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Uniting the Roles of Preaching and Shepherding

By
Samuel Jake McCall

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore how pastors unite their preaching and shepherding roles through sermons to their local church.

Historically, preaching has had a prioritized role in the church. As a primary means of God's grace and an indispensable opportunity to communicate grace and truth, preaching warrants this high ministerial priority. However, the role of preaching can easily separate from the role of shepherding. Staying relationally connected to the practical issues of the congregants creates additional challenges to an already difficult task. Further, the challenge is not only convincing people of the truth of the gospel but is also connecting that truth with common congregational concerns.

This study utilized a qualitative design using semi-structured interviews with six pastors from Reformed denominations that vary in geographic locations, settings, and church size. All six pastors were primary preaching pastors and considered commitments to preaching and shepherding as vital to the health of the church. The pastoral tenure of the participants in a single church ranged from a minimum of ten years to twenty-nine years. The interviews focused on gaining data with four research questions: how do pastors describe the connections between preaching and shepherding in their local church, how do pastors describe the connection between their local weekly preaching and their own spiritual life, what impact does pastoral tenure have on shepherding and preaching, how do pastors prevent becoming isolated from their congregations?

The literature review focused on three key areas to understand in sustaining a preaching ministry: the union of the preaching ministry with shepherding, leadership and

the danger of isolation from a corporate perspective, and the impact of a long-tenured pastorate.

This study reached three conclusions regarding the union of the preaching and shepherding: 1. The priority of preaching in the Christian church has stood the test of time, 2. Uniting preaching with shepherding requires deliberate pastoral efforts, 3. The time-honored establishment of relational trust between a pastor and the congregation is integral to the union of preaching and shepherding.

In light of the findings, three practices are recommended for pastors: 1. Prioritize preaching as a means of shepherding the flock. 2. Create and implement a strategic approach to unite preaching and shepherding. 3. Commit to a long-term tenure of faithful and relational pastoral ministry.

To Alana, the love of my life and the most wonderful person I know. To my children, Ellie, Samuel, Lele, Seth, and Shawn: you make me the proudest of Dads. To my Church, Shepherd of the Valley Presbyterian: thank you for your generous love, patience, and support.

The congregation is the pastor's place for developing vocational holiness.

— Eugene Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable
Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness*

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Acknowledgements

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Chapter One

Introduction

“I am the loneliest person in the sanctuary.”¹ That is how William Self describes his pastoral experience in his book, *Surviving the Stained-Glass Jungle*. The preacher’s pulpit is an isolated place, an isolation on display every Sunday morning, where preachers are dressed differently, act differently, and are seated separately from everyone else. They stand in raised pulpits and speak in robed attire.² These distinctions mark preaching as a sacred and humble call in the life of Christ’s church. However, for pastors and parishioners, they illustrate the insulation they experience, separated from the practical realities of the congregation.³

Donald Capps, author of *Pastoral Counseling and Preaching*, describes the mid-twentieth century emergence of pastoral counseling as a revelatory moment. With the arrival of counseling-based ministry alongside preaching ministry, Capps notes, the gap between pulpit and parishioner lessened: “Through pastoral counseling, one could become involved in the real problems of people instead of speaking in vague generalities

¹ William L. Self, *Surviving The Stained-Glass Jungle* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2011), 29.

² William Durandus, *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments: A Translation of the First Book Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, 1st ed. (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2008), 85.

³ Rudolf Bohren, *Preaching and Community* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1965), 98–99.; Willam H. Willimon, *Integrative Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1981), 10.

from the safety of the pulpit.”⁴ His observation, however, diminishes the role of the preaching pastor without solving the pastoral isolation problem.⁵

Question 89 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism confronts any diminished view of preaching when it asks, “How is the word made effectual to salvation?” The answer follows: “The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation.”⁶ This section of the Shorter Catechism emphasizes the priority of preaching as a primary means of building faith and growth in Christ, and it does so in an uncompromising way.⁷ Dr. J.V. Fesko, professor of systematic and historical theology at Reformed Theological Seminary, also prioritizes the role of preaching: “Our union with Christ is brought about, as Paul says, through the preaching of the word. We are not only brought from death to life by the preached word but are also spiritually nourished throughout our lifelong process of sanctification.”⁸

The purpose of this study is to uphold the primacy and necessity of preaching and also consider how to reunite preaching with the ministry of shepherding. Jerram Barrs, professor of Christian studies and contemporary culture at Covenant Seminary, points out in *The Heart of Evangelism*, that to share the heart of Christ, Christians must discern

⁴ Donald Capps, *Pastoral Counseling and Preaching* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1980), 9–10.

⁵ Arthur L. Teikmanis, *Preaching and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1968), 15.

⁶ Alexander Whyte, *An Exposition on the Shorter Catechism* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2004), 227.

⁷ J V Fesko, “Preaching as a Means of Grace and the Doctrine of Sanctification: A Reformed Perspective,” *American Theological Inquiry* 3, no. 1 (January 15, 2010): 42.

⁸ Fesko, 41.

where people are on their spiritual journey.⁹ This claim applies to one-on-one evangelism and also to pastors as they shepherd through their preaching. Charles Jefferson, author of *The Minister as Shepherd*, affirms this need for preaching to be a work of knowing and shepherding: “The pastoral instinct is nowhere more sorely needed than in the work of preaching. Many would not call preaching pastoral work at all, but what is it if it is not pastoral? No part of a minister’s work is more strictly, genuinely pastoral than the work of preaching.”¹⁰

The Separation of Preaching and Shepherding Roles

The pressure of weekly preaching is an unavoidable reality. People expect mind-grabbing sermons, and pastors hear of people’s need to be enlightened, stretched, and moved during their sermons. For centuries, preachers have had their sermons recorded, in print or now digitally, and the better the preacher is, the more the message gets distributed. Such communication splits the heart and mind of the preacher from the hearts and minds of those receiving the sermon.¹¹

Matthew 9:36 reads, “When he [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.”¹² Charles Kemp, author of *Pastoral Preaching* and *The Caring Pastor*, when commenting on this

⁹ Jerram Barrs, *The Heart of Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 4.

¹⁰ Charles Jefferson, *The Minister as Shepherd*, First (Hong Kong: Living Books For All, 1973), 61.

¹¹ Scott M. Gibson, “The Pastor and Preaching,” *The Journal of Evangelical Homiletics Society* 8, no. 2 (September 2008): 3.

¹² Matthew 9:36. (Unless otherwise specified, Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved., 2001).

verse said, “So Jesus’ message in Matthew 9 grew out of his response to the needs of the people.”¹³ The tenth chapter of John also describes Jesus’ willingness to be close to his people and know them. John 10:27 tells us that Jesus, as the true Shepherd, is within voice-distance, maintaining intimacy and proximity so that he can be aware of the real needs of his sheep. Since pastors don’t have the same capabilities as Jesus to fully know and understand, it should be noted that Jesus knew who was in front of him and he knew what their hearts needed for healing. As Jesus was preaching and teaching, he was pastoring the people that he came face to face with.

How does a pastor go from identifying general and universal spiritual needs in a sermon to preaching directly into the genuine needs of the congregants? Vast resources teach pastors and aspiring preachers how to grow in the craft of sermon preparation and delivery.¹⁴ They range from becoming a better exegete to becoming a better orator and are effective for the seminary classroom and the pastor’s study. However, preaching united to and integrated with shepherding is more than a theological task or a delivered message. It is a pastoral work.¹⁵

These questions affect the responsibilities and roles in pastoral ministry. If preaching is to be influenced by and integrated with pastoral shepherding, should preaching be so separated from other leadership responsibilities that no time is given to

¹³ Charles Kemp, *Pastoral Preaching* (St. Louis, Mo: The Bethany Press, 1963), 17.

¹⁴ E.G., Al Fasol, *A Complete Guide To Sermon Delivery* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996).; James E. Massey, *Designing The Sermon*, 3rd ed. (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1980).; J. Winston Pearce, *Planning Your Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1967).; Wayne McDill, *The 12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994).; Ian Macpherson, *The Art of Illustrating Sermons* (New York: Abington Press, 1964).

¹⁵ Richard Caldwell, *Pastoral Preaching* (Bradenton, FL: Rainer Publishing, 2017), 19.

visitation and congregational care? Church staff titles now read: Pastor of Visitation, Pastor of Community, or Pastor of Congregational Care. These church designations are being debated with a renewed call for all pastors to be relationally connected to the congregation.¹⁶

When the normal preaching pastor is not also spending significant time with congregants on Monday through Saturday, an inevitable gap between the preacher and the people also normalizes.¹⁷ The sermon may be truthful, inspiring, and even universally convicting, but it cannot personally and relationally connect.¹⁸ Yet, as Arthur Teikmanis, who wrote *Preaching and Pastoral Care*, states: “We must emphasize, preaching and pastoral work are inseparably bound together.”¹⁹ Even solo pastors, when they separate preaching into a stand-alone, weekly event, grow disconnected from the rest of the aspects of ministry and soon realize they have a limited amount of shepherding to offer through the sermon.²⁰

Pastor and theologian John Killinger, who wrote *The Centrality of Preaching in the Total Task of Ministry*, points out that many temptations come with being a gifted

¹⁶ E.G., Matt Ward, “Why Pastoral Visitation Is Essential (FOr Every Pastor),” *Center For Pastor Theologians* (blog), December 13, 2019, <https://www.pastortheologians.com/articles/2019/12/12/why-pastoral-visitation-is-essential-for-every-pastor/>; Andrew Roycroft, “15 Reasons Why Visitation Is Vital For Your Pastor,” *Banner of Truth* (blog), September 16, 2016, <https://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/articles/2016/15-reasons-visitation-vital-pastor/>; David Murray, “Pastoral Visitation a “Sign of Sickness” and a “Step Towards Death”?, *Head, Heart, Hand* (blog), September 5, 2016, <https://headhearhand.org/blog/2016/09/05/pastoral-visitation-a-sign-of-sickness-and-a-step-towards-death/>.

¹⁷ I G Murray, “Six Things of Paramount Importance to Pastors,” *Review & Expositor* 26, no. 3 (1929): 265–66.

¹⁸ Craig A. Loscalzo, *Preaching Sermons That Connect* (Downers Grove, Ill: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 100.

¹⁹ Teikmanis, *Preaching and Pastoral Care*, 28,30.

²⁰ Ronald J. Allen, *Preaching and Practical Ministry* (St. Louis, Mo: Chalice Press, 2001), 1.

preacher. He writes that the best antidote for such temptations is a genuine care for people.²¹ Killinger studied the ministry of Harry Emerson Fosdick and recognizes that he was regarded highly as a counselor while in the pulpit and as one who would perform, through his preaching, personal counseling on a group scale.²² This idea suggests that uniting a pastor's preaching role with their shepherding role actually flows from a genuine concern and understanding of the people, and thus a willingness, by the preacher, to enter into the lives of the people.²³

The Separation of the Pastor's Sanctification from the Pastor's Preaching

A central part of a pastor's preaching task is to encourage and challenge people to grow in the gospel of grace.²⁴ This noble effort can also become saturated with inner guilt and shame when pastors believe they are not living according to their preaching.²⁵ This inner guilt and shame, combined with an already idealized pastoral identity, causes pastors to separate themselves from, and even place themselves above, the rest of the congregation.²⁶ This dynamic leads to a preaching ministry isolated from the relational aspects of the church and the spiritual reality of the pastor. Paul Tripp, a pastor and

²¹ John Killinger, *The Centrality of Preaching in the Total Task of Ministry* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1969), 55.

²² Killinger, 54.

²³ Kemp, *Pastoral Preaching*, 39.

²⁴ Gardiner Spring, *The Power of the Pulpit* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1848), 85,87.

²⁵ Chuck Degroat, "Shame and Grace in the Pastor's Life," *Chuckdegroat.Net* (blog), November 3, 2014, <https://chuckdegroat.net/2014/11/03/shame-and-grace-in-the-pastors-life/>.

²⁶ David K Pooler, "Pastors and Congregations at Risk: Insights from Role Identity Theory," *Pastoral Psychology* 60, no. 5 (October 2011): 707, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-011-0356-5>.

author of numerous books on pastoral ministry, deals with this subject in his work, *Dangerous Calling*: “You have the danger of becoming comfortable with a disharmony between your public ministry persona and your private spiritual life...in weariness of spiritual battle many pastors give themselves permission to become comfortable with ministry duplicity (a separation between the truths they teach and the way they live).”²⁷

The Reformed tradition emphasizes the careful connection of preaching to the scriptures. John Calvin was insistent that preachers must not invent anything of their own but instead must proclaim only that which has been revealed in Holy Scripture.²⁸ Hollifield emphasizes that when spoken propositions do not contain an underlying biblical hermeneutic, then the practice is not following the historical understanding of biblical preaching.²⁹

Given that constant, a shepherding view of the pulpit recognizes that preaching consists of much more than the diligent exegesis of scripture and the thoughtful crafting of a dynamic message. Preaching connected to shepherding gets beyond didactic and inspirational goals and pursues personal and spiritual connection based on the pastor’s relationship with God and knowledge of the congregation.³⁰ Craig Loscalzo, former professor of preaching at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, summarizes in *Preaching Sermons That Connect*: “Our best preaching, preaching that identifies with the

²⁷ Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, n.d.), 203.

²⁸ T.H.L Parker, *Calvin’s Preaching* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 2001), 182.

²⁹ Hollifield, Gregory K., “Preaching Matters,” *The Journal of Evangelical Homiletics Society* 8, no. 2 (2008): 90.

³⁰ Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, Second (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 26.

lives of our hearers, preaching that creates identification between ourselves and God, emerges out of a genuine growing faith.”³¹

The Challenges of Sermon Preparation

Sermon preparation is a time-consuming process, pastors expect to spend a large portion their time on it, and church members agree. Mis-handled sermons come from a lack of preparation, and so by the end of each week, pastors are rightly concerned about not being well prepared.

However, sermon preparation time can and should focus on the textual and theological aspects of the sermon, along with the cultural and local contexts of the sermon’s listeners. Dennis Cahill, who has been in the pastorate for over thirty years, describes this balance:

We do not allow culture itself to be our starting place. Form should flow from the content of the text and the form of the text. We begin with the shape of the gospel in a particular text. That, however, does not mean we cannot learn from and be informed by the study of culture in general and of our own church culture in particular. We will listen to the Word and we will listen to our world. We will be concerned with the concerns of our people.³²

Cahill’s comments maintain the importance of biblical context while also emphasizing the context of each particular church. Dr. John V. Tornfelt, author and professor of preaching at Evangelical Seminary in Pennsylvania, describes part of his sermon preparation as a time to ask himself, “What issues are people discouraged by or

³¹ Loscalzo, *Preaching Sermons That Connect*, 73.

³² Dennis Cahill, *The Shape of Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, n.d.), 76.

struggling with in life? Who is grief-stricken, injured, ridden with shame, or fearful? Which individuals are facing an uncertain medical report or haunted by past abuse?”³³ Such sermon preparation allows for local context and local consideration, taking care not to expose names or stories.³⁴ Russell Dicks, author of *Pastoral Work and Personal Counseling*, describes the need to integrate preaching and pastoral work: “The preacher must be careful of the kinds of illustrations he uses...The minister can deal with personal problems without citing illustrations such as, ‘I met a woman and she said to me —.’”³⁵

John Chrysostom, the fourth and fifth century Archbishop of Constantinople, was revered for his oratory. Research suggests that he was sensitive to the mood and behaviors of his audience to such a degree that it affected how he prepared and delivered his sermons.³⁶ Martin Luther also saw preaching as a way to shepherd the people under his care. His own self-condemnation during his monastic practice helped him reach others struggling with this same condemnation, and he made it his life’s work to help those under his care find freedom in the person of Christ.³⁷

Charles Bridges, author of *The Christian Ministry*, also promotes specific application when he writes, “So unnatural is this habit of personal application [by

³³ John V Tornfelt, “Pastor as Preacher,” *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 8, no. 2 (September 2008): 21.

³⁴ Allen, *Preaching and Practical Ministry*, 62.

³⁵ Russell L. Dicks, *Pastoral Work and Personal Counseling* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1949), 144–45.

³⁶ Wendy Mayer, “John Chrysostom: Extraordinary Preacher, Ordinary Audience,” in *Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics* (Leiden, 1998), 132.

³⁷ Michael Pasquarello, *Sacred Rhetoric: Preaching as a Theological and Pastoral Practice of the Church* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing, 2005), 111, 113.

hearers], that most will fit the doctrine to anyone but themselves; and their general and unmeaning commendation too plainly bespeaks the absence of personal interest and concern.” Bridges describes a pastor’s weekly challenge – a congregation already in a posture to deflect the piercing truths from the Bible due to familiarity or habit.

Problem of Focus

As a central practice of the Christian church, preaching demands more of a preacher’s time than other areas of responsibility. Historically, it has been approached as a primary means of God’s grace, and therefore a commitment to preaching is warranted. However, the role of preaching can easily become separated from the role of shepherding. In addition, preachers face the challenge of being relationally connected to the practical issues of the congregants. Therefore, the challenge is not only getting people to agree with the truth of the content. The challenge is also to connect the truth of the content with the particular concerns of the congregation.

Purpose Statement

While vast amounts of resources are dedicated to preaching and shepherding separately, far less literature unites these pastoral roles. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how pastors unite their preaching and shepherding roles through their sermons to their local church.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the qualitative research of this study:

1. How do pastors describe the connections between preaching and shepherding in their local church?
 - a. What are some specific ways that pastors unite their preaching and shepherding roles through their sermons?
 - b. What are the challenges pastors face in uniting their preaching and shepherding roles?
2. How do pastors describe the connection between their local weekly preaching and their own spiritual life?
3. What impact does pastorate tenure have on shepherding and preaching?
4. As leaders, how do pastors prevent becoming isolated from their congregations?

Significance of the Study

Pastors are called to shepherd the flock of God. In theory, preaching is the primary way that call is carried out. However, preaching works to explain and inspire, goals easily separated from shepherding. The integration of preaching and shepherding roles will provide needed balance for preaching pastors. This study's findings will help preaching pastors gain confidence in the value of their pastoral call, especially in an age where online sermons and podcasts are instantly available. The research will encourage preaching pastors to be better students of the particular struggles in their congregation. The findings will also strengthen their preaching ministry and their overall ministry efforts as their sermons do more of the shepherding needed by the congregation.

Definition of Terms

In this study, key terms are defined as follows:

Corporate Trust – In the context of the local church, this realm of trust describes trust between the pastor as a leader and the collection of parishioners as an organization.³⁸

Exegesis - From the Greek verb, ἐξηγεῖσθαι (exegeisthai), “to lead out,” is defined by Michael Gorman as “the careful, historical, literary, and theological analysis of a text.”³⁹

Emotional Intelligence - As described in Goleman, et al., in *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, emotional intelligence is defined as “how leaders handle themselves and their relationships.”⁴⁰ In *Resilient Ministry*, it is described as “the ability to proactively manage your own emotions and to appropriately respond to the emotions of others.”⁴¹

Interpersonal Trust – In the context of the local church, trust between the pastor and the individual parishioners.⁴²

³⁸ Glenn E. Ludwig, *In It For the Long Haul" Building Effective Long-Term Pastorates* (Bethesda, Maryland: The Alban Institute, 2002), 45.

³⁹ Michael J Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), 9–10.

⁴⁰ Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Boston: Harvard Business School; Harvard Business Review Press, 2002), 6.

⁴¹ Bob Burns, Tasha D. Chapman, and Donald C. Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving* (Downers Grove, Ill: Intervarsity Press, 2013), 103.

⁴² Roy M Oswald et al., *New Visions for the Long Pastorate* (Bethesda, Maryland: The Alban Institute, 1983), 44, 46.

Preaching Pastor - The pastor at a local church primarily responsible for the weekly preaching. In this context, a solo pastor would be the preaching pastor.

Shepherding - A servant leadership approach that offers relational, courageous, and compassionate oversight. Robert Ball in his article, *Biblical Shepherding and the Praxis of Ecclesial Leadership*, describes shepherding as including: “guiding, feeding, protecting, recovering, and mending, all in the spiritual realm of the Christian Life. Spiritual shepherding is performed through the Word of God, as empowered and applied by the Holy Spirit.”⁴³

The Gap Theory - A gap of trust between interpersonal trust and corporate trust. In this trust gap dynamic, interpersonal trust is often low early in a pastorate, while corporate trust is high. In this theory, as interpersonal trust is gained and individual relationships are strengthened between a pastor and a congregation, corporate trust can sometimes fall and a new trust gap forms over time. See Figure 1 on page 61.

