The Center for Ministry Leadership at Covenant Seminary recently concluded five years of qualitative research with pastors and their spouses to identify core elements that enable sustainable and effective ministry for a lifetime. This research identified five categories as being critical to this goal. As a ministry leader we wanted to share these findings with you.

We hope to support you in revitalizing your sense of call, enhancing your ministry skills, and furthering your passions to grow and learn.

To put this research into practice our Doctor of Ministry program provides structure in these following key areas amid a trusted cohort of others with similar calling and experience.

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I don’t have anybody to whom I open up about my life, my family, or my ministry. I feel like a guy who is driving over the speed limit on a narrow mountain road without barriers. It’s only by the grace of God that I haven’t driven off . . .

—— PASTORS SUMMIT PARTICIPANT
INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

THE CHALLENGE OF PASTORAL MINISTRY

When we listen to our pastors preach on Sunday mornings, we tend to assume that they have their lives together. Most of us don’t understand what pastors really think, feel, and experience week by week. Take, for example, the pastor quoted on the opposite page. He made this comment to a small group of his peers as I facilitated their discussion of the challenges they faced in ministry. Amid a lively conversation, this man’s words summed up accurately the feelings of everyone present.

A few years later, I quoted him (anonymously) at a gathering of church leaders in his own hometown. After my talk, an elder from this man’s church came up to me. The pastor stood behind him as the elder said, “I’m sure glad it’s not that way in our church. Our pastor can really share with us.” As the elder spoke, his pastor and I exchanged knowing glances, sharing the secret that he had said these words.

This is just one of countless examples of how pastors rarely feel understood and seldom have anyone with whom they can talk openly about their experiences. What can be done to address this widespread lack in our pastors’ lives?
RESEARCHING THE CHALLENGE

Being a pastor is a tough, demanding job, one that is not always very well understood or appreciated. Pastoral work is more complex than that which transpires in the hour or so a week that many lay people see the pastor in action . . .

— Jackson Carroll
Author, God’s Potters

The SPE Initiative of Lilly Endowment Inc.

Throughout the past decade Lilly Endowment Inc. (a private philanthropic foundation created to support the causes of religion, education, and community) has funded several projects aimed at exploring the current state of pastoral ministry. One of these initiatives, entitled Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE), provided grants totaling $84 million dollars to 63 organizations. This initiative is based on the conviction that when churches are led by spiritually strong, thoughtful, able, and imaginative pastors, congregations tend to thrive. The question was: What does it take to sustain pastors in such a way that they will flourish in ministry over the long haul? The SPE initiative was created to find out.

The Center for Ministry Leadership & Pastors Summit

In 2004, Covenant Theological Seminary, in partnership with two sister institutions, received an SPE grant to develop the Center for Ministry Leadership³ for the purpose of exploring what helps pastors survive and thrive in ministry. To study this question, the Center developed a specialized forum called the Pastors
Summit, designed to draw on the experiences and expertise of seasoned pastors. Over the past five years, 61 mostly solo and senior pastors—often with their spouses—have participated in Summit meetings. These pastors represented a wide variety of geographical regions (26 different states), church sizes (from new church plants to congregations of more than 1,200 members), and ethnic contexts (based on proportions of constituencies served by the denominations involved). Chosen via a rigorous application and interview process, all these pastors were of Reformed theological convictions—predominantly from the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)—and were selected for demonstrated ministry expertise and an ability to lead in such a way that exhibits spiritual and relational health.

Under the guidance of other experienced pastors and group facilitators, these church leaders and their spouses met for three two-day meetings per year for a period of two years. Our goal was to interact with one another, share experiences, and delve deeply into discussions and exercises aimed at identifying characteristics, practices, and themes that would provide clues to what makes up sustainable, long-term excellence in ministry. Each meeting was recorded and transcribed, creating about 12,000 pages of material which were then analyzed by a team of researchers. Some of the fruit of this research is offered here for the benefit of Christ’s church.
Most people in our church have lives that are like a stool with three legs. They have their spiritual life, their professional life, and their family life. If one of these legs wobbles, they have two others they can lean on. For pastors, those three things can merge into one leg. When you sit on a one-legged stool, it takes a lot more concentration and energy.

It’s a lot more exhausting.

— PASTORS SUMMIT PARTICIPANT
WHAT IS MINISTRY EXCELLENCE?

What does excellence in pastoral ministry look like? Far too often, we find the answer to this question in superficial markers of success, such as the number of people in worship, a congregation’s financial resources, or the development of popular programs. As one Pastors Summit participant put it, “People judge our ministries by noses, nickels, and noise.”

Another answer is faithfulness: pastors’ commitment to their calling over time, regardless of other indicators of success or failure. One pastor expressed the idea this way: “After 20 years in the same location, I’m comfortable where I am. It would be easy to not rock the boat.”

While numerical success and faithfulness can be useful indicators of effective ministry, neither sufficiently expresses the idea of excellence. After much discussion, Pastors Summit participants concluded that a better criterion is fruitfulness. Christian leaders are to bear fruit by sharing their faith and by nurturing the fruit of God’s grace in their own lives and in the lives of others. This metaphor recalls the garden imagery in Scripture and suggests seasonal fruit-bearing interspersed with times of sowing, watering, and simply waiting for the work of the Lord. Fruitfulness includes a measure of faithfulness and a measure of success, valuing both but preferring neither.

The Pastors Summit identified five primary themes or characteristics that promote healthy, sustainable ministry for the long haul. We’ll look at each one carefully—after a brief consideration of the unique dynamics of ministry life.
THE WORK LIFE OF PASTORS

The relentless nature of ministry means that fatigue is a constant companion of leaders in the church. While lay people joke about ministers only working on Sundays, the truth lies on the other side of the continuum. A pastor’s work is overwhelming because it wears upon the body and soul.

— Pastors Summit Participant

We’ve all heard people make jokes about pastoral work. They say things like, “It must be nice only working one day a week!” or, “Besides preaching on Sundays and visiting folks in the hospital, what else do pastors do?” This is a good question. What are the basic roles and responsibilities of those in pastoral ministry?

