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Pastoral Shame-Lifting

By
Travis J. Marshall

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

Saint Louis, Missouri

2018

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Graduation Date May 18, 2018

Dr. Dan Zink, Faculty Advisor _____

Dr. Mark Pfuetze, Second Reader _____

Dr. Philip D. Douglass, Director of DMin Program _____

Abstract

Shame is a white flag. Embedded into human nature, shame waves in the wind of the heart's convincing surrender "there's something wrong with me." Shame contaminates the health and wholeness of all systems and relationships the shamed participates in. The showcase of shame has been around since the beginning, and it has no need to adjust its winning strategies. Shame has no prejudices or preferences. It insinuates its way into the essence of rich and poor, majority and minority, failures and successes—it targets anyone and everyone. As a result, no one can escape shame's reach—including the pastor.

Human flourishing demands relationship. Shame is born out of relationships and is also healed in relationships. Faith communities are places of relationship, the assurance of shame playing out in our churches are certain. All too often the church becomes a place where shame establishes its roots and grows without detection. Effortlessly pastors will default to isolation due to their fear of being fully known.

Knowing that a pastor will inevitably experience shame, what practices must come into regular church life process for shame resilience, both personally and pastorally, to become the norm? Hidden shame experiences and even more shame triggers lurk in pastoral offices everywhere, and so how can pastors become aware of their shame and experience the process of healing? These questions and more will be explored through the areas of vulnerability, empathy and the sacrament of the Eucharist so that pastors may experience shame-lifting and the process of healing from the shame they experience, both themselves personally and in their church communities.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my wife, Kim, who for 20 years has been my best friend, traveling sojourner, partner in ministry, and my constant source of encouragement. Without her, I could not have had the courage to select this topic, do the research, and wrestle with the findings. She knows me better than anyone and yet continues to pursue me while we share the hope that all things are being made new.

I would like to thank my three daughters, Mackenna, Kate and Bailey. They have been gifts of God's grace to me. Their love, patience, support, and persistent reminders of what faith looks like have been life to my soul. I thank God for them and believe that I could not be the man God has called me to be without them.

I would like to thank Dr. Dan Zink, Associate Professor of Applied Theology and Counseling at Covenant Seminary. His care, patience, wisdom, and insightful counsel has redirected me to gospel health and wholeness while launching me into the second half of life. I would like to thank Dr. Mark Pfuetze for his generous guidance as my second reader.

I would like to thank the seven pastors whose stories and experiences proved so helpful in conducting this research. Their commitments to Christ, to their churches, and to the communities in which they serve are an example and an inspiration. They are true heroes.

Finally, I would like to thank my Father God for welcoming me to himself and inviting me to his mission. It is humbling to be entrusted to lead my family and church out of weakness. I thank the Lord that his ways cannot be deterred and that I can be his witness.

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture citations are taken from *Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Bibles, 2001.

Chapter One

Introduction

Shame is a white flag. Embedded into human nature, shame waves in the wind of the heart's convincing surrender "there's something wrong with me." In the book *Shame Interrupted*, Ed Welch writes, "People are dying from it—some quickly, others slowly. It is the heart disease of this and every era."[1] Shame is an assassin.

Shame's showcase has been around since the beginning and it has no need to adjust its winning strategies. "Shame has no prejudices or preferences. It insinuates its way into the essence of rich and poor, majority and minority, failures and successes—it targets anyone and everyone."[2] If this is true, then no one can escape the reach of this silent assassin—including the pastor.

Understanding Shame

How can pastors recognize the target on their heart called shame -- what it is, how it got there, and why it's causing such havoc? Dr. Richard Winter differentiates guilt from shame saying, "If guilt is about what we have done, shame is about who we are."[3] Patricia DeYoung uses a more academic definition writing, "Shame is an experience of

[1] Edward T. Welch, *Shame Interrupted: How God Lifts the Pain of Worthlessness and Rejection* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2012), 1.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Richard Winter, *When Life Goes Dark: Finding Hope in the Midst of Depression* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012), 182.

one's felt sense of self disintegrating in relationship to a dysregulating other."[4] Researcher and author Brené Brown defines shame as, "the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging."[5] These definitions confirm the human heart feels.

Brown has recently focused attention on the qualities of what she calls *Shame Resilience*. She has harnessed over a decade of shame and vulnerability research in a series of books written for everyone. In one of those books, *Daring Greatly*, Brown says, "shame derives its power from being unspeakable. That's why it loves perfectionists—it's so easy to keep us quiet. If we speak to it, we've basically cut it off at the knees. Shame hates having words wrapped around it. If we speak shame, it begins to wither."[6] As easy and obvious the remedy may appear shame's chorus is loud and convincing in the inner world of the self-declared unlovable.

If this is true for any son of Adam or daughter of Eve, the implications are magnified for a pastor who is expected to be the archetypal example of holiness. No wonder that pastors retreat to silence as their only viable survival path. A pastor will think, "If I don't have it all together and I'm the pastor, how can I lead?" In her book *Understand and Treating Chronic Shame,* DeYoung identifies how shame causes one to hide, "To save ourselves, we push shame away as fast as we can, covering it with more tolerable states of being. These states of being are what we come to know of shame, both

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[4] Patricia A. DeYoung, *Understanding and Treating Chronic Shame: A Relational/Neurobiological Approach* (New York: Routledge, 2015), xiii.

[5] Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2016), 67.

[6] Ibid.

in ourselves and others."[7] DeYoung continues by saying despite its many disguises, shame can be understood as a unique, specific kind of interpersonal experience.[8] Shame so deeply longs for significance and belonging that anything that makes people feel insignificant or rejected will trigger it.[9] When shame is activated, it often drives anxiety, indifference, depression, anger, and perfectionism.

In the book, *Resilient Ministry*, Bob Burns, Tasha Chapman, and Donald Guthrie report their findings from seven years of pastor peer group research. One participant summarized the pastoral experience by saying, "The relentless nature of ministry means that fatigue is a constant companion of leaders in the church. While lay people joke about ministers only working on Sunday's, the truth lies on the other side of the continuum. A pastor's work is overwhelming because it wears upon the body and soul."[10] That constant wear fragments the soul and leads a minister to places of isolation. Alone, a pastor conceals their true self out of fear, which leads to the assembly line self-protection and self-projection. Zach Eswine writes that pastors have two basic fears, (1) people will leave (the church); (2) they will be judged as failures.[11] Both of these fears fall into what Brown calls "a failure to live up to an ideal or goal that has been imposed by others or one's self. This causes isolation that fosters a malicious cycle of believing that I'm not

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[7] DeYoung, xii.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Winter, 183.

[10] Bob Burns, Tasha Chapman, and Donald Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 16.

[11] Zack Eswine, *The Imperfect Pastor: Discovering Joy in Our Limitations Through a Daily Apprenticeship with Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 67.

enough and I don't belong."[12] When a pastor is motivated by fear the ministry is immobilized.

Relationship: The Origin of Shame

Human flourishing demands relationship. Since people are multidimensional beings, it's paramount to understand that the cause, symptoms, and treatments of shame cannot begin to be addressed independently from the interconnectedness of the body, heart, soul, and mind in relationships with others. Curt Thompson in his book *The Soul of Shame,* emphasizes this truth when he says, "Shame is not something we 'fix' in the privacy of our mental processes."[13] He presses the point that shame has a tendency to disrupt the regulating flow of energy and information. This disruption effectively disconnects various functions of the mind from one another, leaving each domain of the mind as cut off from the other and disconnected from other people.[14] Daniel Green and Mel Lawrenz suggest that shame is an alarm to the state of disconnection and functions to protect from the consequences of disconnection from one another.[15] Shame hustles the afflicted ones into hiding, while convincing them that it's all their fault.

At first glance, one might think that shame is caused by an *intra*personal experience, however it is the exact opposite. Shame is born out of an *inter*personal

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[12] Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 68-69.

[13] Curt Thompson, *The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 17.

[14] Ibid., 39.

[15] Daniel Green and Mel Lawrenz, *Encountering Shame and Guilt: Resources for Strategic Pastoral Counseling* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 48.

experience gone wrong.[16] Brown reinforces this psychodynamic when she says, "shame is a social concept—it happens between people—it also heals best between people."[17] When pastors feel shame their natural response is to retreat to protect themselves and the idealism others have about their pastors. Conversely, when pastors identify and face their shame by leaning into a safe relationship, a counter experience leverages against their suffering and isolation.[18] Thompson furthers this paradoxical shame-lifter, writing, "Shame's healing encompasses the counterintuitive act of turning toward what we are most terrified of. We fear the shame that we will feel when we speak of that very shame. In some circumstances we anticipate this vulnerable exposure to be so great that it will be almost life threatening."[19] It is in this courageous movement toward another that pastors will experience what is means to be free from shame's tactics and maladies.

In his book, *The Healing Path*, Dan Allender writes that, "Shame is the silent killer of intimacy. Like carbon monoxide, it is usually undetectable and deadly."[20] Because shame isolates, most make the inner world off-limits to all, even the closest relationships. Shame is a mask that keeps relationships in place but leaves the heart alone. Shame impedes anyone from entering to offer the light of love.[21] Shame's consequences on a pastor and the congregation are antithetical to the central purpose and mission of Christ's Church as demonstrated by Jesus' earthly ministry.

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[16] Gershen Kaufman, *The Psychology of Shame: Theory and Treatment of Shame-Based Syndromes* (New York: Springer, 1996), 64-67.

[17] Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 75.

[18] DeYoung, 162-163.

[19] Thompson, 35.

[20] Dan B. Allender, *The Healing Path* (Colorado Springs, Co: WaterBrook Press, 1999), 105.

[21] Ibid.

Since shame is born out of relationships and churches are places of relationship, the assurance of shame playing out in churches is certain. All too often the church becomes a place where shame establishes its roots and grows without detection. This is not true just of a congregation, but also the pastor. Counseling expert Paul Tripp, in his book *Dangerous Calling,* writes, "The pastor will tend to live in a continual state of spiritual hiding with a growing separation between his private and public life and will make confessions to his fellow leaders and perhaps to the wider body only when struggles have progressed to a point where they cannot be hidden any more."[22] It is understandable that pastoral shame often is categorized as taboo and a sign of weakness. Tangey and Deary, in their groundbreaking study on shame, consistently observed that people avoid identifying and speaking of shame, they continue in their study to label this trend as shame-phobia.[23] It would be anomalous for congregants to admit their shame to other people, much less the pastor.

Pastor's Experience of Shame

As a result of this nature (or culture), churches often confuse perfectionism with holiness and then project their pious expectations upon the pastor. This builds the pastor up falsely and causes the reaction of the pastor to project in return a false identity to appease the unrealistic performance. Writing to pastors, Tripp distinguishes shame as a false identity, saying, "The false identity that many of us have assigned to ourselves

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[22] Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 94.

[23] June Price Tangney and Ronda L. Dearing, *Shame and Guilt* (New York: Guilford Press, 2004), 11.

[then] structures how we see and respond to others."[24] When a pastor lives under a false identity the culture of the church has a way of following suit.

Shame is played out in the isolated graveyard of human memory. Allender writes, "Though memory was meant to provide us a map to move into the future, it instead haunts many people as they look into the terrifying unknown."[25] Holocaust survivor and writer Elie Wiesel warns of the inhumane danger of the memory and its hope found in safe relationships:

> It's inhuman to wall yourself up in pain and memories as if in prison. Suffering must open us to others. It must not cause us to reject them. The Talmud tells us that God suffers with man. Why? In order to strengthen the bonds between creation and Creator; God chooses to suffer in order to better understand man and be better understood by him. But you, you insist upon suffering alone. Such suffering shrinks you, diminishes you.[26]

Shame travels with fear. Brown writes, "There may be no more powerful relationship than the one that exists between fear and shame."[27] Much of what is done in the pulpit and in the pastor's study can be motivated by fear. The fears of expectations lead to a perfectionism that generates a fertile field for fear to grow within the pastor.[28] As fears flourish so does the pastor's inclination to secure the pastoral shield of being known. Thompson says this well:

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[24] Tangney and Dearing, 23.

[25] Allender, *The Healing Path*, 61.

[26] Elie Wiesel, *The Gates of the Forest* (New York: Avon, 1974), 180.

[27] Brené Brown, *I Thought It Was Just Me: But It Isn't: Telling the Truth About Perfectionism, Inadequacy, and Power* (New York: Gotham, 2008), 173.

[28] Eileen Schmitz, *Staying in Bounds: Straight Talk on Boundaries for Effective Ministry* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2010), 128-131.

> When we experience shame, we tend to turn away from others because the prospect of being seen or known by another carries the anticipation of shame being intensified or reactivated. However, the very act of turning away, while temporarily protecting and relieving us from our feeling (and the gaze of the 'other'), ironically simultaneously reinforces the very shame we are attempting to avoid. Notably, we do not necessarily realize this to be happening—we're just trying to survive the moment. But indeed this dance between hiding and feeling shame itself becomes a tightening of the noose. We feel shame, and then feel shame for feeling shame. It begets itself. [29]

Effortlessly pastors will default to isolation due to their fear of being fully known. Fear retreats in the presence of love[30] and sadly; the church often lacks this pattern of gospel health.[31] Paul Tournier says, "Church proclaims the grace of God. And moralism, which is the negation of it, always creeps [back] into its bosom… Grace becomes conditional. Judgment appears… I see every day its ravages in… all the Christian Churches."[32] Tripp articulates this struggle when writing, "They (churches) expect that he (the pastor) will be able to joyfully carry an unrealistic job description that would overwhelm anyone this side of Jesus's return. They just don't expect that in a meeting or in the pulpit, fear of man will keep him from doing or saying the things that God is calling him to do and say."[33] The pastor's best ministry is motivated by love and not fear.

An example of this injurious atmosphere is the area of pastoral perfection. Perfectionism is a belief that if one does things perfectly while appearing flawless doing it, the pain of blame can be avoided at best and minimized at least. Brown includes

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[29] Thompson, 31.

[30] 1 John 4:18.

[31] John 13:35.

[32] Lewis B. Smedes, *Shame and Grace: Healing the Shame We Don't Deserve* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 77.

[33] Tripp, 93.

perfectionism in what she calls the "vulnerability armory." She states, "Perfectionism is a twenty-ton shield that we lug around, thinking it will protect us, when in fact it's the thing that's really preventing us from being seen."[34] The ecclesial environment proves to be fertile for pastoral perfection since its instinctive nature is to reward production, appearance, rule keeping, and perfectionism. Its culture is often to appear, at all costs, competent. With this caveat in mind Christians ought not to be alarmed why pastors are traveling the isolated path forged by shame.[35]

Problem Statement

Shame spoils the shepherds' care for their flock. When the pastor's heart is overcome with the weight of shame's influence the pastor is only a mere shadow of gospel wholeness. However, not only does the pastor suffer, but also the family, community and congregation. Shame obstructs gospel fullness by flying in the face of grace, love, hope and the renewal of all things.[36] Pastors all too often give, give, give and never receive. This neglect leaves the pastor fragmented by the fear and isolation that shame brings. Brown writes, "Until we can receive with an open heart, we will never be able to give with an open heart. When we attach judgment to receiving help, we knowingly or unknowingly attach judgment to giving help."[37] Giving is deeply impacted by the health and wholeness of the giver. Givers can only give what they have received.

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[34] Brown, *Daring Greatly,* 128-129.

[35] Tripp, 92-94.

[36] 1 Corinthians 13:13; Isaiah 43:18, 65:17; Revelation 21:5; Ephesians 2:15, 4:24; Hebrews 8:13.

[37] Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are* (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 2010), 20.

This may be why Jesus trusted and aligned himself so much with his Father, building that connection in time and space. [38]

Shame is the antithesis of one's true self in Christ. Jesus knew vulnerability, therefore his life and work is now the Christian's testimony that God does indeed know exactly what it is like to be human. "To be with us Jesus—Immanuel—not only knows what it means to be vulnerable, he knows how painfully, frighteningly hard it is to live into it, given shame's threat."[39] The Garden of Eden displays this perfectly, as the created and Creator were uninhibited in complete relational openness (Gen. 2:25). Welch calls this, "to be known without feeling exposed."[40] However, shame entered the story, and the story has forever changed the relationships of self, others and God.

As a tool of God's renewal and the continued ministry of Jesus Christ, the church has been commissioned to be a people of acceptance, love, grace, safety, and vulnerability. It would be nearly impossible to find a Christian church that wouldn't endorse these expressions of virtue; however, much of the church culture speaks the clear but often implicit message to hide behind mere projections of these virtues.

Being set apart as the local church's leaders, pastors often hide their true selves in fear of not being enough. No one wants to believe that pastors are in such desperate need of the Cross.[41] Spelled out, the church is sending this implicit, but powerful message, "If you're not put-together and delivered from whatever is spoiling your sanctification, then

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[38] John 4:34, 5:17, 5:36-38, 6:38, 8:29, 9:4.

[39] Thompson, 128-129.

[40] Welch, 42.

[41] Dan B. Allender, *Leading with a Limp: Take Full Advantage of Your Most Powerful Weakness* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2008), 110-111.

there is more inward and hidden cleanup work to be done before you will be fully accepted and embraced." The problem with this encrypted message is that it leads people to hide in their experience of shame, pastors included.

When people hide, relationships can't flourish, and the church will be unable to embody the incarnational gospel. Shame is the result of broken relationship(s) and will only be healed in healthy ones.[42]

Shame is silencing. Everything that looks, sounds, smells or feels like shame instinctively alerts a person's protection mode. This pulling back isolates and keeps relationships at a distance, which only deepens one's shame. Brené Brown uncovers the fuel of shame when she says, "shame derives its power from being unspeakable, it's so easy to keep a shame filled person quiet."[43] She goes on to say that shame hates having words wrapped around it. If we speak of shame, it begins to wither in just the way exposure to light is deadly for shame's story.[44]

Ministerial burnout discloses that regardless of grave warnings pastors are doing life alone. The broken nature of humanity defaults to seclusion. Shame is the source of that unhealthy isolation.[45] For the pastor, their susceptibility to insulate from being known imparts a variety of hurts, habits and hang-ups. Accepting this understanding of the nature and impact of shame within the context of church culture opens the possibilities for relational and personal healing. To deal shame a blow requires being part of a loving community. Thompson writes to the impact of shame beyond the pastor,

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[42] DeYoung, xiii.