Transference – an emotional connection in which one directs feelings or desires related to an important figure in one’s life—such as a parent—toward someone who is not that person.⁴⁴

⁴³ Robert Ball, “Biblical Shepherding and the Praxis of Ecclesial Leadership,” *Journal of Biblical Theology* 2, no. 4 (October 2019): 18.

⁴⁴ “Transference,” Psychology Today, n.d., <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/transference>.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to explore how pastors unite their preaching and shepherding roles through their sermons to their local church. The literature review begins with a literature analysis of preaching ministry combined with shepherding and will discover why and how they are separated from one another. This section will also explore how to overcome this separation while also examining the value of uniting and integrating these two vital ministry roles.

The second literature review section will research leadership and the danger of isolation from a corporate perspective. Given that the purpose of this study is to explore how pastors unite their preaching and shepherding roles, this corporate leadership research will parallel some of the dangers of pastoral isolation and its impact on a pastor's leadership, especially in regard to preaching as a form of shepherding.

The final literature review section will study the impact of a long-tenured pastorate and present its benefits. This section will also explore the obstacles of long-term ministry in the same church and how those obstacles can be overcome.

The Union of the Preaching Ministry with Shepherding

Why should a pastor's preaching be united to shepherding? Furthermore, if preaching should be united to shepherding, how does a pastor practically accomplish that

task? This literature review area begins with a study of the central role of preaching in the ministry of the pastor. Following this area of study, the pastor's call to shepherd through preaching will be examined, followed by a section exploring the ways to overcome obstacles to shepherd through preaching.

The Central Role of Preaching in the Ministry of the Pastor

"A man must have a center. He cannot be all circumference. Somewhere, somehow, things must come together. And the burden to preach, to make a sermon, to speak a word is such a place."⁴⁵ This is how John Killinger describes the vital nature of the preaching ministry. By examining the priority of preaching in the life of the church, this section will discover the advantages for preaching as a connecting hub to other areas of ministry. This section will examine the role of preaching throughout the ages of Christian history and the benefits to a centralized role of preaching.

The Role of Preaching Throughout the Ages of Christian History

According to John Stott, the late rector of All Souls' Church in London and the author of numerous biblical commentaries and books on preaching, "Preaching is indispensable to Christianity."⁴⁶ Stott's claim recognizes that the self-revelation of God has been communicated through words and a central understanding of the propagation of Christianity is that those who have heard and believed these words about God would

⁴⁵ Killinger, *The Centrality of Preaching in the Total Task of Ministry*, 27.

⁴⁶ John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 15.

speaking them to others.⁴⁷ Fred Craddock, the late professor of preaching at Candler School of Theology, explains that preaching “is set in a long and rich tradition and whoever enters the pulpit not only continues that tradition but is influenced by it as part of the Christian community’s memory.”⁴⁸ This conviction about the priority and effect of preaching has been widely shared and upheld throughout the church’s long history.⁴⁹ The following sections will examine the indispensable nature of preaching throughout the different ages of church history.

The Role of Preaching with Jesus and the Early Church

Robert D. Sider, professor emeritus of classical languages at Dickenson College, states, “The story of our Christian faith begins, in effect with proclamation. Jesus came into Galilee with a message of good news – the ‘Kingdom of God’ is at hand.”⁵⁰ This model of preaching a message continued as the first followers of Jesus were compelled to spread this good news.⁵¹ This message made three astounding claims. First, the crucified Jesus is alive because God raised him from the dead. Second, Christ’s resurrection has vindicated him as the promised Messiah, the Anointed One. Third, he will return again soon to reveal the kingdom of God and his reign over it.⁵² As adherents of this early

⁴⁷ Stott, 15.

⁴⁸ Fred Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1985), 35.

⁴⁹ Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today*, 16.

⁵⁰ Robert D. Sider, *The Gospel and Its Proclamation* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983), 11.

⁵¹ David Dunn-Wilson, *A Mirror for the Church: Preaching in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing, 2005), 1.

⁵² Ronald E. Osborn, *Folly of God: The Rise of Christian Preaching* (St. Louis, Mo: Chalice Press, 1999), 245.

Christian faith moved outside of Jerusalem, preachers proclaimed the good news to Gentiles, which led to Christian churches forming around the eastern Mediterranean.⁵³

In describing the role of preaching in the early history of the church, David Dunn-Wilson, former professor of theology at Kenya Methodist University and author of *A Mirror for the Church*, claims, the “birth cry of the infant church is a sermon, and how can it be otherwise when the foolishness of preaching is God’s chosen instrument of salvation?”⁵⁴ Preaching’s priority is expressed throughout the church’s formation and expansion as Luke, in the *Acts of the Apostles*, highlights Peter’s Pentecost sermon in Acts 2, Stephen’s message to the Jews in Acts 7, and Paul’s address in Acts 12.⁵⁵

By the end of the first century, the preaching of the message of Christianity brought swift growth across a large part of the world. Christian preaching also initiated the formation of new Christian communities. Dr. Ronald Osborn, former professor of church history at the Claremont School of Theology, described this growth movement: “The preaching brought into existence believing communities in hundreds of localities and sustained them in a hostile world.”⁵⁶ Also, according to Osborn, first century preaching fixed the life of that early church in a “living relationship with the transcendent ‘word of God.’”⁵⁷

⁵³ Osborn, 246.

⁵⁴ Dunn-Wilson, *A Mirror for the Church: Preaching in the First Five Centuries*, 1.

⁵⁵ Guerric Debona, *Fulfilled in Our Hearing: History and Method of Christian Preaching* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), 8.

⁵⁶ Osborn, *Folly of God: The Rise of Christian Preaching*, 317.

⁵⁷ Osborn, 317.

The Role of Preaching During the Patristic Era

During the Patristic Era, the first through fourth centuries, the Greek world shaped the church's order of worship and the format of the sermon.⁵⁸ Therefore, preaching transitioned to a more structured form, and the emphasis shifted from prophecy to teaching. Even in this transition, the presence of preaching is cited. Justin Martyr, a second century Christian apologist and philosopher, describes weekly Christian worship: "And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs and exhorts to the imitation of these good things."⁵⁹ Also noting the continued practice of preaching during the Patristic era, Thomas Harwood Pattison, former professor of homiletics and pastoral theology at Rochester Theological Seminary and author of *The History of Christian Preaching*, remarks:

In the character of this preaching we mark in the first three centuries a distinct progress. The artless story of the gospel, as Peter preached it on the day of Pentecost and as Paul summarized it in writing to the Corinthians, developed into a more systematic form of address. Spiritual things were compared with spiritual. Teaching, which was at the beginning chiefly expository, took on logical form, and the sequence of thought was more clearly marked. The homily, at first merely an informal address, developed into the sermon as we have it now.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Debona, *Fulfilled in Our Hearing: History and Method of Christian Preaching*, 11.

⁵⁹ *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The First Apology of Justin LXVII* (ANF 1). Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 1885-1887.

⁶⁰ T. Harwood Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1912), 48.

This period produced Christian preachers whose names and sermons have survived time. These names include Clement of Rome (first century), Justin Martyr (120-190), Clement of Alexandria (150-220), Origen (180-253), Tertullian (170-240), Cyprian (200-258), Athanasius (297-373), Basil (330-379), Gregory Nazianzen (330-390), Ambrose (340-397), Augustine (354-430), and John Chrysostom (347-407).⁶¹

The Role of Preaching During the Early Middle Ages

During the fifth through tenth centuries, the sermon continued to play an important role in the church, although this process was often reproductive.⁶² The purpose of Christian instruction remained,⁶³ but the content was characterized by a strict adherence to the early church fathers, whose teachings and homilies were considered the authoritative tradition of the church.⁶⁴ Paul Scott Wilson, professor emeritus of homiletics at Emmanuel College in the Toronto School of Theology and general editor of the *Interpreter's Handbook of Preaching*, states, "Many preachers were often mere mouthpieces for mechanical translations from sermons by church fathers in the common language of the people."⁶⁵

While it continued to have a visible presence, preaching was affected by the political dynamics of the fifth through tenth centuries.⁶⁶ The priesthood of the church

⁶¹ Pattison, 49–63.; Osborn, 249

⁶² Yngve Brilioth, *A Brief History of Preaching* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1965), 72.

⁶³ Brilioth, 70.

⁶⁴ Paul Scott Wilson, *A Concise History of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Pr, 1992), 67. Pattison, 77.

⁶⁵ Wilson, 68.

⁶⁶ Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 74.

gained political power, and in so doing, diminished the church's and Christian preaching's spiritual influence.⁶⁷ In many influential cities, such as Rome, Constantinople, and Alexandria, the Christian religion, as it was in the first through fourth centuries, began to wane.⁶⁸ However, this time period gave rise to a distinctly missionary character and continued to reveal the central role of preaching in the practice of the church.⁶⁹ Harwood Pattison describes this Christian expansion:

During all this dark period, preaching, neglected in the pulpits of a degenerate and ignorant clergy, had made its voice to be heard far-off among the heathen, and in doing so had recovered somewhat of its pristine simplicity and power. We can now see how these early missionaries carrying the gospel in this simple form to Germany and Britain sowed the seed of the Protestant Reformation.⁷⁰

When the Crusades began in 1095, Christian preaching took on a complicated purpose: to recruit crusaders to engage in the recapture of Palestine and to sell indulgences.⁷¹ Though condemnable, it verified the role that Christian preaching maintained.⁷² Even though Christian preaching had “degenerated to a mechanical level and retained this status during the whole of the Middle Ages,”⁷³ preaching maintained a significant influence.⁷⁴ John Wycliffe (1324-1384), mostly known for his commitments

⁶⁷ Pattison, 76.

⁶⁸ Pattison, 79.

⁶⁹ Pattison, 76–77.

⁷⁰ Pattison, 87.

⁷¹ Wilson, *A Concise History of Preaching*.

⁷² Brilioth, *A Brief History of Preaching*, 88.

⁷³ Brilioth, 73.

⁷⁴ Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 89.

to Bible translation, highly esteemed preaching. He established a company of preachers who brought about doctrinal reform in England through their preaching.⁷⁵ Wycliffe's influence found its way to John Huss (1369-1415), as Huss continued defending the early reformer's doctrines. Huss' preaching resulted in his excommunication and execution, proving the widespread assumption of the influential role of preaching in this era.⁷⁶

The Role of Preaching During the Protestant Reformation

"The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century was, in large part, a reformation by preaching and a reformation of preaching: a reformation of the Word."⁷⁷ Dr. Michael Pasquarello, director of the Robert J. Smith Preaching Institute at Beeson Divinity School, thus describes preaching in the Protestant Reformation in his book, *Sacred Rhetoric*. Numerous figures played significant roles during the Protestant Reformation, but two of the most influential reformers from sixteenth century were Martin Luther and John Calvin.⁷⁸ Both Luther and Calvin believed that God worked uniquely through preaching. Luther referred to preaching as the "living Gospel" and he devoted himself to "break open the words of Scriptures so that the Gospel...be let loose by the Spirit."⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Pattison, 117.

⁷⁶ Pattison, 118.

⁷⁷ Pasquarello, *Sacred Rhetoric*, 109.

⁷⁸ Pasquarello, 109, 121.

⁷⁹ Pasquarello, 111.

Pasquarello describes Calvin's primary purpose of doctrinal and biblical interpretation was "preaching, an act of worship and central activity for building up the Christian assembly."⁸⁰ Thus, Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* were chiefly to "guide and inform preaching," while Calvin's "sermons clarified and applied the doctrine of the *Institutes* to summon the church into being."⁸¹

The Role of Preaching During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

In Europe, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, religious consciousness shifted again, a combined result of the aftermath of religious wars that followed the Reformation, the emergence of the scientific method, and new dependence on human reason rather than presupposed revelation in the area of philosophy.⁸² This shift in consciousness, along with Christianity's new defensive posture,⁸³ impacted preaching with an emphasis on clarity, simplicity, and suitable fervor in preaching.⁸⁴ This preaching approach, which appealed to the emotions and the mind, was stressed to make the sermon comprehensible to varying classes and education levels.⁸⁵

This post-Reformation era also displayed a unique period of unity among denominational factions in order to impact the culture of England through the pulpit. Rolf P. Lessenich was a professor for The Institute for English, American Studies, and

⁸⁰ Pasquarello, 125.

⁸¹ Pasquarello, 126.

⁸² Otis Carl Edwards, Jr., *A History of Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004), 391–92.

⁸³ Edwards, 405.

⁸⁴ Edwards, 395.

⁸⁵ Edwards, 401.

Celtology at the University of Bonn, and his research included the influence of pulpit ministry in eighteenth century England. When describing these efforts at denominational unity, Lessenich states:

The large majority of post-Restoration Protestant preachers quickly forgot their petty differences of belief, as between Anglicans and Dissenters, Congregationalists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Unitarians, and united their strength in a joint oratorical crusade against vice.⁸⁶

The Role of Preaching in Early America

Though Puritanism had its origins in England, the Puritan movement began to diminish there in the mid-seventeenth century.⁸⁷ However, the Puritans provided early America with its first homiletical tradition, and its influence lasted much longer in America.⁸⁸ In the early history of New England, preaching's influence was vast.⁸⁹ In fact, Otis Edwards, former professor for preaching at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary and author of *A History of Preaching*, makes the following claim:

This shows how important preaching was in their whole scheme of things: the Puritans left England and endured the dangers of sea travel and the hardships of the frontier so that they could guarantee, as far as humanly possible, that the people in their community would be exposed to sermons preached as they ought to be.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Rolf P. Lessenich, *Elements of Pulpit Oratory in Eighteenth-Century England (1660-1800)* (Germany: Böhlau in Köln [Cologne], 1972), x.

⁸⁷ Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, 470.

⁸⁸ Edwards, 470.

⁸⁹ Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 349.

⁹⁰ Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, 472.

The Great Awakening began in the 1730s, and its two most prominent preachers were Jonathan Edwards and George Whitfield.⁹¹ Though they had vastly different preaching styles, both built their preaching theory on the understanding that preaching was the ordinary means through which salvation occurred and thus solidifying its vital role in the Christian faith and in the revival movements of the church.⁹²

In this new culture, the influence of the church and its preaching continued to play a major role in American life. Sermons shaped revolutions culminating in the American Revolution and the Civil War.⁹³ And though views on preaching throughout American church history vary, “The history of religious thought during the last three centuries or more is a history of the pulpit.”⁹⁴

The Benefits to a Centralized Role of Preaching

As church history tells us, preaching has consistently found a vital place in the life and practice of the church. Therefore, based on its biblical mandate and church history’s emphasis, the priority of preaching has been sustained. However, beyond its need to be prioritized, preaching must also play a unifying role.

⁹¹ Edwards, 478.

⁹² Edwards, 474.

⁹³ Pattison, *The History of Christian Preaching*, 391.

⁹⁴ Pattison, 392.

The Centrality of Preaching Among Multiple Ministry Areas

Pastors are called to carry out numerous responsibilities. They counsel, administrate, console, moderate meetings, visit with members, study, budget and manage finances, pray, teach, and preach. As most other professions move toward more specialized roles, pastoral ministry remains generalized.⁹⁵ Killinger describes the tensions:

This is the claim I make for a good theology of preaching – that it introduces order into the chaos of a man’s ministry. He is lost in the thicket and tangle of crisscrossing paths and dense undergrowth. A dozen major responsibilities tug at his sleeve, this way and that. Administrator, educator, counselor, prophet, pastor, social worker, maybe custodian, secretary, mimeographer, plumber, carpenter, and husband and parent on the side – he is expected to be many things, indeed even wants to be. But there are definite limits to his time and energy and psychological composure.⁹⁶

Killinger assumes differing views and expectations from congregation members regarding which of these ministry responsibilities is most important. Therefore, it can be challenging to centralize a role in the midst of varying congregational expectations.⁹⁷ Even so, when preaching takes on a central role, other areas of ministry tasks can move into an orderly structure.⁹⁸ In his work, *Preaching*, Craddock explains that preaching

⁹⁵ R. Robert Cueni, *What Ministers Can’t Learn In Seminary: A Survival for the Parish Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1988), 48–49.

⁹⁶ Killinger, *The Centrality of Preaching in the Total Task of Ministry*, 28.

⁹⁷ Donald Macleod, *The Problem of Preaching*, Fortress Resources for Preaching (Philadelphia: Fortress Pr, 1987), 39.

⁹⁸ Killinger, *The Centrality of Preaching in the Total Task of Ministry*, 29–30.

“can bring to completion and closure matters that otherwise would remain fragmented and dangling.”⁹⁹

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, minister at Westminster Chapel in London and author of *Preaching and Preachers*, described preaching as the “primary task of the church,” and all other areas of ministry are the “outworking or the carrying out of this in daily practice.”¹⁰⁰ Preaching’s central role does not demean other pastoral roles, but it prioritizes preaching as a point of connection. Preaching has been a distinctive task of ministry in every age, and though many other indispensable pastoral tasks exist, there are no substitutes for preaching.¹⁰¹ This distinction sets preaching apart as a point of origin and order for other pastoral responsibilities. Killinger refers to preaching as a “point of reference” and an “axis.”¹⁰²

The Centrality of Preaching in Worship

Without something that brings unity and structure, a worship service can lack coherence and focus.¹⁰³ The sermon can be that “point of focus which gives true depth and shading and meaning to the rest of the picture, so that nothing in the service – not the subtlest phrasing of a prayer or the slightest tremor of praise – is lost or undervalued.”¹⁰⁴

Abraham Kuruvilla, professor of Christian preaching and former president of the

⁹⁹ Craddock, *Preaching*, 39.

¹⁰⁰ David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011).

¹⁰¹ Killinger, *The Centrality of Preaching in the Total Task of Ministry*, 28.

¹⁰² Killinger, *The Centrality of Preaching in the Total Task of Ministry*.

¹⁰³ Michael J. Quicke, *Preaching as Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 19.

¹⁰⁴ Killinger, *The Centrality of Preaching in the Total Task of Ministry*, 38.

Evangelical Homiletics Society, emphasizes preaching's significant role in worship. "As the primary mode of address to the body of Christ gathered for worship, the public discourse has a unique significance and plays a key role in the life of the church."¹⁰⁵ For the sermon to be a unifying element of the worship service does not mean that the sermon is incorrectly inflated but that other elements of the service are preliminary or secondary.¹⁰⁶

The ministry of preaching does not replace or dominate the other elements of the worship service, but rather it informs and explains them.¹⁰⁷ To speak of preaching as a central element of worship is to view it in relationship to the whole of worship rather than over-emphasized or disconnected. This interconnected relationship is expressed by Killinger:

As the influence of a sound liturgy safeguards preaching from becoming mere exhibitionism or illuminism (witness the negative situation in many aliturgical churches), it is the influence of sound preaching that imparts to the liturgy a sense of existential and contemporaneous.¹⁰⁸

His comments declare the important role that preaching plays while also recognizing the value and interdependence of the other elements of the worship service.

¹⁰⁵ Abraham Kuruvilla, *A Vision for Preaching: Understanding the Heart of Pastoral Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 34.

¹⁰⁶ Michael J Quicke, "Connecting Preaching With Worship: I. A Surprising Journey," *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 11, no. 1 (March 2011): 20.

¹⁰⁷ Killinger, *The Centrality of Preaching in the Total Task of Ministry*, 42.

¹⁰⁸ Killinger, 39.

The Pastor's Call to Shepherd the Local Church Through Preaching

Jared Wilson, author and the director of content strategy for Midwestern Seminary, said that “Preaching is the steering wheel of the church.”¹⁰⁹ A pastor is better positioned to shepherd through preaching when preaching guides the life and ministry of the church, rather than functioning in an isolated and disconnected fashion. To explore the pastor’s call to shepherd through preaching, the meaning of shepherding according to the Bible will first be examined.

The Meaning of Shepherding According to the Bible

Shepherding is a pervasive metaphor used throughout biblical literature to describe the care of the church. One author describes it as “perhaps the richest of all metaphors in Bible.”¹¹⁰ In the Old Testament, God is the shepherd over Israel,¹¹¹ by his care¹¹² and leadership.¹¹³ These Old Testament shepherding descriptions lay the foundation for New Testament presentations of Jesus as a shepherd king. Early in Matthew’s gospel, the coming Jesus is presented as shepherd who will rule the people of Israel.¹¹⁴ In John’s gospel, Jesus is “the good shepherd who lays down his life for the

¹⁰⁹ John H Neufeld, “Preaching and Pastoral Care,” *Vision (Winnipeg, Man.)* 10, no. 1 (2009): 70.

