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The Emotional Life of Seasoned Pastors

How Pastors Pursue Emotional Maturity

By
Andrew Flatgard

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

2025

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Graduation Date May 16, 2025

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Abstract

Research indicates that one-third of senior executives plateau or implode professionally due to a lack of emotional maturity evident in their inability to regulate their emotions during stressful times or in their inability to build teams. While there is literature to aid pastors with practical suggestions for sustainable ministry, there is a dearth of literature that investigates how pastors can pursue emotional maturity and what motivates them to pursue emotional maturity.

This study explored how seasoned pastors pursue emotional maturity in their ministry context. Four research questions guided the research: (1) How do pastors first become aware of their need to pursue emotional maturity? (2) How do pastors describe the goal of emotional maturity they are pursuing? (3) How do pastors pursue emotional maturity in their ministry context? (4) What continues to motivate pastors to pursue emotional maturity? The study employed qualitative research methods and used semi-structured interviews with six pastors.

The literature review focused on four areas to understand how pastors pursue emotional maturity: defining emotional maturity and describing it in the lives of pastors, differentiation of professional leaders, family systems theory and its relevance for pastors' emotional maturity, and a biblical-theological framework for emotional maturity.

The research revealed that emotional maturity for pastors is the capacity to stay connected to people while staying committed to a shared mission. Pastors experience motivation to pursue emotional maturity from their relationships with God, others, and themselves. Pastors who stay connected to people while staying committed to a shared

mission provide a less-anxious presence that fosters a community where people feel free to exercise their spiritual gifts.

Four recommendations emerged from the research. First, pastors must pursue emotional maturity through self-awareness and resting in God's love. Second, pastors should stay connected to people by utilizing healthy differentiation, family systems theory, and spiritual practices. Third, pastors must embrace a shared mission that emanates from the covenant with Abraham for the church to be faithful to God's mission in the world. Finally, pastors must fear the Lord and abide in Christ to pursue emotional maturity and to be faithful to a shared mission.

To Oleva and John Hanson

What makes the temptation of power so seemingly irresistible? Maybe it is that power offers an easy substitute for the hard task of love. It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people, easier to own life than to love life. Jesus asks, 'Do you love me?' We ask, 'Can we sit at your right hand and left hand in your Kingdom?'…

One thing is clear to me: The temptation of power is greatest when intimacy is a threat. Much Christian leadership is exercised by people who do not know how to develop healthy, intimate relationships and have opted for power and control instead. Many Christian empire-builders have been people unable to give and receive love.[1]

– Henri Nouwen

[1] Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 77, 79.

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Acknowledgements

Thank you, Covenant Seminary administrators, professors, and staff, for providing the Doctor of Ministry. Thank you, Dr. Jeremy Ruckstaetter and Dr. Tasha Chapman, for encouragement and guidance on how to write and finish this dissertation.

I wish to thank family and friends who bless me with their emotional maturity, kindness, and sacrificial love. Charlene Flatgard, Spence Flatgard, and Lou Ann Flatgard are my heroes in this respect. Thank you, Paul Kooistra, Jeremy Jones, and Dominic Aquila, for your friendship, wise counsel, and joy in Christ. Thank you to my dear children, Mary Spencer, Reagan, and Samuel, who by God's grace have emotional maturity beyond their years and through whom the Lord is so kind to grow me in emotional maturity.

Special thanks to the men who led me to saving faith in Jesus in the autumn of 1987 when the Spirit of God swept through Memphis Prep. Thank you Spence Flatgard, Andy Johnson, Daniel Boyd, John Bratton, Dick Butler, Randy Dye, West Hammond, Shawn Hunter, and Warren Peek for calling me to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Surely most of all, thank you, God, for your covenant love.

Abbreviations

ESV	English Standard Version
PCA	Presbyterian Church in America
RUF	Reformed University Fellowship

Chapter 1

Introduction

John is a natural leader. With an outgoing personality and a sincere interest in people, he easily makes friends, whether at church, in homes, at parties, or at soccer games. His sermons have colorful stories which bring the Bible to life in inspiring ways. John seemed to have the normal struggles we all have, people thought, and he shares those struggles openly in his sermons. People say his openness and vulnerability in his preaching felt authentic, organic, and real.

The church John planted five years ago grew fast, starting with a core group of twenty-five people, a first worship service with over one hundred people, and growing to a weekly church attendance of 250. With many young adults and young families attending, John's church had an energy and vitality that promised good things to come.

