Profile^v

In the table on the next page, read each row from left to right and rank each word in the row based on how closely each word describes you. Each row has 4 words and you must rank each row 4, 3, 2 and 1. Place a 4 in the box next to the word that **MOST** describes you (in that row). Place a 3 in the box that is next most like you and continue until you place a 1 next to the word that is **LEAST** like you. The example below shows that each word in the row has been ranked 1 to 4. Remember that 4 means MOST like you and 1 means LEAST like you.

Important: The words in each row are to be compared with each other. You may feel that none of the words in the row adequately describes you. Try to remember that regardless of how you feel about the descriptive words, you still must choose one of the 4 words in the row to be most like you, as compared to the others and so on.

Graph Box (for scoring the profile)

I	II	III	IV
40	40	40	40
38	38	38	38
36	36	36	36
34	34	34	34
32	32	32	32
30	30	30	30
28	28	28	28
26	26	26	26
24	24	24	24
22	22	22	22
20	20	20	20
18	18	18	18
16	16	16	16
14	14	14	14
12	12	12	12
10	10	10	10

Column I = Directing/Driving Column II = Influencing/Interacting Column III = Steady/Stable Column IV = Cautious/Correct

EXAMPLE

3	Directing	4	Influencing	1	Steady	2	Cautious
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I	II	III	IV
<input type="checkbox"/> Directing	<input type="checkbox"/> Influencing	<input type="checkbox"/> Steady	<input type="checkbox"/> Cautious
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-Certain	<input type="checkbox"/> Optimistic	<input type="checkbox"/> Deliberate	<input type="checkbox"/> Restrained
<input type="checkbox"/> Adventurous	<input type="checkbox"/> Enthusiastic	<input type="checkbox"/> Predictable	<input type="checkbox"/> Logical
<input type="checkbox"/> Decisive	<input type="checkbox"/> Open	<input type="checkbox"/> Patient	<input type="checkbox"/> Analytical
<input type="checkbox"/> Daring	<input type="checkbox"/> Impulsive	<input type="checkbox"/> Stabilizing	<input type="checkbox"/> Precise
<input type="checkbox"/> Restless	<input type="checkbox"/> Emotional	<input type="checkbox"/> Protective	<input type="checkbox"/> Doubting
<input type="checkbox"/> Competitive	<input type="checkbox"/> Persuading	<input type="checkbox"/> Accommodating	<input type="checkbox"/> Curious
<input type="checkbox"/> Assertive	<input type="checkbox"/> Talkative	<input type="checkbox"/> Modest	<input type="checkbox"/> Tactful
<input type="checkbox"/> Experimenting	<input type="checkbox"/> Charming	<input type="checkbox"/> Easy-going	<input type="checkbox"/> Consistent
<input type="checkbox"/> Forceful	<input type="checkbox"/> Sensitive	<input type="checkbox"/> Sincere	<input type="checkbox"/> Perfectionist
Total	Total	Total _____	Total

Instructions for Scoring

1. Add the numbers in each column from top to bottom. Place the total number for that column in the space at the bottom of the column marked "Total".
2. After writing in the total for all four columns, check your accuracy by adding the 4 column totals together. They should equal 100. If the total of the four columns together does not equal 100, you've miscalculated somewhere.
3. Plot your numbers from each column in the graph box (on the previous page). For example, if your column I total was 15 you would place a dot in-between 14 and 16 in the Column I graph box. Do this for all four columns.

Descriptions of the Four Styles**D Dominant Director/Driver***This Person's tendencies include:*

- Getting immediate results
- Causing action
- Accepting challenges
- Making quick decisions
- Questioning the status quo
- Taking control
- Solving problems

Desirable environment includes:

- Power and authority
- Prestige and challenge
- Opportunity for individual accomplishments
- Wide scope of operations
- Direct answers
- Opportunity for advancement
- Freedom from control
- Many new and varied activities

S Steady Relater/Stable*This person's tendencies include:*

- Committing to routines
- Staying in one place
- Demonstrating patience
- Developing specialized skills
- Concentrating on the task
- Showing loyalty
- Being a good listener
- Calming excited people

Desirable environment includes:

- Security of the situation
- Status quo unless given reasons for change
- Minimal work infringement on home life
- Credit for work accomplished
- Sincere appreciation
- Identification with a group
- Traditional procedures

Action Plan for D*This person needs others who:*

- Weigh pros and cons
- Calculate risks
- Structure a more predictable environment
- Research facts
- Deliberate before deciding
- Recognize the needs of others

What D needs to increase effectiveness:

- Difficult assignments
- Understand they need people
- An occasional shock
- Identification with a group
- To verbalize the reasons for conclusions
- An awareness of existing sanctions/boundaries
- To pace self and to relax more

Action Plan for S*This person needs others who:*

- React quickly to change
- Respond to challenges
- Become involved in more than one thing
- Apply pressure on others
- Delegate to others
- Are flexible in work procedures
- Perform well in multiple tasks

What S needs to increase effectiveness:

- Preparation prior to change
- Validation of self-worth
- Information on who one's efforts contribute to the total effort
- Work associates of similar competence and sincerity
- Guidelines for accomplishing tasks
- Confidence in other's ability

I Interacting Socializer/Influencer

This person's tendencies include:

- Contacting people
- Making a favorable impression
- Creating a motivational environment
- Generating enthusiasm
- Entertaining people
- Desiring to help others
- Participating in a group

Desirable environment includes:

- Popularity, social recognition
- Public recognition of ability
- Freedom of expression
- Group activities outside of work
- Freedom from control and detail
- Opportunity to verbalize proposals
- Coaching and counseling skills
- Favorable working conditions

C Cautious Thinker/Analytic

This person's tendencies include:

- Attention to key directives and standards
- Concentrating on key details
- Working under known circumstances
- Being diplomatic with people
- Checking for accuracy
- Critical thinking/performance

Desirable environment includes:

- Security assurances
- Standard operating procedures
- Sheltered environment
- Reassurance
- No sudden or abrupt changes
- Being a part of a work group
- Status quo unless assured of quality control

Action Plan

This person needs others who:

- Concentrate on the task
- Seek facts
- Speak directly
- Respect sincerity
- Develop systematic approaches
- Are task oriented
- Take a logical approach

What I needs to increase effectiveness:

- Control of time
- Objectivity in decision-making
- Participatory management
- More realistic appraisals of others
- Priorities and deadlines
- To be more firm with others

Action Plan

This person needs others who:

- Desire to expand authority
- Delegate important tasks
- Make quick decisions
- Use policies only as guidelines
- Compromise with the opposition
- State unpopular positions

What C needs to increase effectiveness:

- Precision work
- Opportunity for careful planning
- Exact job and objective descriptions
- As much respect for peoples personal worth as for what they accomplish
- To develop tolerance for conflict