¹¹⁰ Robert Ball, “Biblical Shepherding and the Praxis of Ecclesial Leadership,” *Journal of Biblical Theology* 2, no. 4 (October 2019): 5.

¹¹¹ Benjamin L. Merkle and Thomas R. Schreiner, *Shepherding God’s Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2014), 33.

¹¹² Isaiah 40:11.

¹¹³ Psalm 23.

¹¹⁴ Merkle and Schreiner, *Shepherding God’s Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond*, 36.

sheep” and the one whose sheep hear his voice, know him, and follow him.¹¹⁵ Robert Hall, author of *Biblical Shepherding and the Praxis of Ecclesial Leadership*, describes Jesus’ blend of leadership and self-sacrifice: “Jesus’ earthly ministry was performed with all authority because He is and always will be God. Yet Jesus came in His incarnation with tenderness, compassion, wisdom, and a loving self-sacrifice that is the ultimate example of what it means to shepherd His people.”¹¹⁶

Also in the New Testament, the word pastor is defined and described. The Greek word for pastor in the New Testament is *poimen*, most often translated as “shepherd,” which aligns a pastor’s care for the congregation with that of a shepherd who leads, instructs, accounts for, guards, and feeds the sheep.¹¹⁷ Therefore, the pastor’s call to shepherd the people of the church is a call to follow Jesus’ example to lead, love, protect, provide for, sacrifice for, and know the people.¹¹⁸

The Challenges of Uniting Preaching and Shepherding

Though preaching and shepherding are vital ministry tasks, there are challenges to uniting the two.¹¹⁹ A brief description of some of the challenges will be addressed.

¹¹⁵ John 10:11, 27-28.

¹¹⁶ Ball, “Biblical Shepherding”, 10.

¹¹⁷ Siang-Yan Tan, *Shepherding God’s People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 11.

¹¹⁸ Tan, 9. Ball, 12.

¹¹⁹ Neufeld, “Preaching and Pastoral Care,” 67.

The Emphasis of Biblical Exegesis at the Expense of Congregational Exegesis

Interpretation of the scriptural text requires studying and understanding the text in its original context.¹²⁰ Therefore, it is understandable, important, and expected for pastors to invest time in hermeneutics when preparing to preach. However, in relation to the context of the local congregation, that same type of investment is often overlooked. Observing this imbalance, Martin Saarinen states, “Noticeably absent in pastors’ preparation and continuing education for preaching is attention to the indigenous cultural text provided by the congregation itself. This inattention renders the congregation’s culture one of the most invisible aspects of the church in spite of the profound importance it has for preaching.”¹²¹ Preaching as a shepherd demands a thorough knowledge of a passage’s context along with a thorough knowledge of the congregation’s context.

The Unrealized Relationship Between Preaching and Pastoral Care

Preaching and pastoral care are the most important and time-consuming roles a pastor has.¹²² However, even though they should remain united, often the two are so separated that their paths rarely cross in the life of the church.¹²³

¹²⁰ *Homiletics and Hermeneutics: Four Views on Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 3.

¹²¹ Martin F Saarinen, “‘They Don’t Understand Us’: An Analysis of Preaching and the Culture of a Local Church,” *Homiletic* 11, no. 2 (1986): 5.

¹²² Neufeld, “Preaching and Pastoral Care,” 67.

¹²³ C. Trimp, “Preaching as the Public Means of Divine Redemption,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 10 (1999): 55.

Seminary programs and courses acknowledge each's importance, and much attention is given them, but rarely is the relationship between preaching and shepherding emphasized. John Neufeld made the following observation:

Homiletics courses may mention in passing that pastoral calling and care will provide the contracts necessary to help pastors prepare sermons relevant to the actual experiences of the people in the pews, but I am not aware of preaching courses or texts that investigate the contributions of preaching to pastoral care.¹²⁴

Pastor Isolation

Another challenge to uniting shepherding with preaching is pastor isolation. Killinger warned that the “preacher, who is not a pastor, grows remote.”¹²⁵ Pastor isolation is cited often as a concern, and numerous situations may lead to a pastor becoming increasingly isolated from the congregation.¹²⁶ But regardless of the reason, pastors who are relationally separated from congregations prepare and deliver sermons without the listeners in mind – imparting information to whoever may be listening.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Neufeld, “Preaching and Pastoral Care,” 67.

¹²⁵ Killinger, *The Centrality of Preaching in the Total Task of Ministry*, 71.

¹²⁶ Mark Brouwer, “The Friendless Pastor: How to Address Our Perennial Problem,” *Leadership* 35, no. 1 (2014): 49–51. Dietrich von Oppen, “Isolation of the Pastor from Society,” *Lutheran World* 11, no. 4 (October 1964): 449–57; Carey Nieuwhof, “Overcoming the New Leadership Epidemic - Isolation and Loneliness,” *Carey Nieuwhof* (blog), n.d., <https://careynieuwhof.com/overcoming-the-new-leadership-epidemic-isolation-and-loneliness/>. Roy Yanke, “Isolation and Loneliness - The Danger Zone For Pastors,” *PIR Ministries: Partners in Pastor Renewal* (blog), May 21, 2013, <https://pirministries.org/isolation-and-loneliness-the-danger-zone-for-pastors/>; “3 Reasons Why Ministry Leaders Choose to Be Isolated,” Lifeway Research, September 12, 2017, <https://lifewayresearch.com/2017/09/12/3-reasons-ministry-leaders-choose-isolated/>.

¹²⁷ Oliver, “Learning to Preach Intentionally towards the Mission of the Local Church,” 466.

Often the temptation to dedicate an imbalanced amount of time to study isolates pastors,¹²⁸ and leads to either the reality or the perception that the pastor ministers in an “ivory tower,” estranged from the people of the congregation.¹²⁹ This relational estrangement further segregates the preaching and shepherding ministries.

The Value of Uniting Preaching and Shepherding

The sermon is an indispensable opportunity for a pastor to shepherd parishioners.

Craddock expounds on this connection:

Preaching happens in a pastoral context and is in many significant ways influenced by that context. In fact, at every stage from conception to delivery and beyond, pastoral functions and relationships enter into the preaching ministry. Study and preparation involve careful listening to the congregation as well as to the text.¹³⁰

Kuruvilla explains that because preaching is essential for spiritual formation, “There cannot be a severance between preaching and pastoring, between the exposition of God’s Word and the shepherding of God’s people. The two form an inseparable and integral unity.”¹³¹ This shepherding-through-preaching approach does not happen overnight, but a pastor who “resides with people over time should develop the skill of understanding the people and their context theologically.”¹³²

¹²⁸ Daniel Darling, “God’s People Need a Pastor, Not Just a Preacher,” *For The Church* (blog), April 8, 2015, <https://ftc.co/resource-library/blog-entries/gods-people-need-a-pastor-not-just-a-preacher/>.

¹²⁹ John R Stott, *The Preacher’s Portrait: Some New Testament Word Studies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 88.

¹³⁰ Craddock, *Preaching*, 39.

¹³¹ Kuruvilla, *A Vision for Preaching: Understanding the Heart of Pastoral Ministry*, 33.

¹³² Oliver, “Learning to Preach Intentionally towards the Mission of the Local Church,” 466.

Eugene Peterson, the late pastor, author, and professor of spiritual theology at Regent College, wrote numerous books on pastoral theology, including a memoir titled, *The Pastor*. He describes home visitations as irreplaceable preparation for preaching on Sundays,¹³³ a way to listen to those who will be listening on Sundays.¹³⁴ Though this combination of shepherding and preaching is not the only factor, it does shape the sermon's content.

David Switzer, professor emeritus of pastoral theology at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, and the author of *Pastor, Preacher, Person: Developing a Pastoral Ministry In Depth*, argues that the quality of the pastor/congregation relationship impacts sermon content and also increases the probability of a response to the sermon.¹³⁵

Closer pastor/congregation relationships provide the means for the pastor to anticipate questions or opposition elicited by a sermon.¹³⁶ Some of these responses will be obvious, but others will not be. To anticipate questions or opposition to sermon content, a pastor must have relational insight. A disconnected pastor will deal with questions or rebuttals that do not exist without addressing what is happening.¹³⁷ When

¹³³ Eugene H Peterson, *The Pastor: A Memoir* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), 86.

¹³⁴ Peterson, 87.

¹³⁵ Peterson, 87.

¹³⁶ Switzer, 73–74.

¹³⁷ Switzer, 76.

preaching and shepherding are united, real questions and opposition to sermon points can be discussed and addressed during the sermon.¹³⁸

Also, uniting shepherding and preaching establishes a trustworthy environment between the pastor and the congregation.¹³⁹ A pastor must shepherd the congregation in order to gain trust.¹⁴⁰ This type of shepherding allows the pastor to get to know the congregation and for the congregation to get to know the pastor – giving them insight into the character of the pastor.

Dr. Bryan Chapell, stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church In America and preaching scholar, claims that the perceived character of the preacher is one of the most powerful components of persuading people of the truths of the gospel.¹⁴¹ In his renown book, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, Chapell states, “No truth more loudly calls for pastoral holiness than the linkage of a preacher’s character and the sermon’s reception.”¹⁴²

Summary of Uniting the Preaching Ministry with Shepherding

The purpose of this study is to explore how pastors unite their preaching and shepherding roles through their sermons to the local church. This literature review section examined uniting the preaching ministry with shepherding. The first section explored the

¹³⁸ C.J. Quartlebaum, “Tips For Sermon Prep,” *CJ Quartlbaum* (blog), June 12, 2020, <https://www.cjquartlbaum.com/live-labor/2020/6/12/tips-for-sermon-prep>.

¹³⁹ Robert Norris, “Shepherding and Trust,” *9 Marks Online Journal* (blog), February 26, 2010, <https://www.9marks.org/article/shepherding-and-trust/>.

¹⁴⁰ Norris.

¹⁴¹ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 26.

¹⁴² Chapell, 29.

central role of preaching in ministry, specifically, the role of preaching throughout Christian history and the benefits to a centralized role of preaching. The following periods of Christian history were examined: the age of Jesus and the early church, the Patristic era, the early Middle Ages, the Protestant Reformation, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the early American church history. Although these periods revealed varied practices and emphases, the ministry of preaching maintained an important role throughout.

This review also uncovered the benefits to a centralized role of preaching. Specifically, the benefits to a centrality of preaching among multiple ministry areas and the centrality of preaching in worship were explored. This area of study described preaching as unifying the tasks of ministry and worship.

The second section of this literature review area considers the pastor's call to shepherd the local church through preaching. In this area of study, the meaning of shepherding according to the Bible was first explored. This shepherd metaphor is used throughout the Old and New Testaments to describe God's loving care of his people and his intention for how pastors should care for congregations.

This section also looked at challenges to uniting preaching with shepherding and some benefits for doing so. One of the challenges included an imbalanced emphasis on biblical exegesis at the expense of congregational exegesis. This area upheld the importance of biblical hermeneutics while examining the need to apply additional importance to understanding the local context of the congregation. Also, the challenge of the separation of preaching from pastoral care was explored. Churches and seminaries universally recognize the importance of both ministry areas, but the relationship between

the two has been neglected. Pastor isolation is also a challenge to uniting preaching with shepherding. The relational disconnect that results from the isolation of a pastor is a cited concern in the church. This challenge of pastor isolation denigrates the opportunity for the pastor to shepherd their congregation through preaching.

This literature review section also explained the benefits of uniting preaching with shepherding. This area of study sought to explore the relationship that pastoral care has to sermon content and the congregational response to the sermon. Also, when preaching and shepherding are united, a trustworthy environment can be established between the pastor and the congregation. This trustworthy environment is enhanced as a congregation trusts the character of the pastor who is preaching to them.

Leadership and the Danger of Isolation from a Corporate Perspective

In this section, the connection between leadership and isolation will be examined from a corporate perspective, beginning with an exploration of the path to leader isolation. Following this examination, the effects of isolation will be explored. This research will include the link between isolation and being out of touch with the leader's followers and the link between isolation and burnout. This section concludes with an overview of steps to prevent and/or alleviate leader isolation.

The Path to Leader Isolation

“Leadership is not a solo act, it’s a team effort.”¹⁴³ That is how James Kouzes and Barry Posner describe the importance of leadership collaboration in their book, *The Leadership Challenge*. Kouzes and Posner have researched thousands of leadership scenarios, concluding that organizational achievement relies on a supportive network of people.¹⁴⁴ Even so, a majority of business owners and corporate CEOs experience a “pervasive sense of loneliness” in their roles.¹⁴⁵ The path to leader isolation is a varied one, and the following sections will examine leadership ascension, transference in a corporate setting, self-imposed isolation, and the alienation of technological advancement.

Leadership Ascension

The journey to a place of leadership usually involves an ascension to that position. That ascension requires time-consuming hard work,¹⁴⁶ reducing the time available to communicate with workplace peers.¹⁴⁷ Bell, Camp, Karol, and Roloff explain that the

¹⁴³ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 223.

¹⁴⁴ Kouzes and Posner, 223–24.

¹⁴⁵ D.E. Gumpert and D.P. Boyd, “The Loneliness of the Small-Business Owner,” *Harvard Business Review* 62 (1984): 18.

¹⁴⁶ Matthew J. Mowry, “Climbing the Corporate Ladder,” *Business NH Magazine* 21, no. 12 (December 2004): 22.

¹⁴⁷ R.A. Bell, Karen V. Camp, Susan H. Karol, and Michael E. Roloff, “Is It Lonely At The Top? Career Success and Personal Relationships,” *Journal of Communication* 40, no. 1 (1990): 10.

ascending leader soon finds “that his or her relationships and family relations have deteriorated through neglect.”¹⁴⁸

A leader’s ascension can also lead to the envy of others, which can create an isolating environment. In his research on the connection between leadership and envy, Mark Stein discovers that when employees compare their positions or characteristics to that of their leader, a sense of inferiority can be assumed. This envy-producing inferiority creates an isolating environment supported by the leader or the leader’s followers.¹⁴⁹ Ron Carucci, author of numerous leadership books and articles and managing partner at Passages Consulting, describes this type of isolation: “Sadly, leaders are often relegated to suffering in silence under the burdens and complexities of their jobs, trapped by the popular misperception that they are living in luxury.”¹⁵⁰

The Concept of Transference in a Corporate Setting

The concept of transference emerged from Sigmund Freud’s experience in psychoanalysis and is defined as “a phenomenon in which one seems to direct feelings or desires related to an important figure in one’s life—such as a parent—toward someone who is not that person.”¹⁵¹ Transference directly impacts how followers relate to their

¹⁴⁸ Bell et al., 10.

¹⁴⁹ Mark Stein, “Envy and Leadership,” *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 6, no. 4 (1997): 453.

¹⁵⁰ Ron Carucci, “Leading To Green: When Envy and Leadership Join Forces,” *The Other Journal: An Intersection of Theology and Culture* (blog), November 20, 2007, <https://theotherjournal.com/2007/11/20/leading-to-green-when-envy-and-leadership-join-forces/>.

¹⁵¹ “Transference.”

leaders.¹⁵² Dr. Ami Rokach is the executive editor of *The Journal of Psychology: Interdisciplinary and Applied*, and he is a clinical psychologist who specializes in treating loneliness. Rokach links transference and leader isolation:

Employees are known to attach to their leaders' mystical qualities much like with transference. They respond as though the leaders were a significant authority figure from their past, such as a parent or a teacher; when this occurs, the distinction between their past and present disappears. Such transference onto the leader adds to the stress and eventual isolation of the leader.¹⁵³

Rokach's work affirms that, while positive transference increases productivity, not all transferences are positive, and even positive transferences can suddenly shift. For example, transference may produce positive outcomes for a time, but that positivity can quickly and abruptly change if an employee's irrational expectations are unmet.¹⁵⁴

This unpredictable behavior can result in a leader keeping distance from followers who respond in this way, especially when they are not alert to the possibility that transference is taking place.¹⁵⁵ Transference can also convince leaders that they are as ideal and heroic as their adoring employees make them feel. As a result, some leaders may respond to their employees' transference by "operating in a bubble" and "may become dismissive of their employees," leading to isolation.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Michael Maccoby, "The Power of Transference.," *Harvard Business Review* 82, no. 9 (September 2004): 78.

¹⁵³ Ami Rokach, "Leadership and Loneliness," *International Journal of Leadership and Change* 2, no. 1 (2014): 51.

¹⁵⁴ Maccoby, "The Power of Transference.," 78.

¹⁵⁵ Maccoby, 78–79.

¹⁵⁶ Dicks, *Pastoral Work and Personal Counseling*, 51.

Self-Imposed Isolation

Dr. Moshe Banai, professor of management at Baruch College in New York and Dr. William Reisel, professor of management at St. John's University in New York, performed an international study on job characteristics and work alienation. Their research included manifestations of alienation and how a person's sense of self can result in severe disengagement. Leaders who experience powerlessness, meaninglessness, and self-estrangement can isolate themselves as a protective measure.¹⁵⁷

Self-imposed isolation can also be triggered when a leader perceives others as a threat. Isolated or individual-based leadership compared to team-based leadership provides individual leaders with elevated status, considerable influence, and access to resources.¹⁵⁸ Keeping an isolated leadership structure in place protects those disparities. Describing this protective measure, Dr. Federico Aime, professor of management at Oklahoma State University, writes, "It may be that members with formal authority perceive power transitions as a threat to their position and attempt to constrain any shifts in power expression."¹⁵⁹ These perceptions cause leaders to enforce self-constructed barriers that result in a lack of dialogue.¹⁶⁰ Rokach also notes the perception of a career

¹⁵⁷ Moshe Banai and William D. Reisel, "The Influence of Supportive Leadership and Job Characteristics on Work Alienation: A Six-Country Investigation," *Journal of World Business* 42, no. 4 (December 2007): 466.

¹⁵⁸ Greg L. Stewart et al., "Those With The Most Find It Hardest To Share: Exploring Leader Resistance To The Implementation of Team-Based Empowerment," *Academy of Management Journal* 60, no. 6 (December 2017): 2267.

¹⁵⁹ Federico Aime et al., "The Riddle Of Heterachy: Power Transitions in Cross-Functional Teams," *Academy of Management Journal* 57, no. 2 (April 2014): 345.

¹⁶⁰ Ercan Yilmaz, "Organizational Commitment and Loneliness and Life Satisfaction Levels of School Principals.," *Social Behavior and Personality* 36 (n.d.): 1087.

threat as a cause for isolation, “This perception may lead to anxiety and alienation, which inevitably may affect the interaction between the executive, the organizational structure, and subordinates.”¹⁶¹

Another form of self-imposed isolation results from inevitable oversight requirements. Executives evaluate their employees and critique their work.¹⁶² This role requires delivering negative or challenged information. A leader may redirect an employee’s responsibilities or even terminate employment. These boss/employee dynamics, while vital, are reasons why leaders apply self-imposed distance from their employees.¹⁶³

Self-imposed isolation can also result from personality characteristics and disorders. Introverted leaders “tend toward isolation; projections of aloofness, snobbery, or disinterest; lack of communication; and lack of engagement.”¹⁶⁴ Numerous books and journal articles chronicle how to overcome these tendencies and utilize strengths as an introverted leader.¹⁶⁵

Michael Maccoby, an anthropologist and widely recognized expert on business leadership research, has identified some connection between narcissism, success, and self-imposed isolation. Maccoby states:

¹⁶¹ Rokach, “Leadership and Loneliness,” 52.

¹⁶² Rokach, 52.

¹⁶³ Rokach, 52.

¹⁶⁴ “Introverted Leaders: Seven Tips For Success,” *CareerStone Group* (blog), n.d., <https://careerstonegroup.com/blog/46/Introverted-Leaders-Seven-Tips-for-Success>.

¹⁶⁵ Jennifer Kahnweiler, *The Introverted Leader : Building on Your Quiet Strength* (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2018).; Elizabeth Bernstein, “The Case for the Introverted Entrepreneur,” *Wall Street Journal – Eastern Edition* 266 no. 46 (August 2015): R1-R2; Douglas Lang, “Introverted Leaders – Time to Stand Up!,” *NZ Business* 28 no. 8 (September 2014): 26.