But as the first few years of the church plant passed, John began to change. His congregation noticed that he looked tired and that his joy in the Lord ebbed more than it flowed. Reports surfaced that he wasn't in the office much, and when he was in the office, his staff kept their distance from him. Why would his own staff, all of whom he hired, pull back from him?

While church members heard stories that John was becoming aloof, distant, and harsh with his staff, the most public effect of the change showed in John's preaching. What once sounded endearing and vulnerable now seemed inappropriate to Sunday

mornings and to children with listening ears. But most church members, including church leadership, dismissed their pastor's lack of discretion and joy. "He is just worn out by all he does for us," they reasoned. "And he has been through so much in his life. He may be like a bull in a china shop, but we need that kind of leader, right?"

It wasn't long before John's questionable leadership style drove people away from the church. Not everyone left, of course. Many people in the church had a long history with John. He had been there for them at pivotal moments in their lives when they needed a stable voice to assure them of God's provision and love. But staff that once richly embraced the church's vision and enjoyed their work resigned. Elders and lay leaders also quietly departed, or, as they put it, "escaped." John responded with accusations of insubordination, saying that those who left lacked toughness and were not committed to the church in the first place. Was the staff to blame? Did John change, or were deep-seated problems in his life now surfacing? While church members migrated to other churches, elders were unsure of what to do, if anything. They liked John and equated supporting his leadership and decisions with supporting Christ's church.[2]

How does this happen? How do some pastors become self-absorbed, demanding, and even abusive while others develop into joyful and mature pastors? The answer is not so simple as a lack of character, and the problem is not limited to senior church leadership. Writing in the *Harvard Business Review*, leadership experts Kerry Bunker, Kathy Kram, and Sharon Ting offer from research at the Center for Creative Leadership that "about one-third of senior executives derail or plateau at some point, most often due

[2] This story is an amalgamation of accounts.

to an emotional deficit such as the inability to build a team or regulate their own emotions in times of stress."[3] They further explain:

> The problem is a lack of emotional maturity, which doesn't come easily or automatically and isn't something you learn from a book. It's one thing to understand the importance of relationships at an intellectual level and to learn techniques like active listening; it's another matter entirely to develop a full range of interpersonal competencies like patience, openness, and empathy. Emotional maturity involves a fundamental shift in self-awareness and behavior, and that change requires practice, diligence, and time.[4]

The problem lies deeper than a need to develop social skills or self-awareness and instead arises from a lack of emotional maturity. The problem, therefore, requires deeper analysis.

Emotional Maturity and Psychological Safety

In the last 30 years, the field of emotional intelligence has flourished with research and publications that herald its value in the workplace. Daniel Goleman, a pioneer in the field, writes that emotional intelligence is "the sine qua non of leadership. Without it, a person can have the best training in the world, an incisive, analytical mind, and an endless supply of smart ideas, but he still won't make a great leader."[5] Roy Oswald, founder of the Center for Emotional Intelligence and Human Relations Skills, concurs when he states, "Emotional intelligence is essential for pastoral effectiveness. Without it, great sermons may be preached, effective pastoral care offered, and scripture

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[3] Kerry A. Bunker, Kathy E. Kram, and Sharon Ting, "The Young and The Clueless," in *HBR's 10 Must Reads on Emotional Intelligence* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2015): 143.

[4] Bunker, Kram, and Ting, 143-144.

[5] Daniel Goleman, "What Makes a Leader?" in *HBR's 10 Must Reads on Emotional Intelligence* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2015): 1.

interpreted soundly, but when a pastor does not have a relationship of trust with congregants, little transformation occurs."[6]

Goleman defines emotional intelligence as "the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing our emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships."[7] Specifically, in his book *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, he divides emotional intelligence into four domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. These domains include eighteen emotional competencies which he contends are learned abilities.[8] Goleman's neurological and psychological research further indicates that a leader's emotional intelligence "is carried through an organization like electricity through wires" and thus profoundly affects people:

> A leader's emotional intelligence creates a certain culture or work environment. High levels of emotional intelligence, our research showed, create climates in which information sharing, trust, healthy risk-taking, and learning flourish. Low levels of emotional intelligence create climates rife with fear and anxiety. Because tense or terrified employees can be very productive in the short term, their organizations may post good results, but they never last.[9]

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[6] Roy M. Oswald, "Emotional Intelligence and Congregational Leadership," *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry* 36 (2016): 1.