Multiple Tasks

One influential scholar has identified five core tasks of pastors: worship leadership, preaching, teaching, pastoral care, and administration. All pastors know that these are rarely distinct activities; rather, they blend together through much of the week. Pastoral work requires a great variety of complex skills and talents and has been described as “taxing, fast-paced, and unrelenting, often characterized by doing two or more tasks at the same time.”

Long Hours

Pastors generally work long hours. One survey showed that pastors work an average of 15 hours per week more than their lay leaders realized. In fact, regardless of their theological tradition, pastors average more work hours per week than other managers and professionals. Smaller churches usually require fewer
hours, but as a church grows, the pastor assumes greater and greater leadership responsibilities until, when a congregation has more than 350 members, the pastor takes on a role much like a corporate leader. Pastors of larger churches also spend considerably more time preparing for worship and preaching.10

Challenging Responsibilities

The late Peter Drucker, one of the leading management authors and consultants of the twentieth century, once told a pastor friend of mine that he viewed church leadership as the most difficult and taxing role of which he was aware. This perspective was confirmed by a Pastors Summit participant who had a master’s degree in management and left a successful real estate development company to enter the ministry. He said bluntly, “The business world is much easier than the church.”

Defined by the Role

A unique aspect of pastoral ministry is the way in which one’s role as a church leader impacts and defines all areas of life. Work, family, and personal responsibilities blend together so that pastors have difficulty distinguishing when they are on or off duty. As one pastor put it: “Being a pastor is not just what I do, it is very much who I am. I live with that persona 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.” Another pastor explained, “I was an art major in college. I still love to work at the pottery wheel. But the people in my church have no idea about this area of my life. They only see me as a pastor, regardless of the time or place.”

Being a pastor is hard work—so hard that many will eventually decide to leave the pastorate or leave ministry altogether. What can be done to support these pastors? How can they find the renewal they need to remain fruitful in ministry for a lifetime?
Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

— *Psalm 1:1-3*

THE FIVE THEMES OF PASTORAL FRUITFULNESS

Five years of Summit meetings and hundreds of hours spent sifting through and reflecting upon the resulting data have helped us to identify five themes essential to surviving and thriving in ministry:

- Spiritual Formation
- Self-Care
- Emotional and Cultural Intelligence
- Marriage and Family
- Leadership and Management

Each theme has its own unique characteristics, but each is also intertwined with and dependent upon the others, much like the threads of a tapestry are woven together into one piece. We cannot speak of self-care without taking spiritual formation into consideration, or reference leadership and management skills without keeping marriage and family in mind. All ultimately stand together. And we shouldn’t let the apparent simplicity of these themes fool us into thinking, “There’s nothing dramatic here. Everyone needs to work on these areas.” That’s true enough—yet each theme also speaks profoundly into the unique challenges and prioritites of pastors and their families.
Before you were called to be a shepherd, you were called to be a lamb.

— DIANE LANGBERG
Christian Psychologist
THEME 1: SPIRITUAL FORMATION

How often do any of us ask our pastors how they are doing in their walk with the Lord? Most of us would consider it rude to ask such a thing! But it is not unusual for pastors, when in a place of safety, to share thoughts akin to those of one Pastors Summit participant who said, “I may be a pastor, but I’m an inch deep. My life is filled with incessant activity and little prayer. ‘Contemplation’ is foreign in my vocabulary and non-existent in my life.” Yet, as psychologist Diane Langberg reminds us, pastors, like all disciples, are called to be lambs before they are called to be shepherds.

We focus on following Jesus through the practices of spiritual formation—the ongoing process of maturing as Christians both personally and interpersonally. The key phrase here is “process of maturing.” The Bible expects all Christians—and especially the leaders of Christ’s church—to focus on their own spiritual growth. Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (John 14:23). Similarly, Paul encouraged Timothy to “train yourself for godliness” and to “keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching” (1 Tim. 4:7, 16). Spiritual maturity is an ongoing process, a journey; no one ever fully “arrives.”

In any significant relationship both parties need to experience deep personal encounters with one another. So every disciple—and every pastor—must have a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ and nurture that relationship in a regular and consistent manner. The dangers of not doing so are many, yet, for various reasons busy pastors often ignore or circumvent the process. They reason, for example, that sermon preparation counts as personal time in the Bible: “After all, I’m meditating on Scripture.” But experience shows that sustained substitution of ministry duties for personal spiritual growth results in pastors who are “an inch deep.” Without continual refreshment from the Source, the “spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14) slows to a trickle. Pastors become spiritually dry, worn out, and have little “left in the tank” for others.
Pastors Summit discussions revealed three primary ways for pastors to attend to their spiritual growth:

1. Undivided Worship

_Worship used to be one of my favorite things to do before becoming a senior pastor. Now I’m thinking during the entire service about what’s happening and what isn’t happening. Then I’m flat-lined for the rest of the day._

— Pastors Summit Participant

Pastors are so invested in creating and presenting the worship experience that it is often hard for them to actually worship in their own services. Many pastors struggle with a “double mind” on this issue. One pastor I know attends the Saturday night service of a large church from a very different tradition. He says, “I know some people wouldn't like it, but I go to this church where I am unknown and can just blend in. I want to be in a place where I can focus on the Father and don't have to be responsible for anything.”

Pastors can address this need for worship in several ways.

- Make time available in busy schedules for extended personal worship.
- Take regular breaks from worship and preaching responsibilities.
- Learn to give up a measure of control over worship services to others.

Noted author and speaker Jerry Bridges once told me how he used to work on preparing his talks up to the very last moment, seeking to perfect every word. After much reflection he asked God to forgive him for his lack of faith. It’s tough for pastors to hold the tension of this challenge as they seek to be diligent, pursue excellence, and still trust God. Elders and other church leaders should support pastors in making space in their lives for undivided worship.
2. Re-Establishing and Maintaining Spiritual Disciplines

I often feel guilty taking time for spiritual disciplines. But when I shared this with one of my friends he responded, “Guilty?! I thought that was one of the things we paid you to do!”

— Pastors Summit Participant

Spiritual disciplines are activities intended to improve our relationships with Christ and other believers. These include what are often called the “means of grace”—prayer, reading the Scriptures, participation in the sacraments, and submission to mutual accountability. They can also include other practices such as fasting, solitude, stewardship, and witness. It is just as easy for pastors to get caught up in the busy activities of life and neglect these disciplines as it is for anyone else. Laypersons often assume that pastors are regular and consistent in their spiritual disciplines, yet many are not.