[43] Brown, *Daring Greatly,* 67.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Jill L. McNish, *Transforming Shame: A Pastoral Response* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 185.

"Shame is not something that infests only individuals. It is endemic in systems, and any system run by it will seek to maintain its equilibrium."[46] Christ's Church is called to embrace people's frailties in the light of the gospel of grace. This gives witness to the mission of God to renew and reconcile all things. Within that framework, the church must be a place and people of gentleness, patience and care. It is when these attributes are authentically embodied that brokenness can be set free to the light.[47]

Furthermore, what happens if that person is the pastor, the exemplar of the faith community is expected to be the savior himself? Stephen Pattison speaks to this in his book *Shame: Theory, Therapy, Theology*: "Clergy are idealized and expected to be moral exemplars for their denominations."[48] When shame convincingly speaks worthlessness, what is the pastor to do? For many pastors, there is no other way than to seek the refuge of isolation. Since this route seems to be the only viable option, many pastors travel this lonely road only to discover that shame grows in fear and isolation. Pastors are dying in this fear and isolation.[49] Seasoned pastor, biblical scholar, and author Eugene Peterson speaks boldly to the pastor saying, "…like their congregations, pastors must find healthy community participation to insure a human environment. The threat of dehumanization to which all pain exposes us—of being reduced to the level of 'the beasts that perish'—is countered by the presence of other persons whose humanity is unmistakable. The person who, through stubbornness or piety, insists on grieving privately not only depersonalizes

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[46] Thompson, 145-146.

[47] Brown, *I Thought It Was Just Me But It Isn't,* 205-209.

[48] Stephen Pattison, *Shame: Theory, Therapy, Theology* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 269.

[49] Barbara G. Gilbert, *Who Ministers to Ministers? A Study of Support Systems for Clergy and Spouses* (Washington: Alban Institute, 1987), 30.

himself or herself but robs the community of participation in what necessarily expands its distinctiveness as a human community as over against the mob."[50] So the pressing issue isn't how to preserve pastors from isolation, rather it is to explore how pastors identify their shame and experience the process of healing.

While being pastors and leaders of churches, they must lead the congregation to subscribe to the reality that they are human. Shame is intermixed into everyone's human condition. Shame dwells deep within everyone; it's part of being human. It is why hiding and covering are universal instincts.[51]

Most pastors will agree, to some degree, that the pastorate can be a barren land. This isolation doesn't appear overnight, but cultivates over time and often with long hours, stress and personal pious projecting. Concerning the workload pastors bear; Jackson Carroll's lifetime of study on American clergy shines some light on the demands a pastor faces. Carroll identifies four core tasks of pastors: leading worship, preaching, teaching, and providing oversight. He further explains that pastors rarely handle these tasks as distinct activities. When referring to this study, Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie metaphorically describe pastoring as a balancing act as a one-legged stool.[52] "Researchers Gary Kuhne and Joe Donaldson conclude that pastoral work requires a great variety of complex skills and talents. They describe pastors' activities as "taxing, fast paced, and unrelenting, often characterized by doing two or more tasks at the same time."[53] Carroll

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[50] Eugene H. Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work* (Leominster, England: Gracewing, 1996), 143.

[51] Welch, 17.

[52] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 14.

[53] Ibid.

compared various professional workloads and found that pastors averaged more hours per week than other managers and professionals. He also found that the larger the congregation the more the pastor worked.[54] An unbalanced workload leads to stress, which expresses itself in emotions, such as fear, anger, or withdrawal (to name a few).[55] These emotions can trigger shame and therefore activate the cyclical nature of shame.[56]

With this in mind, congregations continue to place unrealistic expectations on their pastors. Ministry leaders collapse under the overwhelming pressures to ignore their own needs motivated by busyness, people-pleasing, the tyranny of the urgent, and their own lack of priority on personal growth.[57] Pastors have imposed busyness on themselves and have also allowed their congregational expectations to do the same. Eugene Peterson speaks to this when he says, "busy is not a symptom for commitment but of betrayal. It is not devotion but defection. The adjective 'busy' set as a modifier to pastor should sound to our ears like adulterous, to characterize a wife, or embezzling, to describe a banker. It is an outrageous scandal, a blasphemous affront."[58] The pastoral vocation is unique in that these scandalous and blasphemous affronts of busyness are so easily clothed in the accolades and applauds of the congregational consumerist culture.

Knowing a pastor will inevitably experience shame, what practices must come into play for shame resilience both personally and pastorally? Knowing there are untold

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[54] Ibid., 14-15.

[55] Michael Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffmann, *Preventing Ministry Failure: A ShepherdCare Guide for Pastors, Ministers and Other Caregivers* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007), 176-178.

[56] DeYoung, 167-168.

[57] Wilson and Hoffmann, 34.

[58] Eugene H. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 17.

shame experiences in the pastorate and even more shame triggers, how then can pastors become aware of their shame and experience the process of healing?

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how pastors experience the process of healing from shame. In order to understand the process of healing, the following research questions were used:

1. How do pastors become aware of their need to heal from shame?
2. How do pastors experience healing from shame?
    a. In what ways does the pastors' growing awareness of shame further healing from shame?
    b. In what ways and to what extent do relationships further healing from shame?
3. How do pastors deal with ongoing shame triggers after having experienced significant healing from shame in the past?

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is to offer encouragement and guidance to pastors in the darkness of shame by offering the hope that they will come through the process of shame lifting as experienced by other clergy. The researcher found virtually no prior research or literature on, specifically, how pastors can process healing of their own shame. Paradoxically, much has been written about how a pastor can care for others drowning in shame. This may be a profound portal for further research into the ecclesial culture of the ministry and the practices (or lack there of) of pastoral wholeness and self-care. This study will not only help the pastor, but will offer awareness and

encouragement to bishops, denominational overseers, congregations, elder committees, and board members on shame and its injurious authority and greater consequences on their pastor and ministry.

General shame research suggests that the eradication of shame is not probable as long as humanity remains emotional and relational beings; however, the experience of healing as an on-going process is.[59] Within the qualitative interviews, participating pastors will be asked to explore the personal and relational impact that shame can have on them personally, in their marriage, family, and ministry—along with the healing qualities that come with awareness and shame-lifting experiences. This study will seek to understand what practices pastors must observe as they go about the process of healing from shame in context of an imperfect self, congregation and world.

Definition of Key Terms

Shame: A deeply rooted belief of one's defective self. Shame is formed through dysregulated relational experiences. Shame is an emotion that distorts one's worth and worthiness of love and acceptance. Shame is the sense *that "I am wrong*."

Guilt: The sense that one has behaved or acted in a way that is unacceptable. Both outer and inner domains on one's self can inflict the guilt in a person's experience. Guilt is the sense that "I *did something wrong*."

[59] DeYoung, xv-xvi, 162.

Shame lifting: A fully embodied experience(s) of inner courage and renewal. A narrative reversal from previous damaging (implicit or explicit) messages that has the shamed convinced they are unworthy and unwelcome.

Empathy: The emotional posture of one who understands and can comprehend the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of another.

Vulnerability: Vulnerability is an emotion felt when one is facing uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure.[60]

Affect: Affect is an emotional experience that is rudimentarily positioned in the human brain. These neural mechanisms manifest as affect influences to the entire human sensory experience.[61]

Relational Regulation or Dysregulation: When either party in a relationship responds (reacts) in one of two ways—(1) dismissive, rejecting, insensitive, or erratic *or,* (2) accepting, believing, safe and reliable.

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[60] Basis of definition formed by Brené Brown's definition in her book *Daring Greatly*, 34.

[61] Seth Duncan and Lisa Feldman Barrett, "Affect Is a Form of Cognition: A Neurobiological Analysis," *Cognition & Emotion* 21, no. 6 (2007): 1184-211. doi:10.1080/02699930701437931.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to explore how pastors experience the process of healing from shame caused by unrealistic expectations of their congregation. Some of the literature, which speaks to the knowledge about how pastors identify shame while fostering their own personal and pastoral dialogue tendencies, has been referenced in chapter one.

In this chapter, the researcher will provide a limited survey of existing literature that speaks into the process of healing shame. After embarking on the literature survey, the researcher was exceedingly limited to the specific study of shame's impact on the pastor and the best practices to heal from shame. The limited literature on this topic validated the researcher's commission for this project and the belief that the findings will be helpful to pastors, their marriages, families, general relationships, and their churches. The literature areas are organized into the following three categories: 1) The Last Supper as told by the Gospel of Luke (Luke 22:14-38), 2) Healing qualities of vulnerability, and 3) Worthiness fostered in receiving empathy.

Biblical Theological Framework

The Lord's Supper (Luke 22:14-38)

When considering the impact of pastoral shame and the process of healing, one must not neglect the revelatory power of biblical truth demonstrated in symbols. The

church regards two of these symbols as sacred, they enlarge the imaginations and are reminders of the sacred path traveled by Christians throughout centuries. This journey continually points the travelers toward the unfolding renewal of New Creation.[62] These symbols are called sacraments: baptism and communion. Within this section of the literature review, the focus will be on communion, also known and referred to in Christian tradition as The Eucharist or The Lord's Supper.

Since the beginning, societies by default have developed ways of saying things by doing things.[63] The meaning behind a handshake or a slight nod to a passerby while strolling down the sidewalk is a common example. These, along with an innumerable array of other examples are symbolic expressions that carry meaning beyond their rudimentary gesture. All cultures possess symbols that often can be distinctions of status, power, and control.[64] Symbols carry a vast variety of meaning from culture to culture. However, one symbol is held in high regard across all cultural lines—the sharing of a meal.[65] Tradition and cultural historian Louise Fresco, speaks of this when he highlights the importance of sharing a meal:

> The meal is a place of memory where we become aware of who we are and with whom we are. Around the table, all previous meals come together, in an endless succession of memories and associations. The table is the place where the family gathers, the symbol of solidarity. At the table the eater is tamed and opened to otherness. At the table we relive the past, forecast the future and become aware of the present.[66]

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[62] Revelation 21:5; Isaiah 65:17, 43:16-21.

[63] N. T. Wright, *The Meal Jesus Gave Us* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 20020), 4.

[64] Samuel I. Hayakawa, *Symbol, Status, and Personality* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), xii.

[65] Roger E. Axtell, *Gestures The Do's and Taboos of Body Language Around the World* (New York: Wiley, 2001), vi.

[66] Louise O. Fresco and Liz Waters, *Hamburgers in Paradise: The Stories Behind the Food We Eat* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 17.

The sharing of meals draws lines while reinforcing the realities of division.[67] Whether an invite-only dinner club or a family reunion BBQ, the implicit message of inclusion or exclusion is clear. Times were no different in first century Palestine. Evidence of dividing lines abounds in scripture with some of its most convicting examples given by the most veraciously well-intended followers of Jesus.

As often as tables and meals usher in a place of acceptance, identity, and belonging, they can also generate messages that spark emotions of exclusion that lead to shame. Shame embellishes one's experience of inadequacy and bolsters the false message that "I'm not enough." Exclusion nourishes shame. The gospel makes it clear that once there were dividing lines, but in Christ this is no longer so.[68] In light of this good news for the outsider, there is no better symbol of witness than the Lord's Table.[69]

As a primer to the understanding of The Lord's Table one must remember Israel's God, Yahweh as the Great Host in the wilderness. Yahweh supplied manna every day to his people not in return for their faithfulness, but as testimony of his covenantal grace.[70] Later revealed in Jesus as the True Manna, the Bread of Life, God demonstrates the inclusive nature of the covenant of grace to all people.[71] The gospels are full of stories of Jesus either being the dinner host or as a stranger being welcomed, but more often rejected. Frequently, he is depicted as the incarnate of the Great Host who feeds the

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[67] Axtell, 42.

[68] Galatians 3:28.

[69] Gordon T Smith, *A Holy Meal: The Lord's Supper in the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 45-56.

[70] Exodus 16.

[71] John 6:32-35.

hungry crowds from his well of empathy and sustenance. He makes room for prostitutes and little children and cooks breakfast for discouraged disciples.[72] Not only is Jesus the Great Host or a guest—Jesus is also the meal, the nourishment to survive, the source of hope and renewal. The centrality of welcoming all to the table is reinforced and repeatedly re-enacted in the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist. It is there where all have been received into the kingdom and where all are regularly welcomed as his guests to the table of his kingdom.[73]

Throughout the Gospel of Luke, there is significant attention given to food and the sharing of meals.[74] This final supper as recorded in Luke 22:14-38 is part of a series of meals throughout the Lucan narrative. These meals caused controversy as Jesus was using them to question the established and institutional status quo. He lounged at tables with the religious leaders of the day while inviting the unruly, reviled, and marginalized to join him.[75] The Gospel of Luke speaks of a new order of gospel-inclusion in its version of the disciples' final meal. Consistent with Luke's version of the Last Supper, the entire Lucan account seems to be shouting about the shifting winds of the inclusiveness of the coming of the kingdom of God. In a shame culture, Jesus became a shame-lifter through the power of his invitation to those deemed unworthy in the eyes of the powerful and

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[72] Mark 2:15-15, 6:1-6, 10:13-16; Luke 7:36-50, 9:10-17, 14:1-24, 18:15-17, 19:1-10; John 1:10-13, 21:1-14.

[73] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together,* (1949), trans. Daniel W. Bloesch (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 27-29.

[74] Markus Barth, *Rediscovering the Lord's Supper: Communion with Israel, with Christ, and Among the Guests* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 72-73.

[75] Philip Francis Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 72-84.

religious to a table that offered grace to belong.[76]

Numerous stories of Jesus' new way populate the Lucan account. Jesus shared a meal with Levi, the corrupt tax collector and his other guests, also sinners. [77] Jesus' acceptance to sit at the table of Simon the Pharisee demonstrated that his love could not be contained within the limits of conventional religion.[78] He welcomed and even honored the intimacy of a woman who was well known for her scandalous behavior.[79] Her love had drawn her to the table of Jesus' acceptance, kindness, and forgiveness.[80] Again at a Pharisee table, Jesus challenged the religiously rigid to recognize their lack of compassion and justice while callously demanding religious devotion.[81] He used another meal with the pious leaders to heal the shame-filled man with swollen limbs on the Sabbath. In this way, he questioned the way they organized their religious meals and urged them to follow his example as told in the parable of the Great Feast. "When you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed because they cannot repay you."[82] Christine Pohl's *Living in Community, Cultivating Practices that Sustain Us* writes about Jesus' way of inclusion that healed shame through offering empathy while welcoming courageous vulnerability. "Layers of gratitude, hospitality, fidelity, and truthfulness are drawn together in this communion ritual.

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[76] Christine D. Pohl, *Living into Community: Cultivating Practices That Sustain Us* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2012), 161-162.

[77] Luke 5:27.

[78] Luke 7:29.

[79] Luke 7:37.

[80] Luke 7:36-50.

[81] Luke 11:37-54.

[82] Luke 14:1-24.

Sometimes the mystery leaks out in particularly startling or poignant ways, but always it helps us remember and experience again the welcome Jesus offers us all."[83]

For an accurate and consistent understanding of the Lucan narrative, one must understand the challenge that Jesus exposed by sharing meals with "the unworthy" and questioning of the status quo of the Pharisee's religion. Luke brings relevancy to the future generation as he speaks to the *then* of the life of Jesus as a question for the *now* of Christian practice. Commenting on Luke's parable of the Great Feast,[84] John Donahue says, "When Jesus told a parable about eating bread in the kingdom of God, he shattered his hearer's expectations of who would be the proper table companions." [85] Jesus' parabolic language unwaveringly challenges expectations to who is welcome to his table.

A final example of this important Lucan theme is found in Luke 19:1-10. In a story that both looks *back* across the rest of the gospel for its meaning and points *forward* to the final days of Jesus' ministry, Jesus traveled into Jerusalem and caught view of Zacchaeus. Despite the disapproval of the crowd (shaming), Jesus sought him out and publicly announced that he would stay and eat with Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector and thief in the community's mind. Zacchaeus heard this and committed himself to the way of Jesus by promising to give half of his possessions to the poor. Both Christology and discipleship blend in a reciprocal gift of self to the broken ones.[86]

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[83] Pohl, 176.

[84] Luke 14: 16-24.

[85] John R. Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable: Metaphor, Narrative, and Theology in the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1990), 146.

[86] Frances Taylor Gench, *Encounters with Jesus: Studies in the Gospel of John* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 17-138.

Through the accounts of Jesus' inclusive table fellowship, the Gospel of Luke will allow no illusions about the composition of the church of Jesus Christ. Gentiles, prostitutes, tax collectors, sinners, as well as the blind, lame, disfigured, and the poor are welcome at his table and in his covenant.[87] The church is not made up of a group of perfect people, including its pastors and leaders. On the contrary, it is made up of people who have become Christians by accepting the covenantal and sacrificial love of Christ through the witness of the apostles.[88]

The Lucan understanding of the broken ones that gather at the table of the Lord is wider, and perhaps even bolder, than the other two synoptic accounts. No longer is it a question of Gentile and Jew sharing a table founded upon disciples who had failed Jesus. For Luke there are many outsiders to faith such as sinners, prostitutes and tax collectors. There are also the religiously self-righteous such as the Pharisee, who suffer from the sin of conceit. There are disciples who fail Jesus through the weakness of their faith, and there are members of the twelve who deny him (Peter) and who betray him (Judas). Finally, there are the marginalized Gentiles and the physically sick people from the outer parts, who are all welcome at the table of Jesus.

With this broad canvas of broken people who are offered the possibility of a real salvation, which includes shame-lifting through the power of a welcoming community, through sharing meals with Jesus, the apostles will be able to share a powerful witness of repentance and forgiveness to all the nations, without exception.[89] Their own lives as

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[87] Jerome H. Neyrey, *The Passion According to Luke: A Redaction Study of Luke's Soteriology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2007), 10.

[88] Jerome Kodell, *The Eucharist in the New Testament* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 108-112.