DISC Profile Behavior Summary

	Steady Relaters	Influencers	Cautious	Directors
Behavior Pattern	Open/Direct	Open/Direct	Self-Contained/ Indirect	Self-Contained Indirect
Appearance	-Casual -Conforming	-Fashionable -Stylish	-Formal -Conservative	-Businesslike -Functional
Work Space	-Personal -Relaxed -Friendly -Informal	-Stimulating -Personal -Cluttered -Friendly	-Structured -Organized -Functional -Formal	-Busy -Formal -Efficient -Structured
Pace	Slow/Easy	Fast/Spontaneous	Slow/Systematic	Fast/Decisive
Priority	Maintaining relationships	Relationships: interacting	The task: the Process	The task: the results
Fears	Confrontation	Loss of Prestige	Embarrassment/ Loss of control	Loss of Influence
Under Tension Will	Submit/ Defer	Attack/ be sarcastic	Withdraw/ avoid	Dictate/ Assert
Seeks	Attention	Recognition	Accuracy	Productivity
Needs to Know	How it will affect their personal circumstances	How it enhances their status	-How they justify it logically -How it works	-What it does -By when -What it costs
Gains security by	Close Relationships	Flexibility	Preparation	Taking Control
Wants to Maintain	Relationships	Status	Credibility	Success
Support Their	Feelings	Ideas	Thoughts	Goals
Achieves Acceptance by	-Conformity -Loyalty	-Playfulness -Stimulating the environment	-Correctness -Thoroughness	-Leadership -Competition

Likes you to be	Pleasant	Stimulating	Precise	To the Point
Wants to be	Liked	Admired	Correct	In charge
Irritated by	-Insensitivity -Impatience	-Boredom -Routine	-Surprises -Unpredictability	-Inefficiency -Indecision
Measures Personal Worth by	-Compatibility with others -Depth of relationships	- Acknowledgement -Recognition --Applause Compliments	-Precision -Accuracy -Activity	-Results -Track Record -Measurable Progress
Decisions are	Considered	Spontaneous	Deliberate	Decisive

4: Handling Failure

God created us to bear fruit, to be successful, to believe Him and to achieve great things with Him and for Him. That is in our spiritual makeup. Listen to what the Bible says. . .

Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” Gen 1:28

And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God: . . . “Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. . . “Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. . . “The Lord will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, . . . And the Lord will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground . . . And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them. Deuteronomy 28:2 – 13 (selected verses)

Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied. Acts 9:31

All of these verses and thousands of others either promise us success and blessing or give examples of it. God passionately desires to bless and to give us good success in ALL we put our hands to – especially in His ministry. But that is NOT the whole story. His blessing and our success in His work are not some magic formula, but rather a long process of many successes and perhaps what appears to be many failures along the way. How we deal with the failures will determine whether the promises of God are realized in our lives.

A Walk Through Bible History

The bible is a book of successes and failures, but perhaps our definition of each must be re-evaluated. *What is success? What is failure? What effect does each have upon us?*



Reflection: Take a few minutes to evaluate the lives of the following Biblical characters and describe their successes and failures. Which ended their life in failure and which in success? What was the difference between them?

- Abraham
- King David
- Samuel
- King Saul
- *Paul
- *Jesus
- *John Mark

As you examine these men's lives, you see a trail of apparent successes and apparent failures in ALL of them, but some ended in blessing and great achievement and others ended in failure and shame. *What was the difference? Why did some succeed and receive blessing where the others ended in failure?*

A World That Instills a Failure Mentality Within Us

Why do we view life's difficulties, mistakes, and setbacks as FAILURE? What has caused us to view life this way?

Most of us have grown up in a world, which has instilled within us an unholy view of the setbacks that occur in the journey. In most every institution we found ourselves within as young people, life's setbacks were called **FAILURES** and not given their proper perspective of how God sees things and how we should see things. Think of the following:^{vi}

- **The Home** – parents who penalize or punish us for not doing things 'right' the first time or for experimenting and trying new things.
- **Schools** – A school system that groups kids according to their early abilities in reading, writing and etc. instead of creating within children the ability to think, dream, and learn from the learning process.
- **Work** – a work environment that rewards people for instant success, for following orders, or for pleasing the boss, but limits creativity, risk and experimentation for greater success.
- **Church** – a church environment which creates a system of DO's and DON'Ts for people and if you keep these you are a good Christian instead of creating a passion for Jesus, for listening to the Holy Spirit, experimenting with hundreds of new things to reach people and discovering and using our gifts.

The result of this is that we have become addicted to the wrong things. Instead of being contagiously addicted to Jesus and constantly exploring new ways to bear greater fruit for Him (which will require risk, which will lead to setbacks and difficulties), we have become addicted to:

- Playing it safe within the system
- Living for the approval of others
- Not risking anything because of fear of failure or fear of rejection
- Living far below our potential, because finding full potential requires giving my all, doing new things, and taking risks

The Effects of Failure on our Life and Ministry

Anyone who attempts to achieve something great, to build something, or to change something will have to take risks and give much of their life. When you risk much and give much of yourself, the potential for things not turning out the way you desire or even 'failing' are high. Face it, you will have many things that seem like failure come your way as you minister in the Kingdom of God.



Discussion: Take five minutes with a partner and answer the two following questions:

1. List as many things that could happen in your ministry that you or others would consider a failure.
2. Describe the effect these apparent failures would have on you as you serve and minister.

As we study the Scriptures and look into the lives of God's servants, we see failures or perhaps better termed "setbacks" of all sorts:

- Abraham – allowing fear to control him as he told others Sarah was his sister and they took his wife; listening to the voice of human reasoning and having a child through Hagar which caused many problems
- Samuel – failure in raising his children in a godly manner and passing the spiritual mantle to them; failure in properly discipling Saul and seeing him crumble under the stress of leadership
- King Saul – failure to obey God rather than please men; failure to repent when confronted with wrong
- King David – moral failure with sexual sin; covering up sin by murdering his friend; numbering the people and causing God's anger to come upon the nation and 70,000 of your own people die because of your decision
- The apostles when they tried to cast demons out of a boy and nothing happened; Peter when he denied Jesus three times; The Apostles when they all turned away from the Lord and scattered during His trial
- Paul – quarreling with Barnabas over John Mark and leaving the relationship in anger; seeing your disciples turn away from the Lord and go back to the world (Demas)
- John Mark – quitting in the middle of the ministry because things got difficult

These were real people with real emotions and feelings. At times when their own weaknesses and failures hit, they were deeply wounded and deeply hurt. Many emotions must have flooded their hearts as they faced their own weaknesses and problems. They were not supermen; they were normal human beings.

Failure came in two forms: **their own failings and the failings of others**.

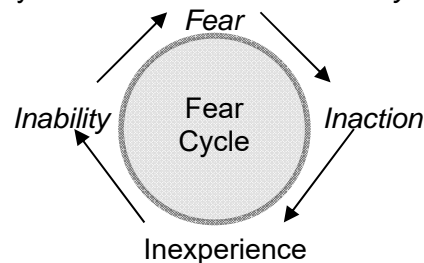
How failure affects people

When we face failures in your own life or in the lives of others, many emotions take place. Things like

- **Disappointment**
- **Discouragement**
- ***Feelings of embarrassment**
- ***Losing trust in others**

- **Deep hurt**
- **Inward feelings of worthlessness**

All of these things cause failure to get a hold of us emotionally, and it stops them from achieving anything significant for God. If others come in with criticism or even ridicule at this point, the hurt and pain can almost become unbearable. This often leads to a destructive cycle called *the fear of failure cycle*.



When we fail and begin to live in the fear of failure, it causes us to move into a mode of inaction. We simply will not step out and try new things again. The inactions causes us to not gain the wisdom and skills that come through experience which is the key to growth and achieving great things. The lack of experience creates an inability to handle similar or new situations as they come to us in our lives, which leads back to fear as we seek to step into new challenges and opportunities. The longer we remain in the fear for failure cycle, the more difficult it becomes to break free.^{vii}

Fear of failure causes

- *Paralysis* – President Harry S. Truman of the USA said, “*The worst danger we face is the danger of being paralyzed by doubts and fears.*”
- *Procrastination* – Some are not paralyzed by fear, fear sends them into procrastination – simply waiting around until the magic someday comes. The problem is, that magic time NEVER comes. Victor Kiam stated that procrastination is the natural assassin of all opportunity.
- *Purposelessness* – Many people who live in the fear cycle simply want to come to the end of the day avoiding the pain of making another mistake. They live without purpose. George Bernard Shaw said, “*A life spent in making mistakes is not only more honorable but more useful than a life spent doing nothing.*”



Biblical Case Study: Read the story of David in 1 Sam 30.1-19.