[7] Daniel Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, appendix 1, Kindle.

[8] Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2013), chap. 3, Kindle.

[9] Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, "Primal Leadership: The Hidden Driver of Great Performance," in *HBR's 10 Must Reads on Emotional Intelligence* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2015): 24.

Given the far-reaching effects of a leader's emotional intelligence, Goleman argues that emotional leadership is the leader's premier and primal task.[10]

Within the church, pastors are called not only to lead organizations but also to lead people into personal transformation and spiritual maturity. Such leadership first requires inner transformation and emotional maturity in the life of the pastor. "It is not possible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature," contends Peter Scazzero, pastor and author of *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*.[11] Pastors who lack emotional maturity, however gifted they may be, cannot lead people to spiritual maturity. Emotional maturity is more than applying the skills of emotional intelligence in relationships. For pastors, emotional maturity is the capacity to stay connected to people while staying committed to a shared mission. This includes not allowing the emotions of others to determine one's own emotions and behavior.

Pastors with emotional maturity can cultivate a church staff and community characterized by joy, mutual trust, healthy risk-taking, sharing, honest feedback, and commitment to a church's mission. Amy Edmondson, Harvard Business School professor and author of *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth*, describes the freedom people feel in an organization to share openly and to work together without fear as psychological safety.[12] When people feel psychological safety, Edmondson writes, they feel free to work

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[10] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, preface, Kindle.

[11] Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: It's Impossible to Be Spiritually Mature While Remaining Emotionally Immature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 19.

[12] Amy Edmondson, *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2019), chap. 1, Kindle.

together in teams and even feel obligated to provide candid feedback.[13] This kind of teamwork and honest feedback is invaluable to any organization. For the church, a lack of psychological safety will lead staff to pull back and ultimately to resign. Leaders and church members will retreat from serving and even hide from the pastor.

Pastors with emotional maturity stay connected to people in healthy ways and thereby create psychological safety for church staff and leaders. This relational stability enables people to engage fully in team ministry and to labor together with joy and energy to achieve a church's mission.

Differentiation: Healthy Connection to People

Differentiation is a concept from Murray Bowen who published his foundational book on family therapy in 1978. Within the realm of family therapy, Bowen states that a lack of differentiation is "the degree of our unresolved emotional attachments to families of origin."[14] Reframed positively, differentiation is the degree to which people resolve emotional attachments in their family-of-origin so that they can then relate to family members in mature ways. Beyond family therapy, differentiation has application for professional leaders; Bowen emphasizes in his book on family therapy that "differentiation of self principles apply in all areas of relationships whether it be within the family or in social or work relationships."[15] The theory that principles from family

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[13] Edmondson, chap. 1, Kindle.

[14] Murray Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, New York: 1992), 529.

[15] Bowen, 461.

therapy also apply to other relational systems, including organizations, businesses, and churches, is known as family systems theory.

Edwin Friedman, in his book *Generation to Generation*, argues that family systems theory and differentiation apply to work systems including businesses, schools, law firms, and medical systems.[16] In the workplace, workers exist in their own system of relationships, much like a family. In addition, people at work often relate to each other in ways similar to which they relate to family members in their family of origin.[17] Workers flourish in their work relationships to the degree that they stay connected to each other while understanding and managing their own emotions. A higher level of differentiation leads to more capacity to respond to inevitable anxiety in the workplace.

For pastors and the church, Jim Herrington, R. Robert Creech, and Trisha Taylor, in their book *The Leader's Journey*, define differentiation as "the ability to remain connected in relationship to significant people in our lives and yet not have our reactions and behavior determined by them."[18] For the pastor, for example, differentiation means following the life and teachings of Jesus rather than allowing the anxiety of people to determine feelings and decisions.[19] Moreover, Bob Burns, Tasha Chapman, and Don Guthrie in their book, *Resilient Ministry*, contend that an integral part of growing

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[16] Edwin Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1985), 197-202.

[17] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 197-202.

[18] Jim Herrington, R. Robert Creech, and Trisha Taylor, *The Leader's Journey: Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 18.

[19] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 18.

resilience in ministry is the work of differentiation.[20] They further describe how healthy differentiation functions in the life of a pastor:

> Differentiation involves not being afraid of others, not avoiding them and not being overly influenced by them. It means remaining connected to people with different opinions, yet not forming our beliefs or making our decisions based on the voice of our parents, the voice of a church officer, or even the voice of our spouse. It takes work, and that work includes times of reflection on our emotions.[21]

Two clear themes in differentiation include (1) staying emotionally connected to people in healthy ways while (2) not allowing others' feelings, especially anxiety, to control one's own emotions and decisions. Differentiation is a key aspect of emotional maturity that is well worth deeper analysis.