How can pastors re-establish and maintain their spiritual disciplines?

- Invest time in the spiritual disciplines without feeling guilty about it.
- Resist the temptation to give in to the tyranny of the urgent.

Church members (especially elders) can help in this area by encouraging pastors to practice their spiritual disciplines regularly without apology and not put them off to deal with the constant pressure of the next crisis. To do their jobs well, pastors must keep first things first and nurture their own souls. While practicing the spiritual disciplines does not in itself guarantee spiritual maturity, a loving relationship with Christ, or success in ministry, Pastors Summit discussions revealed that pastors who actively engage in the spiritual disciplines are better prepared to face the rigors of ministry life.
3. Accountable Relationships for Spiritual Direction

Throughout my entire Christian life I had a mentor—until I became a pastor. How do you develop those relationships within the context of ministry?

— Pastors Summit Participant

The theme of “spiritual direction” has never been dominant in the Protestant tradition. In the last few decades, though, authors such as Eugene Peterson have underscored this need. Put simply, spiritual direction is an accountable relationship in which one person helps another grow spiritually. A spiritual director blends the ideas of discipleship and mentoring in an intimate, trustworthy, and confidential friendship. Church members look to their pastors for shepherding, but most pastors have no one to shepherd them.

Where do they go to fill this need?

■ Some may seek spiritual direction from the elders in their churches.
■ Many will need to look for such relationships outside their congregations.

Some pastors, including me, can name elders who have fulfilled the vital role of spiritual director in their lives. However, many pastors find it difficult to reach the level of vulnerability needed for spiritual direction with elders they are supposed to lead and to whom they are accountable for their job performance. Acknowledging that one doesn’t always have one’s act together could conceivably lead to a lack of respect, personal rejection, or, in some cases, loss of employment. Just as physicians rarely treat their own family members, so elders and other church leaders may not be able to serve as spiritual directors to their pastors, who may need the insights of other pastors or friends. Congregational leaders should make it a priority to urge their pastors to seek spiritual direction without criticism or embarrassment—regardless of how such relationships are formed.
Most ministers don’t burn out because they forget they are ministers. They burn out because they forget they are people.

— ARCHIBALD HART, Christian Psychologist
For pastors, the notion of self-care may come as something of a surprise. It may even sound selfish! Didn’t Jesus say that those who follow him must give up all right to themselves (Mark 8:34)? How does our Lord’s call to self-denial square with the idea of self-care?

In truth, responsible self-care is a form of self-denial. Being a Christian involves “dying to the old life of self-centeredness and rising to a new life of holiness and love.” If the old life included slothful or obsessive activities—such as inconsistent sleep habits, crazy work hours, poor or neurotic exercise, or an excessive diet—then appropriate self-denying self-care might include getting to bed on time, setting aside periods for Sabbath and sabbatical, responsible exercise, and a balanced diet. Too many pastors echo the sentiment of evangelist Christmas Evans, who said, “I’d rather burn out than rust out in the service of the Lord.” To which Anglican bishop and philosopher James Berkeley responded: “I admire the bravado. It sounds dedicated, bold, and stirring. However . . . I want neither to burn out nor rust out. I want to finish out the race.”

The same excuses pastors use for neglecting their spiritual formation are often invoked to justify neglect of self-care, such as the relentless pace of ministry and a sense of guilt at taking the time needed. But as psychologist Archibald Hart says, pastors have to remember that they are people first. The Pastors Summit identified three main areas in which pastors need to be more mindful of how they care for themselves.
1. Attending to Self-Care

I am convicted that I need to be paying attention to [caring for] myself, not just for the church. I have been sacrificing myself for the work and this is not forming myself to Christ.

— Pastors Summit Participant

Knowing the typical work life of pastors, it should be no surprise that so many of them fail to care properly for themselves despite their desperate need for it, as witnessed by these comments from the Pastors Summit:

I feel like Bilbo in THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING when he says to Gandalf, “I feel like butter spread over too much bread.” I feel like I’m tired and running on fumes.

Do I have a life outside the church? No. Do I have a hobby? No.

I don’t know that there’s much I could talk about other than what I do functionally as a pastor and what’s going on in the life of the church. That’s a scary revelation to make.

Of course, not all pastors are—or feel—so one-dimensional. But far too many become so absorbed in their ministries that they lose a sense of equilibrium in their lives. How can pastors regain this equilibrium?
Begin with a personal life audit to identify problem areas.
Elders and others can remind pastors of the need for self-care and encourage them in it.

Summit pastors are asked to reflect for two hours—without cell phones, Internet, or conversations!—on questions that help them review their social, emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual lives. Almost universally they acknowledge seldom taking such time to look at their lives as a whole rather than in isolated segments. Talking about this with others will help, but again, many pastors will have to look outside their congregations for the trusting relationships they need to open up in safety.

2. Safe Relationships

*I found that the time in my life when I became the most isolated was when I became a senior pastor.*
—Pastors Summit Participant

We all know the old cliché: “It’s lonely at the top.” There is a great deal of truth in this, as one expert notes, “Whether in the church, business, or any other field, leadership—particularly for those in executive positions—can be inherently isolating.” 19 Indeed, leaders who try to “do it all” without considering their need to share their struggles with trusted confidants are simply asking for trouble: “The lone warrior strategy of leadership may be heroic suicide . . . When battling loneliness, insecurity, stress, or other pressures, the need to open up to someone can be almost overwhelming.” 20

The distinction between a confidant and an ally is important. An ally may be a close friend whose interests and loyalties overlap with your own but are not identical. 21 Pastors may have allies in their congregations who agree with them.
on many things, but also conflict with them regarding ministry priorities, budget decisions, worship formats, and leadership styles. Even when pastors are good friends with these church members, they still feel a need to guard their thoughts and feelings in conversation, because these same friends pay their salaries and look to them for spiritual nurture.

A confidant, however, allows one to “say everything that’s in your heart, everything that’s on your mind.” A confidant is a person “in whom you can confide without having your revelations spill back into the work arena. . . . You can speak spontaneously.” Pastors Summit participants agreed that pastors’ need for confidants is great.