David had led his men and their families to Ziklag, and under his leadership all of the wives, children and all of their belongings were stolen away. They were devastated. How did his men consider David a failure? How do you think he felt at first about himself and his leadership? How did he face his own failure in this story? How would you have responded? What can you learn from David's dealing with his failure? How does the story end?

5: Failing Forward

John Maxwell, well known author and teacher on leadership, created a phrase that is very powerful – ***failing forward***. This is the idea that no apparent failure is in itself evil or bad, but rather all failure can be faced in such a way that it becomes a positive **stepping stone** for our lives and not a destructive **stumbling block**. It is all in how we view our failures and the failures of others on whether we move forward or backward. Unfortunately, most will move backward when failure comes knocking on the door, because they don't know how to properly view it or handle it. Failing forward is more than having a positive attitude about difficulties, it is the ability to get back up after you've been knocked down, embrace the failure by taking an honest look at what happened, learn from the situation, and move forward with greater wisdom, skills and anointing for Him.



Bible Study: The Bible speaks of our failures in many ways. Read the following passages and describe what the Scriptures teach us about God and our failures in life: Ps. 37.23-24; Prov. 24.16; Eccl. 4.10

The Right Perspective

So how do you view the setbacks of life and Fail Forward? How do you keep from Failing Backward like so many do? How do you take the difficulties of life and allow them to be your teachers that become stepping-stones to greater success in the Lord?

The first thing we must do is to redefine failure. The word failure is powerful. It speaks of finality, low achievement and it not only tells us how we performed, but it can also define how we and others see ourselves. It is crucial that we have the right definition of failure.

Failure is NOT. . .

- Making an error
- Having setbacks while trying to do something significant
- Coming up short on a project
- Not reaching your goal the first time
- Not knowing how to do something new right the first few times

Failure is NOT^{viii}. . .

- Unavoidable
- An event
- An enemy
- Irreversible
- A stigma on our lives
- The final word on our lives

It all has to do with our perspective – how we see things. Here some things we must do to gain a proper perspective:

We Must . . .

1) **View life as a classroom and everything we do and encounter as a lesson for growth and greater fruitfulness.** Failure and setbacks are NOT unavoidable. They are a major part of the process in life and the Kingdom of God. Listen to a few Rules for Being Humans that put things in perspective:

- *Rule #1 – You will learn lessons*
- *Rule #2 – There are NO mistakes, only lessons*
- *Rule #3 – A lesson will be repeated until it is learned*
- *Rule #4 – If you don't learn the lesson the first time, the lesson becomes more difficult. (Pain is a great teacher)*
- *Rule #5 – You know you have learned the lesson when your actions and thinking have changed^{ix}*

When we first learn to read or to write, it is not the immediate success that trains us, but rather our failures. If we have a teacher or parent who lovingly corrects the mistakes we make, each mistake becomes a lesson, each failure a stepping-stone. If we, or our teacher/parent see the mistakes as failures, we will get frustrated and give up in the process.

2) **Realize that temporary setbacks (failure) are necessary to gain the necessary wisdom, character, skill and grace from God to achieve great things.** Failure is not permanent, it is not eternal, it is not irreversible, and it can change if you embrace it and use it to your advantage.

- There's an old saying in Texas that goes: "It doesn't matter how much milk you spill as long as you don't lose your cow." In other words, mistakes are not irreversible. The problems come when you see only the "spilled milk" and not the bigger picture – the cow is still in the barn, and you can milk it again.

3) **Determine that we are NOT a victim. We can take responsibility to change and to change the world through the power of God.** When difficult things come, people take on a victim mentality and they refuse to face the setback, learn from it and change. God gives each of us the power to take life by the throat and change the world! Failure and setbacks are NOT a stigma on our lives unless we are slaves to the approval of others.

In the world today, we have a tremendous problem with our mentality. Many have a victim mentality that will most always lead them into a life where failure is deeply damaging and hard to overcome. Here are some signs of a victim mentality:

- **Blaming Others:** For many of your problems or for your lack of success it is someone else's fault. It's not my fault.
- **Entitlement:** The world owes me something. I deserve something.

- **My Rights:** I have rights and I demand that they be upheld.

4) Understand that failing forward is growing and achieving great things by a lifestyle of trial and error, of risk taking and trying new things.

When this is your mentality, you are not afraid to try new things, to go through difficulties or to face setbacks and errors. When this is our mentality and lifestyle, we view the setbacks, errors, and shortcomings of life as the lessons for our growth that we have already spoken of.

5) Develop and maintain a positive mindset of faith together with a tenacious ability to get up, learn, and keep going when things don't work out! Faith and tenaciousness are two attributes that are critical in learning to take our apparent failures and make them stepping stones to greatness. As we go through times and seasons of difficulties, the devil will attempt to . . .

- **Steal our faith.** The bible speaks of the *fight of faith* and it is often in these times of difficulty and setback that our faith is tested. If we can stay in the spirit of faith with Him as we face, embrace, and learn from our failures, we will grow and move ahead.
- **Rob our ability to keep on going.** The second attack of the enemy is to have us give up. He tries to sow so much disappointment or discouragement into our hearts that we give up on our action. We must develop a tenacious, tough mentality that can face the setbacks of growing in life and keep moving forward with positive, faith-filled action.

Failing Forward - Learning and Growing from Your Failures^x Here are some Action Steps to Develop a Lifestyle of Failing Forward

1. Commit your heart-ache to the Lord. All through the Psalms, we see David going through the most difficult times and his heart is exceedingly heavy. But through them all, he comes through in victory. How does He do it? He learns to commit the heart-ache and the failure to the Lord.



Bible Study: Study the following Psalms and discover how David dealt with his problems, setbacks, failures, and heart-aches:

1. When he had sinned with Bathsheba – Ps. 32 & 51
2. When his soul was low – Ps. 42
3. Ps. 119.28; Ps. 23.3

In Ps. 23.3, David tells us a great principle of learning to take the failures of life that affect our hearts and souls, “**He restores our soul.**” Learning to take the pains of failure and bring them to the Lord will help our soul remain healthy, strong and alive in the journey.

2. Ask the Right Questions:

- **What Caused The Failure?** ^[SEP] You have to willing to face the setback, embrace and ask yourself some honest questions like: Were you in a no-win situation? Is there a certain point when things broke down? Can you pinpoint one central mistake?
- **What Can I Learn From What Happened?** ^[SEP] Unfortunately many people react to adversity in a negative way and are afraid to face it and learn. People that approach adversity like this become so consumed by the setback that they miss the lesson. But there is always a way to learn from adversity and mistakes. Lord Byron once conveyed: "Adversity is the first path to truth."
- **Who Can Help Me With This Area?** ^[SEP] Generally speaking, there are two kinds of learning: experience, which is gained from you own mistakes, and wisdom, which is learned from the mistakes of others. Admiral Hyman Rickover said, "All of us must become better informed. It is necessary for us to learn from others' mistakes. You will not live long enough to make them all yourself." As much as possible, glean wisdom from the wise counsel of others. Seek advice, but make sure it's from someone who has successfully handled mistakes or adversities.