[89] Luke 24:47.

followers and apostles of Jesus result from such an experience. They experience the repentance and forgiveness to which they eventually will bear witness.[90] Those who have experienced forgiveness and invitation to the table of the Lord are able to preach and practice such a mission to those who are outsiders.

The ministry of Jesus' presence to the broken and excluded throughout the whole Gospel reaches its high point at the Last Supper in Luke 22. Xavier and O'Connell point out that "This final meal on the feast of Passover crowns the meals, both everyday and festive, which he has taken with his disciples and with sinners during his earthly life."[91] The theme of meals celebrated by Jesus is continued into this dramatic last meal. As the disciples are gathered, the skill of Luke the storyteller can be felt as he incorporates an unexpected twist. His account reads, "the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table."[92] The density and mere brokenness of the apostles in general are shown through the dispute about who would be the greatest and the prediction of Peter's betrayal. The disciples are weak and will fail. They seem moreover, to understand Jesus' missionary instructions. They hear his hints of the trials, imprisonments, persecutions, and death that await that mission and that will indeed take place and be recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Yet, they take his symbol of a sword literally and miss the point. This leads to Jesus' comment to close all such discussion: "It is enough!" T.W. Manson has described this final reaction of Jesus to his failing disciples as "the utterance of a broken heart."[93]

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[90] Esler, 96.

[91] Xavier Léon-Dufour and Matthew J. O'Connell, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread: The Witness of the New Testament* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 233.

[92] Luke 22:21.

[93] T. W. Manson, *The Saying of Jesus* (London, England: SCM, 1964), 341.

Jesus' table includes Judas, his betrayer; Peter, who will deny him; and the squabbling and imperceptive disciples. Jesus eats with people who fail, even at the Last Supper. Although handled with more subtlety than Mark or Matthew, the presence of Jesus with his disciples at the Last Supper is even more markedly a presence with the broken. This theme, highlighted in so many of the meal scenes, is drawn to a fitting conclusion in verses fourteen through thirty-eight. The disciples will be worthy candidates to witness to repentance and the forgiveness of sins to all the nations.[94]

The Gospel of Luke speaks today to pastors today in their shame. It shows that all are welcome to the table. They come as they are and dine with the Savior where they will know fully and be fully known. Darkness will recede and the hiding places that once called out will no longer summon. Luke has given us an account of Jesus' gift of himself unto death so that a new and lasting kingdom with the people who frame the Lucan narrative of the tables and meals. The meal that Jesus shared was not a meal for the worthy ones. It was a meal for those who were closest to Jesus but who were faced with the challenge to believe, love and follow him. It is these people who will be used to establish Christ's Church for the next two thousand years and beyond.

Healing Qualities of Vulnerability

Vulnerability can be a pastor's shame lifter. Research agrees that vulnerability in relationship is the healing agent of shame.[95] Regardless of the research source, the reality is that far too many pastors risk shame by avoiding this curative agent.

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[94] Luke 24:47.

[95] Patricia A. DeYoung, *Understanding and Treating Chronic Shame: A Relational/Neurobiological Approach* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 164-165.

Humanity was made for connection. Brown defines relational connection as "the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship."[96] They feel and discern their desire to know and mutuality be known by others. Within the last fifteen years, neuroscience research has begun to support what humanity has known all along (CITE). In *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships*, Daniel Goleman explores this scientific revelation verifying that humanity is hard-wired for connection. He writes, "Even our most routine encounters act as regulators in the brain, priming our emotions, some desirable, others not. The more strongly connected we are with someone emotionally, the greater the mutual force."[97] Neuroscientist and psychologist Curt Thompson takes it a step further saying that this relational connection is often expressed through empathy and the attunement with self and others' felt needs. Thompson calls this "being known." Humankind is created for ongoing and deep connective experience with their Creator, others and themselves.[98] Thompson laments the irony of the culture's disconnection and proof of its innate need for connection:

> Our Western world has long emphasized knowledge—factual information and "proof"—over the process of being known by God and others. No wonder, then, that despite all our technological advancements and the proliferation of social media, we are more intra- and interpersonally isolated than ever. Yet it is only when we are known that we are positioned to become conduits of love. And it is

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[96] Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are* (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 2010), 19.

[97] Daniel Goleman, *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships* (New York: Bantam Books, 2007), 4-5.

[98] Curt Thompson, *Anatomy of the Soul: Surprising Connections between Neuroscience and Spiritual Practices That Can Transform Your Life and Relationships* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2010), 3-10.

> love that transforms our minds, makes forgiveness possible, and weaves a community of disparate people into the tapestry of God's family.[99]

Therefore, if God's creation is actually created for connection, then isolation, or a state of being emotionally cut-off and disconnected from others, stands opposed to God-given design. In these narratives of disconnection pastors as persons are confronted with their deepest fears, bleakest shame, and most deep pain. Scott Sauls' *From Weakness to Strength: 8 Vulnerabilities That Can Bring Out the Best in Your Leadership,* explains the road that all to often leads to disconnection and isolation for the pastor:

> Studies show that pastors experience anxiety and depression at a rate that is disproportionately high compared to the rest of the population. Because of the unique pressures associated with spiritual warfare, unrealistic expectations from congregants and oneself, the freedom many feel to criticize and gossip about pastors with zero accountability (especially in the digital age), failure to take time off for rest and replenishment, marriage and family tensions as a result of the demands of ministry, financial strain, and self-compassion, pastors are prime candidates for relational isolation, emotional turmoil, and collapse.[100]

This is why relational connection is so important for the health and wholeness of the pastor. To be connected, individuals must risk telling their stories with the consequence of shame being lifted or furthered embedded. Brown writes that, "Shame hates it when we risk vulnerability by telling our story."[101] To have connection with God, others, and self, a person has first to be vulnerable. Most people think of vulnerability as something that happens in an instant of time, such as a reaction to a single criticism, or being fired from a job, speaking in front of an audience, or the surfacing of a past event

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[99] Ibid., 3.

[100] Scott Sauls, *From Weakness to Strength: 8 Vulnerabilities That Can Bring Out the Best in Your Leadership* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook Pub., 2017), 59.

[101] Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection*, 9.

that exploits one's fear. This understanding is not inaccurate, however, it is incomplete. Thompson deepens this understanding of vulnerability when he writes, "vulnerability is not something we choose or that is true in a given moment, while the rest of the time it is not. Rather, it is something we *are*."[102] Since the Fall of mankind, humanity has been avoiding shame's familiar chorus by dancing around the fact that vulnerability presents itself at all times in the human experience. To be human is to be vulnerable.

Vulnerability requires relational connection. Robert Hilliker says, "shame started as a two-person experience, but as I got older I learned how to do shame all by myself."[103] Shame starts in relationship and is lifted in relationship; however, one's default is to hide with the false hope that if others can't see the shame, it doesn't exist. Humanity is hard-wired for connection. Without it life is choked out, first in the heart and mind and eventually throughout the whole being.[104] After years of shame and vulnerability research along with three advanced degrees, Brown boldly sums up her entire research by stating, "connection is why we're here. We are hard-wired to connect with others, it's what gives purpose and meaning to our lives, and without it there is suffering."[105] These conclusions are consistent with psychological and sociological findings. Being connected in safe relationships acutely impacts one's whole being. Pastors should accept the importance of their innate need for relational connection and

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[102] Curt Thompson, *The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 120.

[103] Brown, *Daring Greatly,* 67.

[104] Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection*, 10.

[105] Brown, *Daring Greatly,* 8.

equally attentive to the solemn dangers of their disregard for their tendency toward disconnection.

Therefore, since ministers are human, they must acknowledge the importance of this relational longing and how, if safely explored, vulnerability will lift their shame. How does a pastor begin this journey of shame-lifting vulnerability? First, acknowledgment that this relational longing is a three-fold connection, with God, others, and one's true self.[106] However, this is not a one-way connection, but a dynamic two-way path of the giving and receiving of both parties' true selves. DeYoung says that one's sense of self comes into being through connection with others. Relational connection is complex. DeYoung says that un-attuned and dysregulated connections foster a false self. Pastors, like all people, can be triggered by and or formed from any given interpersonal experience. This experience may in any moment be altered by the here-and-now quality of a particular connection, regulated or dysregulated, with another person.[107]

Tracing back to Creation, humanity's first father and mother experienced this elusive yearning at the very moment it was lost.[108] Imagine having experienced perfect connection with God, others, and self only to have it stripped away to experience the utter brokenness of shame's interruption. Shame is an archetypal human experience.[109] "The very capacity for experiencing shame, the design of shame inscribed in the human soul—

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[106] Thompson, *The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves*, 122.

[107] DeYoung, 170. (Parentheses added.)

[108] Genesis 3:7.

[109] Jill L. McNish, *Transforming Shame: A Pastoral Response* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 128.

this is a *sine qua non* of humanity."[110] From this traumatic severing point forward, the human heart has never ceased to ache for relational connection. In the scriptures Christians read of a God who himself risks a state of vulnerability by graciously seeking out the rebellious race. Just as salve heals a wound, God immediately applies his healing grace to the brokenness in the garden. This healing came in the form of divine vulnerability as the Creator chose to be present with his broken people east of Eden.[111]

Connection is embedded in the growing likeness of Christ, even if it's a faint whisper.[112] When the word "growth" is used, one may first think of an ascent, a going-up, such as a job promotion. However this connectedness that is embedded in the growing likeness of Christ is more often a descent or going down. Ed Welch expounds using the first beatitude as an example of growing in the likeness of Christ, "Shame is felt before other people, but its deepest answer lies in the way we live before God. In this first beatitude our eyes are directed to that primary relationship with God. While nothingness before other people feels like a curse, nothingness before God is something to which we aspire. It is a blessing. It is honorable. It is the way we were created to live."[113] To embrace nothingness is to reach for God's connection and be amazed that he has already reached for his people. As pastors humbly grow in this type of Christ-likeness they will discover an alternative path to relational connection with others in the community, churches, and beyond.

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[110] Eric Heller, "Man Ashamed," *Encounter* 42:2 (February 1974):23-30, in *Shame, Exposure and Privacy*, by Carl D. Schneider (Boston: Beacon Press, 1977), xiii.

[111] Genesis 3:21, 4:1 ("…with the help of the LORD…").

[112] 1 Kings 9:12.

[113] Edward T. Welch, *Shame Interrupted: How God Lifts the Pain of Worthlessness and Rejection* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2012), 143.

Nevertheless, this intrinsic need for relational connection often is sought after in unhealthy and injurious ways in Christ's church and among the people of God. Power and manipulation stir in the hearts of the fallen. As participants in Jesus' redemptive community, one must never withhold relationship as a protest to its messy and unpredictable ways.[114] Whether a congregant or the pastor of the congregation, these wounding relational characteristics must not define connections but in turn, can help pastors grow in areas such as vulnerability, patience, empathy and suffering.[115]

What does this mean for the pastor that tirelessly leads with a false, yet religious projection of self? What happens when pastors genuinely don't sense that they would be accepted if others knew them as a real people?

Research in both religious and secular disciplines has emphasized the basic human longing to *belong*. The findings seem to mimic one another in how important shared community is for each individual. Individuals desire to be known and valued for the persons they are and not for what they may become.[116] Early in the twentieth-first century, an extensive *Pulpit & Pew* study, conducted on why clergy leave local church ministry, disclosed that over seventy-five percent of the pastors surveyed attributed their burnout leading to local church ministry departure to aloneness and isolation.[117]

Western culture praises personal freedom, autonomy, and self-fulfillment as the highest good, however, that esteem leaves a wake of lonely and emotionally fragile

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[114] Pohl, 8.

[115] Welch, 47-48.

[116] Dan B. Allender, *The Healing Path* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 1999), 105.

[117] Dean R. Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wenger, *Pastors in Transition: Why Clergy Leave Local Church Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2005), 117.

people.[118] The church is not exempt from this cultural influence. When critiquing anthropological patterns through the lens of the biblical narrative, it becomes overwhelming clear that people don't really know themselves until they see themselves in somebody else's eyes.[119] Herein lies the human dilemma—risk exposure by being vulnerable or play it safe in hiding and suffer. To be vulnerable is to recognize that people are at the mercy of those whose intentions they cannot guarantee, and who can leave them alone.[120] The process of healing from shame appeals to pushing against the emotional quarantine default.

The church is not unlike any other organization in that culture is formed inherently. Without awareness and adept attention, culture can often adopt and foster unhealthy relational systems. These cultural systems begin with the church's leadership and primarily with its pastor. Daniel Pinnow provides insight into this reality stating that, "leadership is deeply invested in the culture of the organization."[121] Like many things in this broken world, culture contains a dualism of light and dark. Opportunity stands at the door of a church as personified by its leadership to lean into the countercultural gospel through being vulnerable. Zach Eswine, a local pastor, professor and author reflects on how fostering anger through defensiveness only exaggerates one's faults in the eyes of others and has no power to heal a person, relationship, or community. Eswine recalls the gentle, however truthful words of a friend that pierced his own angry heart by saying,

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[118] Pohl, 3.

[119] Curt Thompson, "Spirituality, Neuroplasticity, and Personal Growth," (video), Open Biola, posted March 7, 2013, accessed July 25, 2017, https://youtu.be/dBBsNoC1D50 33:44.

[120] Thompson, *The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves,* 121.

[121] Daniel F. Pinnow, *Leadership - What Really Matters* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2011), 112.

"Anger doesn't bring about the kingdom of God." [122] Eswine realized that he was not meant to repent because he couldn't fix everything, but because he had continually tried. This posture of shepherding a congregational flock forms and attunes not just the heart of the pastor, but the elders, committees, staff, associate pastors and the entire congregation.

Vulnerability unmasks a pastor's deeper emotions. Shame is often evidenced in how pastors treat others and themselves. Ranging from anger to self-hatred pastors' default to intrinsic worthlessness must be leaned into with the struggle of courageous vulnerability.

Since vulnerability is associated with weakness, pastors regularly choose to avoid it. Vulnerability has a cost. Brown states, "the perception that vulnerability is weakness is the most widely accepted myth about vulnerability and the most dangerous."[123] Pastors carry the weight of modeling the embodiment of spiritual health. However readily a pastor accepts this responsibility, it can quickly become dangerously detrimental to a pastor as a flawed human being.[124] Internally, this sets off all kinds of self-protection alarms since his entire worthiness is judged by the congregation's expectations of what it means to be a Christian example. These behaviors were validated time and again in Burns, Guthrie, and Chapman's seven years of research with pastors and their spouses. One such pastor participant in the study lamented over the weight of expectation he felt from the congregation, "Most people in our church have a life that is like a stool with three legs. They've got their spiritual life, their professional life, and their family life. If

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[122] Zack Eswine, *The Imperfect Pastor: Discovering Joy in Our Limitations Through a Daily Apprenticeship with Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 96.

[123] Brown, *Daring Greatly,* 33.

[124] Bob Burns, Tasha Chapman, and Donald Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 20.

one of these legs wobbles, they've got two others they can lean on. For us (pastors), those three things can merge into one leg. You're sitting on a one-legged stool, and it takes a lot more concentration and energy. It's a lot more exhausting."[125]

In light of these pressures, pastors, by default, often project a false self that will satisfy any congregant's desire for a perfect pastor. However, this replica of health and wholeness ends up costing the pastor dearly in many possible ways. Thompson speaks about the labor one undergoes to keep everything appearing as it should upfront at the expense of its hidden cost. He calls it, "clandestine behavior" and says that it, "manifests across the entire spectrum of what Christians would generally consider to be noble or ignoble activity. Whether one is a felon or a Rhodes Scholar, all will have elements of their lives that are expressions of shame, hidden in our embezzlement or our appointment to the Federal Court of Appeals bench."[126]

Regardless of shame's origin, a pastor will buckle under the burden of its pressure. Under this weight of expectation it is not unusual for a pastor to seek shelter by hiding. Hiddenness, the opposite of shame's relational healer called vulnerability, guarantees more shame.[127]

One of the reasons that vulnerability is often seen as weakness is due to the culturally held belief inside and outside the church that emotions are erratic and cannot be trusted as any type of indicator for information. Brown speaks to this saying that, "vulnerability is the core of all emotions and feelings. To feel is to be vulnerable. To

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[125] Ibid., 15.

[126] Thompson, *The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves*, 30.

[127] Ibid., 29, 34.

believe vulnerability is weakness is to believe that feeling is weakness. To foreclose on our emotional life out of a fear that the costs will be too high is to walk away from the very thing that gives purpose and meaning to living."[128]

When pastors believe the message that vulnerability is weakness and link it to their daunting narrative of unworthiness, a loop of shame tends to be self-reinforcing. Thompson says, "When we experience shame, we tend to turn away from others because the prospect of being seen or known by another carries the anticipation of shame being intensified or reactivated. However, the very act of turning away, while temporarily protecting and relieving people from their feelings and the gaze of the 'other,' ironically simultaneously reinforces the very shame we are attempting to avoid."[129] Historically, the Christian church has not valued and practiced vulnerability well. In fact, those members who show their feelings as a cry for help often are seen as weak and even unfit for spiritual leadership. Given this lens, Brown is right when saying, "it makes sense that vulnerability is seen as weakness only to realize that feelings have been viewed wrongly as failure and emotions as liabilities."[130]

By now readers will understand the importance of vulnerability to pastors processing their shame. However, where is a biblical model of vulnerability? In the pages of scripture God time and again demonstrates vulnerability through his actions. Thompson makes this point: "The act of creation was one of vulnerability, an act in which God was open to wounding, with the anticipated heartache that accompanies it.

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[128] Brown, *Daring Greatly,* 33.

[129] Thompson, *The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves*, 29, 31.

[130] Brown, *Daring Greatly,* 35.