Family Systems Theory for Pastors

After initially applying his theory to help families with psychiatric illness and behavioral problems, Murray Bowen expanded his theory to apply to his work in teaching and administration at Georgetown University and the larger society. He posited that emotional issues in families also exist with the same dynamics in other organizations.[22] "Family Systems Theory contains no ideas that have not been part of human experience through the centuries," contends Bowen, meaning that the theory does not offer novel dynamics of human interaction.[23]

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[20] Bob Burns, Tasha D. Chapman, and Donald C. Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 123.

[21] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 124-125.

[22] Bowen, 464.

[23] Bowen, xiii.

With its focus on unresolved emotional attachment and eight integrated concepts, especially differentiation, family systems theory offers categories and a structured path for addressing emotional maturity. Roberta Gilbert, a student of Bowen's and author of *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory*, provides a framework of family systems theory with eight integrated concepts that she says form a logical progression:

1) Nuclear family emotional system
2) Differentiation of self
3) Triangles
4) Emotional Cutoff
5) Family Projection Process
6) Multigenerational Transmission Process
7) Sibling Position
8) Societal Emotional Process [24]

Theologians, counselors, university and seminary professors, pastors, and researchers have expanded and applied family systems theory into their fields. Edwin Friedman, family systems therapist and rabbi, applied family systems theory to educational systems, business, clergy, and congregational life in his foundational book *Generation to Generation* in 1985. "Family therapy can be applied to all work systems," says Friedman. When he applies it to congregations, he especially focuses on six concepts including a leader's nonanxious presence and overfunctioning.[25] Friedman contends that a nonanxious presence in a leader can modify anxiety throughout an entire congregation: "[T]he capacity of members of the clergy to contain their own anxiety

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[24] Roberta M. Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* (Lake Frederick, VA: Leading Systems Press, 2006), 3.

[25] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 197, 202.

regarding congregational matters, both those not related to them, as well as those where they become the identified focus, may be the most significant capability in their arsenal."[26] When clergy view their own leadership through a lens of family systems theory, they see the potential they possess to modify, encourage, and motivate an entire congregation to achieve its mission.

Building on Friedman's work, professors and pastors continue to apply family systems theory to pastoral care, congregational health, seminary education, and pastoral self-care. Family systems theory has enormous appeal to clergy as religious organizations function like nuclear and extended families and contain the same emotional issues as families. R. Robert Creech, professor of pastoral leadership at Baylor University, explains why congregational leaders find family systems theory attractive and helpful. In his article, "Generations to Come: The Future of Bowen Family Systems Theory and Congregational Ministry," Creech offers that clergy find the theory attractive because it is compatible with biblical teaching and theological categories. Family systems theory is a comprehensive way to describe how and why people interact the way they do.[27] The theory encourages clergy to think about their congregation holistically and to believe that change is possible. As pastors understand that they cannot control others, the notion that a pastor can affect an entire congregation through maintaining a modifying, nonanxious presence is especially appealing.[28]

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[26] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 208.

[27] R. Robert Creech, "Generations to Come: The Future of Bowen Family Systems Theory and Congregational Life," *The Journal of Family and Community Ministries* 28, no. 1 (2015): 73.

[28] Creech, "Generations to Come," 73.

Clergy also appreciate the focus on a pastor's personal life and self-care. As pastors come to believe that their personal lives have far-reaching consequences in the life of a congregation, their motivation to grow in emotional maturity and to take better care of themselves and their own families grows. When pastors engage in the hard work of differentiation, there is the potential for healthier relationships for pastors with themselves, their families, their friends, and with their entire congregation.[29] Furthermore, in the light of family systems theory, a full day of weekly Sabbath rest, enjoying a hobby, and regular exercise become crucial for the pastor to avoid burnout and to sustain joy in life and ministry.

An abundance of literature applies family systems theory to unresolved emotional issues in a pastor's family-of-origin. Books and articles exist to guide pastors through the eight integrated concepts of family systems theory to explain why people in their congregations act the way they do. Excellent research shows how pastors can reflect on their own differentiation so that they will better understand their presence and role in the congregation. Recent literature also details how pastors can grow in emotional intelligence and thereby increase their self-awareness and management of emotions. The books *The Leader's Journey* and *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* provide motivation and direction for personal transformation and ministry renewal as well.