3. Get up and move on. This is critical. We must get up out of the dust and start moving forward again. You may have to ask yourself, "**How do I move forward from here?**" ^[SEP] Moving forward leads us to taking action again. Only action that is coupled with a living faith in Jesus changes things in us and in others. We must learn and then move on by taking fresh action for the glory of God!

Dealing with the Failures of Others

There is one other issue in dealing with this issue of failure: *What do we do when others around us fail? How do we respond? Do we build them up or tear them down?* Fortunately, the Bible is full of stories of how people did it right and how others did it wrong.



Bible Study: Read the following stories or passages and list what you learn from each in this area of dealing with the failures of others.

1. Jesus and the 12 – Matt. 17.14-21; How did He deal with them after they had all denied Him and fled after His resurrection.
 2. Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark – Acts 15.36-41 & 2 Tim. 4.1
 3. Paul requesting Philemon to receive back and love the slave Onesimus who had fled – book of Philemon
-

The way we deal with the setbacks and failures of others will determine their rise to maturity and their fruitfulness in God's service. The church as a whole has dealt very legalistically and harshly with failure and has NOT created an atmosphere of *failing forward* for followers. Here are some practical insights from the Scriptures:

- **Mercy** – always err on the side of mercy
- **Experimentation** – create the environment in your ministry where it is OK for others to try new things and not succeed the first few times. Teach them that the only way to grow is to step out.
- **Restore** – Peter had failed the Lord miserably at the denial but Jesus restored him. John Mark had failed Paul and Barnabas on their first journey by quitting in the middle, but Barnabas went to him and restored him, etc.
- **Correct** – In each of these cases there was a gentle correction and instruction brought to the wounded ones.



Reflection: *How have you dealt with those who have failed or have failed you in the ministry? What do you need to do to change in dealing with others? Do you need to go to someone right now and restore and build them up?*



Application: **Case Study #1 – The Father's of Flight^{xi}**

Everyone has heard of Orville and Wilbur Wright, the fathers of motorized flight, but the details of their success on December 17, 1903 is very interesting. The Wrights prior to this great breakthrough were unknowns in the world, had no university education, and were in NO WAY considered leaders in this field. The leader of the field was Dr. Samuel P. Langley. He was a respected professor of math and astronomy and the director of the Smithsonian Institution. He had published several important works on aerodynamics, had directed many successful tests with unmanned flight, and had such a compelling vision of manned flight that in 1898, he received a large financial grant from the US War Department to build an airplane a man could fly.

On October 8, 1903, Langley anticipated his dreams to be realized as journalist and many onlookers watched a test pilot climb into an experimental aircraft called the Great Aerodrome. As the aircraft was launched, part of it got caught on the launching mechanism and it crashed forty five meters from the launch point. The reports in the Newspapers and from many were full of ridicule and criticism.

At first, Langley did not let the failure or the criticism of others stop him. But eight weeks later, after another failed attempt and much accompanying criticism, Langley quit, gave up on the dream, and stated publicly that it could not be done.

A few days later in Kittyhawk, North Carolina, a sight they chose for most of their tests where there would be NO Reporters and very few on-lookers, the uneducated, unknown,

and unfunded inventors, the Wright brothers successfully flew! What is the end of the story? Langley suffered a stroke two years later and died a broken man while the Wright brothers continued experimenting, growing and completely broke through in the world of manned flight. As you study the development of the Wright Brother's plane, you discover that they "failed" hundreds of times in the journey! It was their discoveries in the midst of apparent "failures" that taught them the lessons that led to success.

1. **What was the difference between the Wright Brothers and Dr. Langley?**
 2. **What can you learn from Dr. Langley's story? What would you have done differently?**
 3. **What is the secret to the Wright Brother's success?**
 4. **What part does dealing with the criticism of others play in failing forward?**
-



Application: **Case Study #2: Jesus and Simon Peter**

Jesus chose Peter and had his story written well for us to teach us how to deal with the failures of others as we lead. Jesus was a fantastic leader and from His life, we can learn great principles of dealing with others. Read the three following accounts and discover how Jesus dealt with Peter.

1. Failure in having the wrong way of thinking: Matt. 16.21-25 & John 13.2-11
 - *What was Peter's problem here? How did Jesus deal with Peter's immature thinking?*
 2. The Denial of Jesus and Peter's restoration: Mark 14.27-31, 14.66-72 & John 21.15-19
 - *What was the source of Peter's failure in this story? What did Peter do and why? How have you seen people treated when they did something like this in the church? What does Jesus do? What can you learn from this story?*
-

6: When Conflict Comes

When we enter the ministry, most of us have a very pretty picture of what things are going to look like: We will preach the word with power, people will be changed, the church will grow, everyone will love us and each other, and the Kingdom of God will expand. All of these things will be true if we don't quit in the journey, but there will be another unavoidable path we will walk down over and over again in our service – **CONFLICT**. We will all walk the path of conflict.

Conflict is unavoidable because all of us in the church still have a sinful nature, we live in a fallen world, and the devil is still prowling around lion seeking to devour people, ministries and churches. Learning to face conflict and handle it properly will be one of your great weapons for winning the battles in a life in ministry.



Discussion: With a partner, discuss several situations of conflict you have seen in the church or been involved with. What happened? How was it handled? What was the outcome? What happens if we ignore it or don't handle it properly?

Different types of conflict

The pages of the Bible and church history books are full of stories of conflict. It is a part of humanity. Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, and Paul all faced conflict and so will we. What are the sources of conflict and what are the different kinds of conflict we will face in our ministry?

Conflict Within the Ranks

The first sort of conflict we will face is conflict within the relationships of those we lead. Some of these will come in the form of:

- **Unmet Needs** – In Acts 6, in the early church, a conflict arose among widows about unmet needs in their lives.
- **Personal Ambition** – As we study the lives of the disciples, we see them fighting for position amongst themselves, fighting for control.
- **Change** – A third potential source of conflict within the people is when change is proposed. Some will adopt and get on board early, but many others will likely oppose change and conflict can arise.
- **The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing** – A fourth type of conflict you may have to confront is a wolf in sheep's clothing – a person who appears 'good' on the outside but has arisen or come to attack the vision and the flock for personal gain. (See Acts 20.29-31)

All of these sources of potential conflict bring their own special problems and can rob you of life and joy in the ministry and cause great harm to the flock.



Bible Study: Read the following passages and discuss what the conflict was about, how it was dealt with, and what the outcome was.

1. Mark 9.33-37
 2. Acts 6.1-7
 3. Acts 15.1-22
 4. Acts 15.36-41
-

Conflict Against the Leader

A second source, even more painful, that you will face at various times in your ministry is conflict that is aimed directly against you. Although your heart is pure and you are seeking to serve Christ and people, others will in different ways attack you and the vision God has given you. Remember this, when you are attacked, you are in good company for all leaders in the Bible were. Here are some types of attack you will likely face over the years:

- **Criticism** – Jesus and the Pharisees
 - **Attack on our leadership** - Korah's Rebellion (Numbers 1.1-35)
 - **Complaining and murmuring (Sheep Bite)** - Moses and the Israelites (Ex. 15.22-25; 16.1-3; 17.1-7)
 - **When your people turn on you because of your apparent failure** – David at Ziklag (2 Sam 30.1-9)
 - **Hostile Takeover** - Absalom & David (2 Sam 15-19)
 - **Betrayal** – Judas' Kiss (Luke 22.47-48)
-



Reflection: Read a few of the stories above. *How did the leader feel in each instance? Place yourself in their place. How would these things have affected you? Could you have dealt with these conflicts and attacks as they did? Why is facing conflict against you and your ministry important to learn?*

Is All Conflict Bad?