Narcissists...are innovators, driven in business to gain power and glory. Productive narcissists are experts in their industries, but they go beyond it. They also pose the critical questions. They want to learn everything about everything that affects the company and its products. Unlike erotics, they want to be admired, not loved. And unlike obsessives, they are not troubled by a punishing superego, so they are able to aggressively pursue their goals. Of all the personality types, narcissists run the greatest risk of isolating themselves at the moment of success.¹⁶⁶

When describing some of the effects of narcissism, Joan Lachkar, author of *The Narcissistic/Borderline Couple: New Approaches to Marital Therapy*, explains that narcissists preserve their self-idealization above all and their primary preservation mechanisms are isolation and withdrawal.¹⁶⁷

The Alienation of Technological Advancements

As technology has grown, so has the physical distance between many leaders and their employees. Technology allows leaders to manage people without being in a shared space.¹⁶⁸ Face-to-face interactions and networking opportunities used to be a normal part of vocational life. While those aspects are not gone, they are less commonplace with the advancements of technology and the growth of remote offices.¹⁶⁹

Bertil Gardell has studied the alienating effects that technology has had on mental health, and his research shows that when work that took personal and skilled action is

¹⁶⁶ Michael Maccoby, "Narcissistic Leaders," *Harvard Business Review* 78, no. 1 (January 2020): 72.

¹⁶⁷ Joan Lachkar, *The Narcissistic/Borderline Couple: New Approaches To Marital Therapy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2004), 71.

¹⁶⁸ Rokach, "Leadership and Loneliness," 52.

¹⁶⁹ Jay Prakash Mulki et al., "Workplace Isolation, Salesperson Commitment, and Job Performance," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management* 28, no. 1 (2008): 69.

replaced by technology, most people develop a passive and isolating response and no longer consider their work meaningful.¹⁷⁰ Kouzes and Posner recognize the reality of technological advancements, and while they promote the need to adapt, they also emphasize the irreplaceable value of face-to-face interactions.¹⁷¹

Drs. Yang Woon Chung and Taekyung Kim are associate professors of business at the University of Suwon in South Korea and have researched how workplace ostracism negatively impacts organizations. They emphasize the alienation via technological advancements:

As today's work is based more on teamwork, managing interpersonal relationships are key components of employee performance. However, ostracism at the workplace has unfortunately become an organizational concern due to its frequency and impact. Studies have found workplace ostracism to result in detrimental effects on organizational outcomes such as withdrawal, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, task performance, and organizational citizen behavior.¹⁷²

The Effects of Isolation

When leaders become isolated from those they are leading, there are some common results. The following sections explore the link between isolation and being out of touch with the leader's followers and the link between isolation and burnout.

¹⁷⁰ Bertil Gardell, "Technology, Alienation, and Mental Health," *Acta Sociologica* 19, no. 1 (March 1976): 84.

¹⁷¹ Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 241.

¹⁷² Yang Woon Chung and Taekyung Kim, "Impact of Using Social Network Services on Workplace Ostracism, Job Satisfaction, and Innovative Behaviour," *Behaviour & Information Technology* 36, no. 12 (December 2017): 1235.

The Link Between Isolation and Being Out of Touch

Scott Golis, a researcher on the need for emotional intelligence in a corporate setting, reveals a connection between executive isolation and being out of touch. “‘CEO disease’ is the information vacuum around a leader created when people withhold important (and usually unpleasant) information. It leaves the leader out of touch and out of tune.”¹⁷³

Pete Hammett is a visiting professor at Purdue University and the former director of client services and assessment group at the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, North Carolina. His career has focused on effective executive leadership. Hammett’s research has concluded that the majority of senior executives exhibit a low need for interpersonal contact, work better alone, and do not significantly rely on others.¹⁷⁴ This trend can result in the leader becoming out of touch with the qualifications of company employees and even future organizational leaders. Hammett states, “This isolation can also inhibit senior executives’ ability to identify first-hand individuals who could be in the up-and-coming next generation of leaders.”¹⁷⁵

In a 2015 article titled, *Burst That Bubble: Engaging Out-of-Touch Leaders*, author Sam Davis believes an out-of-touch leadership team is “a widespread

¹⁷³ Chris Golis, “How To Tell If You Are Suffering From CEO Disease,” *Professional Development* (blog), November 29, 2012, <https://www.smartcompany.com.au/people-human-resources/professional-development/how-to-tell-if-youre-suffering-from-ceo-disease/>.

¹⁷⁴ Pete Hammett, “The Paradox of Gifted Leadership: Developing the Generation of Leaders.,” *Industrial & Commercial Training* 40, no. 1 (January 2008): 5.

¹⁷⁵ Hammett, 6.

phenomenon.”¹⁷⁶ Dr. Linda Trevino, professor of organizational behavior at Pennsylvania State University and author of *Out of Touch – The CEOs Role in Corporate Misbehavior*, recognizes this phenomenon in the context of ethical problems within organizations.¹⁷⁷ This type of CEO isolation results from delegating interactions with lower level employees to managers or assistants with whom they have little contact.¹⁷⁸ When CEOs or higher level executives become isolated from lower level employees, they become unaware of the daily realities of the majority of employees.¹⁷⁹ This type of isolation leads to two different perceptions of an organization – one view held by the senior leader and another view by the majority of the employees.¹⁸⁰

The Link Between Isolation and Burnout

Burnout in the workplace is a growing trend, and some of the well-known reasons for this are exhaustion, workload, and stress.¹⁸¹ Dr. Jeremy Nobel, faculty member at Harvard Medical School, sees how these growing vocational problems lead to isolation. He explains that people susceptible to vocational exhaustion “are more likely to

¹⁷⁶ Sam Davis, “Burst That Bubble: Engaging Out of Touch Leaders,” Chief Learning Officer, n.d., https://www.chieflearningofficer.com/2015/10/20/burst-that-bubble-engaging-out-of-touch-leaders__trashed/.

¹⁷⁷ Linda K. Trevino, “Out of Touch - The CEO’s Role in Corporate Misbehavior,” *Brooklyn Law Review*, Corporate Misbehavior by Elite Decision-Makers: Perspectives from Law and Society Psychology, 70, no. 4 (2005): 1195.

¹⁷⁸ Trevino, 1211.

¹⁷⁹ Trevino, 1208.

¹⁸⁰ Trevino, 1209.

¹⁸¹ Emma Seppala and Marissa King, “Burnout at Work Isn’t Just About Exhaustion. It’s Also About Loneliness,” *Harvard Business Review*, n.d., <https://hbr.org/2017/06/burnout-at-work-isnt-just-about-exhaustion-its-also-about-loneliness>.

withdraw, interacting less and less, and effectively isolating themselves from the people around them.”¹⁸² He also recognizes that when people disconnect from the people they serve, they become disconnected from their mission and purpose.¹⁸³

Workplace burnout and the connection between loneliness, isolation, and job performance prompted Dr. Alexandru Sirbu and Dr. Andrei Dumbrava to focus research in this area.¹⁸⁴ Their study links loneliness and isolation with a loss of creativity and lower organizational commitments.¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, their research concluded that loneliness at work contributes to overall negative job performance and increases workplace burnout.¹⁸⁶

The Prevention and Alleviation of Leader Isolation

As noted above, several pathways lead to the creation of an isolated leader. However, many steps can prevent and/or alleviate leader isolation. The following sections will explore these steps. They include obtaining an executive/leadership consultant, “management by wandering around,” and fostering a collaborative leadership approach.

¹⁸² Jeremy Nobel, “Workplace Burnout and Loneliness: What You Need to Know,” *Psychology Today*, December 14, 2019, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/being-unlonely/201912/workplace-burnout-and-loneliness-what-you-need-know>.

¹⁸³ Nobel.

¹⁸⁴ Alexandru-Andrei Sirbu and Andrei Cosmin Dumbrava, “Loneliness at Work and Job Performance: The Role of Burnout and Extraversion.,” *Human Resources Psychology / Psihologia Resurselor Umane* 17, no. 1 (January 2019): 7–17.

¹⁸⁵ Sirbu and Dumbrava, 7.

¹⁸⁶ Sirbu and Dumbrava, 8.

Executive/Leadership Consulting

Obtaining an executive/leadership consultant gives leaders a secure and appropriate outlet for concerns, difficulties, and business strategies. The executive/leadership consultant offers confidentiality and a free exchange of ideas regarding sensitive corporate and personal struggles or setbacks.¹⁸⁷ This consultant/client relationship also offers mutual respect, trust, and accountability, often absent for a corporate leader.¹⁸⁸ A leadership consultant with an outside perspective and an assurance of confidentiality provides the sounding board that isolated leaders need.¹⁸⁹

Research has shown that leaders who participate in a professional coaching relationship are more likely to attain their stated goals than those who are not being coached. Marcia Richard is a professor of acquisition and contract management at The Defense Acquisition University and has more than three decades of executive coaching experience.¹⁹⁰ Richard affirms the benefits of leadership consulting and has witnessed many leaders in her field grow “exponentially in terms of ideas and self-assurance.”¹⁹¹ Kay Bower, author of “Leadership Coaching: Does It Really Provide Value?”, found that those with a leadership coaching relationship “experienced higher levels of self-reflection and insight accompanied by lower levels of depression, stress, and anxiety.”¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷ Rokach, “Leadership and Loneliness,” 53.

¹⁸⁸ Marcio E. Richard, “Someone Else I Can Talk To,” *Defense AT&L* 45, no. 3 (June 5, 2016): 12.

¹⁸⁹ Richard, 13.

¹⁹⁰ Richard, 11.

¹⁹¹ Richard, “Someone Else I Can Talk To.”

¹⁹² Kay M. Bower, “Leadership Coaching: Does It Really Provide Value?,” *Journal of Practical Consulting* 4, no. 1 (2012): 2.

Management by Wandering Around

Another strategy for alleviating leader isolation is “management by wandering around.” Management by wandering around (MBWA) was coined by executives at Hewlett-Packard Co. to improve communication and connection.¹⁹³ This widely adopted management approach enables a leader to observe and interact with employees and customers who leaders wouldn’t see during their workday. This approach allows a leader to reveal their commitments to multiple layers of an organization, communicate their strategic plans so that everyone is on the same page, and gain a first-hand look at the operations of the organization – ideally in a personal way.¹⁹⁴ This approach is particularly important to prevent leader isolation in a modern business environment that revolves around email and other technology-driven forms of communication.¹⁹⁵

Fostering a Collaborative Leadership Approach

Collaborative leadership is “leadership that fosters collective action by multiple stakeholders.”¹⁹⁶ Adopting a collaborative approach is also an opportunity to prevent leader isolation. An important step is developing a climate of trust. Kouzes and Posner emphasize trust as “the central issue in human relationships within and outside

¹⁹³ W. Trueman, “CEO Isolation and How to Fight It,” *Canadian Business* 64, no. 7 (July 1991): 29. Chip Bell, “Managing By Wandering Around,” *Executive Excellence* 19, no. 4 (April 2002): 7.

¹⁹⁴ Chip Bell, “Managing by Wandering Around,” *Executive Excellence* 19, no. 4 (April 2002): 7.

¹⁹⁵ Ann Pace, “Leaving the Corner Office,” *T+D* 62, no. 8 (August 2008): 16.

¹⁹⁶ Joyce E. Bono, Winny Shen, and Mark Snyder, “Fostering Integrative Community Leadership,” *Leadership Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (April 2010): 324.

organizations.”¹⁹⁷ They also explain that without a climate of trust, leaders either do all the work themselves or become over-controlling in their leadership, which fosters isolated leadership rather than collaborative leadership.¹⁹⁸ A collaborative approach to leadership is also subject to a sense of interdependence. Kouzes and Posner explain the importance of this in the context of successful leadership:

To get extraordinary things done, people have to rely on each other. They need to have a sense of mutual dependence – a community of people in which each knows that they need the others to be successful. To create conditions in which people know they can count on each other a leader needs to develop cooperative goals and roles, support norms of reciprocity, structure projects to promote joint efforts, and support face-to-face interactions.¹⁹⁹

In 2017, a pilot leadership training program, Community Coalition Leadership Program, was studied to see how collaboration provided new skills, knowledge, and resources to leadership participants.²⁰⁰ Participants reported that “the CCLP helped them identify and leverage their leadership styles and provided a set of standardized facilitation and planning tools that helped them engage and lead others.”²⁰¹

Summary of Leadership and the Danger of Isolation from a Corporate Perspective

¹⁹⁷ Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 224.

¹⁹⁸ Kouzes and Posner, 224.

¹⁹⁹ Kouzes and Posner, 233.

²⁰⁰ Jung Y. Kim, Todd Honeycutt, and Michaela Morzuch, “Transforming Coalition Leadership: An Evaluation of a Collaborative Leadership Training Program,” *Foundation Review* 9, no. 4 (December 2017): 22.

²⁰¹ Kim, Honeycutt, and Morzuch, 27.

The purpose of this study is to explore how pastors unite their preaching and shepherding roles through their sermons to their local church. This literature review section examined the danger of isolation in the context of leadership from a corporate perspective. The first section explored the varied paths that lead to leader isolation. Specifically, four paths to leader isolation are examined: leadership ascension, the concept of transference in a corporate setting, self-imposed isolation, and the alienation of technological advancement.

Leadership ascension often requires an extraordinary amount of time commitment. As a leader ascends through the ranks, the social and casual time spent with co-workers and others can be neglected as more priority is given to work. As leaders ascend through promotions and career growth, others can become envious as they compare themselves to their rising leader.

Research has shown that transference behavior from followers toward their leaders occurs in corporate settings. This unpredictable and irrational behavior can cause leaders to isolate themselves from their followers. Self-imposed leader isolation is another path to leader isolation. Leaders, in response to feeling threatened can alienate themselves from the perceived threats. Research has shown that when a leader perceives that their image or position is at risk, isolation is a protective response.

The inevitability of oversight requirements is also a reason for leader isolation. Unwelcome job changes or termination lead to increased distance from their followers. Other self-imposed isolation paths result from personality characteristics and personality disorders. Technological advancements within the corporate context are a daily reality. They provide many benefits, but they also can foster workplace and leader isolation.

Studies show that technological advancements are leading to workplace ostracism with increasing frequency.

The second section of this literature review sought to discover some of the effects of leader isolation. Specifically, the link between isolation and being out of touch and the link between isolation and burnout were examined. The nature of the boss/employee relationship can lead to employees being unwilling to share concerns or problems. This can leave the leader unaware of what employees know and experience. Research also shows that the majority of executives work better alone and show little need for interpersonal contact, which can lead to a lack of awareness of the qualifications of individuals in their organization. There is also a link between isolation and the effect of burnout. Isolation contributes to burnout because when leaders disconnect from those they serve, it leads to being disconnected from their mission. Studies also show a connection between isolation and lower creativity and organizational commitments.

The third section of this literature review explored steps to prevent or alleviate leader isolation. These steps included executive/leadership consulting, “management by wandering around” (MBWA), and fostering a collaborative leadership approach. Executive/leadership consulting brings an outside perspective and a confidential forum for the corporate leader. Leadership coaching research shows that the consultant/client relationship produces higher levels of goal attainment and lower levels of anxiety, depression, and stress. MBWA promotes a management approach that gets a corporate leader out of their office and into other areas of the organization in order to observe and interact with employees and customers. This approach can particularly prevent or alleviate leader isolation in a highly technological environment. A collaborate leadership

approach is an alternative to an individualistic leadership approach. This type of collective leadership is dependent on an environment of trust and an understanding of interdependence.

The Impact of a Long-Tenured Pastorate

Uniting a pastor's preaching ministry with shepherding involves the development of the pastor/congregation relationship. Building mutual understanding and mutual trust takes time,²⁰² and this is particularly true for church leadership.²⁰³ Unfortunately, most research finds that the majority of pastors serve less than eight years at any one church,²⁰⁴ with some studies showing average pastoral tenures as low as 3.6 years.²⁰⁵ Yet, church health research done by Lifeway Research has found correlations between church health and pastor tenures of at least six years.²⁰⁶ Therefore, this literature review section begins with the benefits of a long-tenured pastorate, followed by the path to a long-tenured pastorate. Interestingly, the literature does not speak to the correlation between the long-

²⁰² Norris, "Shepherding and Trust."

²⁰³ Greg Strand, "Pastoral Tenure," *EFCA: Understanding Scripture* (blog), December 16, 2015, <https://go.efca.org/blog/understanding-scripture/pastoral-tenure>.

²⁰⁴ Steven M Johnson, "Running with Patience: Encouraging the Long-Term Pastorate," *Review & Expositor* 113, no. 3 (August 2016): 360, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034637316658493>.

²⁰⁵ E.g., "Report Examines the State of Mainline Protestant Churches," Research Releases in Pastors and Leaders (The Barna Group, December 7, 2009), <https://www.barna.com/research/report-examines-the-state-of-mainline-protestant-churches/>; Thom Rainer, "The Dangerous Third Year of Pastoral Ministry," *Church Answers Featuring Thom Rainer* (blog), June 8, 2014, <https://churchanswers.com/blog/dangerous-third-year-pastoral-tenure/>.

²⁰⁶ Kevin Blackwell, "Church Health and Pastoral Longevity," *Samford Ministry Training Institute* (blog), September 27, 2018, <https://drkevinblackwell.com/2018/09/27/church-health-and-pastoral-tenure-longevity/>.

tenured pastorate and the preaching ministry, and so the interview data will explore that correlation.

The Benefits of a Long-Tenured Pastorate

The trust and relationships needed for effective shepherding ministry come with time.²⁰⁷ Glenn Ludwig, who has authored a book and numerous articles based on his experience as a long-tenured pastor, observes, “A long-tenured pastorate makes possible greater in-depth knowledge of and relationships between the pastor and individual church members as well as between clergy and the congregation as a whole.”²⁰⁸ This section will examine the long-tenured pastorate benefits of established trust, stability for church and pastor’s family, and experiencing the fruit of long-term ministry.

Established Trust

Trust is an “assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something.”²⁰⁹ This assured reliance is a foundational piece of the relationship between a pastor and a congregation.²¹⁰ According K.H. King, the late Anglican bishop of Chekiang, China and president emeritus of the Chinese Christian Council, claimed that above all other pastoral qualifications “first and foremost is that we

²⁰⁷ Self, *Surviving The Stained-Glass Jungle*, 104.

²⁰⁸ Ludwig, *In It For the Long Haul: Building Effective Long-Term Pastorates*, 16.

²⁰⁹ *Oxford American College Dictionary*, s.v. "Trust" (Oxford University Press, 2002)..

²¹⁰ Steve Mizel, “5 Ways to Build Trust as a Pastor,” *TGC: Church Planting* (blog), October 29, 2019, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/5-ways-build-trust-pastor/>.

be trustworthy.”²¹¹ It takes time, however, to develop trust in a pastor/congregation relationship because it takes time to know another person.²¹² It also takes time to establish shared experiences that lead to interpersonal trust.²¹³ Roy Price, a retired pastor and current professor of pastoral theology and polity at A.W. Tozer Theological Seminary in Redding, CA, connects trust with long-term ministry in his own experience: “Had I been a short-term pastor, the relationship would never have developed. How unfortunate that just when people and pastor are getting to know each other, he often terminates the romance.”²¹⁴

It’s not only time that establishes trust but consistency and pastoral faithfulness over that time.²¹⁵ Dr. Craig Barnes, president of Princeton Theological Seminary and professor of pastoral theology, describes pastoral faithfulness and its effects:

Over the years they have invited the pastor into enough of the mystery of their lives that it is now possible for him or her to see beyond the constructed identities of smiling faces and freshly pressed dresses that fill the church’s photo directory.²¹⁶

Barnes’ observation reveals that time-tested pastoral care offers opportunities for pastors to get beyond assumed congregational needs or problems and into a new level of

²¹¹ K H Bp Ting, “That You Be Trustworthy,” *Chinese Theological Review* 7 (1991): 92.

²¹² Roy C. Price, “Building Trust Between Pastor and Congregation,” *Leadership* 1, no. 2 (1980): 50.

²¹³ Oswald et al., *New Visions for the Long Pastorate*, 32.

²¹⁴ Price, “Building Trust Between Pastor and Congregation,” 50.

²¹⁵ Catherine MacLean, “Showing Up: The Essential Practice of Pastoral Care,” *Touchstone* 35, no. 1 (February 2017): 23.