However, this openness was bracketed by a relational connection that prevents fear and shame from ruling its anticipated future. Although we can assume that God knew creation would bring trouble, he had confidence that his triune relationships would bear the weight of whatever trauma would come his way."[131] With God's demonstration of vulnerability, pastors and their churches alike are free to embrace vulnerability as a God's grace. The example now becomes the loving relationship shared between Father, Son, and Spirit. In this relationship of constant, perfect, self-giving, and vulnerable love, shame is destroyed. The ever-present movement of this three-part, shared relationship toward one another—working with one another, trusting one another, delighting in one another—provides the basis for why God created the world in vulnerability and then made himself vulnerable in coming to it in Jesus Christ.[132]

Worthiness Fostered in Receiving Empathy

As has been established already, humanity is wired for connection. When people are isolated and left feeling disconnected, an instinctual survival mentality emerges that assigns blame, protects at all cost, and preserves any perceived good. Hartling and Walker point to this reality in their shame and humiliation research when recording the generality that disconnection is strategic in how it causes the isolated to withdraw, hide, remain silent, and keep secrets.[133]

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[131] Thompson, *The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves*, 122.

[132] Ibid., 29, 125.

[133] Linda Hartling, Wendy Rosen, Maureen Walker, and Judith V. Jordan, "Shame and Humiliation: From Isolation to Relational Transformation," *Work in Progress.* no. 88 (2000): 1-14.

Empathy is a powerful antidote of isolation. However difficult, Brown says, "Empathy is essential for building meaningful, trusting relationships, and this is what we all need."[134] Empathy is more than words. Empathetic connection embraces both cognitive and behavior skills. Knowing the right thing to say to someone who is experiencing shame will not be effective apart from the genuine presence of an engaged empathizer.

What is empathy? Brown defines empathy as, "the skill or ability to tap into our own experiences in order to connect with an experience someone is relating to us."[135] A. Ivey, Peterson, and M. Ivey define it as "the ability to perceive a situation from the other person's perspective. To see, hear and feel the unique world of the other."[136] Their research findings point to the reciprocal and inseparable qualities that empathy must be practiced interpersonally for it to have a curative effect.[137] In other words, shame resilience requires the interchange of empathy from both the givers and receivers.[138]

Benjamin Gottlieb speaks from a broad perspective of social support, which includes empathy as "verbal and/or non-verbal information or advice, tangible aid, or action that is proffered by social intimates or inferred by their presence, and has beneficial emotional or behavioral effects on the recipient."[139] Support through an

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[134] Brené Brown, *I Thought It Was Just Me: But It Isn't: Telling the Truth About Perfectionism, Inadequacy, and Power* (New York: Gotham, 2008), 37.

[135] Ibid., 33.

[136] Allen E. Ivey, Paul Pedersen, and Mary Bradford Ivey, *Intentional Group Counseling: A Microskills Approach* (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Thomson Learning, 2001), 37.

[137] Ibid., 38-44.

[138] Brown, *I Thought It Was Just Me: But It Isn't,* 32.

[139] Benjamin H. Gottlieb, *Social Support Strategies: Guidelines for Mental Health Practice* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1983), 28.

empathetic interpersonal presence has the ability to lift shameful experiences and their enduring threats.[140] As seen in chapter one, the unique vocational demands of pastoring a local church raise critical concerns about the health and wholeness of the pastor as a person. To this end, the absence of interpersonal emotional support within the pastorate has been linked with the waning of marital and parental relationships and the lowering of an overall satisfaction of ministry and life.[141]

Brown's *Shame Reliance Theory* (SRT) positions empathy as shame's contrast. She does this by identifying what she calls the shame resilience model. Indicators on a 0 to 12 continuum moving from left to right from shame's expression of fear, blame, and disconnection to empathy's embodiment of courage, compassion, and connection.[142] The great writer, poet and abolitionist, Henry David Thoreau speaks to the transformational power of empathy upon the human condition when saying, "Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other's eyes for an instant?"[143] When empathy is exercised to the pastor and the experience is authentic, shame will be exposed to a resilient light of hope. When the emotional support of empathy fails to exist, the unavoidable outcome opens the door to burnout.

The importance of relationship is emphasized in Wilson and Hoffmann's *Preventing Ministry Failure*. They reported from the research of Save American

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[140] Robert M. Arkin and Kathryn C. Oleson, *Handbook of the Uncertain Self* (New York: Psychology Press, 2015), 238-239.

[141] Michael Lane Morris and Priscilla White Blanton, "The Influence of Work-Related Stressors on Clergy Husbands and Their Wives," *Family Relations* 43, no. 2 (1995): 189-195.

[142] Brené Brown, "Shame Resilience Theory: A Grounded Theory Study on Women and Shame," *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services* 87, no. 1 (2006): 47. doi:10.1606/1044-3894.3483.

[143] Henry David Thoreau, *Walden: or Life in the Woods* (New York: Heritage Press, 1939), 20.

Ministries, "The State of Ministry Marriage and Morals" that seventy percent of pastors surveyed admit they have no close friend(s) and feel isolated and alone, which has led them to unhealthy ministries, families, practices.[144]

The lack of relationship not only has impact on pastors, but also on those in their families, churches and communities. Hartling, Walker, and Jordan, borrowing from psychoanalyst Karen Horney, speak to this in what they call the strategies of disconnection.[145] Teyber and McClure further explain these strategies as they are displayed in three relationally dysfunctional movements that are used by those who find themselves alone and attempting to seek connection, albeit through manipulation. First, they may attempt to move away from others by withdrawing, hiding, and/or becoming silent. Second, they may move toward others through the attempt to earn connection by appeasing and pleasing others. Third, they may move against by trying to gain power over others or using shame as a way of projection to fight their shame and aggression.[146] These movements result in further isolated damage for the pastor but also reinforce the barrier of relationship in general and the overall health of pastors and their congregations.

To develop healthy connections, there must be willingness and courage to be known even in one's brokenness. Brown speaks to this courageous step of being known and opening oneself to relational connection, "For those of us who fear being alone, coping with the solitude inherent in this process is a daunting challenge. For those of us who prefer to cordon ourselves off from the world and heal alone, the requirement for

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[144] Michael Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffmann, *Preventing Ministry Failure: A ShepherdCare Guide for Pastors, Ministers and Other Caregivers* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007), 31.

[145] Hartling, Rosen, Walker, and Jordan, 17-22.

[146] Edward Teyber and Faith H. McClure, *Interpersonal Process in Therapy: An Integrative Model* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2016), 188.

connection—of asking for and receiving help—becomes the challenge."[147] Without a healthy relational connection, pastors and their ministries will never be fully what they were meant to be. As said before, shame is conceived in relationship and is lifted in relationship; however, Thompson acknowledges the risk vulnerability exposes when receiving empathy. He writes that the empathized stand at the mercy of those whose intentions cannot be guaranteed and who can end up furthering the shame rather than lifting it.[148] In short, to receive empathy is to risk vulnerability and too often pastors choose the safer way and further their isolation.

Pastors are seen as the professionals who are called to disseminate information in a top-down fashion -- professional clergy to laity. This often gets translated into the interpersonal relationships that the pastor has with those in their congregation and community. J.V. Jordan claims through her relational-cultural theory research that she has seen firsthand how a two-way interpersonal experience is much more able to include mutual empathy, mutual empowerment, and overall growth.[149] Translating this concept to the pastor as a person means that two-way relationships will promote a resiliency that abounds through relational connection.

Research has revealed two main themes—connection and understanding. It could be argued they are but one in the same. These catalytic tools for empathy underlie the tenor of the empathy-giver's interest and pursuit of the empathy-receiver. Teyber and McClure refer to this as "empathetic understanding" and state that it "connotes a genuine

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[147] Brené Brown, *Rising Strong How the Ability to Reset Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* (New York: Random House Inc, 2017), 6.

[148] Thompson, *The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves*, 118-119.

[149] J. V. Jordan, *Relational Resilience* (Wellesley, MA: Stone Center, 1992), 9.

feeling of warmth and concern." They go on to say that, "this not a [therapy] technique but rather a respectful attitude and nonjudgmental stance."[150] This attitude and stance acts differently from just being nice; it behaviorally demonstrates that the empathizer "gets it" or "sees" the empathized in a way that others generally do not.[151] This is precisely what interpersonal connection and understanding look like. They are instrumental in the process of shame lifting in the life of the pastor.

The posture of God in the scriptures is a pursuit of relentless connection. Even in the light of humanity's hedges of shame seen in fighting, fleeing, or freezing, God continues to pursue his creatures. Shame shows itself in the psychological, spiritual, mental, and behavioral states of humanity revealing the devastating loss of their created glory in the image of God. Author and trauma psychologist Diane Langberg speaks to this loss when she points to God's pursuing response to this shame filled loss of glory, " . . .Pursuit—the very thing we do not want when we feel ashamed. He came for them [Adam and Eve]. I want to see you, he said."[152] She goes on to give a larger narrative of God's pursuit of humanity through his incarnation to pursue his glorious creation:

> …a baby born to an unwed mother—shameful. A child of Nazareth—shameful. A man who walked the roads with women in his company—shameful. He touched lepers, demoniacs, and bothered with children—shameful. Sold for a price of a slave—shameful. Arrested by religious leaders and publically insulted—shameful. Dragged to the front of jeering crowds—shameful. And then dragged through the streets—shameful. Set on high for all to see—naked, struck, beard plucked out, spit upon, humiliated, and erected on one of the most shaming and torturous instruments of death in the history of the world. He was shamed by the

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[150] Teyber and McClure, 59.

[151] Ibid.

[152] Diane Langberg, *Suffering and the Heart of God: How Trauma Destroys and Christ Restores* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2015), 137.

> world he had made. He became shame, embodied it. All could see—he did not hide.[153]

As this great pursuit takes place in all of creation the pastor must acknowledge the pursuit of the Creator and be willing to respond by stepping from the shadows. In *That Their Work Will Be A Joy - Understanding and Coping with the Challenges of Pastoral Ministry*, Lee and Fredrickson speak to a challenge that they say is steeped in the local church culture. Lee and Fredrickson say, "The biggest barrier to pastoral connection comes from the local churches idealization of the pastor's role. Deep connection usually requires some sense of mutuality and the culture of the local church is usually built on the separatist laity and clergy ideology."[154] The fact is that churches often paint and treat their pastors as if they are prodigiously human, one that is above the requirement of emotional necessities. When this message is communicated, in its many implicit and explicit ways, a pastor retreats into hiding isolated from others.

A key ingredient of empathy is being understood. Pastors want to be understood, and empathy requires a level of understanding. To be understood one must be listened to with a full presence that is both cognitive and affective.[155] In the case of an everyday relationship, each party must be fully present to have any hope in being understood. Maya Angelou, the great writer, poet and activist famously said,[156] "At the end of the day people won't remember what you said or did, they will remember how you made them

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[153] Ibid., 138.

[154] Cameron Lee and Kurt Fredrickson, *That Their Work Will Be a Joy: Understanding and Coping with the Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 35-36.

[155] Teyber and McClure, 59.

[156] While it is unclear who said this first, I came across this quote attributed to Maya Angelou in the volume represent in footnote 157.

feel."[157] Empathy is the restricted path for a person to be emotionally nurtured. If the ones who are risking exposure feel understood and therefore feel as though they "aren't crazy" the relationship dramatically changes for the better, since the empathizer is no longer seen as the problem-solver and the interaction as a transaction.[158]

Research has abundantly spoken into the necessity for interpersonal connection through emotional support; however Brown has narrowed the research to provide a framework of empathy as a shame-lifter.[159] The experience of perceived support is an entirely different experience than connecting with an empathetic other.[160]

The pastor needs to receive empathy embedded in a safe relationship. This person must have the ability to understand the pastor's experience and be able to reflect back that understanding in emotionally regulated health.[161] This health is best personified in a relational posture of interpersonal emotional understanding.[162] Brown writes concerning this posture of understanding saying, "…[empathy] is the emotional posture of one who understands and can comprehend the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of another.[163]

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[157] David Booth and Masayuki Hachiya, *The Arts Go to School: Classroom-Based Activities That Focus on Music, Painting, Drama, Movement, Media, and More* (Markham, ON: Pembroke Publishers, 2004), 14.

[158] Andrew Root, *The Relational Pastor: Sharing in Christ by Sharing Ourselves* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013), 92.

[159] Brown, *I Thought It Was Just Me: But It Isn't,* 31-44.

[160] Jimmy Dodd, *Survive or Thrive: 6 Relationships Every Pastor Needs* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2015), 265-267.

[161] Michael Lewis and Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones, *Handbook of Emotions* (New York: Guilford Press, 2000), 682.

[162] Teyber and McClure, 59.

[163] Brown, *Rising Strong*, 155.

In studying empathy as an agent of pastoral shame resiliency, it is paramount to translate the understanding that empathy is a differentiated feeling that someone is feeling; it's not feeling it for them.[164] Empathy is not pity or sympathy, feeling sorry for a person. It is not sympathy as sympathy may be looking across at others and feeling bad for them. Empathy develops through a gracious and gentle engagement to one's understanding as represented in the situational experience(s) and general outlook or lack thereof to effectively respond. It is not "What would I do if I were in their position?" but "What are they doing? Why are they doing what they're doing, from the perspective of what they have endured?"[165]

Some have argued that empathy can be learned. Helping professional scholar, Teresa Wiseman identifies four essential qualities of empathy in her article entitled, "A Concept Analysis of Empathy." Her insight proves helpful in explaining how empathy is interpersonally established and demonstrated.[166] These qualities are: (1) the ability to see the world as others see it; (2) to be nonjudgmental; (3) to understand another person's feelings; and (4) the ability to communicate that understanding of that person's feeling back to them.

Empathy: Ability to See the World as Others See It

The unique vocational expectations and demands clergy bear are difficult for congregants to understand. Therefore, they are often unable to empathize. Dr. Claus

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[164] Lewis and Haviland-Jones, 677.

[165] Isabel Wilkerson, "The Heart Is the Last Frontier," On Being, American Public Media, 11 Jan. 2018, accessed August 18, 2017, onbeing.org/programs/isabel-wilkerson-the-heart-is-the-last-frontier-jan2018/.

[166] Theresa Wiseman, "A Concept Analysis of Empathy," JAN: Informing Practice and Policy Worldwide Through Research and Scholarship 23, no. 6 (June 1996): 1162-167. doi:10.1046/j.1365-2648.1996.12213.x.

Lamm speaks to the cultivated skill of "perspective taking," or as he likes to refer to in his scholarly research, "cognitive appraisal," as a discipline one can foster to better understand the perspectives of others.[167] A simpler way to understand this is the lens metaphor that Brown uses, "We all see the world through multiple lenses. These lenses represent who we are and the perspectives from which we view the world."[168]

Empathy requires that one recognize that everyone has multiple lenses. In an attempt to see through other people's lenses, people must first acknowledge that they have their own. This understanding creates awareness both in the giver and receiver of empathy. Often what ends up happening when a pastor is vulnerable with a perspective empathizer is that people identify all too closely with the hurting pastor and hold to their own perspective, couched in shame, which results in the minimization of the pastor's feelings or redirecting the vulnerable moment back to themselves.[169] This is not helpful or healthy for the pastor.

In *Let Your Life Speak,* writer and professor Parker Palmer shares an example of the absence of perspective-taking in his relationships during the dark days of depression:

> Depression is the ultimate state of disconnection. People would come to me and say, "But you're such a good person, Parker. You teach and write so well, and you've helped so many people. Try to remember all the good you've done, and surely you'll feel better. That advice left me more depressed, for it plunged me into the immense gap between my "good" persona and the bad person I then believed myself to be. When I heard those words, I thought, "One more person has been defrauded, has seen my image rather than my reality—and if people ever saw the real me, they would reject me in a flash."[170]

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[167] Claus Lamm, "The Neural Substrate Of Human Empathy: Effects Of Perspective-Taking And Cognitive Appraisal," *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* 19, no. 1 (2007): 42.

[168] Brown, *I Thought It Was Just Me: But It Isn't,* 37.

[169] Ibid., 38.

[170] Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 62.

To journey into the experience and inner being of pastors is to be able to see their perspective and give empathy. Anything other than perspective taking empathy will only frustrate the process of shame healing.[171]

Empathy: Being Nonjudgmental

A natural defense for one's shame is to respond with judgment. False or inauthentic empathy may result in the pastor's protective attempt to buffer a judgmental attack. This dynamic plays out in the form of the pastor casting judgment in return upon the well-intentioned but unhelpful empathizer. Everyone falls prey to judgment; however, everyone also plays the role of the inflecting judge. Wiseman states, "Our patterns of thinking are deeply rooted, so rarely does anyone think of himself or herself as judgmental."[172] Pastors are judged on many levels. Often congregants judge their pastors in light of their own abilities, values, and convictions. Even more, parishioners can hold their pastor to a standard to which they themselves are not committed.[173]

Power and influence often are expended through judgment to gain relational and circumstantial control.[174] By imposing one's power, judgment causes the one shamed to often counter by redirecting the blame in the form of judgment. This dynamic seems contrary, as one would expect the shamed to pull away as an act of avoidance. Green and Lawrenz explain this interaction as a strategy of reconnection that enables the one

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[171] Lamm, 42.

[172] Wiseman, 1162-167.

[173] Mandy Smith, *The Vulnerable Pastor: How Human Limitations Empower Our Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 190-192.

[174] June Price Tangney and Ronda L. Dearing, *Shame and Guilt* (New York: Guilford Press, 2004), 83-85.

judging to have power over the shamed, "The person who experiences the shame desires to be reconnected with the one who imposed the shame as the reconnection will bring relief from the painful emotional experience. Thus, the one who imposed shame, the imposer, has gained power or influence over the one who is experiencing the shame. Should the imposer not be available to reconnect for any reason, the perceived power or influence of that person increases."[175]

Green and Lawrenz continue to explain this measure of power and influence through the shaming technique of "imposed shame." One may even go so far to assault verbally the shamed by saying, "shame on you" or "you should be ashamed."[176] The research of J.S. Shrauger and T.M. Osberg reveals that judgment allows the evaluation and comparison of one another's skills, principles and standards.[177] Tangney and Dearing link emotion and behavior saying that emotional motivation is positioned underneath every action.[178] Whether it is a congregant inflicting judgment on the pastor or the pastor using judgment as a defense, the wounded can misguidedly think he or she can escape the triggers of shame by redirecting the judgment and convincing the false self, "…compared to them, I'm pretty good."