I think we have a vital body life and great connections within the church. But there are deeper things too great for them to bear. For that, it’s helpful to have someone not associated with the situation.

I have hundreds of people who would be there in a minute if one of us got hurt or someone in our family died. But they are not there day to day. Nobody’s calling and saying, “How are you?” And that’s hard, because I know I can depend on them in need. But I want somebody with whom I can just hang out.

When I went to my new pastorate I thought I better find somebody who’d tell me the truth. I sought out [an older pastor] and he was very kind to do it. I’d drive two and
a half hours to his church and meet for two hours about once a month. He would tell me his own struggles. He was very open about his own mess.

Where and how can pastors find such safe relationships?
- Most pastors may have to seek confidants outside their congregations.
- Elders and church members can encourage and support their pastors as they seek out those with whom they can connect on a deeper level.

While looking outside the congregation for help creates deep personal and theological frustration for some pastors, it is vitally important that they—and their church members—understand that the relational needs of pastors must often be met elsewhere. It might take extra time, effort, and resources to make such connections, but they are necessary for the responsible self-care of pastors.

3. Review of Calling

If we’re not getting the returns, we begin to ask about our calling. We can live with all the frustrations of ministry. But those are compensated because we see spiritual returns. Peoples’ lives are being changed. Something is happening. But when the balance goes the other way and the frustrations exceed the returns, understandably we begin to ask questions.

— Pastors Summit Participant

The need for confidants is particularly important when it comes to a gnawing reality for pastors—the questioning of one’s calling. Here we must make a
distinction between the initial call to the ministry and the particular call to a current church. Most pastors don’t usually question their initial calling to vocational ministry, but Summit participants attest to the fact that many regularly question their particular callings:

I find myself going through loops: I’ll stay here; I need to leave; I should stay here . . .

I wonder how others deal with the day-to-day, week-to-week reviewing of their calls. When I’m not getting results in ministry—numbers, money, affirmation, people standing there hugging me and telling me how I’ve changed their lives—how do I process that?

How does one process such self-questioning?

- Share the struggle with a trusted confidant.
- Rely on the insights of a spouse, if married.

One participant advises, “I have found that it is not profitable for me to question my calling unless I open up to some other trusted people. I can’t get the answer personally, on my own.” When asked, “Who keeps you going when you’ve doubted your call?” most Summit pastors responded simply: “My spouse.” It makes sense to take advantage of the wisdom of the person who knows you best.
Without [emotional intelligence], a person can have first-class training, an incisive mind, and an endless supply of good ideas, but he still won’t be effective.

— **MARK GERZON**, Conflict Mediation Expert

It is vital to our ministry to understand cultural norms and nuances in order to discern between what we accept as correct in culture and what is truth as defined in Scripture.

— **PASTORS SUMMIT PARTICIPANT**
Emotional and cultural intelligence are so closely aligned that we must consider them as one theme. Yet to understand how they impact pastoral life, we will look at each separately.

Emotional Intelligence

You learn to play a game, to put on a mask, which then becomes a way to handle a lot of issues. You’re the holy man who has to put on the holiness aura and have it all together. And that’s going to come back and wipe you out. It wiped me out.

— Pastors Summit Participant

This comment and others like it speak to the importance in ministry of what we call emotional intelligence (EQ): the ability to manage one’s own emotions proactively and respond to the emotions of others appropriately. Western Christians often downplay the role of emotions, seeing them as subordinate to both facts and faith. This negativity is not limited to the Christian community. For years, business and leadership material relegated emotions to the “soft” side of life that had no role in the marketplace. In recent decades, however, both Christians and the business world have come to a deeper appreciation of how emotions impact our lives. In order to thrive in ministry, pastors need to develop both of the aspects of emotional intelligence identified here.
1. The ability to identify, manage, and express one’s own feelings

Scripture confirms this capacity again and again, most notably in Ephesians 4:26, where Paul tells the Ephesians to identify their feelings (“Be angry”), manage their feelings (“do not sin”), and express their feelings responsibly (“do not let the sun go down on your anger”). This is not always easy to do, especially given the typical pastor’s busy, non-reflective lifestyle. Summit pastors acknowledged these difficulties:

I wonder if not really knowing how I’m doing is an indicator of how I’m doing. Maybe I’m just too busy to think about it.

I don’t know how to deal with my or others’ emotions. It hasn’t been part of my discipleship agenda.

I’m increasingly aware that I am not very aware of the emotional aspects of my personality. I see my weaknesses in this area reflected in the church I pastor. Our church is emotionally and relationally underdeveloped. I’ve heard it said that your church will take on your personality. Mine has!

How can pastors begin to develop a more reflective mindset?

- Take time to focus on spiritual formation and self-care.
- Seek the support of a confidant.
After a time of intensive reflection, one Summit pastor commented, “For me, prayer plays a huge role in healthy emotional management. Things get less muddy as I engage with God about things. Things seem to fall into place. I can't explain how it happens, I just know it does.” Again, having someone to talk to helps, but as we’ve seen repeatedly, pastors may need to look outside the congregation for relational safety in order to identify and process their feelings.

2. The ability to discern others’ feelings and respond appropriately to them

Pastors may be in the “people business” but that doesn’t necessarily mean they are able to discern other people’s feelings. As one Summit pastor put it, “When I was in seminary I was taught how to preach and how to exegete the Scriptures. I wasn’t taught how to exegete people. . . . I didn’t know that pastoring is dealing with people and their messiness.”

A good coach can help pastors learn to identify unspoken cues or sensitize them to the message behind someone’s comment. Spouses can be particularly helpful in this regard as Christian counselor Winston Smith noted to Summit pastors and their spouses: “Pastors who do not have strong relational skills may still be successful if they are willing to accept their spouse’s strengths in this area and be guided and shaped by them.”

Why is it important for pastors to be able to discern others’ emotions?

- This ability impacts pastors’ leadership.
- This ability helps pastors maintain healthy boundaries.
- This ability helps pastors deal with conflicts in ministry.