²¹⁶ M Craig Barnes, *The Pastor as Minor Poet: Texts and Subtexts in the Ministerial Life*, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship Liturgical Studies Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 26.

understanding and reality. When pastors reflect the love of God through pastoral faithfulness, the fundamental element of trust can be established.²¹⁷

Stability for the Church and the Pastor's Family

Short-term pastorates, especially consecutive ones, can result in instability and feelings of despondency and uncertainty.²¹⁸ Frequent pastoral transitions disrupt the relationships, schooling, and vocations of the pastor's family.²¹⁹ Long-term pastorates, in contrast, bring continuity and stability to a congregation and to a pastor's family.²²⁰ The pastor's family that builds lasting relationships in the church and the community will put down roots and grow up with people who can invest in them and vice versa.²²¹

A long-term pastorate also allows for long-range planning without immediate and distressing changes for the congregation.²²² In this same context, a long-term pastorate can shepherd congregations through multi-year projects that are people-centered rather than program-centered.²²³ As previously mentioned, established trust is something that happens over time, and a pastor who has the trust of the congregation is granted more

²¹⁷ Robert Kolb, "Dismantling Mistrust from the Pulpit," *1517* (blog), October 9, 2021, <https://www.1517.org/articles/dismantling-mistrust-from-the-pulpit>.

²¹⁸ Thomas F Fischer, "Support and Resources for Pastors and Christian Ministry Professionals," *Ministry Health*, n.d., http://www.ministryhealth.info/mh_articles/264_long_term_pastorate.html.

²¹⁹ Ludwig, *In It For the Long Haul" Building Effective Long-Term Pastorates*, 12–13.

²²⁰ Oswald et al., *New Visions for the Long Pastorate*, 32.

²²¹ Paul Beasley-Murray, "Long-Term Pastorate: Some Reflections," *Ministry Today* 10 (June 1997): 3.

²²² Oswald et al., *New Visions for the Long Pastorate*, 32.

²²³ Sean Allen, "Moving From Event-Centered Ministry to People-Centered Ministry," 2018, 2, <https://davenportdiocese.org/young-adult-ministry>.

leadership capital.²²⁴ With pastoral transition comes leadership style change and change in ministry philosophy, which can cause frustration or confusion for a congregation. Long-term pastorates, on the other hand, provide consistencies in leadership styles and ministry philosophies. This continuity is beneficial for church staff and lay members, especially in the areas of ministry training and ministry responsibilities.²²⁵

Experiencing the Unique Fruit of Long-Term Ministry

Scott Hubbard, a pastor and editor for *Desiring God*, explains that a long outlook aids spiritual growth. He states, “In Scripture, we see that mature Christlikeness does not happen in a month, a year, or a decade, but over a whole lifetime.”²²⁶ Long-tenured pastors witness firsthand long-term spiritual growth in the life of parishioners.²²⁷

A long-tenured pastorate also offers greater community impact outside of the local church. Just as the establishment of congregational trust takes time, so does the establishment of trust by the broader community.²²⁸ Also, just as congregations have unique traits,²²⁹ so do communities. A long-tenure provides pastors with a greater knowledge of their community – its dynamics, its culture, and its needs. This knowledge,

²²⁴ John B. Mann, “Pastoral Tenure and Healthy Churches,” *Daily Pastor* (blog), September 17, 2019, <http://dailypastor.com/pastoral-tenure-and-healthy-churches/>.

²²⁵ Oswald et al., *New Visions for the Long Pastorate*, 32.; Beasley-Murray, 4

²²⁶ Scott Hubbard, “Most Growth Will Be Slow Growth,” *Desiring God* (blog), August 8, 2019, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/most-growth-will-be-slow-growth>.

²²⁷ Oswald et al., *New Visions for the Long Pastorate*, 33.

²²⁸ Oswald et al., 34.

²²⁹ F. Dean Lueking, *The Last Long Pastorate: A Journey of Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 196.

based on long-term familiarity and investment, will give long-tenured pastors enhanced involvement in community affairs and considerable insight into community needs.²³⁰

A long-tenured pastorate can also help members discover and use their gifts.²³¹ Ephesians 4:11-12 calls on pastors to “equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” Equipping people is not an overnight task and is encouraged by sustained pastoral leadership.²³² Equipping is a relational task more than programmatic, and therefore a long-tenure can provide the relational insight needed to better accomplish this.²³³

Long-tenured ministry also offers pastors the setting for personal and pastoral growth. Peterson emphasizes this idea:

The congregation is the pastor’s place for developing vocational holiness. It goes without saying that it is the place of ministry: we preach the word and administer the sacraments, we give pastoral care and administer the community life, we teach and give spiritual direction. But it is also the place in which we develop virtue, learn to love, advance in hope – become what we preach.²³⁴

Dean Lueking, retired long-term pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Illinois and author of *The Last Long Pastorate*, describes the congregation as the “primary place for pastoral growth in the art and skills of ministry of the Word.”²³⁵

²³⁰ Oswald et al., *New Visions for the Long Pastorate*, 34.

²³¹ Mann, “Pastoral Tenure and Healthy Churches.”

²³² Mann, “Pastoral Tenure and Healthy Churches.”

²³³ Ludwig, *In It For the Long Haul" Building Effective Long-Term Pastorates*, 77.

²³⁴ Eugene H Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 21.

²³⁵ Lueking, *The Last Long Pastorate: A Journey of Grace*, 196.

The Path to a Long-Tenured Pastorate

There can be numerous obstacles to a long-tenured pastorate. Some common obstacles include pastoral burnout,²³⁶ a gap between parishioners and pastor (“gap theory”),²³⁷ and the distracting temptation of other ministry opportunities.²³⁸ This section details how to surmount these obstacles and ²³⁹ lists strategies to improve vitality in life and ministry and avoid pastoral burnout, narrowing and eliminating the trust gap, and making an early commitment to stay.

Strategies to Improve Vitality in Life and Ministry and Avoid Pastoral Burnout

Life and ministry vitality strategies energize a pastor’s callings, while fighting burnout.²⁴⁰ Burnout is associated with a loss of purpose and calling, and an effective way protect those mainstays is through spiritual formation. Pastors provide for the spiritual nourishment of others and neglect their own.²⁴¹ Establishing or re-establishing a regular pattern of Bible reading, prayer, and spiritual retreats restore vitality to avoid burnout.²⁴²

Pastoral burnout can also result from work and family conflict. The pastor, the pastor’s family, and the congregation move about in overlapping contexts. These

²³⁶ Ludwig, *In It For the Long Haul" Building Effective Long-Term Pastorates*, 40.

²³⁷ Johnson, “Running with Patience: Encouraging the Long-Term Pastorate,” 365.

²³⁸ Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness*, 20.

²³⁹ E.g. Oswald et al., *New Visions for the Long Pastorate*, 40.; Johnson, “Running with Patience: Encouraging the Long-Term Pastorate,” 364.

²⁴⁰ Ludwig, *In It For the Long Haul" Building Effective Long-Term Pastorates*, 43.

²⁴¹ Thomas V Frederick, Yvonne Thai, and Scott Dunbar, “Coping with Pastoral Burnout Using Christian Contemplative Practices,” *Religions* 12, no. 6 (June 2021): 6–7, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12060378>.

²⁴² Ludwig, *In It For the Long Haul" Building Effective Long-Term Pastorates*, 43.

situations can interrupt a pastor's family responsibilities and violate boundaries between a pastor's family and the congregation, especially if these situations are frequent.²⁴³

Therefore times of rest through regular days off and vacation ensure times for revitalization and family investment. Ludwig also refers to the wisdom in the "development of a sabbatical policy" with the governing board of the church.²⁴⁴

Finding a support network also aids monitoring and prevents burnout.²⁴⁵ Support groups that provide common experiences and a listening ear promote trust and compassion.²⁴⁶ Other strategic opportunities to avoid or address pastoral burnout include regular physical exercise or a new hobby interest.²⁴⁷

Narrowing and Eliminating the Trust Gap

Multiple studies regarding pastor longevity have recognized the pastor/congregation trust pattern called "the gap theory."²⁴⁸ Focused and successful pastoral care in the early years of ministry can lead to negative consequences in later years, another obstacle to a long-tenured pastorate.²⁴⁹ Figure 1 below illustrates this

²⁴³ Frederick, Thai, and Dunbar, "Coping with Pastoral Burnout Using Christian Contemplative Practices," 5.

²⁴⁴ Ludwig, *In It For the Long Haul" Building Effective Long-Term Pastorates*, 43.

²⁴⁵ Ludwig, 43.

²⁴⁶ Johnson, "Running with Patience: Encouraging the Long-Term Pastorate," 364.

²⁴⁷ Ludwig, *In It For the Long Haul" Building Effective Long-Term Pastorates*, 44.

²⁴⁸ William C. Hobgood, "The Long Tenured Pastorate: A Study of Ways to Build Trust" (DMin diss., Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, PA, 1982); Oswald et al., *New Visions for the Long Pastorate*, 43-47.; Ludwig, 44-45; Johnson, 367.

²⁴⁹ Johnson, "Running with Patience: Encouraging the Long-Term Pastorate," 365.

dynamic. When a new pastor arrives, high corporate trust is typical, as congregations anticipate new energy and excitement. Interpersonal trust, however, is low simply because relationships have yet to be formed, and uncertainty regarding personal pastoral care is present.²⁵⁰

As parishioners get to know their pastor and as the pastor engages in pastoral care opportunities such as baptisms, weddings, funerals, hospital/home visits, and other special events over time, significant personal trust increases.²⁵¹ As focused attention is given to individual needs, corporate needs can be neglected.²⁵² As interpersonal trust increases and as relationships between the pastor and a congregation are solidified, a lack of overall church health can go unnoticed for years by a beloved pastor and a trusting congregation.²⁵³ This dynamic leads to a church corporately lacking confidence in their pastor as a leader even as their personal trust in their pastor's character and ability to minister increases.²⁵⁴ Eventually the lines of corporate trust and individual trust meet, and a new gap begins to form.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁰ Oswald et al., *New Visions for the Long Pastorate*, 44.

²⁵¹ Johnson, "Running with Patience: Encouraging the Long-Term Pastorate," 366.

²⁵² Ludwig, *In It For the Long Haul" Building Effective Long-Term Pastorates*, 45.

²⁵³ Johnson, "Running with Patience: Encouraging the Long-Term Pastorate," 366.

²⁵⁴ Ludwig, *In It For the Long Haul" Building Effective Long-Term Pastorates*, 45.

²⁵⁵ Johnson, "Running with Patience: Encouraging the Long-Term Pastorate," 366.

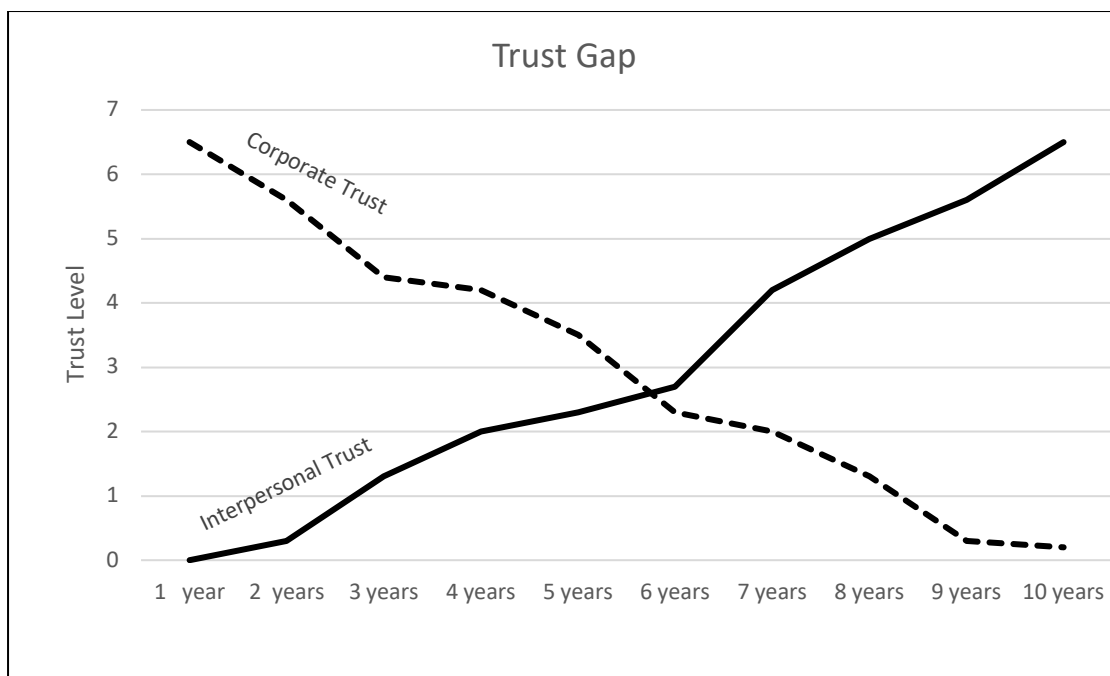


Figure 1

This new gap exists because the congregation deeply cares about their pastor, and so they find it difficult to share negative feedback. Also, the closer a pastor may be with parishioners, the more perceptive they will be to the painful effects that needed change may bring. This causes pastors to hesitate before moving forward with tough decisions or conflict resolution that church health demands.²⁵⁶

There are, however, certain steps can narrow and even eliminate this gap, so that congregations that have high interpersonal trust and high corporate trust over a long period of time.²⁵⁷ Because a lack of quality feedback leads to this trust gap, soliciting candid and professional feedback from the congregation is an important process in

²⁵⁶ Oswald et al., *New Visions for the Long Pastorate*, 47.

²⁵⁷ Oswald et al., 48.

maintaining high interpersonal and high corporate trust.²⁵⁸ Congregational interviews, surveys, and focus groups elicit this type of feedback and can produce valuable information.²⁵⁹

Second, a shared leadership structure and vision leads to high interpersonal trust and high corporate trust. Agreed upon plans to train and incorporate new people into leadership positions puts a pastor on the same page with other leaders.²⁶⁰ Also, a shared leadership structure that balances authority and decision making “will go a long way in keeping a ministry fresh and vibrant.”²⁶¹

Third, a commitment to renewal for the pastor and the congregation has been shown to close this trust gap.²⁶² For the pastor, this step includes conferences, continuing education opportunities, and pastor retreats.²⁶³ For the congregation, steps could include “a new urgency about evangelism, social action, education, liturgy, etc. It includes regular ways in which the congregation is ‘recharged’ to do its mission.”²⁶⁴

Making an Early Commitment to Stay

In pastoral ministry, like other vocations, other opportunities are a significant obstacle to the long-tenured pastorate. Michael Anthony, associate provost and professor

²⁵⁸ Ludwig, *In It For the Long Haul" Building Effective Long-Term Pastorates*, 46.

²⁵⁹ Hobgood, “The Long Tenured Pastorate: A Study of Ways to Build Trust,” 90.

²⁶⁰ Oswald et al., *New Visions for the Long Pastorate*, 48–49.

²⁶¹ Ludwig, *In It For the Long Haul" Building Effective Long-Term Pastorates*, 53.

²⁶² Oswald et al., *New Visions for the Long Pastorate*, 49.

²⁶³ Oswald et al., 49.; Johnson, “Running with Patience: Encouraging the Long-Term Pastorate,” 367

²⁶⁴ Oswald et al., 49.

of Christian Education at Talbot School of Theology, explains that this temptation is “especially strong today as pastors are exposed to a host of dynamic ministries that appear as oases in the midst of their personal ministry desert.”²⁶⁵ Peterson also expounds on this temptation in *Under the Unpredictable Plant*: “Somehow we American pastors, without really noticing what was happening, got our vocations redefined in the terms of American careerism. We quit thinking of the parish as a location for pastoral spirituality and started thinking of it as an opportunity for advancement.”

Peterson argues that the way to overcome this temptation of leaving one congregation for another and “detach...from the careerism mind-set” is to take an early “vow of stability” and commit to staying where you are in ministry.²⁶⁶ He further elaborates this point. “There are plenty of times when God in sovereign wisdom reassigns pastors for his own, presumably strategic reasons.”²⁶⁷ Such shifts, however, should be the exception rather than the rule, and “the norm for pastoral work is stability. Twenty-, thirty-, and forty-year-long pastorates should be typical among us (as they once were) and not exceptional.”²⁶⁸ Brad Roth, pastor and author of “Pastors Who Stay,” recognizes that a pastoral commitment to stay at a church long-term is a “powerful sign of the gospel” and in spite of its challenges, it is “an act of hope and love.”²⁶⁹

²⁶⁵ Michael J Anthony and Mick Boersma, *Moving On Moving Forward: A Guide for Pastors in Transition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 86.

²⁶⁶ Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness*, 18,21.

²⁶⁷ Peterson, 28.

²⁶⁸ Peterson, 29.

²⁶⁹ Brad Roth, “Pastors Who Stay: Small Town Churches and the Ministry of Abiding,” *The Christian Century* 135, no. 17 (August 15, 2018): 23.

Summary of the Impact of a Long-Tenured Pastorate

The purpose of this study is to explore how pastors unite their preaching and shepherding roles through their sermons to their local church. This literature review section examined the impact of a long-tenured pastorate. Though this literature analysis did not produce a connection between a long-tenured pastorate and preaching, many of the benefits of long-term ministry will factor into the interview data.

The first section of this literature review area explored the benefits of a long-tenured pastorate. Specifically, the areas of established trust, stability for the church and pastor's family, and experiencing the unique fruit of long-term ministry were researched.

The second section of this literature review examined the path to a long-tenured pastorate. This area of study listed some of the common obstacles to a long-tenured pastorate from the literature. These obstacles include pastoral burnout, a trust gap between parishioners and pastor ("gap theory"), and the distracting temptation of other ministry opportunities. The literature for this section found that these obstacles are surmountable with certain strategies. The following strategies were discovered and explored: strategies to improve vitality in life and ministry and avoid pastoral burnout, narrowing and eliminating the trust gap, and making an early commitment to stay.

Summary of Literature Review

In light of the literature examined, it was discovered that preaching and shepherding, although routinely disconnected in ministry, can be consistently united. This first area of literature analysis examined these two areas of ministry and their functions. Through the exploration of the role of preaching, it was discovered that preaching has

consistently had a prioritized role throughout the different ages of Christian history. The literature affirmed that while church structures, liturgies, and cultural influences have fluctuated, the importance of the sermon has remained intact. The value of preaching, not as an inflated and isolated task, but as a unifying task was affirmed. Thus, preaching can serve as a point of origin, holding all areas of ministry together.

This section also explored the pastoral call to shepherd the local church through preaching. There are challenges to this call which include the neglect of congregational contextual analysis, the unrealized relationship between shepherding and preaching, and pastoral isolation, which leads to sermons isolated from other areas of ministry and church life. Preaching, however, is an indispensable way for pastors to not simply relay accurate content but shepherd people. When shepherding is a part of the process of preaching, then relational barriers between preacher and parishioners can be overcome, and the content and the response to the sermon are impacted.

The second literature review section explored the subject of leadership and the danger of isolation from a corporate perspective. This analysis discovered the paths to corporate leadership and how those paths can lead to isolating roles or the desire for leaders to be isolated from employees. The literature pointed out how leadership isolation happens, and how leaders become out of touch with those they have authority over. This section of study also exposed the link between corporate leader isolation and burnout. It ended with an examination of the ways that corporate leaders can prevent or alleviate isolation.

The third literature review section explored the impact of a long-tenured pastorate. It revealed a correlation between church health and pastorates with tenures

greater than six years. And yet, a majority of pastorates have a tenure that falls in the range of 3-8 years. There are numerous benefits to long-tenured pastorates, such as the establishment of trust and stability. These benefits are lost when a pastorate is cut short because of the numerous obstacles to a long-tenured pastorate. This section of the literature review also examined these obstacles and discovered that there are opportunities to overcome them. These opportunities require strategy implementation such as personal spiritual formation, shared leadership structures, and early commitments to stay where you are. The literature has shown that the implementation of those strategies have led to longer pastorate tenures.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore how preaching pastors unite their preaching and shepherding roles through their sermons to the local church. The assumption was that through intentional work and experience, some pastors have overcome the common divide between the pastor's preaching ministry and shepherding ministry. These pastors have a preaching ministry relationally and spiritually connected to the unique issues of the congregation. In order to address the research purpose with more focus, the following research questions guided the qualitative research:

1. How do pastors describe the connections between preaching and shepherding in their local church?
 - a. What are some specific ways that pastors unite their preaching and shepherding roles through their sermons?
 - b. What are the challenges pastors face in uniting their preaching and shepherding roles?
2. How do pastors describe the connection between their local weekly preaching and their own spiritual life?
3. What impact does pastoral tenure have on shepherding and preaching?
4. As leaders, how do pastors prevent becoming isolated from their congregations?