It is rational and even warranted to believe that a judgmental posture is nothing more than one's self-righteousness. However, Brown finds in her hundreds of interviews

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[175] Daniel Green and Mel Lawrenz, *Encountering Shame and Guilt: Resources for Strategic Pastoral Counseling* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 63.

[176] Ibid., 62.

[177] J. Sidney Shrauger and Timothy M. Osberg, "The Relative Accuracy of Self-predictions and Judgments by Others in Psychological Assessment," *Psychological Bulletin* 90, no. 2 (1981): 322-51, doi:10.1037//0033-2909.90.2.322.

[178] Tangney and Dearing, 133.

that judgment was routinely used out a fear-based anger that was initially conceived by shame.[179] DeYoung writes in the context of shame reduction that charged judgment comes from the unmet longings to be connected.[180] The research findings cause one to reasonably conclude that judgment comes from a deeper longing. This longing is ultimately seeking connection through relational repair.

Empathy is inherently non-judgmental. Brown is convinced through her research that to be able to move away from judgment and toward empathy will require being mindful of what one is thinking, feeling, and saying. She emphatically says, "You can't fake nonjudgmental. Real empathy requires us to stay out of judgment and that's very difficult if we are not self-aware. We must know and understand ourselves before we can know and understand someone else." [181] As the pastor seeks connection the reality of shame manifests its many characteristics, including judgment. Judith Jordan in her study of relational development explains that, "Empathy brings back the possibilities of connection. Within any connected relationship empathy increases and shame decreases."[182] Empathy is a means to repair, redeem, and reconcile the judged and deal with shame.

Empathy: Understanding of Another Person's Feelings

Emotions are often challenging to recognize and even harder to name. This third aspect of Wiseman's empathy research displays that an empathetic person is one who can

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[179] Brown, "Shame Resilience Theory," 47-48.

[180] DeYoung, 165.

[181] Brown, *I Thought It Was Just Me: But It Isn't,* 40.

[182] Judith V. Jordan, *Relational Development: Therapeutic Implications of Empathy and Shame* (Wellesley, MA: Stone Center, 1989), 152.

understand another person's feelings.[183] The church has traditionally discouraged feelings as a reliable compass for health and wholeness. People in general and especially men, have been culturally taught that feelings can't be trusted and must be ignored at all cost. For pastors, this approach of life detaches their decision-making faculties from their true heart. This disconnection prevents ministers from being fully capable of following their deeper passions of the pastoral call.[184]

As a part of that that official call, one should be required to study and practice self-awareness.[185] In *The Minister and Care for Souls,* Daniel Day Williams expresses his belief that the ordination vows of all clergy should include a promise to be engaged in "clarification of motive and search for integrity of self which we mean by self-knowledge."[186] Clergy will not be able to shepherd their people well without first knowing themselves.[187] Reinard Nauta speaks into this when writing on psychological dynamics of pastoral identity, "The reciprocal paradox of empathy is that empathy requires self-awareness and self-awareness requires empathy."[188] He goes on to speak of God's incarnation in Christ as a "caregiver's" empathetic understanding of humanity formed by the empathetic interdependence of the Godhead.[189]

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[183] Wiseman, 1162-167.

[184] Wilson and Hoffmann, 55.

[185] McNish, 185-188.

[186] Daniel Day Williams, *The Minister and the Care of Souls* (New York: Harper, 196), 100-101.

[187] Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 27-28.

[188] Reinard Nauta, "Psychological Dynamics of Pastoral Identity: The Different Faces of Empathy," *Journal of Empirical Theology* 9, no. 1 (1996): 53-54.

[189] Ibid.

To rightly understand the feelings of another, one must be able to name that feeling. When one has the ability to assign words to feelings, empathy is born. For example, if one can't recognize and name fear when one is feeling it, how will that one empathically connect to someone else who is in fear?[190] In *Emotionally Healthy Leader*, Peter Scazzero speaks to the importance of self-awareness as primer for a leader to connect emotionally with others. Scazzero says, "While leaders may have benefited from personal and leadership inventories such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, StrengthsFinder, or DISC profile, they remain unaware of themselves. The lack of emotional awareness also extends to their personal and professional relationships in their inability to read and resonate with the emotional world of others."[191]

The experience of authentic empathy has the potential of repaving the shame ruts that cover the pastoral road. DeYoung uses the following powerful image to demonstrate the influence and beauty that authentic connection through empathy can have in the face of shame. She describes authentic connection as "sharing emotion with 'I-see-you-seeing-me' intersubjective space: I will tell you what I feel because we each hear and care about how the other feels."[192] This reinforces the point Wiseman made when she said that empathy blooms when the sun shines knowing that it once was night and will be again.[193] Healthy relationship heals shame born out of past unhealthy ones.

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[190] Brown, *I Thought It Was Just Me: But It Isn't*, 40.

[191] Scazzero, 28.

[192] DeYoung, 166.

[193] Wiseman, 1162-167.

Empathy: Communicate Understanding of Another Person's Feelings

If empathy had degrees of difficulty, being able to communicate understanding of another person's feelings may be the most difficult.[194] Brown suggests that communicating understanding with words can feel very risky. However, she goes on further to explain and accentuate that the key is full and active engagement.[195]

This kind of engagement calls for entirely present empathizers ready to lean into their shame without redirecting their experience back to them or minimizing its impact. In general, pastors experience unlimited giving of themselves to a congregation that expects them to be "on" twenty-four-seven.[196] These immense expectations of the flock can often form a belief that their pastor is beyond human needs.[197] This mistaken belief can also produce an empathy that is initially expressed to the pastor; however, is soon revealed to be a call for the congregant's care.[198] This works for a while. However, a pastor who only gives will soon run dry. In *On the Problem of Empathy*, E. Stein speaks of this consequence when she writes, "empathy announces in the most direct manner possible the actual presence of the other's experience although it doesn't provide us with first-person access to it. Empathy is a kind of experience in that when I empathize with another, the empathized experience is located in the other and not in myself." [199] In short,

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[194] Brown, *I Thought It Was Just Me: But It Isn't*, 41.

[195] Ibid.

[196] Wilson and Hoffmann, 17, 48.

[197] Dodd, 76-77.

[198] Lee and Fredrickson, 157-158.

[199] Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, trans. Waltraut Stein (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 1989), 3:6-11.

empathy entails by necessity a difference between the subject of empathic experience and the subject of the empathized experience.

In the case of the pastor, a problem arises since only a select few are able to understand and empathize emotionally with the pastor and even less will be able to communicate the experience in return. However, this empathetic barrier all too often falls upon the propensity of the pastor to dismiss the friend, community member, or congregant as an experientially limited empathizer. Brown writes that, "our level of shame resilience depends equally on both our ability to receive empathy and our ability to extend empathy."[200] Mandy Smith shares about her dismissive indifference toward empathizers during a time of darkness, fear, and confusion, adding that the "welcoming of discomfort" led to the uncovering of her shame.[201]

For many pastors shame has flooded their inner world to a point where empathetic possibility seems impossible. With this deeply rooted belief, self-protection works tirelessly in retreat of the risk of being known.[202] Authentic relationships in general seem unreasonably out of touch for many clergy. Nevertheless, pastors' indifference to interpersonal connection doesn't bury their intrinsic relational ache. Thompson puts words to this longing, "We all are born into the world looking for someone looking for us, and we remain in this mode of searching for the rest of our lives."[203]

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[200] Brown, *I Thought It Was Just Me: But It Isn't,* 57.

[201] Smith, 72-75.

[202] DeYoung, 166.

[203] Thompson, *The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves*, 138.

Chapter Three

Project Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore how pastors experience the process of healing from shame caused by expectations set by their congregations. To research the best practices of pastors experiencing the process of shame healing, the researcher held to the belief that the qualitative research method would best inform the research findings. In turn, it would be of greater worth to the larger church, its clergy and the communities they serve. Rather than employ a tool for the measurement of shame, the researcher devised an interview process to explore the pastors' self-awareness of their shame. A basic qualitative study provides an adequate foundation for exploring this as "a phenomenon for those involved."[204]

Design of the Study

Sharan Merriam, author of *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, writes: "[Q]ualitative researchers are 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."[205] The qualitative method serves to assist the researcher to better understand "how people interpret their experiences, how they

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[205] Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 13.

construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences."[206] Utilizing the qualitative method offers the researcher the opportunity to gather the rich data provided through interviews. This method will enable the study to explore themes, common strategies and concerns, and the rich experiences behind the values, practices and fears of shame.

Participant Sample Selection

This study will utilize "purposive sampling"[207] for identifying participants to provide the most relevantly rich data. Seven pastors were interviewed following the interview protocol listed below. Each pastor interviewed were male, evangelical, serve as the senior (or lead) pastor, and preach the majority of the time in his local congregation. Men who are evangelical have been selected for the singular purpose of narrowing the findings and controlling the qualitative aspects of the research. This parameter is by no means aimed to qualify, exclude or discriminate clergy or to issue a theological or ecclesial statement. This criterion is important to identify properly the participants who are most susceptible to congregational criticism. The pastors interviewed will be initially selected through self-reporting and/or peer reporting. This means that the subjects' process of healing from shame has come to the attention of either the researcher or one of the subjects' peers who, in turn, informed the researcher. In order to create a sample set from which meaningful, rich data can be gained from this study, it is necessary to choose participants who already are self-aware of having healed significantly from shame recently and of continuing the process of healing from shame. The participants must be

[206] Ibid., 5.

[207] Ibid., 77.

able to self-report that these two things are true of them. These criteria are important because the research requires participants who are willing to have a high level of openness and vulnerability to share their experience with the researcher. Participant's names, and certain identifying information such as a specific location and church name will be changed to assure their confidentiality.

Data Collection

The interviews will follow a semi-structured protocol, conducted face to-face. Utilizing the semi-structured protocol the researcher will have the opportunity to explore consistently the experiences of the pastors from pre-designed questions, yet with flexibility to pose new questions pursuing matters arising from the answers to the questions themselves.[208] Prior to the interview, each participant will receive written communication outlining the purpose of the study, the research questions, and a confidentiality consent form to be signed.

The following interview protocol will be piloted with interviewees who match the purposive criteria outlined above. An initial protocol arranged around the research questions outlined in chapter one is below. This protocol may change based on what is learned about the relevance of the data elicited through the pilot test.

Interview Protocol

1. What experience(s) helped you identify the emotion of shame?

[208] Ibid., 90.

2. What helped you identify your experience(s) as shame?
3. What motivated you to learn about your shame?
4. How did human relationship(s) inform your understanding of shame?
5. What experience(s) brought healing to your shame?
6. What has changed in your life since experiencing the process of healing from shame?
7. What resources have you found to continue the healing process of shame?
8. What kinds of challenges have you come up against during the process of shame healing?
9. What new practices do you utilize to continue the process of healing your shame?
10. What advice would you give to a pastor that seems to be suffering from shame?
11. What else would you like to share about your process of healing from shame?

Interviews will be recorded using a digital recorder, then transcribed in their entirety for analysis.

Data Analysis

The researcher will interpret the data using the constant comparative method of analysis. Merriam describes the constant comparative method in the following way:

> Basically, the constant comparative method involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences. Data are grouped together on a similar dimension. The dimension is tentatively given a name; it then becomes a category. The overall object of

> this analysis is to identify patterns in the data. These patterns are arranged in relationship to each other in the building of a grounded theory.[209]

The transcriptions of the interviews will be analyzed and coded into themes following each interview and prior to subsequent interviews. This methodology is utilized in order to discern patterns in the data as it is constantly compared to subsequent data as well as to identify new sources of data. The patterns quarried from analysis will be coded and placed into categories to address the research questions outlined in chapter one.

Researcher Position

Utilizing the qualitative method demands that researchers clearly state their assumptions and biases, commonly referred to as the researcher position. The underlying reason for this demand is that a qualitative researcher is the primary instrument in interpreting data and therefore constructing meaning. Analysis is filtered through the researcher's own subjective values and worldview. Clarification about the theoretical framework enables readers to better understand the interpretations of the data by the researcher.[210]

In significant extent, the researcher matches the purpose of criteria outlined above. The researcher is a male, evangelical Christian ordained minister. Although the researcher is not currently in a pastorate, he has served in a senior pastor role in a church of three hundred (plus) for seven years and in an associate pastoral role for eight years. His position, however, is as a researcher seeking to interpret the experiences of other pastors called to a similar ministry.

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[209] Ibid., 31.

[210] Ibid., 219.

The researcher's location of ministry is in the Midwest of the United States of America. He lives in a semi-conservative region and attends and serves in a conservative evangelical seminary.

Study Limitations

Seven pastors will be interviewed for this study. This sample size will be sufficient in this qualitative format, but it has its limitations due to the larger best practices of the process of healing from shame in the pastorate. The reader may also discern the limit of the study because only male pastors are participants. Generalization of particular aspects of what is learned in this study must be tested in the reader's particular context. The findings in this study may have implications for how pastors in other regions of the United States may find ways to process the healing of their shame. As with any qualitative study, however, responsibility for understanding how findings apply within their own specific setting lies with the readers.[211]

[211] Ibid., 226.

Chapter Four

Data Report and Analysis

The purpose of this study was to explore how pastors experience the process of healing from shame. Three research questions were framed to guide the study. The research questions were:

1. How do pastors become aware of their need to heal from shame?
2. How do pastors experience healing from shame?
   a. In what ways does the pastors' growing awareness of shame further healing from shame?
   b. In what ways and to what extent do relationships further healing from shame?
3. How do pastors deal with ongoing shame triggers after having experienced significant healing from shame in the past?

This chapter will introduce the participants of the study and present their insights concerning the study questions.

The Study Participants

Seven ministers were interviewed, each of who is male, evangelical, with ten plus years of senior (or lead) pastorate tenure, and preaches the majority of the time in his local congregation. The participants come from six states that range from California to

South Carolina. The participants served in a number of denominations such as Evangelical Free Church in America, Presbyterian Church in America, Church of the Nazarene, and Christian and Missionary Alliance. All participants serve in a suburban context of approximately 100,000 to 1,000,000 people and in churches ranging in size from 200 to 5,000. Six participants are currently serving their local churches as senior pastor. One has served for twenty-five years as a senior pastor and is currently serving the local church as the preaching pastor. None of the participants is currently serving in a first pastoral assignment.

Alan is 48 years old. He and his wife of twenty-two years have three children, two who are still living at home. He has served for twenty-four years in a number of full-time ministry roles including the areas of children, youth, and discipleship. He is currently serving as the senior pastor in a local church. Although not his first senior pastorate, it is his longest assignment to date.

Bob is 46 years old. He and his wife have been married for twenty-three years and have three children under their care in the home. He has served as a youth pastor, associate pastor, and, for seventeen years now, as senior pastor of a church he planted.

Cole is in his mid-sixties. He is currently the preaching pastor of a local church. Although beginning ministry as a youth pastor, Cole previously planted and became senior pastor of a church where he served for twenty-five years. He and his wife have been married for thirty-five years. He has adult children and grandchildren.

Don is 50 years old and has been in ministry for over twenty years. Don has been divorced and is well into his second marriage. He has three children, two of whom are adults. He has been in senior pastoral leadership in two different local churches for

sixteen years and is currently in the tenth year of his current assignment.

Eric is in his early fifties and is married with three children. He has served in three churches: one as a college minister and two as a senior pastor. He has been serving in his current assignment for nearly five years.

Frank is in his mid-fifties. He and his wife of nearly twenty years have three children. Frank has served in full-time ministry eighteen years, fourteen as a senior pastor. He has been in his current role as senior pastor for three years.

Gil is 50 years old. He is married with three children. He and his wife have been married for nearly thirty years, the same number of years as his senior pastorates. He serves on multiple boards and is a frequent national speaker. He has pastored both medium and large congregations all of which have been historic to his denomination.

Becoming Aware

The researcher was interested in exploring the initial exposure and awareness of the emotional reality of shame in the participants. Conscious that pastors, especially ones who are the senior leaders and the primary preachers, often are critiqued harshly and held to an unwarranted standard of performance and perfection, the researcher understood that it takes a crisis event to bring about shame awareness. Prior to this self-awareness, all participants reported a deep sense of inner turmoil, emptiness, helplessness, and limitation as they carefully kept their struggles concealed. It was during this time of crisis that three areas distinctly emerged from the participants interviewed. These areas were: ministry burnout, experiencing a healthy relationship, and forced rest.

Ministry Burnout

When the group was asked about how they identified shame in their life stories, Cole led without hesitation: "It was my burnout in ministry that happened when I was 50 years old at the height of when our church was doing so well. It's a range of circumstances that brings you to a point where you can't squirm away from them like you once did, we are all guilty of wanting to heal our wounds lightly." Alan shared: "I hit the bottom and had no where to turn. I knew I was at the bottom because none of my ministry tricks were working anymore. I felt as if my insides had caved in on me, and it was just a matter of time until I suffocated." Bob similarly shared,

> For some crazy reason I never saw it until there was nothing else to see. It was like my eyes went blank, and all I could see was bleakness ahead. This terrified me. A matter of fact, I remember seizing up like the Tin Man. I literally couldn't move as I sat at my desk. I remember praying the only word that could come to mind, "help," over and over and over again. It wasn't until an hour or so later that I realized I had not moved in my chair.

Experiences like these have the power to bring ~~pastors~~ to their knees. The data was clear that until experiencing a "coming to the end of oneself," the pastors wouldn't notice the deeply rooted stamp of condemnation on their heart called shame. Eric verified this when he said:

> I knew quite a bit about shame, at least in my head. My undergraduate degree was psychology and my doctorate concentration was counseling, but my antenna was tuned toward caring for others—I wasn't able to see my own shame expressed mostly in the fear. I was afraid of what people thought of me and specifically what would happen if I didn't meet their expectations. It wasn't until I came to end of myself and burned out that I began to see what was really going on in me.

Cole continued: "In my burnout I was able to say, here are some core emotions and realities in my soul, that doing more and trying harder is not going to touch." He went on reflecting: "It was through ministry burnout that I experienced my brokenness,

which slowed me down enough to notice this path I had been on."