Pastors’ emotional states and actions affect the emotional states and actions of the people they shepherd. And, let’s face it: most pastors are people pleasers who want to be appreciated and do not like disappointing others. This sets them up
to be manipulated or diverted from their most important responsibilities. One Summit pastor commented: “We have to develop the ability to look people in the eye who have genuine needs and say, ‘I am not the answer to this need.’ And then not to flinch when that person says, ‘That pastor is so uncompassionate, so uncaring.’”

In addition, we know that the main reason why pastors leave parish ministry is conflict—and not conflicts over huge issues of doctrine, but over everyday things like pastoral or worship style, staff relationships, or the handling of finances and building space. Pastors must be able to deal effectively with such conflicts, especially when their own interests differ significantly from those of others.

Cultural Intelligence

_Minorities, now roughly one-third of the U.S. population, are expected to become the majority in 2042, with the nation projected to be 54 percent minority in 2050. By 2023, minorities will comprise more than half of all children._

— U.S. Census Bureau

The implications for the church of this U.S. Census Bureau report are profound. This information underscores the importance of pastors’ developing cultural intelligence for long-term ministry viability. The cultural challenges experienced by Pastors Summit participants further emphasize the significance of this topic:

_My whole ministry DNA is white middle class. And there’s a train coming down the track that shows this will no longer be the dominant culture._
Cultural intelligence (CQ) can be defined as the ability to understand, acknowledge, and appreciate current contextual forces as well as the cultural background of oneself and others. It involves an awareness of regional, ethnic, and generational differences and the implications of these differences on one’s worldview. Two aspects of cultural intelligence stand out clearly from our Summit research.

1. Culture can be geographical, generational, and socioeconomic as well as ethnic.

This is illustrated well by one Summit pastor whose church has a growing Christian school as well as a youth ministry that interacts with inner-city children, creating a unique cultural tension.

We have families with children in a Christian school who do not want to be in a youth group with inner-city children. There is a creeping elitism in that. The parents don’t realize that they have created a social-cultural grouping that freezes their kids from being able to integrate with others, so every phase of their life would be only in their context.

This pastor knows that few issues are more sensitive than parenting decisions that may place children at perceived risk. However, because of his sensitivity to cultural dynamics, he also understands his responsibility to help these parents grapple with their “creeping elitism.” By addressing this issue he is working on both conflict resolution (EQ) and on training parents and children in how to function in a multicultural environment (CQ).
2. Whenever there is a dominant way of life, the people who hold that perspective think it is the right one.

We’ve all experienced this when we have been in a minority position. Think of a sporting event at which one lone fan of the opposing team finds it difficult to cheer for his or her heroes. Or take a friend of mine who moved from Florida to a small town in the upper Midwest and quickly learned that “if you ain’t Dutch, you ain’t much!”

One Summit participant told of a pastor whose large church experienced an influx of Asian and Middle Eastern professionals. These visitors were welcomed in the congregation, though the pastor made it clear that, “We want our church to be multiethnic and monocultural.” One Asian man, asked by our participant how he felt about conforming to the church culture, responded, “Conform? Absolutely not! But we are willing to adapt to their cultural habits in order to be accepted in the congregation.” The pastor’s cultural insensitivity was endured because of the Asian man’s cultural intelligence.

If pastors are going to lead churches more effectively now and in the coming years, it is vital that they develop cultural intelligence and equip others to serve in a multi-cultural environment. They must:

- Understand that culture includes more than just ethnicity—it also has geographical, generational, and socio-cultural elements.
- Recognize dominant cultural perspectives and the tendency to assume that these are correct.
- Make careful distinctions between biblical expectations and cultural assumptions.
The most effective way to develop a healthy church is for me to be healthy and maintain the health of my marriage.

— PASTORS SUMMIT PARTICIPANT
Maintaining happy, healthy marriage and family relationships is important in any walk of life. For pastors the challenges of caring for the spiritual and relational health of spouses and children are many and complex. We outline three of the major issues here.

1. Partners in Life, Partners in Ministry

Understanding the strategic role a spouse plays in ministry means recognizing not so much the spouse’s functions within a congregation, but rather the role a spouse plays in sustaining the pastor-partner in ministry. One Summit pastor put it this way:

*I know now more than ever that I cannot answer this calling without my wife. She is the only person in my life who will always be there for me in ministry. I realize I’ve undervalued my wife, even while thinking that I wasn’t.*

We’ve already noted the importance of having safe relationships within which pastors can open their hearts without fear of repercussion. For most of the pastors in the Summit, the one confidant they have is their spouse:

*My wife is generally the person I go to in order to determine if a congregant’s criticism is valid or simply a personal issue.*
For me, when my heart is broken, when I’m angry, I don’t go to the elders, and I don’t have a pastor— so I go to my real pastor, which is my wife.

A spouse’s insights can be especially helpful as pastors inevitably question their call to a particular ministry. The spouse is usually the first person the pastor talks to about this, as this Summit participant poignantly illustrates:

When it’s to the point where I’m doubting my call, what is the bottom line that keeps me in ministry? For me, it’s letting my wife know I’m doubting my call. That takes away the loneliness of the question. It’s more of an “us” and not a “me.”

God has designed marriage to be a partnership so it is only right that spouses fulfill such a strategic role in pastors’ lives. However, ministry spouses often end up being the only ones with whom pastors will open up. Spouses too frequently become the “nuclear waste dumping ground” for pastors. One pastoral spouse put it this way:

Pastoral spouses suffer from the hits and conflicts their partners take as pastors, but they don’t get to participate in the resolutions directly. There is an analogy between this and getting cancer from exposure to second-hand smoke.

How can pastors protect against this? Pastors must develop a broader relational support system beyond their spouses. Though a spouse’s input is essential, it is
neither healthy nor responsible for spouses to be the only ones helping pastors process the struggles of ministry.

2. Spiritual and Domestic Care of Spouse and Family

One thing I would see as a mark of success is if my kids grow up and love the church. They see the good, the bad, and the ugly. It is my goal that they can get through that and grow up and still love the church. We all know kids who were damaged by growing up in a pastor’s home.

— Pastors Summit Participant

It’s easy for church members to assume that pastors naturally focus on the needs of their family members. One Summit spouse shared, “People think that if you marry a pastor, you’ll get pastored all the time.” But this is far from the truth. Pastors often want to come home and not focus on their families. Many become so intent on the spiritual condition of others in the congregation that they are unaware of how their own families are doing. The following comments from Summit pastors illustrate this point graphically.