Design of the Study

The research design of this study followed a basic qualitative approach. Sharan B. Merriam, in her book *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, describes a qualitative researcher as one “interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed; that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world.”²⁷⁰ Merriam identifies four characteristics of qualitative research: the focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive.²⁷¹

This type of research finds its origins in fields of study such as journalism, medicine, and social work and the mid-twentieth century saw numerous works dedicated to qualitative methodology. Over the thirty to forty years, qualitative research has become an established research methodology in its own right.²⁷² This type of research relies on the researcher to gather and analyze the data, which is based on the interpretation of a participant’s experience.²⁷³

This study employed a general basic qualitative research design and conducted semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data gathering. This qualitative method provided for the discovery of more comprehensive and descriptive data from participant perspectives in the narrow phenomena of pastors uniting their roles of

²⁷⁰ Sharan B. Merriam and Elisabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 15.

²⁷¹ Merriam and Tisdell, 15.

²⁷² Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*.

²⁷³ Merriam and Tisdell, 24.

preaching and shepherding. This general qualitative study will seek to understand how pastors make sense of their experiences in the context of their varying roles.²⁷⁴

Participant Sample Selection

This research required participants who are able to communicate in depth about uniting their role as a preacher with their role as a shepherd. Therefore, the participants selected for this study were either solo pastors or the primary preaching pastor of the church where they served. This study sample was made up of participants who had been preaching pastors of the same church for at least eight years with some preaching at the same church for twenty years or more. This experience criterion allows the study to pursue best practices learned over time. The participants were also known for their commitment to relational ministry and how they translated relational ministry into the pulpit. This experience level assumes long-term relationships, an understanding of the impact of their preaching over time, and an understanding of the specific context of the congregation. These participant selections were based on Merriam's description of sampling: "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned."²⁷⁵

Participants were chosen for a unique type of sample in order to provide for unique attributes in the data collected.²⁷⁶ Participants were chosen to provide variation in

²⁷⁴ Merriam and Tisdell, 24.

²⁷⁵ Merriam and Tisdell, 96.

²⁷⁶ Merriam and Tisdell, 97.

ministry location (suburban, urban, university setting, small town) in order that this study not be limited to one type of setting perspective, and, thus, broaden a variable of focus. The participants also varied in ministry tradition and ministry training background so that this study can uncover insights and outcomes based on parish experience rather than denominational tradition or training experience alone.²⁷⁷

The final study was conducted through personal interviews with eight pastors that serve either as the solo pastor or the primary preaching pastor (usually senior pastor) of their local congregation. They were invited to participate via an introductory letter, followed by a personal phone call. All expressed interest and gave a written informed consent to participate. In addition, each participant signed a “Research Participant Consent Form” to respect and to protect the human rights of the participants. According to the Seminary IRB guidelines, the Human Rights Risk Level Assessment is “no risk.”

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

I agree to participate in the research which is being conducted by Samuel Jake McCall to investigate the uniting of preaching and shepherding for the Doctor of Ministry degree program at Covenant Theological Seminary. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary. I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that they can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, and/or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

- 1) The purpose of the research is to explore how preaching pastors unite their preaching and shepherding roles through their sermons to their local church.
- 2) Potential benefits of the research may include helping preaching pastors understand and gain confidence in the uniqueness and value of their pastoral call, especially in an age when online sermons and sermon podcasts from well-known preachers are instantly available to anyone. The research could encourage preaching pastors to be better students of the particular and unique struggles that face their congregation. This

²⁷⁷ Merriam and Tisdell, 100.

study will also explore solutions to the problem of separating the preaching ministry of the church from the rest of the life of the church. Though there are no direct benefits for participants, the researcher hopes participants will be encouraged by the experience of sharing their experiences with an eager listener and learner.

- 3) The research process will include six participants who will be interviewed for 60-90 minutes via in-person or via zoom-based interviews that are recorded.
- 4) Participants in this research will interviewed for 60-90 minutes concerning their experience integrating preaching and shepherding as a pastor of a local church.
- 5) Potential discomforts or stresses: Participants may be uncomfortable describing their own experiences relating to preaching and shepherding.
- 6) Potential risks: Minimal: Participants who are pastors are asked to share their experience of uniting preaching and shepherding in their local church. Participants will be asked if their experience has influenced their approach and they will be asked about relational aspects of their ministry. Participants may become tired or weary as they share their past experience.
- 7) Any information that I provide will be held in strict confidence. At no time will my name be reported along with my responses. The data gathered for this research is confidential and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. Audiotapes or videotapes of interviews will be erased following the completion of the dissertation. By my signature, I am giving informed consent for the use of my responses in this research project.
- 8) Limits of Privacy: I understand that, by law, the researcher cannot keep information confidential if it involves abuse of a child or vulnerable adult or plans for a person to harm themselves or to hurt someone else.
- 9) The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the study.

Printed Name and Signature of Researcher

Date

Printed Name and Signature of Participant

Date

Please sign both copies of this form. Keep one. Return the other to the researcher. Thank you.

Research at Covenant Theological Seminary which involves human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant should be addressed to: Director, Doctor of Ministry; Covenant Theological Seminary; 12330 Conway Road; St. Louis, MO 63141; Phone (314) 434-4044.
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Data Collection

This study utilized semi-structured interviews for primary data gathering. The open-ended nature of interview questions facilitates the ability to build upon participant responses to complex issues in order to explore them more thoroughly.²⁷⁸ Ultimately, these methods enabled this study to look for common themes, patterns, concerns, and contrasting views across the variation of participants.²⁷⁹

The researcher performed a pilot test of the interview protocol to evaluate the questions for clarity and usefulness in eliciting relevant data.²⁸⁰ Initial interview protocol categories were derived from the literature but evolved around the explanations and descriptions that emerged from doing constant comparison work during the interviewing process. Coding and categorizing the data while continuing the process of interviewing also allowed for the emergence of new sources of data.²⁸¹

For this qualitative study, six pastors were interviewed for one hour each. Prior to the interview, the participants received an interview protocol and a brief description of the topic of study. The researcher audiotaped the interviews with a digital recorder. By conducting one interview a week, the researcher completed the data gathering in the

²⁷⁸ Merriam and Tisdell, 110–11, 122.

²⁷⁹ Merriam and Tisdell, 297.

²⁸⁰ Merriam and Tisdell, 125.

²⁸¹ Merriam and Tisdell, 178–79.

course of six weeks. Following each interview, the researcher wrote field notes with descriptive and reflective observations on the interview time.²⁸²

The interview protocol contained the following questions.

1. How do you practice the integration of your role of shepherding your congregation with the role of preaching?
 - a. Describe the role that preaching plays in your overall ministry responsibilities.
 - b. What are some of the challenges of integrating your role of shepherding with your role of preaching?
2. How would you describe the connection between your weekly preaching and your own spiritual growth?
3. Knowing what you know now about your congregation compared to your first 1-3 years as pastor, how has your sermon preparation and sermon approach changed?
 - a. How has the integration of preaching and shepherding roles improved and/or changed as your tenure has grown?
 - i. What role does the issue of trust have in this improvement or change?
 - b. As your tenure has grown and interpersonal trust has increased, has the level of corporate trust or trust in leadership ability increased or decreased?
4. As a leader, describe your experience with pastoral isolation.

²⁸² Merriam and Tisdell, 131.

- a. What are some ways that you have protected yourself from being isolated from your congregation?

Data Analysis

As soon as possible following each interview session, the researcher utilized a digital transcription service which transcribed each interview from MP3 into a text format. This digital transcription service ensured that everything that was stated in the interview was secured for analysis.²⁸³ This study utilized the constant comparison method of routinely analyzing the data throughout the interview process.²⁸⁴ This method provided for the ongoing revision, clarification, and evaluation of the resultant data categories.

When the interviews and observation notes were fully transcribed into computer files, they were coded and analyzed using a color-code method. The analysis focused on discovering and identifying (1) common themes, patterns, and practices across the variation of participants; and (2) congruence or discrepancy between the different preaching pastor participants.

Researcher Position

In this type of qualitative research, the researcher is the collector and analyzer of the data. Therefore, it is important to recognize and explain the researcher's biases and assumptions that may be projected onto the analysis process.²⁸⁵

²⁸³ Merriam and Tisdell, 131.

²⁸⁴ Merriam and Tisdell, 202.

²⁸⁵ Merriam and Tisdell, 208.

The researcher is a minister in the Presbyterian tradition and is ordained in the Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians (ECO). The researcher holds to Reformed, confessional theology and maintains theologically orthodox positions. The researcher has served churches with 115-130 members and a church of 500 members. These churches allowed for vastly different experiences in ministry and required different approaches to relational ministry and how that impacted weekly preaching.

While the researcher can recognize some influence from some well-known and highly gifted preachers, he has primarily been mentored and shaped for ministry by pastors who placed a heavy emphasis on deeply relational ministry areas such as shepherding and counseling.

Study Limitations

As stated in the previous section, participants interviewed for this study were limited to those serving in pulpit ministry. Therefore, the results of this study will be focused on the impact of weekly sermons in the context of the local church. Some of the study's findings may be generalized to other similar ministry contexts such as regular teaching roles outside of the pulpit. The results of this study may also have implications for other areas of public leadership in educational, public service, and other religious settings. However, readers who desire to generalize some of the particular aspects of these conclusions beyond the role of preaching pastors should test those aspects in their particular context. As with all qualitative studies, readers bear the responsibility to determine what can be appropriately applied to their context.

Chapter Four

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore how preaching pastors unite their preaching and shepherding roles through their sermons to the local church. To address the purpose of this study, the following research questions guided the qualitative research:

1. How do pastors describe the connections between preaching and shepherding in their local church?
 - a. What are some specific ways that pastors unite their preaching and shepherding roles through their sermons?
 - b. What are the challenges pastors face in uniting their preaching and shepherding roles?
2. How do pastors describe the connection between their local weekly preaching and their own spiritual life?
3. What impact does pastoral tenure have on shepherding and preaching?
4. As leaders, how do pastors prevent becoming isolated from their congregations?

This chapter provides the findings based on six interviews and pulls out insights and experiences pertaining to the research questions above. The interview findings have been sorted and organized according to the four primary research questions.

Introductions to Participants and Context

Six preaching pastors were selected to participate in this study. All names and identifiable participant information have been changed to protect the identity of the

participants. The participants ranged in age from 42 to 69 years old. The pastoral tenure of the participants in a single church ranged from a minimum of ten years to twenty-nine years. All of the participants are pastors in the United States, but their geographic location and their geographic setting vary. Five of the six participants are ministers in the Presbyterian tradition, and one is a minister in the Baptist tradition. All graduated from Reformed seminaries, with four of the six holding doctoral degrees.

Jerry has over thirty years of pastoral experience and has been the senior pastor of his current congregation for twenty-nine years. He holds a doctoral degree from a Reformed evangelical seminary and pastors in a suburban setting in a Presbyterian denomination. Oscar has thirteen years of pastoral experience and has been the senior pastor of his current congregation for ten years. He holds a doctoral degree from an evangelical seminary and pastors in a small-town setting in a Baptist denomination. Lewis has been the senior pastor of his church plant congregation for twenty-eight years. He holds a Ph.D. in historical theology. His church is in a mid-size city in a Presbyterian denomination. Landon has over thirty years of pastoral experience and has been the senior pastor of his current congregation for twenty-three years. He holds a doctoral degree from an evangelical seminary and pastors in an urban setting in a Presbyterian denomination. Aaron also has over thirty years of pastoral experience and was the solo pastor of his most recent congregation for thirteen years. He holds an advanced seminary degree and his most recent congregation was in a rural context in a Presbyterian denomination. Grant also has over thirty years of pastoral experience and was the senior pastor of his congregation for twenty-four years. He holds an advanced degree from a

Reformed seminary and his congregation is in a suburban setting in a Presbyterian denomination.

The Connection Between Preaching and Shepherding

The first research question examined how pastors describe the connection between preaching and shepherding in their local church. This research question explored this connection by examining the specific ways the participants unite their preaching and shepherding roles through their sermons and also by examining the challenges the participants face in uniting their preaching and shepherding roles.

Ways of Uniting Preaching and Shepherding Roles

The participants affirmed the prioritized position of preaching in their role as a pastor. Oscar described himself as a “pulpit-driven leader” and his church as a “pulpit-driven church.” Aaron stated, “The preaching ministry gets most of my time’s attention, and it’s through preaching that I accomplish most of my vision-casting.” Lewis added, “Preaching has always been of central importance for my ministry.” Jerry also affirmed his preaching commitment and added, “Also, it’s been clear to me that my congregation values preaching above all things and that was instilled in them long before I got here.”

Lewis described the practice of uniting his preaching and shepherding roles by saying, “Preaching and shepherding come together in a sermon through pointed application.” He continued this point by describing “pointed application” as being “sensitive to where your people are.” The participants also recognized sermon application as a way they united their preaching and shepherding roles. Oscar observed that even

though meaningful application is “often the most difficult part of the sermon preparation process, it is an indispensable part of shepherding the flock through preaching.”

Jerry admitted that sermon application had to be practiced, and he came to understand that it “can’t be worked out in a vacuum.” He explained that shepherding the congregation through preaching happens when a pastor “is with the people.” Grant took that concept further to emphasize how a pastor relates to and gets to know the flock. Grant stated, “Getting to understand the needs and struggles of your people requires establishing a rhythm of visitation – not just in the pastor’s office – but in the people’s homes, as well as where they work.”

Landon noted that he learned more about people when away from the church campus. He said, “Whenever I am able to get exposure to the day-to-day activities of people in my church, I usually grow in my understanding of my congregation as a whole.” Aaron relayed a personal story about a pastoral visit to one of his older members. During that visit, he learned that the church member had a son and granddaughter who lived with her and counted on her financially and emotionally. Aaron explained that he had no idea for over a year, even though he saw this church member every Sunday. Through that awareness, Aaron gained insight into this church member’s struggles. “This knowledge initiated a new pastoral approach because of new revelation about her circumstances.”

Every participant noted the connection between visitation and sermon application, and several expressed that pastoral visitation played a regular role in their weekly sermon preparation. Oscar stated, “Although it has taken some time to realize the importance of this, I try not to separate my pastoral responsibilities of visiting the sick, officiating

funerals, and counseling people from my preaching responsibility of ministering the Word on Sunday mornings.” Grant also made note of countless visits to hospitals as he sat with families in waiting rooms and with the sick at their bedsides. “Sermons were often inspired and drafted as I cried with and shared the hope of Christ with people in their suffering and in their time of need,” Grant said.

Jerry and Grant emphasized listening as a way of uniting preaching with shepherding. Jerry stated, “My parishioners expect me to be a thinker and an effective speaker, but if I’m not listening to my parishioners, then my thinking and speaking will fall short.” Grant’s experience was the same, as he remarked, “Really listening has the greatest impact on my preaching.” He claimed that his listening to those under his care has given him “a greater understanding of God’s people and of God himself.”

Several pastors noted that uniting the roles of preaching and shepherding required deliberate efforts. Landon was reminded how his practice of praying for the specific needs of parishioners often transferred to sermon writing. He recalled, “If I’m praying for my people, God brings their difficulties and sufferings to mind as I’m thinking through practical aspects of my sermon points. The Lord wants my sermon to address the immediate needs and pains that are being experienced by his people.” Lewis highlighted how his weekly preparation for his church’s small group ministry allowed for the union of his preaching and shepherding roles. He stated, “Each week I prepare sermon-based discussion questions for our ‘Koinonia Groups.’ Thinking through and writing these questions causes me to think through the practicality of my preaching.”

Grant has established a vast letter-writing ministry that has closely connected him to his congregants. He stated, “I will sometimes write dozens of letters to members in a

day and then mail them, old-fashioned style. This provides a unique and intimate connection.” Grant explained that the letter writing is a form of shepherding that keeps those people in his mind and heart as he’s preparing to preach to them.

Oscar recognizes that, as a pastor of a larger church, it is important for him to rely on the wisdom of others to unite his role as preacher with his role of shepherd. Therefore, he has implemented what he called “Tuesday’s sermon review and sermon preview.” During this time, he gathers with an average of seven church staff members, he said, and they discuss things he did well and things he needed to improve. Oscar described the shepherding importance of this weekly effort. “It can be difficult to host a forum that allows for criticism, but it has been a valuable means of growing as a preacher and gaining a greater understanding of my congregation and the way they listen and apply my sermons.”

Grant hosts a similar meeting with a church leadership team. Weekly, he invites a group of people to discuss the text for Sunday’s sermon, he said, noting that the discussion includes points of application specific to his church’s culture. In describing the value of this approach, Grant claimed, “Since I have been practicing this collective approach to preaching, I have become a more understanding and repentant pastor in the pulpit.”

The Uniqueness of Sermons that Unite Preaching with Shepherding

When asked to describe the uniqueness of sermons that integrate shepherding with preaching, participants had varied responses, but all identified qualities of integrated sermons. Grant recognized these sermons as ones that were “inspired by the Holy Spirit and delivered to people that he had walked through trials with over many years.” Jerry

explained the uniqueness of these integrated messages by contrasting them with sermons preached to congregations or groups of people that he didn't know. He stated, "When you don't know what people are going through, preaching feels like a performance, and it's difficult to reach the heart. True preaching that shepherds people springs from knowing the people."

Oscar pointed out that he has experienced the uniqueness of sermons that integrate shepherding and preaching following significant events affecting a large number of the congregation. He described, for instance, a sermon that followed the death of a church family's child. He said, "The family of that little boy was hurting, and our church was hurting, and I was called to preach to them. The main thing that I wanted to communicate was that I was grieving with them, and Jesus grieves with them."

Lewis shared that since he started leading one of the small groups at his church, his preaching has become more united with shepherding. He noted, "The intimacy of a small group makes me a more sensitive and connected preacher. When considering whether I should continue leading a small group or not, I realized that it not only benefits me as a pastor but also as a preacher." Aaron realized a similar benefit when he became more active as a counselor. He explained, "Though I never violate the confidentiality of a counseling session, those sessions absolutely influence my preaching and positively influence me as a preacher."

Challenges of Uniting Preaching and Shepherding Roles

Jerry declared, "The union of preaching and shepherding should be seamless, but it's often very difficult to integrate the two." Landon described the preaching process as a "layered approach that creates a tension between being alone for study and being with

people to understand the culture.” He went on to explain that his tradition expected a “scholarly approach to the sermon” and that he can often “get trapped in the layer of exegeting and explaining the text while neglecting the local culture.” Grant also recognized this tension. He characterized his sermon preparation time as “susceptible to becoming a prisoner to biblical exegesis and lacking the freedom to spend time on cultural exegesis.”

Several participants described themselves as introverted and therefore naturally gravitating toward private study. Jerry, for instance, related that he had to make conscious efforts to get out in the community with people. He quipped, “By the time I have interacted with people for a few hours on Sunday and a couple of hours on Wednesday, I am mentally and emotionally exhausted. It’s hard for me to get motivated for further interaction.” Landon also noted his introversion: “My personality type and gift package often keeps me isolated from others. If I did what I usually wanted to do, then I would read, write, and pray in my study most of the week.” He recognized, however, this challenge and said that he “regularly takes steps to be in the company of people inside and outside of his church.” Aaron admitted that a couple of difficult seasons in his life resulted in extended periods of isolation. He explained, “There are ways that personal difficulties help pastors relate to others, but extended periods of isolation were not a good pastoral practice. I felt very disconnected from my congregation when I was preaching to people that I wasn’t interacting with.”

Two claimed that the temptation to be a great preacher conflicted with their shepherding goals. Aaron confessed, “The allure of becoming a successful and admired preacher often took precedence over regular pastoral duties.” Lewis also observed,

“Sometimes being a great preacher can become an idol, and you become self-focused rather than God-focused and others-focused.”

Summary of the Connection Between Preaching and Shepherding

The participants affirmed prioritizing preaching, also recognizing the importance of preaching in the culture of their congregations. They identified sermon application as an important means of uniting the roles of preaching with shepherding. Effective sermon application was also closely related to consistent and personal interaction with the congregation. They emphasized that skillful application required deliberate effort to know and relate to their parishioners. These deliberate efforts included integrating pastoral prayer ministry with sermon preparation and approaching sermon evaluation and preparation as collaboration. The uniqueness of sermons that integrated preaching with shepherding was also described. The pastors provided keen insights into what people were experiencing as they were listening to the sermon.

The challenges of uniting the roles of preaching and shepherding was shared amongst all participants. One of these challenges was the tension between the time needed for effective biblical exegesis and the time needed for personal pastoral care. Another challenge was the tendency for some to withdraw from others. Another challenge was the allure of becoming a “successful preacher” and how that ambition can become an idol that creates a self-focused ministry.