Next we must ask ourselves this question: ***is all conflict bad? Is it all from the devil? Does it always produce bad results?***

Many people feel that conflict is bad and comes from the devil, but this is NOT necessarily true. And even that which comes from an evil source can have positive results if we learn to handle it properly.

The conflict in the church in Acts 6 had a very positive outcome; many new young men were brought into the ministry. The conflict between the apostles as they

were arguing about who was the greatest had a wonderful result; Jesus was able to bring truth to them about leadership in the Kingdom of God. The conflict of Acts 15 about Gentiles and salvation served to clarify the true spirit of the Gospel. Even the betrayal of Jesus by Judas had a wonderful end result because Jesus saw the eternal purposes of God!

Conflict is often one of the great building blocks God uses to build our lives, our ministries and the churches we lead.

What can we learn about conflict in the church?^{xii}

- Some conflicts appear to be about minor concerns, but in reality involve deeper issues.
- Conflict helps us gain clarity.
- Certain conflicts are worth investing energy because they remind the church about its mission.
- Don't use all your creative energy on minor scrapes disguised as "crisis".
- The church is called to speak a prophetic word to the world, stirring up conflict on issues such as injustice, prejudice and hatred.

Ken Sande, in his book, *The Peacemaker*, says, "Contrary to what you may have heard, God's highest purpose for you is . . . to conform you to the likeness of his Son! He began to change you the day you yielded yourself to him, and he will continue this process throughout your life. Conflict is one of the many tools that God can use to help you develop a more Christ like character."^{xiii}

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." 2 Cor 4.16-18

The Results of Conflict

When conflicts, attacks and criticisms come several things can happen:

Wounded hearts & broken spirits – the first thing that can happen is that our heart and usually the hearts of others gets wounded. The attack and the conflict usually goes inside of us and does some damage. Consider the following:

- Imagine how Jesus felt at Judas' betrayal, when Peter denied Him and claimed he did not even know Him, and when all the others fled caring only for their own lives.
- David, when all the broken down men he had helped turned against him at Ziklag, how did he feel?
- What about Moses? How must he have felt after he had suffered and sacrificed so much for the children of Israel and in return they constantly criticized him and complained against his leadership

David in Ps. 109 describes attacks against himself and the effects it has upon his life. He speaks of his wounded heart and how all of his strength has left him. (Read Ps. 109.22-31) This condition is called a broken spirit.



Bible Study: Listen to what the Bible says about a broken spirit. . .

Prov 15.13 Prov 17.22 Prov 18.14

When our heart has been wounded and our spirit has been broken all of our strength on the inside dries up and we have little motivation, little energy, and can accomplish nothing for the Lord.

Offense – A second result of attacks and conflict is offense. Offense is a deadly disease in the world and in the church. When a person becomes offended by another, it creates a giant wall between the two. The Bible says, “**A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, And contentions are like the bars of a castle.**” **Prov 18.19**

Jesus spoke of being offended many times. He knew it would be a great weapon the enemy would try to use against us. The Greek word for *offense* is the word **scandalon**. This word speaks of the stick used to put bait on in a trap to catch animals. In other words, the Bible tells us that offense is a bait the devil uses to catch us and put us in a trap.

As we deal with conflict, attacks, and criticisms, we must . . .

- Guard our own hearts against offense. Love has NO RIGHT to get offended at another no matter what!
- Help others guard their hearts against offense.
- Make sure that we do not pass offense to others or allow it to be passed in our church

Broken Relationships & division – a third result of conflict is broken relationships. This is the aim of the devil – if he can wound our hearts, break our spirits and then break our relationships, he will win. Jesus spoke so much about love for one-another, unity, denying self because He knew that broken relationships is one of the great tools of the devil.

As relationships begin to break down other consequences can occur such as, division in the church, people taking sides against one-another and finally church splits. Once a church splits it is very hard for the original church or the new split to ever have success or be blessed by God.

Destruction of the flock – all of these other results of conflict end in one thing, the flock of God is destroyed. It may not physically go away, but the Spirit of God working within, the people of God living on Mission with Him, love and unity will all fade away and Satan has gained victory.

One of the greatest ways Satan tries to destroy the flock is by striking the shepherd. Jesus quoted the proverb, “*strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.*” We must understand that it is just not conflict in the body that will destroy the flock but also the conflict and attack aimed against the leader that can also cause the sheep to scatter.



Application: **Case Study – The Mishandled Revival**

At the end of 1999 and the beginning of 2000, the Holy Spirit visited the church in a mighty way, but it was quite unusual also. Services began to be held 4 nights a week and mighty miracles were taking place. Many were easy to find in the Bible, but there were a few others that could not be found there. Over 500 people were baptized in nine weeks and thousands of lives were changed. That is the good news, but there is more to the story.

During the nine weeks, a number of leaders began to have problems with some of the things taking place. Also, the small group ministry of the church, which was the churches’ heart and soul began to suffer. Conflict broke out. Leaders felt attacked by other leaders, small group leaders began to grumble and criticize the pastors. The pastors met often with the disgruntled people, but they defended themselves and the revival. In the end, the number of small groups went from about 25 to nine. About a dozen key leaders got offended and eventually left the church, but not before spreading more offense to others. Although thousands were blessed by the revival and God touched many powerfully, It took three to four years for the church itself to be healed and regain its strength.