I know I need to pray with my wife. But I’m tired, and unless prompted I’m more inclined just to hit the sack early because I have so much to do the next day. I have a 5-year old, a 3-year old, and a 1-year old. My wife finally said to me, “There is only one human being on
this planet who is my husband and a father to these children.” That got my attention!

A couple of years ago we were driving in the car and my wife said to me, “You haven’t asked me about whether I’m doing my devotions for six months. You’d do that for a new Christian in our church.” I just about hit a telephone pole because she was right.

My wife is lonely. The heart of the issue is that as a pastor you have two wives: the church and your spouse. The second wife—the church—dominates your focus and attention. My wife wishes I would give her the attention I give the church. There is resentment and jealousy.

It’s easy to think that when your church reaches a certain milestone—the number of members, hiring another staff person, etc.—that things will be different as far as time demands. This is simply not true.

I feel that pressure sometimes to have this model home that everybody can follow and imitate. I’m not good at that.
My family gets the scraps.

How can pastors address these issues and make sure their families get the care they need?

- Pastors should talk candidly with spouses and congregational leaders about the importance of marital and family health.
- Church leaders must affirm that the health of a pastor’s family is key to the health of the congregation and act on this as a priority.

It can be freeing for everyone to realize that part of the job description for pastors is to take care of their relationships with their families, and to do so confidently, not sheepishly. Jesus taught that the world will know that we are his disciples by the love we demonstrate toward one another (John 13:35). This love should be visible in the home before anywhere else.

3. Safe Relationships for Pastoral Spouses and Children

Even though we have great friends in the church, I can’t tell my good friends, “Oh yeah, there are lots of times when my husband feels like packing up and moving out of this church.”

— Pastors Summit Spouse

If pastors need safe relationships in which to process their struggles, the same is equally true for their spouses and children. Discerning what is safe to share with people in the church—and with whom to share it—is just as much a challenge for a pastor’s spouse as it is for the pastor. This need for safe relationships extends to a pastor’s children as well, because they often experience the fallout
of ministry actions. (For instance, one son of a pastor was beaten up during recess at school because his father had had an argument with a woman in a committee meeting the night before. The woman vented to her husband, their son overheard the conversation, and he decided to take care of the problem in his own way.)

There are no simple solutions to finding confidants for pastors’ spouses and children. Some possibilities might be to:

- Seek out other ministry families in the area.
- Maintain friendships with people they met in seminary.
- Reach out to extended family.
- Talk with a professional counselor.

For the sake of the family, pastoral couples need to encourage each other and pursue such safe relationships diligently until they are found.
I never thought about my calling as a leader until I was already in the pastorate.

— PASTORS SUMMIT PARTICIPANT

Few laity give much weight to the pastor’s administrative tasks.

— JACKSON CARROLL, AUTHOR, GOD’S POTTERS³¹
THEME 5: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The responsibilities of leadership and management (both integral to the pastoral task of congregational oversight) are rarely discussed in seminary. Most pastors enter ministry with very little preparation in these areas and are generally surprised by how much leadership and management skills are part of their work. They often learn how to do these things on the job—not always very effectively. Pastors aren’t the only ones surprised by this reality. Most lay people have no idea of the time and energy involved in the leadership and management aspects of the pastoral vocation. Indeed, these ministerial responsibilities are something of a hidden secret that is rarely discussed but continually demanded. Pastors Summit research reveals that for pastors to thrive in ministry, they will need to attend to at least three areas related to leadership and management.

1. Accepting Leadership and Management

What’s my perfect job description? Preach, teach, and spend time with my staff and elders. But I’m so busy managing that I feel guilty doing relational things. I have this vision where I could maintain these close relationships and still keep the church moving forward if I had this guy—my own Ed McMahon—doing the stuff that prohibits me from doing what I want to do.

— Pastors Summit Participant
Leading and managing are two different things. Though closely related, they refer to different tasks that require different skill sets and abilities. In general, leadership is about seeking adaptive and constructive change, while management provides order and consistency to organizations. As churches grow, these responsibilities often get divided up, but in smaller churches they are usually handled solely by the pastor. Most pastors dislike these responsibilities and would prefer delegating them to someone else. But because the church is primarily a volunteer organization, pastors will always have to cover some aspects of these domains, even if they don’t feel gifted to do so.

One characteristic of successful companies—or thriving ministries—is that they confront the brutal fact that leadership and management responsibilities must be accepted. Churches need to support their pastors’ learning and growth in these areas.

- Encourage pastors to read and study about leadership and management.
- Make it possible for pastors to take advantage of seminars, conferences, and other continuing education opportunities on leadership and management.
- Urge pastors to seek out lay people gifted in leadership and management who can offer wisdom and coaching support.
- Exercise patience and forgiveness with pastors who may not be especially gifted in these areas.

2. Trusting God with Challenging Expectations

The expectations and demands for service are at an all-time high. What people expect from a church is not only a nice message, but also a perfect nursery, a perfect
restroom, and interesting programs. At the same time, it must all be done in under an hour. And these expectations come with some of the lowest levels of commitment from congregation members.

— Pastors Summit Participant

We already know that pastors tend to be people pleasers. At the same time, one of the most significant leadership challenges pastors face is dealing with the expectations of people in their congregations. How are pastors to handle demands and expectations like those enumerated by the pastor quoted above? A few suggestions may help.

- Stay close to the Lord through prayer.
- Remember that God is in control.
- Seek the help and advice of other church leaders.

The Bible consistently teaches that when God’s leaders are in difficult circumstances, the first thing they must do is turn to the Lord. When David found himself facing hardships, his immediate response was to “strengthen himself in the LORD his God” (1 Sam. 30:6). Jesus himself, under stress as he awaited arrest and crucifixion, retired to Gethsemane to seek comfort and strength from his Father (Matt. 26:36–46 and parallels). One Summit pastor put it this way:

*It takes courage to exercise calmness of leadership in the midst of crises, not to get rattled because there is a deep conviction that God is going to work things out. It doesn’t mean you don’t push back and speak the truth, but you don’t get riled up.*
Obviously, the theme of leadership and management is tightly interwoven with that of spiritual formation. Without a trust in God that moves beyond the theoretical into practice, it is impossible to handle the expectations of ministry. This kind of faith is only forged in the crucible of ministry pressure. As the author of Hebrews reminds us, even our Lord learned obedience through what he suffered for our sakes (Heb. 5:8; 12:1–2).