The Connection Between Preaching and the Pastor’s Own Spiritual Life

The second research question explored the connection between weekly preaching and the pastor’s own spiritual life. This research question led to two categories of

responses: 1. The recognized need for pastors to give attention to their own spiritual growth and 2. The spiritual commitments that are important for pastors.

The Pastor's Need to Grow in Grace

The participants recognized that the pastor's own spiritual growth is an often neglected aspect of his shepherding and preaching ministry. Aaron asserted that a pastor's spiritual growth is often overlooked. "It would seem obvious that as a pastor, I should be growing in my faith, but it is a common struggle to prioritize my own spiritual life." Landon also confessed, "I am fully convinced that it is extremely important for pastors to be spiritually mature and growing in grace, but I regularly feel that the spiritual formation of others gets my primary attention." Lewis pointed out how valuable spiritual growth is for him. "We certainly want to see fruit in the lives of our people, but our people need their pastor to be shaped by the gospel of grace because they don't need to just hear what I am saying; they need to believe in the authenticity of it." Jerry emphatically claimed, "My spiritual growth is vital to my call as a pastor. If I am not growing in grace, it will be the reason that my congregation is not bearing fruit."

This research question also revealed that participants understood a connection between their weekly preaching and their own spiritual growth – especially over time. Grant made that connection in the following way: "True gospel preaching cannot be sustained by a heart that is not being softened and affected by God's grace." He also made the point that effective sermon application should be accompanied by the way the passage has "personally affected the pastor's heart." According to Lewis, preaching is a "means in which God reveals his love, and God has designed for his message to travel through those that are experiencing his love." Jerry admitted that during his almost thirty

years of preaching, he has had some seasons of spiritual struggle. As he looks back on some of those seasons, he claimed: “God was gracious to my church and to me during those periods, but for the sake of the gospel ministry and the name of Christ, a renewed heart and renewed faith had to be prioritized.”

The Importance of Regular Spiritual Commitments

This second research question led participants to describe specific spiritual commitments important to their spiritual growth. It took Aaron a while to realize it, but his Bible reading needed to be distinct from what he was preaching or teaching through. “For years, I let my weekly sermon and teaching preparation serve as my personal Bible reading, but I needed something beyond that. Distinguishing my personal devotional time from my weekly preparation was a needed step in my spiritual formation.” Aaron also noticed a change in his preaching from this spiritual commitment. “Ironically, separating my personal devotion time from the text I was preaching through made me a gentler and more thoughtful preacher, and it made me a better student of the text.”

Jerry and Landon attributed their ongoing spiritual growth to their accountability relationships, called “covenant groups.” Jerry said that his covenant group with three other pastors “has been a lifeline for my soul in life and ministry.” He continued, “They have been a confessional when I have needed it, and they have inspired me to hang in there when I thought about giving up.” Landon claimed, “My faith has been strengthened, and my attitude adjusted because of this small fellowship of gospel ministers.”

Lewis considers his annual commitment to serving on mission trips as having the greatest impact on him. He said, “About fifteen years ago, I made a commitment to go on at least one mission trip a year. This has not always been easy to accomplish, but it has

inspired me tremendously and has made me a better pastor. I communicate the importance of this to younger pastors whenever I have the opportunity.” When asked if these mission trips have directly influenced his preaching at his home church, Lewis said, “In a big way they have influenced my preaching. These experiences with different cultures have given me new insights into the human heart and into God’s Word. Also, these trips are a providence of encouragement to my flock when I am able to share of the work God is doing in other lands and other people groups.”

Summary of the Connection Between Preaching and the Pastor’s Own Spiritual Life

The participants agreed on the importance of a pastor’s own spiritual growth. Even so, the neglect of personal spiritual growth was a shared concern. They also recognized the connection between their spiritual growth and their preaching and shepherding.

They also described their most beneficial spiritual commitments. These included scriptural devotional readings distinct from sermon texts, accountability groups made up of other ministers, and annual mission trips.

The Impact of Pastoral Tenure

The third research question examined the impact that pastoral tenure has on shepherding and preaching. Based on an analysis of the data, three categories emerged: 1. The impact that pastoral tenure has on sermon preparation and approach, 2. The impact that pastoral tenure has on the integration of preaching and shepherding, and 3. The role of trust in shepherding and preaching.

Pastoral Tenure and its Impact on Sermon Preparation and Approach

Although responses varied, the participants expressed that the way they approach and prepare for a sermon has changed as their tenure has increased. They even described their sermon approach as “dramatically different” now compared to their first three years as a pastor. Jerry, who has the longest tenure at the same church, described an early emphasis on explanation and illustration, compared to a later emphasis on application. He explains, “In my first years as a preacher, I would spend most of my prep time working to explain the text and illustrate the point. So, I would relay all original definitions and try to find the perfect story or metaphor, hoping to grab or hold my congregation’s attention.”

Aaron also had an early emphasis on explaining the text. He states, “As a young pastor, I was so intent on proving myself as competent and learned that 99 percent of my sermon was interpreting the scripture.” Landon was amused as he thought back to his early days of preparing sermons. “I would discover an obscure interpretation of one of the words that was in the text, and I couldn’t wait to build my sermon around that obscure interpretation.” Oscar, who had the shortest tenure among the participants, expressed “a major shift” in his approach over the last ten years. He observed, “I was limited in my understanding of who I was preaching to in my first few years, but honestly I was also limited in my understanding of how to preach.” Grant, Lewis, and Jerry shared a common early experience of being impatient. Lewis explained, “I would try to cover every potential theme in the text that I was preaching through, and it would make for a long and convoluted sermon.”

As participants described the differences now compared to early in their tenures, some shared terms and phrases emerged: “patient,” “simplified,” and “more emphasis on

application.” Landon observed that he had “outgrown the needless complexity of his early sermons,” and he now “puts as much effort into being clear as he used to put into being obscure.” Landon recalled reading through an old sermon from twenty years ago and acknowledged, “I used to insert heavy quotes from Karl Barth, John Calvin, and Bonhoeffer – sometimes five different long quotes in a sermon. It’s not that I don’t quote theologians anymore. I’ve just learned not to pile it on incessantly.” He added, “There was a time when my approach to preaching kept me at a distance from my congregation. Part of my maturity in preaching has come as God has connected my heart to the hearts of those that are listening to my sermon.”

Lewis said a turning point for him was “realizing that a pastoral call should include a long-range outlook and that includes in the way preaching is approached.” I am more patient now and willing to leave things unsaid in a sermon or at least saved for another sermon.” Grant came to a similar conclusion. “I am much more patient today in the way I preach a sermon. I no longer feel the need to force every doctrinal position into one sermon.” Jerry explained that a major difference for him is his commitment to “pointed application.” He said, “In my early years of preaching, application is something I would hastily attach to the end of each point, but now it is by far my greatest point of emphasis. It’s the primary way I shepherd my flock.” Landon also stressed this idea of improved sermon application. “My greatest area of improvement in preaching has come in the way I lead people to apply my sermons. It’s also the primary way I communicate my love for my people. Explanation and illustration can often be self-serving, but application is how I express love for others.” Aaron added, “Application used to be a

forced, obligatory step for me. I would tack on a short to-do list at the end of my sermon and consider it complete. I now see application as a way to speak to and shepherd hearts.”

Grant and Aaron came to value the power of people’s stories as their pastoral tenure has grown. Grant explains, “People need to see God’s work in action, and so I share about that activity when I am preaching. Sometimes I use some of my sermon time and invite people to share their story, and the sermon comes alive.” Aaron made the point that “a testimony can bring light to truth and help it come into focus.” Therefore, he has implemented testimonies at times during his sermon – sometimes in person and sometimes through video. Grant and Aaron noted that they would not have found testimonies valuable early on in ministry, but as Grant commented, “I have seen how people are shepherded by the experiences of their peers and leaders.”

Landon and Jerry pointed out that as their pastoral tenure has grown, their cultural awareness has grown. Landon explained, “When I think of shepherding my local church through my sermon, I think about how I have become more aware of the unique qualities, successes, and struggles of this church.” Jerry added, “I wouldn’t be able to preach, word for word, to any other church a sermon that I have already preached to my own church.” Oscar built on this important point. “I am aware that there are more gifted preachers than me but because of my specific calling, because of my deep and sincere knowledge of my members and my community, I am the most equipped pastor there is for my people.”

The Role of Trust in Shepherding and Preaching

As noted in Chapter Two, it takes time to develop trust in a pastor/congregation relationship because it takes time to know another person.²⁸⁶ The participants affirmed that time-honored trust increased their effectiveness as a pastor. They also admitted that they've always recognized the value of trust as a shepherd, counselor, and friend, but this interview caused them to consider how important trust is for preaching. Oscar noted, "There were natural obstacles in place as I would exhort [from the pulpit]: parents on points of parenting or businesspeople on points of generosity and integrity. Even though I may have thought at the time that I was automatically trusted because I was their pastor, I wasn't. I had to gain their trust, and that took time, but over the years, active responses to my sermons have increased."

They understood trust as a gift of the Holy Spirit working in the church. Lewis stated, "Genuine trust comes when people recognize the Holy Spirit at work in one another." Aaron added, "The Spirit is responsible to bring trust into the equation of pastoral ministry." Jerry made a similar connection: "Faith is how we please God, so it would make sense that he would use faith and trust as a basis for effective ministry in the church."

Landon made the point that "people aren't going to really listen to your preaching until they know you are going to be their pastor." When asked to elaborate, Landon explained, "I have seen that preaching flows from a pastoral relationship. People may learn some things from your sermons for your first year or two, but those sermons start taking root after the people have been loved by you."

²⁸⁶ Price, "Building Trust," 50.

Grant acknowledged that trust is an indispensable aspect of the pastor/congregation relationship “because relationships are predicated upon the exchanged trust between two persons who expose themselves one to the other. This is the foundation of our relationship with Christ, and it is the foundation of our relationship with one another.” Grant continued, “As I established myself as a trustworthy pastor, people leaned in to listen. As I began to trust the congregation, I became more vulnerable in the pulpit. I could confess my sins and share my falls during my sermon. That authenticity is impossible without trust.”

Lewis said he has gotten to the point where he is baptizing children of the children he baptized over twenty-five years ago. He explained, “There are ups and downs in pastoral ministry for every pastor, but when you hang in there with a church, and they hang in there with you, there are trust-based relationships and pastoral opportunities that are otherwise unavailable.” Jerry added, “You wouldn’t think it would take this long, but I feel like it took about ten years to really establish trust with my congregation. Once I did, it became a shared trust between them and me and that trust level spread to newer members. Also, it benefited vision-casting, preaching, and my freedom to offer pastoral counsel.” Landon affirmed this concept of shared trust. “When newer members sense or learn of the trust established between a pastor and long-time members, it does not take them near as long to trust their pastor.”

Jerry noted that “trust has become an integral part of his preaching bolder and more sensitive sermons.” Even so, Jerry also described his painful experience when trust had been assumed but was then revealed as lacking. He elaborated, “Over the last two years, I have felt compelled to address some sensitive and challenging issues from the

pulpit. Many received it well, but there were some who surprisingly took severe offense, and I believe it revealed their lack of trust in me as their pastor.” Lewis also admitted that at times, “My perception of trust has been miscalculated.” He recalled a sermon where “I once made a comment off the cuff about a current event, and rather than giving me the benefit of the doubt, some members believed I was intentionally insulting them.”

The participants did not acknowledge a decrease in corporate trust with an increase in interpersonal trust, as was introduced in Chapter Two as the “Gap Theory.” Instead, they believed that as interpersonal trust increased, corporate trust increased. However, one participant acknowledged the possibility of that dynamic but was unfamiliar with the study. One of the participants (Aaron) was familiar with the “Gap Theory” and is convinced that he experienced that in his congregation and was uncertain with how to navigate the lack of corporate trust.

Summary of the Impact of Pastoral Tenure

It was widely acknowledged by participants that as their pastoral tenure has increased, it has positively impacted the pastor/congregation relationship. They affirmed that their sermon approach and preparation methods have changed over time. They associated that change with a matured understanding of the practice of preaching, but some pointed out that their change paralleled their particular knowledge of their congregation over time.

The concept of trust between a pastor and a congregation and the role it plays in preaching and shepherding intrigued the participants. They acknowledged, without hesitation, that trust required for the pastor/congregation relationship to flourish. However, the question itself, when applied to the role that trust has in preaching, proved

enlightening to the participants. The participants explored the idea as they commented on the role of trust in preaching. It was acknowledged that the establishment of trust led to bolder sermons, a more vulnerable posture from the preaching pastor, and an increased level of reception from the congregation. Some of the participants acknowledged their disappointment when the trust level is miscalculated. Most did not correlate to the “Gap Theory” between interpersonal and corporate trust developed in Chapter Two. The participants saw corporate trust increase alongside interpersonal trust, though one participant recognized the “Gap Theory” dynamic during his pastoral tenure.

Pastoral Leadership and the Prevention of Isolation

The final research question explored ways to prevent pastoral isolation. Jerry confessed that one reason he was drawn to becoming a pastor is because he loved scholarly study. He said, “I considered continuing to study immediately after I got my M.Div., but I also wanted to preach so I saw the pastorate as an opportunity to study deeply and preach about what I studied. I didn’t really think of it as isolating, but when I wasn’t intentional, it would become isolating.” Landon also acknowledged a general tendency to “tuck himself away in his study.” Aaron explained that his experiences of pastoral isolation were not the result of study or scholarly work but of a choice to distance himself from others during difficult seasons of trial and depression. Several participants were forthcoming about times they experienced pastoral isolation. They were aware of instances of pastoral isolation with those in pastoral leadership positions.

Lewis recognized how pastoral leadership can become an isolating role. “There are many ways that serving as a senior pastor can make you want to escape from people. Preaching a bad sermon, having to make hard decisions, having hard meetings, or falling

short of unachievable expectations can all make you want to just close yourself off from others.” When asked how he guarded himself from that desire becoming a pattern, Lewis said, “by praying that the Holy Spirit would protect me from that danger.” Landon too commented on this leadership dynamic. “The pastor is a leader, and a shepherd leader is distinct from the flock in one sense, but the shepherd should never be distant or unavailable to the flock.”

Jerry and Landon referred again to the importance that their covenant groups have played in preventing pastoral isolation. Jerry said, “There have been times when I did not want the company of anyone, including those in my covenant group, but there’s a level of dedication to that group that overcomes any pull toward isolation.” Landon claimed that his covenant group has been “a source of encouragement. They’ve also pushed me toward more pastoral interaction with my congregation,” Landon said.

They also acknowledged the value of therapeutic counseling. One participant commented, “Pastors can be slow to seek counseling because of what they fear it may say to others, but, for some, it can be the only format to be honest about spiritual and emotional pain.” Another participant added, “Counseling for pastors should be more readily available because there are many pastors who don’t have anyone they feel comfortable sharing with.” Oscar promoted the value of doing ministry with others to prevent becoming isolated as a pastor. “Establishing a pattern of ministering collectively rather than alone is a protective measure for me. Also, that pattern helps build up colleagues in ministry and maintains a healthy level of accountability.” Jerry noted that he has established a pastoral visitation system that wasn’t necessarily designed to protect him from being isolated, but it has indirectly served that purpose. “Because I have a

regular, weekly visitation schedule, I keep myself in rotation amongst our church members and visitors.”

Interview data also revealed shared concerns about pastoral isolation and narcissistic characteristics. Aaron asserted that “when a pastor resorts to ‘ministry’ in isolation, his voice will be the primary voice that he hears, and that can be dangerous.” Lewis added, “God ordinarily works through a plurality of leaders rather than a single leader, so it seems to me when a pastor leads from a place of isolation, it is cause for concern and could be an issue of self-absorption.” He added, “I say that recognizing that I have fallen into that dangerous place before and know that I and my church need to be spared from a pastor that is isolated from elders and members.”

Summary of Pastoral Leadership and the Prevention of Isolation

Interview data revealed that the participants have experienced varied forms of isolation as a pastor. Scenarios of isolation ranged from personality-driven isolation to depression-related isolation. One participant spoke of the toll of leadership pressure and how that has pushed him toward shutting other people out. Though no participants revealed any personal struggles with narcissism, some shared experiences of dealing with narcissistic pastors that led churches or ministries to isolate from other leaders or counsel.

Participant recommendations to prevent pastoral isolation included performing ministry duties with other colleagues, counseling for pastors, committing to a covenant group, praying for God’s protection from harmful isolation, and being committed to regular pastoral visitation.

Summary of Findings

This chapter examined the findings of preaching pastors who unite their preaching and shepherding roles through their preaching. The data was categorized according to four research questions. First, the ways that pastors describe the connections between their preaching and shepherding roles in their local church were examined. These responses were examined through specific methods used and challenges faced. Second, the connection between a pastor's weekly preaching and their own spiritual life was explored. Third, the impact of pastoral tenure on shepherding and preaching was studied. The last category was the examination of how pastors, as leaders, prevent becoming isolated from their congregation.

In order to unite preaching and shepherding roles, participants expressed a parallel between sermon application and shepherding the flock. They acknowledged that application was not as heavily emphasized early in their preaching ministry, and when it was used, it was used ineffectively. As these practitioners came to understand the role and goal of preaching, application increased in its importance and its effect. They noted a connection between sermon application and pastoral visitation, affirming pastoral visitation as a part of their sermon preparation process. Participants emphasized the importance of pastoral visitation because how it leads to knowing the congregation better, which improves the ability to preach to them. Participants further expressed the need to speak to the particular struggles their parishioners are facing, which requires deliberate efforts of praying specific prayers and having access to their spiritual needs.

Participants recognized the need for pastors to give attention to their own spiritual growth, while simultaneously acknowledging that a pastor's spiritual growth was often

not prioritized. Participants also affirmed the indisputable connection between the pastor's spiritual life and the pastor's weekly preaching. Participants expressed that it was by God's design that his message would be communicated through those who have been personally affected by that message and that true gospel preaching will not be sustained by a preacher whose heart has not been softened by the gospel.

The connection between pastoral tenure and the establishment of trust was affirmed. Participants experienced more effectiveness in preaching and a greater connection between preaching and shepherding as their pastoral tenure increased. This research category further expanded the examination of sermon application and how an increase in pastoral tenure resulted in a changed approach to the sermon and its preparation. This change in approach and preparation was largely attributed to a matured understanding of preaching, but it was also acknowledged that this change was closely tied to the cultural awareness that comes with extended time in one congregation. Participants affirmed that the longer pastors serve in one congregation, the more equipped they are to shepherd that congregation through preaching.

The connection between established trust and preaching was also examined. Participants connected important sermon qualities to the trust between a pastor and a congregation. The literature area that revealed the contrast between interpersonal trust and corporate trust was also explored but did not find a negative relationship between interpersonal and corporate trust.

Lastly, pastoral isolation was recognized by participants as a danger, and it was experienced in varied forms. Participants offered recommendations to prevent pastors

from becoming isolated from their congregations, through experiential measurements and by way of general recommendations.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore how preaching pastors unite their preaching and shepherding roles through their sermons to the local church. In Chapter Two, the review of literature examined the following literature areas: the union of the preaching ministry with shepherding, leadership and the danger of isolation from a corporate perspective, and the impact of a long-tenured pastorate. In Chapter Four, six participants were interviewed, and the following research questions guided the qualitative research:

1. How do pastors describe the connections between preaching and shepherding in their local church?
 - a. What are some specific ways that pastors unite their preaching and shepherding roles through their sermons?
 - b. What are the challenges pastors face in uniting their preaching and shepherding roles?
2. How do pastors describe the connection between their local weekly preaching and their own spiritual life?
3. What impact does pastoral tenure have on shepherding and preaching?
4. As leaders, how do pastors prevent becoming isolated from their congregations?

Summary of the Study and Findings

This study reviewed relevant literature in three areas and analyzed interview data from six preaching pastors. The literature review consisted of research and analysis across three major areas: the union of the preaching ministry with shepherding, leadership and the danger of isolation from a corporate perspective, and the impact of a long-tenured pastorate.

This first area of literature analysis examined the two ministry areas of preaching and shepherding and their functions. Through the exploration of the role of preaching, it was discovered that preaching has consistently had a prioritized role throughout Christian history. The literature affirmed that while church structures, liturgies, and cultural influences have fluctuated, the importance of the sermon has remained intact. The value of preaching, not as an inflated and isolated task, but as a unifying task, was affirmed. Thus, preaching can serve as a point of origin, holding all areas of ministry together.