Frank shared about how he had an overwhelming sense of desperation in his second ministry position, which was his first senior pastorate. "I was desperate and knew that I needed something, anything, so I reached out to a couple of guys that I knew their stories had to do with shame in some way. I was spent and found myself nipping at the heels of anything or anyone that could help me." Gil shared about the pressures of ministry coupled with mounting financial stress, a young family and the opportunity to teach at a local seminary that led him to a psychological breakdown. "A lot of fear was driving me, fear of failure, or fear of being exposed as 'I'm not nearly as capable as you think I am,' fear of letting a ball drop. Fear for not being known as a kind of superman that can do all these things." At one moment Alan had to pause and clear his throat to say: "Life in general just got darker and darker until the point I remember shutting down, physically freezing in my office while huddled up on the floor in the corner. That was the bottom for me and from there I knew I had to start paying attention."

For these pastors, crisis through some variation of ministry burnout opened their eyes to their reality of shame and their need to identify it to have any hope to address it and heal through it.

Experiencing a Healthy Relationship

The second emerging area of shame awareness arose for the participants through a healthy, regulated,[212] and safe relationship. Eric recalled, "It wasn't until I experienced a safe relationship that I knew its power to heal me from all the unsafe ones." Equally Alan shared, "I couldn't accept that it was possible to be treated so empathically. He treated

[212] Refer to the definition of terms section in chapter one.

me so gently and with my best interest in mind. That experience helped me know that I could come out of hiding." After sharing about his upbringing and dysfunctional relationship with his father Bob said, "It took a couple of experiences when I was young to believe that nobody could be trusted. It has taken years and a couple of healthy relationships to rewire that rooted belief and see that I could afford to be vulnerable and I needed to be."

Don shared extensively about how his awareness of shame was formed by the welcoming posture of others that offered care and not correction. "Offering the remedy to someone who is experiencing shame doesn't work. To say that you're forgiven, but that isn't the issue—it is the acceptance and that you are welcomed, received and belong." He continued to reflect of his encounters with those who welcomed him. "The glad welcome of others like mentors, professors, peers, counselors, pastors, and my wife is what helped me identify my shame. These men and my wife were people who just upon seeing me would either physically open their arms or by their presence showed that they were glad to see me just the way I am. I had not experienced that growing up, especially from men."

Cole shared that his shame always has to do with being seen. He explained that the damaging "being seen" experiences carried greater authority in his internal narrative than life-giving ones. He now considers God's gaze as the guide in appraising all other gazes.

> A shame-free intimacy with God enables us—whether it's in marriage, parenting, life, or pastoring — it will allow us to steward the kind of gazes we will get. You know what kind of gazes a leader, senior pastor, 'all eyes are on you' kind of guy is going to get? Some people's gaze has the power to give us life and some have the power to completely immobilize us. My ability to voice and handle this reality is what I am afraid of letting others see; I'm naturally going to hide. But, whose gaze is more defining for me? Have I avoided a gaze or have I paid too much attention to another's gaze.

Gil shared, reflecting on his breakdown: “I don’t remember much of what they said, but I remember vividly them just with me, sitting with me, present with me.” He shared how he felt safe unlike in other relationships, especially his family of origin. He went on to say that this experience was a key moment of bonding that began to heal him but also revealed a deeper pain and unmet longings that could only be restored in relationship. Frank talked about a healthy befriending of an older elder. He said:

> I could tell in that very first lunch with him that this was actually a guy that could handle my doubts. I wasn’t sure I could trust anybody with the things that I was thinking. They clearly didn’t fit the fundamentalist ethos of what a good Christian was. Sure enough this elder did, and met me there in some very remarkable ways, with some well-placed and vulnerable stories. I realized that I wasn’t crazy—not only am I not crazy, but I am asking some really good questions, and that the Bible invites me to asks those questions. He was introducing me to a much broader understanding of Christianity that I didn’t have categories for. He met me and I felt I could really bring it all and put it all out of that lunch table and we started meeting together everyone 2-3 weeks. It was through that experience that I became to see deep inside me to some of what was going on.

Cole shared about his uncomfortable role reversal with others that helped expose his shame. “The deeper experience that I have been preaching to others for years now has called me to get on the pallet and let others take me to Jesus instead of my being committed to the ministry of taking others to Jesus.” Eric shared similar sentiments when saying, “It wasn’t until I allowed others to take care of me that I realized I was ashamed . . . . when I was held with care my dirt showed up the most.”

The stories of these men are peppered with convincing shame awareness examples of how healthy relationships powerfully expose shame’s origin in the unhealthy ones. The data revealed time and again that the literature and research threaded throughout chapter one and chapter two are accurate—shame is born in relationship and is healed in relationship. Such a paradox is the tension of the human condition.

Rest

Some type of rest (or break) was identified by all but one participant as a central experience of their shame awareness, whether that rest was planned, such as a sabbatical, retreat or holiday, or unplanned in the form of a psychological breakdown, physical illness, leave of absence, or reassignment.

"I don't think I identified the emotional journey I had been on involved shame until very recently—since being in this new role." Gil shared. He went on saying, "The vulnerability that comes with a transition and the knocking out from under you all the props and security blankets that you've accumulated through the years just with familiarity was and is tough."

Bob shared about how it wasn't until he was diagnosed, after months of mounting pain, with a complex autoimmune disease, that forced him to extended breaks from pastoring his congregation off and on for five years.

> It felt like everything was being taken away from me. Not only was there a stripping away of my physical health, but my heart was being ripped to sheds because I couldn't do anything but pop pills and lie around. I remember the day that a member from the church meant well when he showed up. During the visit he asked, 'Until you are better, who should we go to?' It was in that moment my pastor addiction showed its slip.

Cole explained that if it weren't for his elders giving him permission to take a break, he would not have been able to move forward. Alan transparently shared how he was cared for by his denominational restoration committee's recommendation to take a six-month break from the ministry to rest and recalibrate through professional counseling.

> At first my shame grew when I learned that I was going to have to hang it up for awhile, but somewhere inside of me, I was actually relieved. I felt cared for even though I was deeply embarrassed. I later was able to put words to that embarrassment—shame. I was a pro at dressing shame in anger to control others. So many people stuck by me even though I wouldn't have. Looking back, I know

> that if I didn't have what ended up being nearly two years until I was reassigned I would have completely crashed and burned and would have taken my family and congregation down with me.

Eric wrestled with his words as he described how hard it was to be placed under a physician's care in a psychological care facility. He said, "Just saying psychological breakdown was shame-provoking, and if I'm not cautious, it still can be. I needed help and my soul and brain knew it—I wasn't going to get out of this one. It wasn't until I surrendered to my reality of needing help that I began the long road of recovery. Without this very painful and unplanned break, I would not be here today, I'm convinced of that."

Don spoke of an escape into nature as restful. He reflected about his often miniature retreats from the office to walk in creation. He spoke of the sounds he would hear and the sights that he would see. It helped him refocus. He identified this experience as restful or renewing.

Participants have identified experiences of ministry burnout, disruption in healthy relationships, and lack of rest as a factor of their shame awareness and need of healing. Without these, the awareness of their shame may have continued to be covertly used as a defense mechanism from facing their deeper brokenness. As the interviews unfolded, the power of awareness both initiated and cultivated substantial and sustainable health in the pastor's process of healing.

Experiencing Healing

The researcher was interested in exploring how pastors experienced the process of shame healing. Understanding that complete healing from the effects of the Fall will not be set right until Christ's return when all things are made new, the researcher's position

held to the possibility for pastors to experience healing as a process. Participants reported that becoming aware of their shame was the key for the beginning of the experience of healing. As reported by participants, four areas of shame-lifting experience emerged from the interviews. Those areas were: relational acceptance, gospel embrace, professional guidance, and courageous attention.

Relational Acceptance

When asked how healing was experienced, participants jumped without hesitancy to share their experience of healthy relationships as the ointment for shame's wounds. Themes of these stories harmonize in the tone of personal acceptance. Cole shared, " . . . before my two friends, I come completely apart in their presence, both of these guys were men of many words, but they spoke nothing, but met me. As I was leaning over, they started weeping, and their tears were dripping on the back of my neck." Don spoke about how his wife powerfully showed him acceptance. "One night as I was headed out to a elders meeting that had me anxious—crisis situation—she grabbed me and kissed me like she really meant it and looked me in the eyes and said that I am a son of the king; go get 'em!" He also shared about an older mentor who would repeat a simple statement of care in the Quaker tradition. "I see you." Don explained that this saying was a reminder of care and acceptance that meant "you are seen and loved."

During some of the darkest days when anxiety and fear were crippling Gil, a congregant reminded him that sometimes his pastoral care depends on how well the pastor allows his flock to care for him. He went on to say, "The healing experiences from people that received me built me up. Every time I opened the door of my heart, it opened

the door for someone to talk back to me and share their struggle, and we both experienced healing."

Participants shared time and again how care was shown through acceptance. Whether personally or corporately, pastors reported the healing power of reception. Frank shared about the acceptance he received from his wife. "Early on in our marriage my wife and I were in the car and she said, 'I think I know you well enough that I know what buttons to push to get what I want.' It was then that my fear went up my spinal cord. 'But I don't want to live that way,' she said. I realized in that moment that I can be known and loved. She knows my weak points, and she is deliberately not going to take advantage of them to serve her own will or interests. There is a healing and freedom that comes with that."

Eric reflected on his sleepless nights of worry about how he would be received by the church's leadership team. "I didn't tell anyone for so long, but the time came that I had to. I spent several nights unable to sleep—I was worried about how I was going to break all of this to our elders. I decided to share with them three at a time. I called on three of the guys, and they dropped everything and came to the office. That first meeting was not what I expected. They listened, and their eyes showed me the openness of their hearts to love me and help me—I felt safe."

Alan shared his healing experience of acceptance: "I kept people at a distance. But there was this one older man that didn't obey my rules and sought me out. He wouldn't give up. It annoyed me at first but then I began to see that he really did care for me. He wasn't a man of too many words, but when he spoke I made sure I was listening.

I think his love and acceptance was powerful because he wasn't prying, treating me like a project or trying to fix me—he just was there, in it with me."

Gospel Embrace

Participants reported healing experiences spurred by a personal embrace of the gospel message. Having studied, preached, and taught the scripture, many of the participants transparently shared their incongruence between their congregational proclamation and their personal gospel embrace.

Cole detailed his journey of gospel embrace saying:

> The gospel of God's grace was the greatest gift and this is why I loved to preach it. It was through a crisis event that I begin to say, the Lord knows me and loves me and enjoys me, as odd as that is—this is not privatized spiritualty, but the truth of his intimacy. The journey from John 3:16 to Galatians 2:20 sometimes is really long. We can proclaim God's love for the world, but to say that the Son of God loves me and gave himself for me is a whole other thing. Without the right understanding of creation and the Creator we will never be able to understand redemption and the Redeemer. We need to come alive to echoes of Eden—we need to see our dignity before our depravity—our beauty before our brokenness. That is a part of what is shaping my continual formation of what discipleship looks like.

Bob, Gil, and Eric complemented each other's reflections when confessing that the gospel was not personal for them, but they freely preached it to their congregations. Bob stated, "The gospel was more than enough for everyone else, but for some reason I didn't believe that it was enough for me—I always was trying to add to it so that I could qualify." Gil shared a similar thought and followed it with, "This is something I should know. It's in our theology and I preached it every week." Further, Eric said, "I had a messianic complex and I thought 'the messiah' didn't need saving, but this one did. The

gospel has a way of pushing back, and I would read it with either critical eyes or eyes for those who were in my care. It wasn't until I hit the bottom of the barrel that it changed. I guess it's kind of like that clay jar thing—I was getting crushed."

Some participants reported that biblical and theological head knowledge paired with their personal expectations to be a learned scholar proved to be restrictive to the gospel's transformative power in their personal lives. Alan shared, "If I didn't have the answer or a verse for what I was feeling, I categorized it as irrelevant, and I couldn't find what I was feeling in the Bible." Chuck recounted his struggle that his tradition's theological bedrock was justification by faith, but there was little to no language for the shame he was feeling. "Since I couldn't find it, this must just be my problem," he concluded. In Don's case, he had never ceased to feel the presence and call of God in his life, but projected dysfunctional relationship dynamics upon the displeasure of him. "I knew that the gospel is true, and I kept pursuing it and finding ways forward in its truth."

Healing from shame through the gospel reception was additionally a main theme for Cole:

> I'm building a lifestyle of preaching the gospel to our hearts." We must believe the gospel for ourselves. This must be proactive and constant. You are more in need of God than you know and also at the same time more loved by God than you will ever know. The more I am growing at the core level of the gospel its going to bring me more to my brokenness but it's met with the riches of Jesus. Jesus is all about healing, freedom, liberation, reconciliation and so on. This is what the gospel does and it can't do anything less and there is no more that it will need to accomplish.

When pastors allow the gospel to speak and penetrate their hearts redeeming formation became follows closely. A theme that could be traced in each of the seven interviews was how easy it was for the pastors to preach the gospel to others all the while going great distances to justify its power be kept from their personal reach.

Professional Guidance

In all seven interviews, some variation of professional guidance was reported as a significant part of the process of shame healing. All seven participants identified that their experience of professional counseling was a significant healing aid in the process of shame lifting. Four of the participants shared about the care they received from medical doctors and prescription medications. In three of the participants' cases, professional care was resourced with either intensive counseling or in one case, hospitalization.

Don shared about how counseling is a part of his process of shame healing. "I get stuck. I need a counselor's help to look up; I can get consumed from past relationships and patterns. It's hard for me to be received, and this is where I get stuck. Ongoing help from a counselor is key to receive genuine welcome." In Frank's experience, counseling gave him freedom to begin to assign words and give voice to what was going on inside of him. He recalled, "I told my deepest darkest secrets to the counselor and he didn't flinch. He didn't run me out. The hammer was to my head, and I was sure there was something wrong with me. I was allowed to use my voice and express, much for the first time, what was going on inside of me."

Gil shared that it was his psychologist who first identified what he was experiencing as shame. "He is the first person to ever have used that word 'shame.' He said, 'You take on too much and then you stuff it deep inside and feel a responsibility for it, but you also feel that you can't do it—that you're not good enough. Then you start believing that internal conversation and then begin to believe lies that lead you to shame.'" In Cole's situation, he and his wife were afforded a ten-day counseling intensive. "Those tens days were overwhelmingly painful but key to our path—I was

stretched outside of my comfort zone. This time forced me out of control enough to help me reflect upon and voice my core emotions of fear and shame. I was motivated to dig deeper with the right counselors and their therapies moved me forward."

For Alan counseling was synonymous with weakness. He recalled, "I was cut from a cloth that looked down on the field of psychology. Brokenness was exclusively a sin problem, and if the issue persisted then you needed to figure out the sin from which you needed to repent. We had a double standard when it came to medication. If it were for a physical issue it was okay, but for a psychological or mental issue, well, that was a different story." Alan shared about how his rearing context evolved when he was placed on leave and eventually reassigned. "I came to accept that God made all of me and not just my spirit. I guess I came to believe that my heart, soul, mind, and body were interconnected and so therapy would need to be also."

Courageous Attention

All seven participants reported that an ongoing attention to their shame fostered their growth. For each of the participants, paying attention to their shame presented an enduring challenge that was often uncomfortable. The interviewees revealed their courage to give themselves permission for time and space to pray, contemplate, receive counseling, exercise, sleep, and establish and maintain boundaries to safeguard their continued growth.

Bob shared about the pain that active attention would initiate. "It was the classic two steps forward and one step back. There were some experiences where it was two steps forward and two steps back, but when I could see my shame and was able to point

to it—'hey, that's shame speaking,' I could face the stuff that was keeping me from getting better." Similarly Eric reported, "Once I could see it, I couldn't ignore it any longer. Shame is ugly but not nearly as ugly as when it goes unnoticed. It seemed childish—so easy but when I felt fear I began to stop and ask, 'Why am I feeling fear?'"

One participant shared about his addiction to pornography and where his shame tends to hide,

> Intimacy with my wife often brought about shame. It's hard to say, but for years after admitting my addiction, I wouldn't allow myself to enjoy sex with my wife—I felt that I wasn't worthy of her and so I make myself pay. I guess that was my penance. Shame seemed to always shout at those times. But here is the thing that my counselor helped me see: that tactic was a defense to keep me from where I need to go. This is still an issue from time to time and if I'm not careful it can really gut punch me. But, I'm not afraid anymore to see it's there.

Gil shared about how others have rallied around him to help navigate the pitfalls caused by shame. "I have been blessed with really great assistants and coverage of staff and elders who have not just given permission to say 'no' but have insisted on it. They are often having to overcome my shame of saying 'no' or having to admit that I have a capacity." Gil also shared how shame often parades in the reminders that he has not fulfilled his mother's expectations and emotional needs. "I feel guilty every time I talk about this because I don't want to dishonor her. Counselors have helped me to see the root of all of this. I've never been able to fulfill her expectations or emotional needs that are loaded on me. A counselor one day told me, 'I want you to stop saying depression in our conversations and replace it will oppression, because your mom is sitting on your chest like an eight-hundred pound gorilla.' When I am aware of that, I'm in a very different place."

In speaking about the fight to stay ignorant, Alan bluntly stated, “I didn’t want to face it and that is why it kept hanging around.”

Cole put words to the healing power of facing shame with others and how this led to his vigilance of shame’s manifestations:

> Two friends helped me begin this journey. For me, this led to the ongoing process of healing through the well-crafted counseling that gave me more theoretical and theological language. This journey began in my early fifties. I began studying shame and how it is a core category through scripture. When this happened, I began to see it everywhere. The gospel alone is the true narrative of power that lets us go there and begin to become freed from our shame. We are never free from our shame; I like to use the language of stewarding our shame. We both know our growth as leaders is that the gospel is less about getting over something but more about growing through it. When I saw this, everything changed. Jacob continued to limp. We are not cast aside because of our weakness. For me, part of that journey was to come to realize and practice that I don’t need more discipline—I was over my pragmatic perfectionism.