Ministry partners, particularly the elders of a congregation, need to come alongside the pastor—like Aaron and Hur upholding the arms of Moses (Exod. 17:12)—to help address congregational expectations. Pastors must learn to make themselves vulnerable to lay leaders, drawing them in as allies in ministry. Without such partnerships, pastors cannot be sustained in ministry.

3. Handling the Political Realities of Ministry

*Wherever two or three are gathered in Jesus’ name, there is politics.*

— Friend of the Author

Politics is a dirty word in the church. Yet ministry involves working with people whose interests lead them to act in certain ways as they make decisions about what to do or say. Ministry involves negotiating—choosing among conflicting wants and interests, developing trust, locating support and opposition, being sensitive to timing, and knowing the formal and informal organizational ropes. In short, ministry involves politics.

There are two kinds of politics: 1) attempting to get one’s own way however possible (including manipulation of people and circumstances), and 2) negotiating one’s interests with others in the context of relational power dynamics.
Responsible pastors reject manipulation and learn to negotiate interests effectively among the people they serve.

The Necessity of Understanding Interests

*I have the ability to arrange things so I can get my way. I find myself struggling with that. How much do I get involved and how much should I just let things happen? There are times when sinful interests need to be strategically worked around. But there are valid interests that are different than mine. We pastors have to be discerning about these things.*

— Pastors Summit Participant

Ministry plans and programs reflect the key convictions of a church: its theological, budgetary, and time and resource priorities. As ministry is planned, people bring a complex set of goals, values, desires, concerns, and motivations to the table. To ensure that the priorities and purposes of the ministry are reflected in congregational activities, an understanding of the different interests of those involved is critically important.

Some pastors fail to assess the varying interests of their congregants before implementing a ministry initiative. A Summit participant told of a pastoral acquaintance serving with a church for less than a year who, after assessing the church’s small group ministry, decided that all the groups needed to use the same curriculum. Anticipating a positive response from the elders, this pastor was instead faced with serious push-back from leaders who had not been consulted on the matter.
The Necessity of Understanding Relational Dynamics

You build relational capital. That’s what my Marine mentor always talked about. He said, “Think of it like poker chips. You get so many poker chips. And when you make a mistake, you lose some. You’d better have enough chips built up so when you blow it, or when you need them, you have them.”

— Pastors Summit Participant

Interests are always negotiated in the context of relational power dynamics. Too often pastors assume that their ability to get things done rests in their formal authority: their education, ordination, and calling. (I once heard a pastor say loudly to a faithful volunteer, “You will do it this way because I have a seminary degree and I’m an ordained pastor!” Needless to say, that pastor cashed in all his relational chips that day!) What pastors soon learn is that congregations form webs of relationships, and the credibility established in those relationships will always trump formal authority in the long run. Pastors must:

- Learn who has the relational power and influence.
- Learn how to negotiate.

Every congregation has at least one person whom I’ll call “Mrs. Jones.” This lady has been teaching Sunday school since before the current pastor was born. She taught every person of influence in the congregation when they were children. Though she doesn’t hold any formal position in the congregation, everyone loves and respects Mrs. Jones. If the pastors want to lead any change in just about any area of the church, they had better check with Mrs. Jones first. She’s got the relational power.
When we feel deeply about our interests, we will promote them. Another word for this is negotiation. Pastors negotiate every day, sometimes unconsciously (“Can I delay seeing Mrs. Smith in the hospital so I have more time to work on my sermon?”), sometimes more directly (such as in discussions over the use of limited resources between parties with differing but legitimate desires). Whose interests *should* be represented at the planning table? Whose *will* be represented? And *how* will they be represented? Pastors must ask these questions and be aware of possible outcomes.

Regardless of how distasteful the idea of politics may seem, when it is understood as the negotiation of interests in relational contexts, political activity is the daily coinage of ministry life.

*Embracing Leadership and Management*

Leadership- and management-related activities take, on average, 45% to 65% of a pastor’s time and energy. To lead effectively for the long term pastors cannot avoid these activities but must embrace them and learn to handle them to the best of their abilities. Such activities are part of the fabric of ministry, the place where God helps pastors learn to walk in the Spirit and trust in him.
Unlike other vocations, ministry work has no formal arrangement for ongoing learning and development, no requirements for continuing education, and no structured place for peer collaboration and assessment.
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

So we return to the question with which we started: **What does it take for pastors to survive and thrive in fruitful ministry over the long haul?** Five years of study and research through the Pastors Summit have led us to several conclusions that can help answer this question.

1. **Pastors, church leaders, and other Christians need to gain a better understanding of what pastors face in day-to-day ministry life.** Far too many of us move through our lives without giving due consideration to what we are doing, let alone understanding what others face. Gaining a better awareness of how pastors spend their time and what they need to focus on for healthy sustainability benefits not only pastors and their families, but their congregations and the broader church as well.

2. **The church as a whole needs to begin ongoing conversations about the issues raised in this study.** It is easy to read a report like this, affirm what we find interesting, then put it on the shelf and go on living and working in the familiar, comfortable patterns we have established. But we believe that the findings of this research are too important to the lives and health of our pastors and churches to set aside and be forgotten. The realities of life in the pastorate must be named, discussed, examined, and worked through.

- **Pastors should review their own lives and ministries.** Ask questions like: Do I see myself in this booklet? What do I think about that? Are there things I need to change about my life or ministry? If so, what do I plan to do about it?
- **Pastors should discuss these issues with their spouses.** Spouses are integrally involved in and impacted by the way pastors do ministry. They
have insights that few others can provide. Their support for and participation in any life modifications is essential for sustained change. Pastoral couples should ask themselves: What does this study say about us? About our marriage? About our family?

- **Church leaders should reflect carefully on how they might help or hinder the growth and effectiveness of their pastors.** Those charged with congregational oversight can ask: How do our expectations affect our pastor’s effectiveness? Are those expectations too high? Do they need to be modified? Are we setting our pastor up to fail or helping to foster fruitful ministry?