This section also explored the pastoral call to shepherd the local church through preaching. According to the literature, challenges to this call include the neglect of congregational contextual analysis, the unrealized relationship between shepherding and preaching, and pastoral isolation, which leads to sermons isolated from other areas of ministry and church life. Preaching, however, was an indispensable way for pastors to not simply relay accurate content but shepherd people. When shepherding was a part of the process of preaching, then relational barriers between preacher and parishioners were overcome, and the content and the response to the sermon are improved.

The second literature review section explored the subject of leadership and the danger of isolation from a corporate perspective. This analysis discovered the paths to

corporate leadership and how those paths can lead to isolating roles or the desire for leaders to be isolated from employees. The literature pointed out how leadership isolation happens, and how leaders become out of touch with those they have authority over. This section of study also exposed the link between corporate leader isolation and burnout. It ended with an examination of the ways that corporate leaders can prevent or alleviate isolation.

The third literature review section explored the impact of a long-tenured pastorate. It revealed a correlation between church health and pastorates with tenures greater than six years. And yet, a majority of pastorates have a tenure that falls in the range of three to eight years. There are numerous benefits to long-tenured pastorates, such as the establishment of trust and stability. These benefits are lost when a pastorate is cut short. This section of the literature review also examined obstacles to a long-tenured pastorate and discovered opportunities to overcome them. These opportunities require strategy implementation such as personal spiritual formation, shared leadership structures, and early commitments to stay put. The literature has shown that the implementation of those strategies leads to longer pastorate tenures.

In addition to the literature review area, data collected from participant responses was categorized according to four research questions. First, the ways that pastors describe the connections between their preaching and shepherding roles in their local church were examined. These responses were examined through specific ways that pastors united their preaching and shepherding roles through their sermons and by exploring the challenges that pastors face in uniting their preaching and teaching roles. Second, the connection between a pastor's weekly preaching and their own spiritual life was explored. Third, the

impact of pastoral tenure on shepherding and preaching was studied. The last category examined how pastors, as leaders, prevent becoming isolated from their congregation.

Participant data routinely expressed a parallel between sermon application and shepherding the flock. However, participants acknowledged that application was not as heavily emphasized early in their preaching ministry, and when it was used, it was used ineffectively. As these practitioners came to better understand the role and goal of preaching, application increased in its importance and its effect. They noted a connection between sermon application and pastoral visitation and affirmed pastoral visitation as a part of their sermon preparation process. Participants affirmed the importance of pastoral visitation because of the way it led to knowing and relating to the congregation, which led to the opportunity to preach to people who the pastor knows more fully. Participants further expressed the need to speak to the particular struggles that their parishioners are facing, which required deliberate efforts to pray specific prayers and hear about their spiritual needs.

Participants recognized the need for pastors to attend to their own spiritual growth, though a pastor's spiritual growth was often overlooked and not prioritized. Participants also affirmed an indisputable connection between spiritual life and weekly preaching. Participants expressed that it was by God's design that his message is proclaimed through those who have been affected by that message and that true gospel preaching will not happen unless a preacher's heart has been softened by the gospel.

The connection between pastoral tenure and the establishment of trust was affirmed. Participants experienced more preaching effectiveness and a powerful connection between preaching and shepherding as their pastoral tenure increased. This

research category further expanded the examination of sermon application and how an increase in pastoral tenure changed the participants' approach to the sermon and its preparation. This change in approach and preparation was attributed to a matured understanding of preaching, but this change was also closely tied to the cultural awareness that comes with extended time in one congregation. Participants also affirmed that the longer pastors were in one congregation, the more equipped they were to shepherd that congregation through preaching.

The connection between established trust and preaching was also examined through interview data. Participants connected important sermon qualities to the trust between a pastor and a congregation. The literature area explaining the contrast between interpersonal trust and corporate trust was also explored through interview data, which did not find a negative relationship between interpersonal and corporate trust.

Lastly, pastoral isolation was recognized as a potential danger, and it was experienced in varied forms by a majority of participants. Participants offered recommendations to prevent pastors from becoming isolated from their congregation through experiential measurements and by way of general recommendations.

Discussion of Findings

In this section, the literature and interview research identified three principles. First, the priority of preaching in the Christian church has stood the test of time. Second, uniting preaching with shepherding requires deliberate pastoral efforts. Third, the time-honored establishment of relational trust between a pastor and the congregation is integral to the union of preaching and shepherding.

The Priority of Preaching in the Christian Church has Stood the Test of Time

A key finding of the research was that the historical priority of preaching presented in the literature review area was also found in the experiences of the participants. John Stott, in his book, *Between Two Worlds*, gives a brief historical overview of preaching where he described the task as “indispensable to Christianity.”²⁸⁷ Fred Craddock connects the modern preacher with the history of this sacred calling when he explains, “The sermon is set in a long and rich tradition and whoever enters the pulpit not only continues that tradition but is influenced by it as part of the Christian community’s memory.”²⁸⁸ This historical emphasis on preaching was clearly shared by the participants of this study. They prioritized their preaching, and I recorded descriptions such as Oscar’s “pulpit-driven” or Jerry’s portrayal of preaching as “of central importance.” Aaron explained his description of preaching’s priority in the context of time commitment and shared that when comparing it to other areas of ministry, it “gets most of my time’s attention.”

Robert Sider reminds readers that this emphasis on preaching is upheld by biblical merit. “The story of our Christian faith begins, in effect with proclamation. Jesus came into Galilee with a message of good news – the ‘Kingdom of God’ is at hand.”²⁸⁹ Therefore, I believe participants emphasized their preaching not merely because of

²⁸⁷ Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 15.

²⁸⁸ Craddock, *Preaching*, 35.

²⁸⁹ Sider, *The Gospel and Its Proclamation*, 11.

tradition or a learned behavior, but also because of the ministry of Christ, continuing on to today as a central practice of the Christian church.

When exploring the priority that preaching has had in the past and the place that it has today, neither the literature nor the interview data revealed a direct connection or a conversation between preaching and shepherding. Even though participants understood that the research was on the union of preaching and shepherding, the subject of the priority of preaching did not lead to the connection of preaching with shepherding. Nor did the subject of shepherding or pastoral care directly connect with the practice of preaching. Arthur Teikmanis recognized this failure to connect the two roles and wrote *Preaching and Pastoral Care*. He states, “We must emphasize, preaching and pastoral work are inseparably bound together.”²⁹⁰

Once I began to connect the two roles through the interview questions, the participants’ descriptions emerged, and best practices were shared. Thus, my analysis suggested a longstanding blind spot separating the preaching and shepherding roles.

Uniting Preaching with Shepherding Requires Deliberate Pastoral Efforts

The literature analysis and participant data promoted an integration of preaching with shepherding. Abraham Kuruvilla stresses that “there cannot be a severance between preaching and pastoring” and joins the two roles together, forming an “inseparable and integral unity.”²⁹¹ Nevertheless, this union is not easy, as the literature and practitioners agreed. Jerry, who has been preaching and shepherding for over thirty years, said, “The

²⁹⁰ Teikmanis, *Preaching and Pastoral Care*, 28.

²⁹¹ Kuruvilla, *A Vision for Preaching: Understanding the Heart of Pastoral Ministry*, 33.

union of preaching and shepherding should be seamless, but it's often very difficult to integrate the two."

Martin Saarinen expresses how any contextual understanding of the congregation has been overlooked when he says, "Noticeably absent in pastors' preparation and continuing education for preaching is attention to the indigenous cultural text provided by the congregation itself."²⁹² This overlooked aspect of sermon approach and preparation was shared by interview participants. Landon acknowledged his emphasis on other aspects of preaching while "neglecting the local culture." Grant too characterized his sermon approach as a failure to "spend time on cultural exegesis."

I know the Presbyterian pressure to be biblically and theologically astute, and yet we do not apply that same amount of pressure to being culturally astute. Therefore, it makes sense that this challenge is widespread in our tradition. Aaron related that his congregation expects him to take a "scholarly approach to the sermon."

Another shared challenge was the introversion of some participants. They confessed that because of their personality and gift mix, they often felt a preference for private study over pastoral interaction with their congregation. Jerry admitted that beyond a few hours on Sundays and Wednesdays, it was hard for him "to get motivated for further interaction." The literature addressed this area of participant data from a corporate leadership perspective and identified introversion as a potential challenge in business that

²⁹² Saarinen, "'They Don't Understand Us': An Analysis of Preaching and the Culture of a Local Church," 5.

tends “toward isolation; projections of aloofness, snobbery, or disinterest; lack of communication; and lack of engagement.”²⁹³

Aaron and Landon used the word “isolation” to describe this challenge, and others acknowledged that they have experienced pastoral isolation in some form. Jerry explained that it took him looking back to realize his practice of preparing for and delivering sermons without shepherding people was isolating.

Pastoral leadership parallels corporate leadership in many ways, and as the literature review in Chapter Two confirms, corporate leadership isolation has been studied to a greater degree than pastoral leadership isolation. Ron Carucci describes corporate leader isolation, writing, “Sadly, leaders are often relegated to suffering in silence under the burdens and complexities of their jobs, trapped by the popular misperception that they are living in luxury.”²⁹⁴ D.E. Gumpert and D.P. Boyd record that a majority of business owners and corporate CEOs experience a “pervasive sense of loneliness” in their roles.²⁹⁵

The literature confirms the potential harm to the leader, the employees, and the organization. As mentioned, interview participants confirmed they have experienced isolation from their congregations. If corporate leader isolation creates such potential systemic damage, there should be concern about the systemic harms from pastoral isolation – to the pastor, to the parishioners, and to the church. I would actually go further to suggest that pastors isolated from their congregation could cause even greater harm.

²⁹³ “Introverted Leaders: Seven Tips For Success.”

²⁹⁴ Carucci, “Leading To Green: When Envy and Leadership Join Forces.”

²⁹⁵ Gumpert and Boyd, “The Loneliness of the Small-Business Owner.”

Pastoral isolation may lead to greater harm, but it always prevents the union of preaching and shepherding.

These challenges led participants to recognize that combining preaching with shepherding required the best practices of deliberate pastoral efforts, and this deliberate approach was supported by the literature. The participants used sermon application as a bridge between preaching and shepherding. Lewis put it plainly: “Preaching and shepherding come together in a sermon through pointed application.” Jerry explained that effective sermon application “cannot be worked out in a vacuum” and emphasized that a pastor has to be “with the people.”

Landon described his commitment to praying for his parishioners in specific ways. He added that these prayers often spilled over into his sermon writing. Lewis added that his work in generating small group discussion questions based on his sermon was an important way for him to think through the practicality of his sermon. Grant discussed how his regular, old-fashioned letter writing created a “unique and intimate connection” between him and his congregation and kept them in his mind and heart as he prepared to preach to them. Grant also promoted the importance of truly getting to know people by visiting them in their home and at their jobs. He claimed visiting them in the “routines of their daily lives” was how he came to “understand the needs and struggles” of his people. In the literature, Eugene Peterson describes home visitations as an irreplaceable way to prepare for weekly sermons and a way to listen to the ones who will be listening to the sermon.²⁹⁶ Fred Craddock adds, “At every stage from conception to delivery and beyond,

²⁹⁶ Peterson, *The Pastor: A Memoir*, 86–87.

pastoral functions and relationships enter into the preaching ministry. Study and preparation involve careful listening to the congregation as well as to the text.”²⁹⁷

Grant and Oscar, as pastors of larger churches, emphasized the need to shepherd through preaching in a representative way. Both have implemented a team-based approach to sermon preparation that involves other people in the church and is aimed at the hearts of the particular people in their church. James Kouzes and Barry Posner affirm this vital need for team-based leadership in their book, *The Leadership Challenge*: “To create conditions in which people know they can count on each other, a leader needs to develop cooperative goals and roles, support norms of reciprocity, structure projects to promote joint efforts, and support face-to-face interactions.”²⁹⁸

Although Kouzes and Posner are speaking from a corporate perspective, their collaborative approach can be applied to a pastor’s team-based opportunities. I believe pastors could benefit from this approach to sermon preparation, whether the church is large or small. Working on sermon text and application insights with a team of congregational representatives could provide greater congregational understanding, awareness of sensitivities, and insights into collective struggles, to name a few. Other best practices included active listening, incorporating people’s testimonies, and allowing the disappointments, tragedies, and heartbreaks of pastoral ministry to influence sermon preparation.

²⁹⁷ Craddock, *Preaching*, 39.

²⁹⁸ Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 233.

The Establishment of Time-Honored Trust between a Pastor and a Congregation Is Integral to the Union of Preaching and Shepherding

A key finding from participant data and the literature was the impact of trust that develops during a long-tenured pastorate. Participants and the literature viewed trust as a process and often a lengthy process. Roy Price, who wrote the article, “Building Trust Between Pastor and Congregation,” cited the value of a long-tenured pastorate: “Had I been a short-term pastor, the relationship would never have developed. How unfortunate that just when people and pastor are getting to know each other, he often terminates the romance.”²⁹⁹

Participants affirmed the pastoral and relational value of time-established trust. Also, participants recognized the value of experiencing the church’s spiritual growth over time, as well as the value of a congregation experiencing a pastor’s growth over time. Craig Barnes portrays the value of time when a pastor can get “beyond the constructed identities of smiling faces and freshly pressed dresses that fill the church’s photo directory.”³⁰⁰

Participant data uncovered a connection between time-honored trust and preaching not discovered in the literature analysis. While the literature revealed numerous connections between the establishment of trust and shepherding and overall pastoral leadership, it did not draw a connection between the establishment of trust and preaching. However, participants affirmed that trust was a key component in uniting their preaching roles and shepherding roles. Oscar noted that as a result of established trust, “active

²⁹⁹ Price, “Building Trust Between Pastor and Congregation,” 50.

³⁰⁰ Barnes, *The Pastor as Minor Poet*, 26.

responses to my sermons have increased.” Grant believes that trust is the reason people “leaned in to listen” as he preached and also attributed vulnerability and confession from the pulpit to trust. Landon added that trust moved his sermons beyond a teaching time to a time when his messages would “start taking root.” Jerry also credited time-honored trust with his freedom in “preaching bolder and more sensitive sermons.”

These responses describe the established trust in a congregation as a preaching advantage for the pastor and an advantage for the congregation. Based on participant data, pastors who trusted their congregations, and were trusted by their congregations, could effectively address topics and approach subjects that otherwise could not be addressed, at least not effectively. Also, because it was based on long-term relational and faithful service, established trust corresponded to a pastor who knew the particular concerns and culture of the congregation. Therefore, a trusted pastor’s sermons can more effectively and more freely preach directly to these particular concerns in the context of the congregation’s culture.

It is also worth noting that the literature and participant data’s emphasis on the importance of a pastor’s own spiritual growth was linked with this concept of established trust. Catherine Maclean, in her article titled, “Showing Up: The Essential Practice of Pastoral Care,” argues that pastoral trust takes time and consistency of pastoral faithfulness.³⁰¹ I include spiritual growth in those categories of consistency and pastoral faithfulness. As noted in Chapter Four, some participants spoke of trust between a pastor and a congregation as a gift and work of the Holy Spirit. As pastors shepherded their congregations through their preaching, they invited people to live differently and believe

³⁰¹ MacLean, “Showing Up: The Essential Practice of Pastoral Care,” 23.

differently – all through the power of the Holy Spirit. Trusting that their pastor was doing, and wanting to do, what he was charging others to do, was an integral part of receiving and responding to sermons.

Recommendations for Practice

In light of the findings described above pastors are well advised to: 1. Prioritize preaching as a means of shepherding the flock. 2. Create and implement a strategic approach to unite preaching and shepherding. 3. Commit to a long-term tenure of faithful and relational pastoral ministry.

Prioritize Preaching as a Means of Shepherding the Flock.

Pastors are called to “preach the word.”³⁰² Pastors are also called to “shepherd the flock of God that is among you.”³⁰³ The research has affirmed the practice of preaching as having biblical, historical, and contemporary priority in church. This priority has stood the test of time, it continues to be recognized as a central practice of the church, and it offers pastors an irreplaceable opportunity to communicate grace and truth and to shepherd their congregation. The research did reveal seasons in the history of the church when preaching was de-emphasized in favor of other practices. There are also attempts today to give preaching less priority in favor of other practices. History would tell us, however, that there is no adequate replacement for preaching, and therefore it should remain a central practice of the church and the pastor. To be sure, preaching can be

³⁰² 2 Timothy 4:2

³⁰³ 1 Peter 5:2

wrongly inflated and incorporated, belittling other ministry tasks. When uniting preaching and shepherding, pastors should avoid these scenarios. Rather than prioritizing preaching at the expense of shepherding or vice versa, the priority of preaching should remain as a primary way of shepherding. As one participant said, “It must be united to it.” The pastor as shepherd should define all of the work of the pastor – from visitation to leadership to preaching.

Create and Implement a Strategic Approach to Unite Preaching and Shepherding.

The literature and participant data revealed numerous obstacles to uniting preaching with shepherding. According to the research, these obstacles cannot be overcome without strategic efforts. The participants and the literature affirmed the necessary role that pastoral visitation has in shepherding through preaching. Rather than forsaking pastoral visitation for the sake of study or sermon preparation, pastoral visitation should be maintained, in some form, for the sake of preaching. Also, rather than scheduling it separate from preaching and teaching, relational ministry should remain connected to sermon preparation and sermon material.

It can be easy for pastors to disconnect ministry tasks, thus I was encouraged by how participants connected ministry tasks with sermon preparation. The shepherding work in small group ministries easily combines with preaching ministry, using questions that are sermon-based. As one of the participants acknowledged, the process of writing discussion questions based on his sermon has caused him to be more intentional with sermon application.

Implementing a collaborative approach to sermon preparation and post-sermon feedback is an excellent opportunity to involve more people in the sermon process and to expand a preaching pastor's understanding of the congregation. Pastors could benefit from this approach to sermon preparation, whether the church is large or small. Therefore, this collaboration could take place with a church staff, as was the case for participants who practice this approach, or this collaboration could take place with a group of elders and other church leaders. Working on sermon text and application insights with a team of congregational representatives could provide greater cultural intelligence, individual sensitivities, and collective struggles, to name a few.

Another recommendation may sound simplistic, but I believe it is profound: find ways to love people. Participant responses made me realize that sermons find their way into the hearts of people who have been loved by their pastor. Two participant examples in particular come to mind. First, Landon's example to regularly pray for his people often led to God bringing them to mind as he wrote his sermon. Second, Grant's ministry of writing and mailing letters connected him to those he was preaching to.

Commit to a Long-term Tenure of Faithful and Relational Pastoral Ministry.

This recommendation comes with the understanding that sometimes long-term tenure is not an option for the health of the pastor or the church. However, research has revealed that average pastoral tenure ends prior to the benefits that come with established trust. Based on participant research, many of the best practices could not emerge until trust could be established. I acknowledge that some pastors are able, based on their personality traits and certain circumstances, to establish trust sooner than other pastors. However, research shows that trust is established as experiences and trials are shared over

time. Pastors who depart prior to that are causing their own cycle of establishing trust to start over in a new church, and the same happens at the departed church.

Participants were not able to determine a minimum amount of time that would be considered long-term, but they saw the benefits of established trust emerge between seven to ten years. Therefore, it would be my recommendation to commit to pastoring the same church beyond ten years, for the fruit of established trust to reproduce. These recommended practices and commitments are dependent on one another. Therefore, to be effective in uniting preaching with shepherding, this long-term recommendation must be connected with prioritized preaching and the strategic pastoral efforts above.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused on the exploration of how preaching pastors unite their preaching and shepherding roles through their sermons to the local church. As with any study, there are limitations as to how extensive the research can be. Therefore, pursuit of the following areas of study could be highly valuable.

First, a pursuit of a potential link between established trust and the prevention of pastoral isolation could prove valuable for pastors and congregations. Further research could explore reasons for pastoral isolation. There is much more material and research available for leader isolation from a corporate perspective than there is for pastoral isolation. While there are ways to draw some parallels to the pastoral vocation from corporate leadership studies, further research specific to pastoral leadership and isolation could benefit this issue in pastoral ministry.

Second, further research could explore the dynamics of churches whose primary preaching pastor is separated physically and relationally from the congregation, as in

large multi-campus churches that video stream a pre-recorded sermon or live-streamed from another site.

Third, further study could apply best practices in churches with different emphases and personality types according to Dr. Phil Douglass' book, *What is Your Church's Personality?*

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