Don summarized growing his attention of shame with one word, “Courage.” He continued by saying:

> Shame challenges your courage. Fight or flight is so real. Tripping up; being drawn to a certain kind of relationship that isn’t welcoming—that will increase shame. Not realizing it and not particularly choosing it. This happens to caregivers and those in ministry. It’s so important to realize that, ‘I’m experiencing pain from this person. Aha! I’ve been here before. I’m experiencing the exact same thing; I’m hearing the same message— how did I not see that coming.’ You’ve got to pay attention.

Bob articulated the paradox of vulnerability and how its disarming power has helped him be attentive to his shame and its companions like fear:

> I kept reading about how vulnerability would help me grow, but as good as it sounded I refused to believe it—scary stuff. Eventually, with the help of a counselor I started to open up. I discovered my small tribe of friends was safe because they cared for me well—I didn’t get hurt. One of the guys checked up on me multiple times a week with a simple call or text. He would ask me, ‘What are you fearful of?’ This little question helped me keep an eye open to what was going on inside of me. A simple text message gave me to courage to stop and open my eyes and see the power I was giving to my pride to not be vulnerable.

For all of the participants, the hard and purposeful work of paying attention to their shame produced shame-lifting fruit. Furthermore, those who fostered the practice and developed it into the long-term practice could unmistakably trace its catalytic influence for health and wholeness in the pastorate.

Ongoing Healing and Health

Finally, the researcher was interested in learning how pastors deal with ongoing shame triggers after having experienced significant healing from shame in the past. The participants' answers revealed three categorical trends: relational vulnerability, permission to feel emotions, and vocalizing shame.

Relational Vulnerability

The interviews confirmed the importance of relational connection as it relates to the ongoing health of the pastor. All participants shared that to have relational connection requires the risk of vulnerability. Eric admitted, "I knew that if I was going to figure out what was happening inside I was going to have to let someone in." Alan similarly shared, "Keeping it inside was like trying to play tennis alone—it was impossible. I knew that I needed someone to help me." Bob put it plainly:

> I was such a fearful person that I didn't let anybody fully know me. This came out of several relationships early on in which I was foolishly vulnerable. My shame brought me to a point of decision. I could either stay where I was or I could let my defenses down and let a couple of safe people help me. Praise God that I surrendered my defenses and let others in. It was painful, but what I found, really what my friends and I found was a ton of fear—mostly the fear of being known. It was through those healthy experiences that I have now been able to share myself with others on an honest level.

Cole shared about vulnerability's role in his continued process of healing from shame, but first he clarified: "I always have been comfortable being transparent, but it wasn't until I became broken that I was willing to be vulnerable. Transparency can be described as the data of our stories while vulnerability is identifying the impact of our stories." It wasn't until sharing the impact of his story with his safe traveling partners that the shame was unveiled. Cole continued to share:

> Other people became deeply important when I moved to genuine and honest brokenness and was able to be vulnerable and feel safe—these people had always been there and it was almost like they showed up and said, 'We've been waiting for this, we've been praying that you'd stop finishing our sentences and feel like you needed to be the fourth member of the Trinity—be ordinary.' My friends called me out from behind my curtain and invited me in, broken and all— just as they were. They would tell me, "You teach us to do all of this but you have refused it yourself."

Don shared that continued growth for him has meant exercising vulnerability in ways both broadly and intimately. He shared, "I'm still learning to be vulnerable with everyone, but specifically with a few. I have to be focused on being open and real with a few, so I can be vulnerable with everyone. It is just like Paul and Timothy and the thorn. Vulnerability must be held with wisdom, or it can be further damaging."

Alan spoke from recent memory and appeared to continue to process as he was speaking, "I know that I need to be vulnerable, but I have continued to get hurt by unsafe people. I'm familiar with the hole I have found in myself—I'm caught in that shame place. I think this says more about my selection of those with whom I am vulnerable. I need to become wiser and maybe just keep my circle of vulnerability smaller to just a couple of guys." By saying this, Alan was processing the healing of shame by connecting his insights regarding the past with how he will make decisions regarding vulnerability and safe people in the future.

Frank shared about how healthy relationships invited him to be vulnerable. Vulnerability allowed him to see that he had spent most of his life hiding:

> I started to realize that most of my life I was hiding. As a child we kids hid from our father. We literally hid from him—jumped in the bushes when he brought the alimony. The phone was blocked—only outgoing calls from our house. We were in hiding, I was good at hiding. No heat in the house, our house, car, clothes, free lunches, food stamps and welfare all made me hide—I was embarrassed. Without knowing it these experiences on top of my absent father made me pretty good at hiding. I just didn't believe that anyone would ever want me.

Then entered Frank's then girlfriend and now wife:

> She just started to ask questions about me about the areas of my life that I was hiding. She kept asking what my desires were—what do I want. I didn't have a category for this. Warmth and welcome she brought to me. Then to get married and to live in such proximity to another human being exposed so much about my hiding. Going from hiding to a life of *coram deo* freed me and began to help me start to live a more vulnerable life.

Despite obstacles, Bob reported that vulnerability is the key to his progress. "Nobody is perfect, I'm sure not. It took time and a couple of times falling on my face to see the importance of putting yourself out there. If I hadn't just jumped, I would not be able to see some of the angels of my heart. That's what transparency does—it lets other people in to help you. Without putting myself out there I would still be going it alone."

Cole shared about how he was asked to be in a group of fifteen and seventeen guys. His mentor said that this group was full of guys that are too smart, too gifted, and too alone. Cole wasn't exactly excited about it but had deep respect for his mentor so he complied. He reflected how this group was healing to his shame:

> This group started as a place to share our ministry horror stories but soon became a time that we saw each other as safe enough to share our brokenness and our hearts. From this time many of the guys, including me, leaned into our brokenness and stewarded our shame together. Deep and heavy things were shared. These guys are still today my go-to group whether it is individually or during our annual get-together. When you are with men that understand and that say "me too" in their own way, healing begins to happen. This was the vulnerability of entering

> into my brokenness. We were being transformed as we were coming to stare down our idols structures, shame and sin patterns. Shared vulnerability was and still is a gift that is a part of my healing and continued health. It is important to have up close friends, and the dynamic of that is very important, but it is also helpful to have a larger group that is courageously sharing their stories of brokenness.

Permission to Feel Emotions

Pastors healing from shame voiced the importance to give themselves permission to feel emotions. Bob shared what his mentor preached to him. "To care well for others you must first learn how to care well for yourself. Take care of yourself and give yourself permission to be a human being." He went on echo his counselor's appeal. "Humans are wired to feel. The word *emotion* comes from the Latin word *emovēre*, which means 'in motion' or 'to move.' If you don't allow yourself to feel you freeze." Gil shared some of the same wisdom gleaned from his mentor, "Be nice to yourself. Give yourself permission to listen to your emotions."

Alan shared how barring emotions furthered his wounds and kept him from healing:

> Feelings were not talked about in my home growing up, so it is natural for me to hesitate when I start feeling stuff inside. I wanted the data not the eccentric mush. I always thought I could read myself out of feeling emotions, but it never worked. Instead I would just bury them, deep. I taught myself not to feel. That worked until I hit the bottom. That was when I discovered I was standing on top of my own graveyard—I couldn't go any deeper. My pain was piled on top of my buried pain. I tried not to feel—it had worked for so long but now I had to pay the piper.

Alan then talked about his counselor sharing with him a book called *The Wounded Heart* by Dan Allender. He reflected on what he calls his light bulb moment,

> It was that book that helped me get a vision for what hope is. I knew that I wanted hope, but had long ago let that dream die. Dan Allender wrote something like, "Hope waits, but doesn't keep still. Hope reaches for what is coming. Hope takes

> us to that risky place when we let it because hope perseveres." That has always stuck with me because the risk for me was to face what I was feeling and deal with it—I had never been able to do that before.

Eric shared how his wife often said to him, "It's okay to feel." He recalls in many of those moments he didn't reveal how angry he was hearing those words. He continued by saying, "I didn't want to feel, I wanted to fix it. I never put it together until after more than a decade of marriage that I'm a better husband, father, and pastor if I allow myself to feel what is happening inside of me and listen closely."

"I was the one that helped others work through their emotions," Bob shared in his frustration. "It was one of the hardest things to let myself be a regular human, just like someone in my care, and welcome the rush of emotions."

Vocalizing Shame

Assigning words to emotions proved to be a healing strategy for pastors dealing with ongoing shame triggers. The researcher observed from the participant's answers that learning to speak of shame is an essential part of the ongoing process of healing.

"Words matter." Alan said. "If I had a dollar every time my counselor asked me to explain what I'm fearful of and I couldn't, I'd be rich. It seems so clear in my head—it makes sense when it's up there, but when I try to put it into words, it's hard. I will catch myself feeling like a loser that a preacher can't find the words— shame is just wrapped up in all of this." Bob shared a similar statement. "When I am able to speak about what I am feeling something happens. I know this in my head, but I seem to default to silence. It's true, talking about this stuff declaws it." He spoke in particular to how his marriage was saved when he began to vocalize his shame:

> My mom was right when she used to say, "talking about it makes it better." It seems obvious, but we men run from talking. Because to talk we'd have to slow down long enough to get exposed. Talking about what is going on inside of me saved my marriage along with my ministry. There is no way around this one. Pastors are notorious for saying all the right things from the pulpit, but when they need to peel back the onion to what is going on inside them—forget it.

Participants shared specific activities that would trigger their shame and how vocalizing it brought it into the open to be faced. Eric shared about the shame trigger of having to get his prescription filled each month. "We have a pharmacy near our house that our family uses, but I have my own—it's on the other side of town. Every month I'm triggered by having to go to the pharmacy and pick up those pills. I'm wrestling with this trigger now. It's raw still." In the same mood Alan shared about his guardedness when going to his psychiatrist appointments. "I always tried to sneak away undetected, but if anyone asked I'd tell them I was going to a doctor's appointment—I hated being sneaky but I needed to, so I could feel safe."

Frank said that email was a shame trigger of his that needed to be vocalized. "I'm a haunted house when it comes to email. I see an email coming and I say 'OH NO.'" He continued to share about his inadequacies in evangelism and the shame that pressures him to not to be at home in his own skin:

> I experience shame all the time because I am not penetrating outside the church. I don't know how many times I listen to Tim Keller's sermons, but you know—he's just not rubbing off on me. I can't do what he is a master of. I'm wondering if shame is part of my story of engaging unbelievers. I would just kill myself over this—I then began thinking, "Can't I just be myself with unbelievers?" My shame was keeping me from sharing life with unbelievers. I'm not ashamed of God, but of me. This is one of my huge issues; so true for me in the "shame-zone" is evangelism.

Gil told a personal story that affirmed the power of speaking shame even though he initially had no interest in testing it:

> I hit the wall again and this time I could tell it was coming. At this time I had

> somehow learned that a local professor and psychologist was teaching a class on pastoral burnout. I called him up and asked for him to send me the required reading list—he said that he'd be glad to, but asked why? "Are your teaching on this?" he said. I said, "No, I think I am burning out and I want to read up on it." He asked me if I had told anyone. I said, "No." In my head I thought, "I wasn't going to tell my wife, she has little kids at home and didn't need to take care of me." I went on to justify to the professor that I didn't need a whole congregation of counselors approaching me. If I told the staff, they will lose confidence in me and so would the session, so just get me something to read and I'll get better… The professor laughed out loud and said, "Gil that is stupid, just stupid! You've got tell someone." I now know that vocalizing it helps break the power of shame and gets us out of the condemnation that the devil wants to lock us in.

Cole shared about his coming undone in the midst of his two friends. The healing started when he began to put words to his shame:

> There was then a time when I was with both of them at the same time, and I sat in a room completely undone feeling the weight of my brokenness and burnout. I declared in their presence that God has reminded me the fact that I hadn't been back to my mom's grave since she was buried forty years earlier. I began to voice my anger and pain and process this as core to my story. I had been hiding and not wanting it to be seen.

These pastors identified both the powerful echoes of past wounds and their continued process of healing when they are vulnerable in the presence of others, give themselves permission to feel emotion, and vocalize what they are feeling. When asked what has changed through his process of healing from shame, Cole spoke as a witness of the power of renewal:

> I linger longer. I listen more. I realize the importance of telling my story as the gospel is re-narrating it—as to not be a slave to the silence and voice of shame that is trying to condemn me and narrate my life toward fear and disengagement. A slower pace has been key. There is a greater willingness to be known by others. I'm freer to pursue people rather than checking off appointments. As to relationships, this journey and process has rewired me. My wife and I are better friends now than ever. I am more willing to enter the chaos of people lives without the need to fix it or explain it. Hopefully I am offering a more non-anxious presence.

Further Analysis of the Data

In further analyzing the data, the researcher observed that all but two of the respondents were hesitant to answer one of the researcher's final questions in the interview: What advice would you give to a pastor who seems to be suffering from shame? Interestingly enough five of participants declined and four of them said in similar ways that they aren't professional counselors and could only share their experience but wouldn't diagnose or give a prognosis to that pastor. The researcher found this trend to be indicative of shame's remnant masquerading in humility. The researcher noted that the word "advice" may have caused the participants to understand the meaning of "advice" more as "counsel" or "instruction," rather than "encouragement."

The researcher also made note of the hesitancy of five of the seven participants to use the word *shame* within their answers. Considering that all eleven protocol questions used the word *shame,* the researcher deemed this as important data. Possible reasoning may include the following: (1) Taboo nature in the church and the greater culture, (2) Lack of clergy education on the topic, (3) Confusion between the meanings of "guilt" and "shame."

The researcher found it interesting in the two previous observances that the process of shame healing is all too often kept from being realized due to silence.

Summary of Findings

In this chapter, the participants of the study were introduced and their insights concerning the questions that guided the research were presented and analyzed under common themes. The researcher appreciates the candor with which the participants

shared their lives and experiences. It was obvious that each one deeply cares for his congregation and is seeking to serve faithfully. The next chapter will be devoted to consolidating the research from the literature reviewed in chapter two and the interviews conducted in chapter four by comparing and contrasting the two, after which the researcher will make conclusions and offer recommendations.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study is to explore how pastors experience the process of healing from shame. In order to understand the process of healing, the following three research questions were used:

1. How do pastors become aware of their need to heal from shame?
2. How do pastors experience healing from shame?
   a. In what ways does the pastors' growing awareness of shame further healing from shame?
   b. In what ways and to what extent do relationships further healing from shame?
3. How do pastors deal with ongoing shame triggers after having experienced significant healing from shame in the past?

To explore these questions, three areas of literature were reviewed: 1) The Last Supper as told by the Gospel of Luke, 2) The healing qualities of vulnerability, and 3) Worthiness fostered in receiving empathy. Seven pastors who are male, evangelical in theology, and have served a minimum of ten years as the senior/preaching pastor were interviewed. Their insights regarding these questions were reported in chapter four. To consolidate the findings and arrive at the dissertation conclusions, the researcher has used the constant comparison method to organize the emerged data qualitatively into two main themes and their sub-themes. The remainder of this dissertation will focus on those

themes, closing with the researcher's personal conclusions, practice recommendations, and suggestions for further research beyond the scope of this work.

Summary of Findings

The hinge of human relationship firmly hangs the welcoming door for lifting shame. All seven interviews presented in chapter two verified the literature research that shame is born in relationship and healed in relationship.[213] This both/and conclusion attests that the human heart manufactures self-protective devices. However, the nature of a fortified heart comes with a hefty price that demands the currency of isolation, hiding, numbing and self-projection.[214] Participants' stories mirrored the literature and demonstrated that the defensive tactics of shame attempt to detain feelings such as fear, anger and anxiety.[215] As a result of this confinement, the pastors experienced psychological breakdown, physical illness, voluntary or mandated leave of absence, or reassignment.

Pastors who identified high levels of awareness were activated and further cultivated by relational safety, empathy, and vulnerability. In many cases the process of healing was not exclusive to a linear movement. For example, the participants showed the process of shame lifting begins in the initial formative stages of a participant's identification of shame; however, enduring awareness fostered healing in their present

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[213] Patricia A. DeYoung, *Understanding and Treating Chronic Shame: A Relational/Neurobiological Approach* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 23.

[214] Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2016), 121-122, 138-139.

[215] Edward T. Welch, *Shame Interrupted: How God Lifts the Pain of Worthlessness and Rejection* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2012), 23, 31.

experience and in navigating the predictable and undetected triggers moving forward. Cole spoke powerfully to this finding when he shared:

> Two friends helped me begin this journey. For me, this led to the ongoing process of healing through the well-crafted counseling that gave me more theoretical and theological language. This journey began in my early fifties. I began studying shame and how it is a core category through scripture. When this happened I began to see it everywhere . . . .We are never free from our shame. I like to use the language of stewarding our shame. We know our growth as leaders is dependent on knowing that the gospel is less about getting over something but more about growing through it.

Without relational attunement, demonstrated through acceptance, interpersonal vulnerability, empathy, guidance and awareness, the shame-lifting hope processed in the regulating experiences of reception, honesty, vocalization, and emotional permission, bonded in relationship, will never be realized.[216] Employing these tools takes courage that is much harder than building walls of protection. The researcher was deeply encouraged to witness the formative hearts and intentional practices of each of the seven participants. These men were courageous in their weakness holding to the gospel hope that, indeed, all things are being made new.[217]

Discussion of the Findings

The human experience is an intricate web of relationships, some healthy and others injurious. The nurturing connection of a mother to her newborn, or lack thereof, introduces and informs each one to the ever-unfolding interconnectedness within the growing circle of relationships. Over time that circle encompasses the larger relational spheres of public, social, domestic, virtual, professional and institutional life.

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[216] Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are* (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 2010), 19-21.

[217] Revelation 21:5.

In the case of the seven participating local church pastors interviewed in this study, the mounting pressure that came with heightened expectations in the public and professional spheres drove them to a place of crisis. It was revealed that in this space of crises, their broken relational past increased the volume of their inner-voice narratives of condemnation, self-doubt, and fear. This track, which gets played over and over, is called "shame," and its defensive strategies are like Band-Aids on deep wounds.