- **Congregation members should consider their part in the dynamic that fosters or frustrates fruitful ministry.** Members can ask: How does this research affect my ideas of who pastors are and what they do? How should I as a layperson approach my pastor? What can I do to help my pastor succeed?

3. **Pastors, church leaders, and congregations need to work together to encourage, develop, and implement practical steps toward change.** The long-term strength of a church ought to be the concern of every member of the congregation. Church leaders especially need to recognize that the full-orbed health of pastors and their families will have a direct impact on the well-being and growth of the congregation. Taking steps to strengthen pastors will strengthen the congregation as well. A regular review of the themes presented in this booklet can help.

Further, we encourage congregational leaders to develop specific plans—and to invest resources to sustain these plans—that focus on the growth and development of the pastor, the pastor’s spouse, and their family. These plans should include (but are certainly not limited to) considerations of:

- **Scheduling.** Make a commitment to ensure that pastors are regularly reviewing the pace of their weekly schedules; using vacation time; and
getting regular study leaves, monthly planning days, and yearly planning and reflection retreats.

- **Continuing Education.** Encourage pastors to take advantage of both informal (conferences, seminars, retreats) and formal (Doctor of Ministry programs) continuing education opportunities.

- **Physical Health.** Encourage complete physical check-ups annually, along with regular exercise and healthy eating and sleeping habits.

- **Psychological Health.** Consider provisions for professional counseling; just as yearly check-ups help keep a pastor’s body sound, so periodic counseling helps keep the “heart” in tune.

- **Sabbaticals.** Provide opportunities for pastors to step away from the obligations of daily ministry and engage in an extended process of renewal.38

As we have seen, the pace and demands of ministry can be relentless, causing even the most dedicated pastors to question and re-evaluate their lives. The Center for Ministry Leadership desires to help pastors, elders, and congregations do such evaluation in an encouraging and informed manner. We pray that the information in this booklet will provide motivation to make the sustaining of pastors a priority so that our churches may be strengthened and God may be glorified.

We began this discussion with a comment from a pastor who said:

> I don’t have anybody to whom I open up about my life, my family, or my ministry. I feel like a guy who is driving over the speed limit on a narrow mountain road without barriers. It’s only by the grace of God that I haven’t driven off . . .

If you see yourself or your pastor in this statement, our challenge to you is: *What are you going to do about it?* May the Lord be with you on your journey of discovery and growth.
1 Jackson W. Carroll, God’s Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).


3 The initial grant was submitted as a joint project by three institutions: Covenant Theological Seminary, Reformed Theological Seminary, and Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia). Though no longer directly involved in the project, Reformed and Westminster seminaries remain allies of the work of the Center.

4 Denominations represented in the Pastors Summit were the Presbyterian Church in America, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, The Reformed Church in America, the Episcopal Church, and the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

5 I thankfully acknowledge my friend Stafford Carson, formerly of Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia) and now pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Portadown, Northern Ireland, who initially shared his extended study on fruitfulness.

6 Carroll, God’s Potters, 98, 106.


8 Peter Brain, Going the Distance: How to Stay Fit for a Lifetime of Ministry (Kingsford NSW: St. Matthias Press, 2004), 17.

9 Carroll, God’s Potters, 103.

10 Carroll, 111–12, reflecting the work of Arlin Routhauge (1995).

11 Unless otherwise indicated all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.


15 Quoted in Brain, Going the Distance, 21.

16 Self-care has been described as “the wisdom to ensure, as far as humanly possible, a wise and orderly work that conserves and lengthens a pastor’s ministry.” Brain, Going the Distance, 24.


18 Evans and Berkeley are both quoted in Brain, Going the Distance, 10.


21 Heifetz and Linsky, Leadership on the Line, 203.

22 The research of Dean Hoge and Jaqueline E. Wenger, Pastors in Transition: Why Clergy Leave Local Church Ministry (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 29, identifies the most common reason that Protestant pastors leave parish ministry as differing interests that lead to stressful conflict. The most common conflict issues are leading change, financial allocations, and worship style.


25 One of the earliest popular studies on emotion in evangelical literature was H. Norman Wright, The Christian Use of Emotional Power (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1974). Many studies from various Christian frameworks could be cited. A few representative examples would be Richard Winter, Perfecting Ourselves To Death (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005); Dan Allender, The Healing Path (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 1999); Peter Scazzero, Emotionally Healthy Spirituality (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006); and Edward T. Welch, When I Am Afraid (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010). Note that while the evaluation and discussions of emotions has increased among Christians over the last few decades, the Puritans pursued

26 “How well leaders manage their moods and affect everyone else’s moods . . . becomes not just a private matter, but a factor in how well a business [or church] will do.” This thought is noted in Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*, 18.


30 As psychologist Diane Langberg notes, “Pastors and their spouses have unique dual relationships with people in the church. For example, they worship with people who are also employees, and they are friends with elders who are the pastor’s supervisors. This can be confusing and emotionally difficult.”

31 Carroll, *God’s Potters*, 120.

32 Congregational oversight is described as sharing congregational leadership, building congregational community, effective administration, conflict utilization, and responsible self-management. See D. S. Schuller, M. P. Strommen, and M. L. Brekke, eds., *Ministry in America: A Report and Analysis, Based on an In-Depth Survey of 47 Denominations in the United States and Canada, with interpretation by 18 Experts* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 34.

33 See the pioneering works of Samuel W. Blizzard, who reported that ministers allocate more of their energies in administering programs than would be anticipated in terms of training and their own expectations. Blizzard’s works include “The Minister’s Dilemma,” *The Christian Century* 73,


38 We would strongly encourage churches to look into the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal program. Information is available online at www.lillyendowment.org/religion_ncr.html.
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This book is given to you as a free resource to help sustain you for a lifetime of ministry.
The Pastors Summit seeks to foster excellence in ministry and to understand how ministry is honed in the midst of taxing, fast-paced, and unrelenting demands. As pastors are supported in revitalizing their sense of call, enhancing their skills, and fostering supportive relationships, some of the foremost needs faced by shepherds of Christ’s church are addressed. When this occurs, the fruit flows into individual lives, family relationships, and congregational ministry.

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