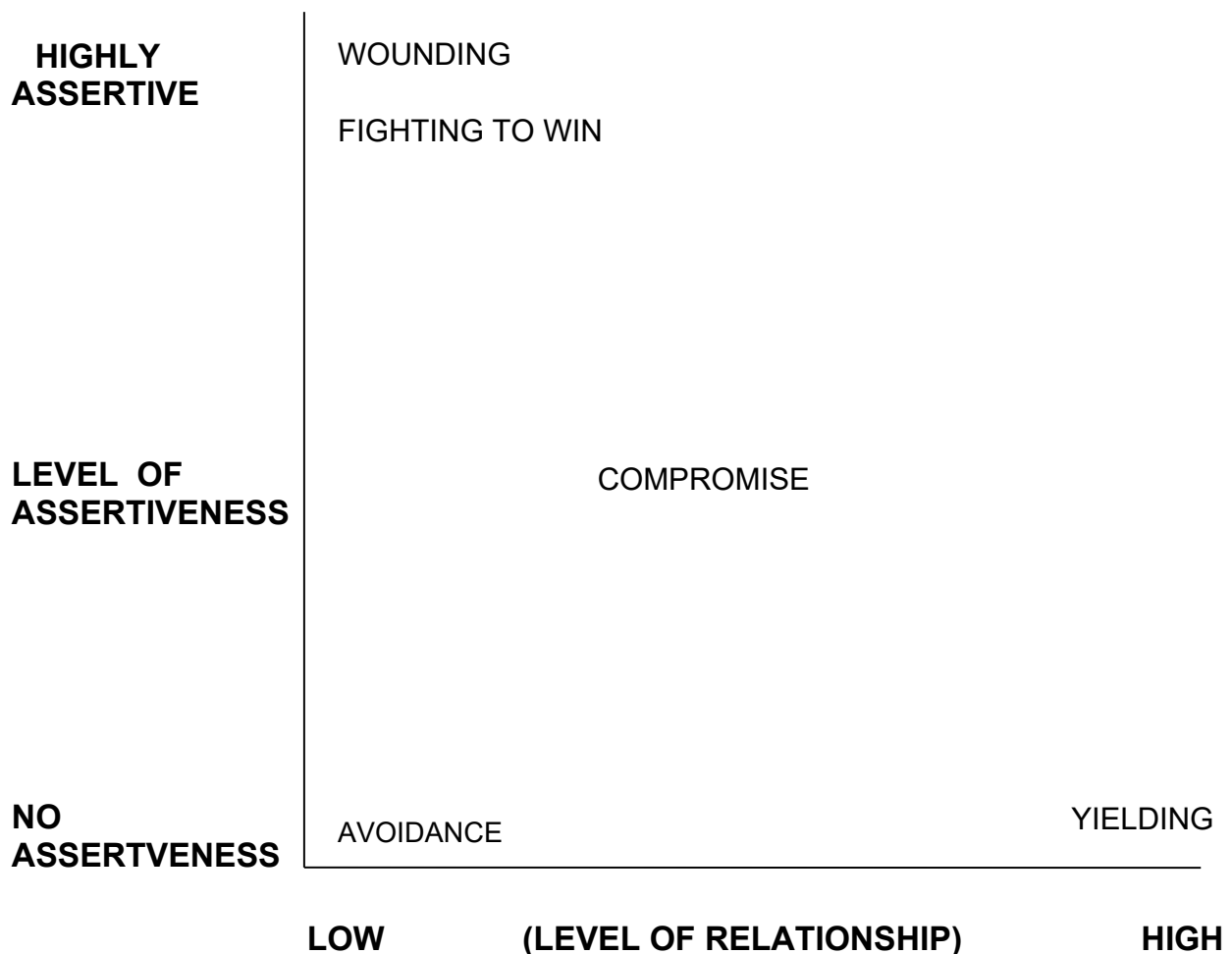
What could have been done differently? Who was right, the leaders or the pastors? What should the pastors have done? What should the offended leaders have done? What would you do in this case?

7: Facing Conflict Well

As we walk through the life in the ministry, it is certain that all of these types of conflict will come. Conflict is NOT evil, often it is a gift of God. How we face it determines whether conflict becomes our friend or our enemy.

Wrong Ways of Approaching Conflict

- **Avoidance** – I/we won't face it at all. (You lose & I lose)
- **Fighting to Win** – I am right and you will see it my way! (I win & you lose)
- **Compromise** – Don't really resolve the issue, let's just make peace. (We both lose)
- **Yielding** – OK, have it your way, it's not worth another argument (You win & I lose)
- **Wounding** – I might not win, but I can hurt you in the process (I win & you lose)



Practical Steps to Dealing With Conflict

1. Maintain a Christ-like attitude during our experiences with conflict.



Bible Study: Read a few of the following verses and describe the Christ like attitudes that Paul speak of. How would these be important in dealing with a personal attack or some form of conflict?

2 Cor 10.1

Phil 2.3-8

Eph. 4.30-5.2

“Paul challenges us to demonstrate the meekness and gentleness of Christ. “The meekness and gentleness of Christ, when activated in the character of a leader, makes the authority of the leader appealing.” “Meekness means strength under control; here it is a relational term used to offer leniency to those deserving of greater punishment. Gentleness typically means to be reasonable or fair; when coupled with meekness, the word means to be gentle or especially kind.” The opponents of Paul had mistaken his meekness as timidity. Paul reminded them that his boldness (a worldly standard for leadership) had come under the control of Christ. So must ours if we are to be effective in conflict resolution.”^{xiv}

It is critical to develop and maintain in all attacks and conflict we face the very attitude of Christ. These three attitudes – gentleness, meekness, and honesty will be the cornerstone of coming through conflict well. As we display a Christ like response and attitude, we will have much greater chances of winning over our opponents and definitely of pleasing the Father in all that we do.

2. Use the right weapons; God’s truth (not the world’s humanistic methods) in loving communication and confrontation

- **Seek the Truth:** Take it to the Lord asking for His perspective on the issue. It is important to see from God’s point of view, especially when you are being attacked. Moses was a master at this (See Moses’ response in Numbers 16) It is critical if we are going to walk in God’s truth, that we get His point of view of the problem. At times Moses did not defend himself at all, and at other times he did. The secret: He always sought God’s truth.
- **Communicate the Truth** – communication is the key to solving most life conflicts. We must be committed to talking even when it hurts. If we will not be willing to talk, we will only build bigger walls between us. Communication is the major key to resolving problems, conflicts and attacks. The faster we address the issues and the person, the more likely it seems that the conflict will begin to be resolved. The longer things boil in people’s hearts and minds, the bigger the issues become.
 - If possible, don’t let the sun go down on your anger. Deal with things quickly.
 - Choose the right time and place for any confrontational meetings. When people are tired or in the middle of another big project, the timing is probably not good.

- Speak with the proper attitude communicating the truth (as you see it) in love.
- Communicate the specific action or issue at hand without attacking or wounding. The issue at hand and the relationship is what are important not winning and losing.
- Listen, Listen, and then Listen some more
- Avoid all tricks, games and manipulations
- Take responsibility for you own mistakes, apologize and seek forgiveness.
- Avoid bringing up past mistakes and problems. Focus on right now.
- ***Be willing to stay in the communication process to the end. Don't quit because it is hard.***

3. Consider the welfare of all parties involved.

As stated many times before, we are NOT seeking to win and we MUST give up the desire to be

RIGHT. If we try to win or be right, we will almost always hurt and alienate others.

- There are times when we must remain silent and not defend ourselves (the example of Moses Numbers 12 & Numbers 16)
- There are times when we must think about others even when we are hurting also. A great guiding principal is Phil 2.3-4
- There are times when we must give up our rights for the sake of the Kingdom and others

4. Remain focused on God's purpose and glory, not our purpose and glory

In all that we do, we cannot lose sight that God has an eternal will and purpose. His will is that the Great Commission of His Son be fulfilled, that the church be built, that love wins amongst His people. We cannot make compromises on the will of God or the purposes and glory of God. This means at times, after we have done all that we can do, we might have to let people leave. We cannot compromise God's will for peace with others. We might have to stand upon the Word in the midst of a conflict in order NOT to compromise God's plans. Unity at all costs is NOT God's will. His eternal purposes and plans must be fulfilled!

You find instances in the Bible where leaders compromise God's purpose and glory to keep peace amongst the people. This is NOT the way to go. As we deal with these problems, we do it in loving confrontation, but always keeping in mind the revealed will and work of God and never compromising these.

5. Keep your own heart healthy and clean

As you encounter all conflict the potential for personal hurt, bitterness, and anger is great. It is critical to keep your own heart clean and healthy.

- Clean means free from bitterness, anger, and unforgiveness
- Healthy means free from hurt and pain

Jesus gave some great advice about this:

But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. ²⁹ To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your

goods do not ask them back. ³¹And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. Luke 6.27-31

This is Jesus' prescriptions for dealing with conflict. It is great guidance for the relationships themselves, but it is perhaps even clearer guidance to help cleanse and heal our heart from the personal pain we have experienced. These attitudes are healing to our relationships, but they also help bring healing and cleansing to our hearts. Jesus said. . .

