Boundaries in Ministry

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Boundaries?
Ministerial Pathology
That Erodes Boundaries
1. What is in your “suitcase”?

Harvard Mastery of Stress Study - College Aged Young Adults

Found that...

- “95% of subjects who used few positive words, and rated their parents low in parental caring had diseases diagnosed in midlife.”

Father/Son Relationship

John Hopkins University:
“...was the closeness of the father-son relationship early in life.”
1. What is in your “suitcase”?

Harvard Mastery of Stress Study - Mother - Daughter/Son

Found that...

“91% of participants who did not perceive themselves to have had a warm relationship with their mothers had serious diagnosed diseases in midlife – including: coronary artery disease, high blood pressure, duodenal ulcers, and alcoholism, as compared to only 45% of those who had perceived themselves to have warm relationships with their mothers.”

Lower Mother & Father Warmth

Found that...

“All, 100% of the participants, who rated both their mothers and fathers low in warmth and closeness 35 years earlier had diseases diagnosed in midlife.”
1. What is in your “suitcase”?

Who’s voice are you ‘hearing’ or ‘responding’ too?
2. Demands on Time & Energy

Study - Prof. Dennis Orthner (University of North Carolina)
Survey of almost 2000 Uniting Methodist pastors. (1)

found:

… “that their (Pastoral) work can be rewarding, but is highly demanding.”

Pastors are expected to fill a variety of roles at once, including administrator, teacher, preacher, counsellor, and fund-raiser.

There are few times when they are not “on call,” and they often must deal with persons who are severely troubled. 2,3

2. Demands on Time & Energy

- “About one in four of the surveyed pastors work more than 60 hrs a week.
- The burnout syndrome has unfortunately become increasingly associated with pastoral work, in part because of time pressures and financial distress.”

To illustrate the demand placed on pastors, researches has found:

- “Pastors are the primary mental health counsellor … frequently the first person to help with a family or marital problems or a personal crisis.” 7.

- “… frequently (as likely as with mental health specialists) to have a person with DSM IV mental health disorder diagnosis come to them for help – severe mental illness, including schizophrenia and bi-polar disorder.” 8

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3. Pastoral Morale & Occupational Stress

**Morale and job satisfaction**
- important factors determining how individuals perform their jobs and commit themselves to their work.

Study - 250 religious professionals - equal numbers of Protestant ministers, and Roman Catholic priests (9) found:

“… Protestant clergy had the highest overall work-related stress and were next to the lowest in personal resources to cope with the occupational strain.”

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3. Pastoral Morale & Occupational Stress

- “... sole pastors, frequently felt isolated and had few friends or colleagues to whom to turn for help.”

- “… Many Protestant clergy expressed concern about their inability to set time limits, show their vulnerability, or express appropriate anger with parishioners.” 10

3. Pastoral Morale & Occupational Stress

Study - 1362 Presbyterian Clergy (11)

Research found:
Pastors reported more negative interaction, taking the form of criticism and demands, than laity.

These experiences had an injurious effect on the ministers, lowering psychological well-being in spite of some positive social support within the church.

3. Pastoral Morale & Occupational Stress

Sources of stress and coping strategies

Study - Dewe used in-depth interviews of 38 clergy in the protestant churches - New Zealand

found... amongst 59 possible stressors, the top 3 listed were:

- Congregational conflict and church conservatism
- Difficulty involving parish commitment, and
- The emotional and time demands of crisis counselling

3. Pastoral Morale & Occupational Stress

Predictors of job satisfaction in spite of the pressure and job stress were:

- A sense of accomplishment
- A feeling that they were fulfilling their “calling,”
- The importance they place to their pastoral role, and
- The support they received from their congregations.

3. Pastoral Morale & Occupational Stress

Study - Warner & Carter (14)

- Found that …”1 in 6 clergy who showed signs of serious distress also had high levels of isolation, loneliness, fear, abandonment, anger, and boredom.”

Pastors without a strong sense of well-being and personal adjustment will have a hard time guiding others in their spiritual development. (15)

4. Marital Adjustment and Family Stress for Pastors

Clergy and their families are:

• In highly visible positions
• often expected to meet numerous and sometimes unrealistic expectations of their congregations.
• Tension, fatigue, and the pressure of excessive time demands can drain resources necessary for dealing with the normal responsibilities of family life.

Study -189 Presbyterian Ministers, their wives and laity. (16)

Found that Ministers and their spouses experienced

• greater loneliness,
• more emotional exhaustion, and
• lower marital adjustment than their lay counterparts.

4. Marital Adjustment and Family Stress for Pastors

Divorce

• Almost 1 in 3 pastors leaving ordained ministry had family difficulties. (17)
• Clergy rank 3rd in percentage among professionals who are divorced. (18)

Two main work-related contributing factors impacting ministers and their wives:

i. The lack of available social support, and

ii. Intrusion on family life

These two factors also related to lower parental, marital, and life satisfaction for clergy. (19)

19. Morris and Blanton, op. cit.
When wives were asked what services the denomination could provide that would be of great benefit, they most frequently indicated counselling/therapy and family adjustment services. (20)
4. Marital Adjustment and Family Stress for Pastors

Pastors reported working averages of 64 – 70 hrs per week.

Study - 75 ministers & wives (Uniting Church – Queensland) (21)

Using the “Marriage Adjustment Test,” researchers found the following:

- 35 % indicated a high marital adjustment,
- 47 % moderate adjustment
- 19 % low adjustment

- **Low adjustment couples** - lacked private time together, personal autonomy, and clarity about congregational expectations of the wives.

- **Unhappy pastors** - tended to work the longest hours and were unlikely to keep a day aside for relaxation and family involvement.

5. Pastoral - Impairment (Sexual Misconduct)

Factors contributing to sexual misconduct with adult members of the church
Study - Southern Baptist senior pastors (22)

They found that:

• High levels of stress and sexual misconduct were strongly associated.

• Ministers with chronic stress from several sources were at greatest risk of misconduct.

• A Minister in the midst of personal crisis (e.g. painful marriage, or other emotional difficulty) are particularly vulnerable, especially if they are unable to reach out for needed counselling.

Six Boundary Principles for Pastoral Ministry

1. Your first Covenant Relationship - with God

2. Crisis demands attention - illness, deaths, births, weddings, traumas

3. Scheduling, in a Battle Zone - self, spouse, children

4. Beware - Counselling drains - Supervision
   - Keep a list of true Christian Therapists

5. Sexual Boundaries
Sexual Boundaries

"Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well." Proverbs 5:15 NKJV
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5. Sexual Boundaries
   - Marital adjustment counselling

6. Good Boundaries - Your Church can assist