The greatest finding in this study can be summarized in one sentence: Shame is born in relationship and is healed in relationship.[218] [219] [220] Robert Hilliker spoke to shame's isolating phenomena. "Shame started as a two-person experience, but as I got older I learned how to do shame all by myself."[221] Pastors, like everyone, are following the instinctive ploys of shame—to hide. This natural reaction to shame's devices is to suppress. This response has equaled the classic results of a child laboring to keep a beach ball immersed under the water. Same as the ball's power to surface, shame will have its way to convince the pastors they are far too flawed and therefore, unworthy of love and belonging.[222] The participants reported their "beach ball" stories of breaking the surface of their hiding.

Shame: Born in Relationship

Participants were in agreement when sharing their stories of the seizing power of

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[218] Gershen Kaufman, *The Psychology of Shame: Theory and Treatment of Shame-Based Syndromes* (New York: Springer, 1996), 64.

[219] Brown, *Daring Greatly,* 75.

[220] DeYoung, 162-163.

[221] Brown, *Daring Greatly,* 67.

[222] Ibid.

fear. Shame travels with fear and silence. It was clear that the pastors interviewed spent a significant time in the waters of shame, remaining fearfully silent. Three participants spoke bluntly about the high bar that is implicitly set and reinforced in the pastorate. As the stakes mature, so does the pursuit for the relief valve called self-projection. These projections unmistakably possess the contamination to create space for the shepherd to hide in plain sight of his sheep. This not only impacts the congregation but every relationship the pastor has. When projections are nurtured, shame begins to interact with fear. A fearful pastor is plagued by shame in the unhealthy conditions of a variety of unrealistic expectations. One participant related that all of his ministry tricks were rendered powerless. Another echoed that he was driven by his fear of failure—dropping a ball or being found out not to be the pastor everyone believed he was.

Both the literature and the study's participants identified that fear often leads to perfectionism. Much of what is done in the pulpit and in the pastor's study can be motivated by fear. The fear of expectations leads to perfectionism that generates a fertile field for the fear to grow within the pastor.[223] Cole identified that shame always has to do with being seen. He calls it a gaze and identifies the dysregulated effect of some relationships as opposed to the healing gaze of a regulated God. This is consistent with what Curt Thompson writes in his book, *The Soul of Shame*:

> When we experience shame, we tend to turn away from others because the prospect of being seen or known by another carries the anticipation of shame being intensified or reactivated. However, the very act of turning away, while temporarily protecting and relieving us from our feeling (and the gaze of the 'other'), ironically reinforces the very shame we are attempting to avoid.[224]

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[223] Eileen Schmitz, *Staying in Bounds: Straight Talk on Boundaries for Effective Ministry* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2010), 128-131.

[224] Thompson, 31.

The dance of shame and fear is to blame for much of the emotional dysfunction in our pastors and churches. Many of the games pastors play to remain unknown on a deeper level are only cultivating a culture of fear that produces programs and performance instead of honest people of worship.

For more than half of the participants the themes of fatigue and desperation emerged. From those identifying participants, two of them experienced a ministry burnout that included either taking time away from the pastorate or coming under the care of a denominational committee and being reassigned. Additionally, Bob and Alan identified their experiences of fatigue and desperation in their physical body as the catalyst for burnout. The others charged their exhausted soul as the perpetrator.

Shame: Healed in Relationship

Healthy Relationships

Human flourishing requires healthy relationships. Surprisingly, the path of shame lifting turns out not to be all-together a new path, but the renewal of the well-worn and traveled one. This path is called relationship. If shame is born out of an interpersonal experience gone wrong and not a social abstraction, then it will also need to be healed between people and in relationship.[225] [226]

The participants identified that facing their shame by leaning into a healthy relationship countered their state of isolation and began shame healing. The voices of the

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[225] Gershen Kaufman, *The Psychology of Shame: Theory and Treatment of Shame-Based Syndromes (*New York: Springer, 1996) 64.

[226]Brown, *Daring Greatly,* 75.

participants highlight this relational paradox that echoes the literature reviewed. Thompson writes:

> Shame's healing encompasses the counterintuitive act of turning toward what we are most terrified of. We fear the shame that we will feel when we speak of that very shame. In some circumstances we anticipate this vulnerable exposure to be so great that it will be almost life threatening. But it is in the movement toward another, toward connection with someone who is safe, that we come to know life and freedom from this prison."[227]

Being welcomed and accepted by others was identified as healing by many of the participants. Don shared that the church can be quick to offer a remedy to experiencing shame, but that doesn't work. He concluded, "It is the acceptance and that you are welcomed, received, and belong." Being conditioned by shame, Alan had a hard time receiving empathy, and Eric admitted that it wasn't until he experienced a safe relationship that he knew its power to rewrite the embedded story from the dysregulated ones. Gil remembered feeling safe unlike in other relationships, especially his family of origin.

These healing qualities found only in relationship proved to be difficult at times to navigate in the church, especially as the leader of that local church. Paul Tripp in his book *Dangerous Calling*, warns pastors about the lurking dangers they will face as their congregations set expectations in regard to leadership, wisdom, discernment and compassion. He implores his pastor readers to come out of hiding before there is no possible way to hide anymore.[228] Participants were consistent in their conviction that church is a community, and if shame is healed in relationship, the church must be a

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[227] Curt Thompson, *The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 35.

[228] Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 94.

driving force of that reconciling movement. However, all too often the reality is that the church becomes a place where shame establishes its roots and grows.

All seven of the participants shared the pain of isolation. When they reflected on that isolation and were processing it, the participants defaulted to a painful, exposing path of vulnerability more than once, as opposed to a straightforward rejection of isolation as counterproductive and a joy in healing relationships. Not one spoke of vulnerability as easy, but as an intentional leaning into a relationship. Some shared about the healing qualities of their wives' acceptance; others pointed to their reluctance to open themselves up with even those with whom they felt safe. In one case, Gil shared about his disregard for a doctor and psychologist's plea to tell someone. Overall, their hesitancy was consistent with the literature. Brown branded shame's full glory is flaunted in isolation.[229]

The interviews and research agrees: vulnerability in relationship heals shame.[230] Several of the participants spoke of experiences where they felt genuine welcome and acceptance regardless of their current condition. Distance was covered by the bridge-like qualities of vulnerability. One pastor didn't even have a category for the empathy he felt from an elder. Don shared about an older gentlemen taking him under his wing and sharing a Quaker aphorism, "I see you," meaning, "I see you just the way your are and you are loved." Eric disclosed his procrastination to share his struggles with church elders. This hesitancy caused sleepless nights that ushered in mounting anxiety through distorted thinking. He continued saying that when he started with just a couple of men, he received the effect of safety in their eyes and hearts.

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[229] Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection,* 9.

[230] DeYoung, 164-165.

Generally, pastors are on public display. Many of the participants spoke of their survival tactics to hide in plain sight. Cole reflected on his survival tactic of transparency. "I always have been comfortable being transparent, but it wasn't until I became broken that I was willing to be vulnerable." He continued with illuminating the difference between the two, "Transparency can be described as the data of our stories while vulnerability is identifying the impact of our stories." The literature agreed, "Using vulnerability is not the same thing as being vulnerable; it's the opposite—it's armor."[231] For Cole and others it wasn't until they courageously stepped into the wild domain of vulnerability and actually became vulnerable that shame was laid bare and had to be faced. Hiddenness, the opposite of shame's relational healer called vulnerability, guarantees more shame.[232]

Courageous Attention

In the book, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*, Brené Brown shares a decade of her qualitative research on shame and its transformational agent called vulnerability. She says:

> Owning our story can be hard but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it. Embracing out vulnerabilities is risky but not nearly as dangerous as giving up on love, and belonging and joy—the experiences that make us the most vulnerable. Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of the light.[233]

The point she is making and that emerged from the interviews is the process of healing shame takes awareness and the cultivation of risk to new rhythms and practices.

Awareness proved to be foundational in fostering shame lifting in relationship.

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[231] Brown, *Daring Greatly,* 161.

[232] Thompson, 35, 104-105, 125, 144.

[233] Brown, *Daring Greatly,* 128.

Participants described their fresh awareness as painful but yet helpful and healing. The adage one participant shared, “two steps forward and one step back,” illuminates much of the hard work it takes to remain shame vigilant. That attention looked like this for one participant. “Once I could see it, I couldn’t ignore it any longer.” He continued by sharing a practice he had employed to remain courageously attentive to his shame—when he would feel fear (his indicator of shame), he would stop and deliberately ask himself, “Why am I feeling fear?” For all of the participants, paying attention to their feelings proved to be a hard skill to nurture. As men, many of them recounted how they were instructed as young children to ignore their inner life. A few of the other pastors recalled their upbringing couched in the conviction that all emotions were unreliable and must be defied at all cost.

Rest emerged in the interview data as a significant indicator to the presence of shame and also an instrument of shame lifting. However, it is important to note that participants reported the shared elements of solitude and shared life as important in their process of healing from shame. One pastor shared about how well his denominational restoration committee took care of him even though he ended up being reassigned after a longer period of time off than expected. He reflected on how rest under the care of that committee was shame-lifting. Another participant firmly believed that if it weren’t for his elders giving him permission to take a break, he would not have been able to heal.

The literature spoke of physical rest and renewal but did not address the difference that those interviewed illustrated between rest in solitude and in relationship. The interviews revealed the correlation that rest alone did not prove to be holistically redemptive without pairing it in relationship. Some of the participants identified spending

time in nature and silence but always came back around to how that rest enabled to be known by others and therefore fostered their healing. Gil shared that when he was ready to talk about his pain in the midst of crisis, someone was always there for him. The mutuality of their life experience was therapeutic for his heart, mind, and soul.

Likewise, relationships provided safe spaces for the participants to vocalize their shame. Whether the shame was clothed in fear, anxiety, perfectionism or its many other facets, those interviewed spoke of the redemptive qualities that resulted from the effect of vulnerability giving utterance to their shame in the presence of others. Many of these participants reported shaming experiences through the objectification of a parent, friend, or some authority figure. Whether it was explicit or implicit in nature, the participant shared the impact of those experiences on them for thirty, forty, or fifty plus years to the present. Once self-doubt was birthed in the participants, the haunting of a flawed self had incredible sticking power. Participants reported the power held in vocalizing their wounds, fear, and anxieties as a significant shame lifter. "Words matter," DeYoung says, "We learn from those outside of us how to do shame and then become the offender."[234]

Several of those interviewed shared about how they experienced newfound freedom in vocalizing their shame as those caring for them openly received them. They were welcomed to not be afraid of feeling emotions and to continue exploring an inner life. One participant had a counselor share that the Latin root of the English word "emotion" means "in motion" or "to move." This was revelatory for him, as he has literally experienced physical arrestment of fear and shame.

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[234] DeYoung, 25.

Sharing one's wounds in relationship heals shame. The interviews harmonized with the previous literature in this manner, such as when Brown writes about the power of words to break shame's grip. "Shame derives its power from being unspeakable. Shame hates having words wrapped around it. If we speak shame, it begins to wither. Language and story bring light to shame and destroy it."[235]

It was a challenge for the participants to allow themselves to be human, like everyone else in their congregations. Healthy relationships acted as an encouragement to rediscover what it means to be fully human and flourish. The default of shame is to hide, whereas the healing agent of shame is first exposure. Vocalizing shame's shackles gave power to the participants to process healing. One pastor shared about how he failed to make heart adjustments after falling prey to shame's power through his first breakdown. He ignored shame's hints hoping it would fade. Fear and anxiety joined shame's chorus, and the melody was louder than ever. He identified the importance of vocalizing what was happening inside. He reported that he lives differently now and leans into the safe relationships that allow him speak of shame and continue the process of healing.

One participant shared his tendency to linger longer and listen more to shame as an indicator of something deeper going on. He shared that awareness allowed him to share his weakness that resulted in freedom from shame's silence. The interviews distinctly revealed shame that loses its power when it is acknowledged and spoken about in relationship. Without this approach, the participating pastors conveyed that they would not be able to thrive in their personal, family, and public life as a healthy local church leader of God's mission.

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[235]Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 67.

Gospel Embrace

For many of the participants, the gospel hope was captured by their shame and held at a distance. The cycle of condemnation ran wild as their joy of the gospel freedom was confined to their foreboding island. In a majority of the interviews, pastors identified the challenge of preaching the gospel on a seven-day rhythm and not personally losing its power. It was reported that theology could often detach the heart from the head. One participant spoke of the journey from John 3:16 to Galatians 2:20 saying, "We can proclaim God's love for the world, but to say that the Son of God loves me and gave himself for me is a whole other thing." Others spoke of their urge to add to the gospel in hopes to qualify for its saving grace.

The participants who were interviewed were selected intentionally for their ecumenical diversity. Even though all interviewed were evangelical, the researcher aimed to test whether ecumenical diversity made a difference. Differing doctrine, polity, and traditions did not impact the presence and impact of shame. However, those participants from the Reformed tradition spoke more of theological head knowledge as restrictive for dealing with their deeper heart issues caused by shame. In contrast, some from Armenian traditions evidenced an unbalanced view on emotion. In light of the merged interview and literature findings, it was evident that gospel renewal requires both a heart posture of obedience and an intellectual grasp of the mission of God. An understanding of the theological areas of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and New Creation proved to be foundational.

A participant shared about how his preaching preparation and delivery had changed for him. He now preaches first to his own heart so that he can believe the gospel

for himself. The conviction to be proactive and constant calls a pastor to embrace the gospel personally. A broken vessel produces a generosity of heart that permits a person to step into weakness and receive the full promise of covenantal love and gospel grace. Pastors who embrace the gospel for themselves and not only for general pronouncement will be more likely to experience shame lifting.

The participant who began preaching to himself before he preached to his congregation also said that the more one admits the need for God, the more one will know the love of God. For all the pastors interviewed, this truth was simple to accept but difficult to practice in the depths of their own hearts. “Trying harder and doing more just doesn’t work,” a participant shared. When the gospel was embraced in a pastor’s weakness and given full permission to expose and renew, shame showed signs of retreat.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore how pastors experience the process of healing from shame. I, the researcher, anticipated a variety of themes on why pastors experience shame and how they experience the process of healing. What I discovered was quite the opposite. I found one overarching theme that could unmistakably be traced to every protocol question answered by all seven participants. Shame is born in relationship and is healed in relationship. Whether the relationship is with a peer, mentor, elder, or spouse, relationships were essential in lifting shame. This finding reflected the literature research. Openly, I hypothesized that there would be multiple factors to the healing process of shame. Three areas I strongly believed would emerge from the interviews were solitude, silence and contemplation. The study found two of three areas as key

components of shame lifting, but not exclusive to interpersonal relational connection.

The pastors interviewed not only identified the importance of relationship as an initial agent of shame awareness but also were unanimous in seeing it as a vital agent of healing to their ongoing triggers of shame. Pastors with twenty, thirty, and forty years of tenure openly and routinely admitted their propensity to do life alone, even after multiple burnouts. Time and again they forfeited sharing their life with others for fear that they would not be accepted. Sentiments of "If they only knew who I really was," echoed the shame-ridden heart of the pastors interviewed. With that wearisome belief came story after story that no area of life remained untouched by the impact of their shame.

Vulnerability played a starring role in each of the pastors' stories. Whether it was vulnerability with a wife, elder, friend or counselor, this step in the process of healing was identified emotionally difficult yet significant to their healing. Consistently pastors reported that vulnerability nurtured a secure and healthy relationship to explore shame's influence in their life. With this freedom to safely explore came the ability to be aware of one's shame and act vulnerably in proper ways that cultivate healing not promote injury. When a pastor was able to face shame, the natural next step in the process of healing was to open up and test vulnerability in relationship. Pastors spoke time and again about how key relationships created space for them to be human. When they were allowed to be human, both in their created beauty and sinful brokenness, they were able to progress in their process of healing.

Even though six of the seven participants never used the word empathy, their interviews were testimony to many examples of relational empathy. Being seen and loved is a demonstration of empathy. Permission to feel their emotions and the space to explore

them is evidence of empathy. Openly welcoming the pastors just as they are is empathy. One participant mentioned that he couldn't remember what the elders said to him, he only remembered their presence—that is empathy. The power of empathy is found in a posture of the one that welcomes. Each of these pastors shared stories that demonstrated this openness as a significant part of their process of healing.

Recommendations for Practice

The participants' interviews demonstrated the need for the local church pastor to cease from doing life alone. The question is not which pastors have shame; they all do. The question is, "How will pastors become aware of their shame and begin the life-long process of healing from that shame?" The answer was overwhelmingly proven in this study that shame lifting comes in in the form of a friend—relationship. Shame causes a pastor to retreat, pull-away, and isolate. I appeal to every pastor to take the courageous risk of being known by others. When pastors allow themselves to be known, healing becomes possible. Healthy relationships prevent a pastor from burnout and continual patterns of unhealthy relationships. They also cultivate a gospel embrace, resilience of exploring emotions, relational acceptance, openness to professional guidance, and courageous attention to ongoing triggers of past shame.

These findings support the wisdom and practice of local church pastors allowing a small circle of two or three safe people to know them fully. In relationship, shame will be exposed and healing will begin. It is in the sharing of one's broken life that the seed of renewal will have the fertile ground to produce health and wholeness.

Recommendations for Future Research

Having come to the end of this study, the researcher recommends several studies spurred on from this one proving beneficial to Christ's Church.

First, several of the pastors had experienced shame for most of their lives only identifying it when difficult circumstances or significant relationships forced them. In light of shame losing its power when we speak of it, how much more profitable would ministry in the local church be if pastors and laymen alike were given language and assisted in identifying their shame earlier on in their lives?

Second, the literature spoke of the culture of shame. It would be interesting to study shame and healing practices in other cultural contexts. Another aspect of that study would be how cultural norms travel when they are contextualized to foreign lands through immigration. Or how multicultural churches address shame patterns and address its impact and implicit messages?

Third, if and how shame transfers from pastor to congregation through church models based in business, entertainment, or prosperity. It would be interesting to explore how congregants become aware of the culture of shame in their church and how they heal from it when the inflictor of shame is the church's leadership. Another angle of possibility is how the pastor as counselor transfers shame.

Finally, since the core of this study emphasized the centrality of interpersonal relationships for the healing of shame it would be only natural and beneficial for the research of the importance of relationship in general for the pastor's health and wholeness.

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