- *Love your enemies*
- *Do good to those who hate you*
- *Bless those who curse you*
- *Pray for those who use you*
- *Turn your cheek when attacked and offer the other cheek*
- *When someone takes from you, give them more*



Reflection: Here are some great questions to go through when resolving conflict:

- 1. Have you maintained a Christ like attitude of meekness and gentleness toward those with whom you have conflict?**
 - 2. Have you been able to state your opinion or purpose clearly and do you feel strongly about your goals in the situation?**
 - 3. Have you prayed thoroughly about this situation to determine the mind and truth of God?**
 - 4. Have you discovered possible areas of selfish desires in this situation that could stand in the way of God's will or the healing of relationships?**
 - 5. Have you asked the Lord to enable you to see the other person's point of view and what their good would be in this?**
 - 6. Have you considered that the other person's motives are pure?**
 - 7. Have you considered the effects this conflict is having on others around you as they watch you resolve this conflict?**
 - 8. Have you demonstrated genuine humility by appreciating the importance of the other person and their views?**
 - 9. How will God be glorified in this conflict or will man be glorified?**
 - 10. How will God's will and purposes be served in this conflict?^{xv}**
-



Application: Case Study – YOU

Think of a time when you were personally attacked or had a major conflict with someone. How did you handle it? Did God receive glory? How would you do it differently if you were currently going through the situation? In what way did you keep your heart clean and healthy?

8: Ministry and the Family

One of the most difficult areas of ministry to balance is family relationships. It is hard work planting a church or leading a ministry and if it is to be successful, you are going to have to make a sacrifice of time and effort. But it doesn't get any easier once the ministry is up and running. Committing sufficient time to be home with your wife and children becomes more challenging the more successful you become in ministry. The more lives you touch and the larger your church, the more time they demand.

How do we keep from alienating our spouses and our children while trying to build the kingdom of God? There is no easy answer to this question.

God's Priorities For Families In Ministry



Bible Study: Before we go any further, let's be sure we understand what God's priorities are when it comes to ministry and family. Read the following scriptures and make note of the instructions/expectations.

Ephesians 6:1-4; I Timothy 3:4-5; Titus 1:6

If you want to get a glimpse of God's attitude toward leaders in the church all you need to do is look at the qualifications he lays out for elders. It is important to note that these qualifications, found in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1, are not limited to the top leaders. These qualifications are for all Christians. Paul is simply stating that those chosen to lead must be successfully *fulfilling* the qualifications.

How important is this to God? He makes a revealing statement in I Timothy 3:5. Paul says '*if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?*' There is no mistaking God's priority here. Our credibility as pastors or ministers or leaders relies on our commitment to building a godly home. A spiritual mentor of mine would often say, "the kingdom of God begins in the home." I've never forgotten those words. If you want to know if you can build the kingdom in your city, first build the kingdom in your family.

Building the Kingdom of God at Home

I have heard many authors and speakers suggest that if ministry takes time away from the family, then you should quit your ministry. I understand the thinking behind this. These counselors are saying that if a choice has to be made, don't sacrifice the family. However, I think they've missed the greater point. I WANT my children to learn how to sacrifice for the kingdom of God. But they need to be ready and the sacrifice needs to be theirs.

Perhaps the best way to explain is to give you a glimpse inside our home. Our home is different from other homes. It isn't because we are more orderly (if only!). It isn't because things are always calm and serene (4 children can really fill up a room). It is because my wife and I take responsibility for our children's faith. We

talk about our faith. We talk about changing the world. We study the Bible. We talk about each other's giftings and callings. We pray together. We worship together. And then we minister together. The kingdom of God is alive and well in our home and this has given us the proper foundation to build a ministry.

When it came time for me to travel full-time with Prepare International, we all knew it would mean a sacrifice of time away from the family. But we talked about it, and prayed together and when I made the decision, it was a family decision. This was not just my ministry, this was OUR ministry. This attitude makes all the difference. I'm not dictating what their sacrifice is going to be. Every time I travel to Europe, my family *sends* me, just as a church sends a missionary. And they continue to grow and prepare for the times that they will travel with me and minister as well.

Inappropriate Sacrifice

Sacrificing for the ministry is not a bad thing. It is part of the territory. However, there are some things that God never intended for us to sacrifice.

- Involvement in rearing and disciplining our children.
- Time alone with our spouses sharing on an intimate level.
- Developing the faith of our children.
- Times devoted to fun and relaxation.
- Time alone with God



Reflection: Take a moment to think about how your family is doing. Are they supportive of your ministry or resentful? Is your spouse your greatest support or your greatest critic? Does your family see your ministry as their ministry? What might need to change? What do you need to do to bring peace and health into your home?

Traps of the Ministry

If we are not careful we can easily be lured into one or more of the following traps.

1. ***Spiritual superiority***. When you receive a call into ministry but the spouse does not feel that same calling, it can be tempting to consider yourself spiritually superior to your spouse. We sometimes feel that our spouse is not walking with God like they should and then we assume that we must make decisions without them because they wouldn't understand. While it is true that many couples are at different places on their spiritual journeys, this mentality is a trap that will destroy the family and ultimately disqualify the minister.
2. ***Spiritual Isolation***: The most common trap that pastors and leaders fall into is a pattern of isolating themselves from God. It is the ultimate irony in ministry. When we become consumed with ministry activity, the first thing we sacrifice is our time alone with God and our personal study of the scriptures. After a while we are no longer operating out of the overflow of

the Holy Spirit, but we are operating out of our own strength. We begin to make critical mistakes and our strength quickly fades. Burnout is always the end result. This isolation feeds all other traps and destructive cycles.

3. **Spiritual Mistress:** When our ministry begins to replace our family relationships, we essentially withhold the love intended for our spouses and we focus our affections on our ministry. This often results in the spouse and children harboring bitterness and anger toward the minister and the ministry.

Finding the Balance

Finding the balance between your family and your ministry will only happen if you give it your attention. Your children will not be raised by default. Your spouse will not continue to love you and support you just because you're married.

Relationships will always deteriorate unless they are properly fed. Dedicating specific time to your spouse and to your children is the only way to establish the kingdom at home.

The following steps may help you to build a proper balance:

- Set aside time to talk with your spouse about the gaps and problems that currently exist. If it is needed repent of any neglect or spiritual forcing that you have done.
- Involve your family in making a plan for family time, date time and any other times that are important to your family.
- Set specific times to pray together as a family, study scripture and establish the kingdom in your home.
- Talk with your family about the sacrifices that need to be made for the kingdom and call your family into the ministry.

9: Finishing Well

The God who called us into this great life of ministering for and with Jesus Christ intends for us to finish well. To finish with greater love for Him, a healthy emotional life and wonderful relationships. To finish with a deep gratitude in our hearts that He called us, we obeyed, people were transformed and God was glorified. Paul said it like this. . . *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.* 2 Tim 4.7-8

One last issue, we want to discuss is the issue of finishing well or in today's terms. . **.avoiding burnout!**

What is Burnout?

"It was a grey Canadian morning in April 1982. The children had gone to school, my wife to work, and I did something I'd never done before. I turned the phone down, put a note on the front door, and went back to bed. I was burned out - and within two months resigned my ministry there." Rowland Croucher, Australian Pastor^{xvi}

"Burnout is emotional exhaustion, 'compassion fatigue'" - Dr. Arch Hart. Burnout is 'a state of physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental exhaustion marked by physical depletion and chronic fatigue, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, and by development of a negative self-concept and negative attitudes towards work, life and other people'^{xvii}

Some of the signs of burnout are (1) Lack of energy –passionate work becomes increasingly difficult;^[SEP](2) emotional feelings of failure in the ministry;^[SEP](3) feeling that the reward for the sacrifice you are making is not worth it;^[SEP](4) a growing cynicism and negativism about self, others, work and the world generally; (5) treating others and yourself in an impersonal way; (6) withdrawing from responsibility; (7) avoiding contact with others; (8) the feeling of being 'beaten' by life and the ministry.

All of us will face the prospects of burnout as we lay down our lives for Christ and the ministry. All of the issues we have discussed in this course could possibly lead us to burnout and to not finish well, so we must understand the issues if we are to enjoy the journey to the very end.

Understanding the Causes of Burnout

What causes burnout?

- Consistent Conflict from whatever source
- Unrealistic expectations that can never be met – either from ourselves or others
- Lack of support system – spiritual mentors and fathers
- Lack of adequate training to face the needs we face
- Spending too much time with negative ministry and not enough time with the positive ministry opportunities
- Workaholism
- Loneliness – although pastors are around people all the time, often, they have no life-giving friendships
- Financial pressures

All of these issues can send a person into the ministry into a cycle causing further stress upon themselves and their families.



Reflection: Burnout Potential Inventory

Describe your feelings about these issues in your life of ministry? Use the scale below to rate how often you are disturbed by each situation described in the quiz. Add up the score when you finish the quiz.

(Rarely) 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 (Constantly)

Powerlessness

- 1. I can't solve the problems assigned to me.
- 2. I am trapped in my ministry with no options.
- 3. I feel unable to influence decisions that affect me.

Not Enough Training

- 4. I am unclear about what is expected of me from God and others.
- 5. I don't have enough training to serve well.
- 6. I don't quite understand my gifts and how they should function.
- 7. I don't understand the goals of my ministry.

Conflict

- 8. I am often caught in the middle of conflict with those I minister to.
- 9. I face criticism often.
- 10. I often have disagreements with other leaders or lay people.
- 11. I have faced attack on my leadership and ministry by others.

Poor Team Work

- 12. At times I feel undermined by others in leadership.
- 13. We do not work together well as a team.
- 14. Church politics interfere with success in the ministry.
- 15. People often compete instead of cooperate in our ministry.

Overload

- 16. The ministry dominates my personal life.
- 17. I tend to feel like there is too much to do in too little time.
- 18. I often feel I am not getting the job done for Him or others.
- 19. The ministry is overwhelming.

Poor Feedback

- 20. I often don't know if what I'm doing is right or wrong.
- 21. My leader doesn't give feedback on my service.

___ 22. I don't get timely information to act and change things.

Positive Affirmation

- ___ 23. My leader is critical.
- ___ 24. My ministry is unappreciated.
- ___ 25. I often feel that I am blamed for others' mistakes.
- ___ 26. I seldom receive positive affirmation in my service.

Loneliness and Isolation

- ___ 27. I struggle with feeling isolated from others.
- ___ 28. I am just a little cog in the big Kingdom of God operations.
- ___ 29. I have little in meaningful relationships with people I serve with.
- ___ 30. I lack spending time with life-giving friendships.

Unclear Expectations

- ___ 31. The "rules" of ministry seem to be constantly changing.
- ___ 32. I don't clearly understand what God expects of me.
- ___ 33. There seems to be no relationship between hard work in serving and success.
- ___ 34. I set much too high expectations on myself.
- ___ 35. At times, I feel like people's expectations of me just cannot be met.

Attitudes About the Work

- ___ 36. I seem to have little joy in the ministry.
- ___ 37. I have lost my sense of passion.
- ___ 38. The ministry is not what I had hoped for.
- ___ 39. I feel disappointment.
- ___ 40. I often am more discouraged than full of faith and hope.

Finances and the Family

- ___ 41. I feel my family constantly suffers because of the ministry.
- ___ 42. There is conflict in our marriage due to ministry pressures.
- ___ 43. My children resent my service to others.
- ___ 44. There is constant financial pressures upon us.

Emotional & Physical Wellbeing

- ___ 45. I have little physical energy.
- ___ 46. Often, I lack motivation or strong desire.
- ___ 47. My health has not been well cared for.
- ___ 48. I don't often take time for appropriate rest or exercise.

Scoring: Your risk of Burnout

48 - 168 Low risk of burnout.^[SEP] 169 - 312 Some Risk of Burnout.^[SEP] 313 - 432 High Risk of Burnout^{xviii}

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Positive Action for Finishing Well

1. Find Fresh Ways of Connecting with God. Everything began years ago with a love relationship with Him and probably the hardships of ministry has somehow eaten away at your ability to connect with Him in real life-giving ways. Take time to discover Him all over again. He is the reason you're doing this!

2. Take regular time off. Don't forget that God called us to have regular Sabbaths for a reason and Jesus said that Sabbath was made for man – to be a blessing to us. In the Sabbath life of Israel, there was to be a weekly Sabbath, two longer sabbath's per year in the form of the feasts and a whole year of Sabbath every seven years! Jesus even told His guys after a long ministry trip, "*let's go away awhile to rest.*"

3. Take care of your body. We cannot violate plan for our bodies to have rest, good food and appropriate exercise. If your body breaks down or you lose physical energy, everything else will follow.

4. Find soul replenishing activities that are not spiritually based. God had created everyone with different things that will replenish them. Some love music, others nature, and still others physical fitness. Also, some replenish better by being alone and others by being with people. Discover how He made you and take time to keep your soul healthy.

5. Take care of your relational life. All of us need life-giving relationships. These relationships come in three primary forms – family, life-giving friendships, and positive mentors. Do not let any of these areas go unformed or neglected. He created us to gain life from one-another!

6. Have fun! To belong to the kingdom you have to be like little children. No matter how serious life gets, children know how to enjoy themselves and have fun. Too often we in the ministry have forgotten how to love life and celebrate it. Rediscover fun in your life.^{xix}

ENDNOTES:

- i ***The Road Less Traveled***, by M. Scott Peck, Simon and Schuster Publishing, 1978, p. 1.
- ii This material is original but influenced by Schutz's 3 interpersonal needs and by Neil T. Anderson's work on identity.
- iii ***Victory Over the Darkness***, by Neil T. Anderson, Regal Books, 1990, p. 21.
- iv Ibid, p. 43.
- v Adapted from Carlson Learning, for educational purposes.
- vi ***Success is Failing Forward***, by Greg Balanko-Dickson, professional business coach.
- vii ***Failing Forward***, John Maxwell, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000, pp. 38-40
- viii Ibid, p. 13-17
- ix Ibid, p. 13.
- x ***Failing Forward***, By Rev. Misael Zaragoza, article on InspiredChristian.org
- xi ***Failing Forward***, John Maxwell, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000, pp. 35-37.
- xii ***Dealing with Conflict***, Robin McCullough-Bade, [Etips article](#), Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- xiii ***The Peacemaker***, by Ken Sande, 2006, Baker Books.
- xiv Bible Study 2 Cor. 10, Dealing with Conflict, Lesson 11.
- xv Questions from Bible Study on 2 Cor 10. Dealing with Conflict.
- xvi ***Stress and Burnout in Ministry***, Ministry Article by Rowland Croucher, Clergy/Leaders' List: clergym@pastornet.net.au
- xvii Ibid.
- xviii Adapted from Beverly A. Potter, from: "***Overcoming Job Burnout: How to Renew Enthusiasm For Work***", Ronin Publishing, Inc., Copyright 1980, 1993, 1998.
http://www.docpotter.com/beajob_pot_test.html
- xix ***Stress and Burnout in Ministry***, Ministry Article by Rowland Croucher, Clergy/Leaders' List: clergym@pastornet.net.au