While there is literature to aid pastors with practical suggestions for sustainable ministry, there is a void of literature that investigates the motivations pastors may have to start their journey toward emotional maturity. There is also a lack of literature for how pastors can maintain motivation for pursuing emotional maturity. What might motivate

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[29] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 125.

pastors, like John, to begin their journey of emotional maturity? What motivations might sustain the pursuit of emotional maturity for pastors in their forties, fifties, sixties, and beyond? Through interviews with six seasoned pastors, this study seeks to understand what motivates pastors to pursue emotional maturity in their ministry context.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore how seasoned pastors pursue emotional maturity in their ministry context. The researcher hopes that this study may increase awareness in pastors and others of the need to pursue emotional maturity. The study also provides biblical and theological teaching, psychological theory, and practical suggestions for how to pursue emotional maturity. Three main areas of study have been identified as primary to understanding and pursuing emotional maturity: development of emotional maturity, differentiation of professional leaders, and family systems theory for growth in emotional maturity.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the qualitative research:

1) How do pastors first become aware of their need to pursue emotional maturity?
2) How do pastors describe the goal of emotional maturity they are pursuing?
3) How do pastors pursue emotional maturity in their ministry context?
    a) How do pastors pursue healthy differentiation?
    b) What challenges pastors as they pursue emotional maturity?
    c) What helps pastors as they pursue emotional maturity?

4) What continues to motivate pastors to pursue emotional maturity?
    a) What motivates pastors from their emotional life?
    b) What motivates pastors from their cognitive life?
    c) What motivates pastors from their physical life?
    d) What motivates pastors from their social life?
    e) What motivates pastors from their relationships?

Significance of the Study

This study has significance for pastors, church leaders, and church members who desire to lead churches well and are willing to reflect upon and work toward emotional maturity in the context of overall spiritual formation.

First, there is significance for pastors. Church members often place a high degree of trust in their pastors by nature of their office. Consequently, the maturity (or immaturity) that pastors bring to their leadership in any denomination can have far-reaching and multi-generational effects. Family systems theory can also help pastors better understand the context of current debates within their denomination. The PCA is a young denomination that broke away from a much older denomination. Due in part to this separatist history, there remains suspicion in the PCA toward the accumulation of power. Applying family systems understanding to the PCA and its history can help pastors grasp how anxiety and fear interfere with efforts to unify in mission. This family systems understanding can equip a pastor to lead with emotional maturity by absorbing anxiety from others while pressing forward with missional leadership.

The Research Questions offer several lines of questioning to lead pastors to reflect on their pursuit of emotional maturity and associated quality of leadership. Initially,

pastors might ask themselves, “How would I define emotional maturity? When did I sense that I needed to pursue such maturity? Wait...have I even started to examine my family-of-origin and how my role in it affects how I interact with people now?” Next, pastors may consider what motivations they have to pursue emotional maturity. They might ask, “Are these motivations present in my life, too?” Finally, they may reflect upon what challenges and what encourages them now to pursue emotional maturity.

Second, there is significance for church leaders, including elders, deacons, and ministry leaders. In addition to considering how to pursue emotional maturity in ways mentioned above for pastors, church leaders might use this research to analyze the anxiety present in their congregation or church family system. If church leaders find that members are resistant to their leadership, church leaders could use a family systems theory framework to better understand the anxiety in their system and how they contribute to it. If church members lack joy in Christ and lack zeal for the church’s mission, leaders can ask how pursuing emotional maturity might lessen anxiety in the church and equip a congregation to be able to receive mature leadership.

Third, this study has significance for church members. Church members are by definition part of a larger group. They are organizationally united to each other and also the body of Christ, that is, the spiritual union of Christ and his people. Family systems theory can explain why church members feel resistance to forming new friendships and working together in ministry. Anxiety in a church understood in light of family system dynamics can alleviate frustration by providing insight into, for example, why church members recoil from new ministry ideas and resist change. Church members can respond

with emotional maturity as they search for and ally with other emotionally mature church members.

Definition of Terms

In this study, key terms are defined as follows:

Emotional Intelligence – The capacity to recognize one's emotions and the emotions of others and the ability to manage these emotions intrapersonally and interpersonally. Emotional intelligence requires self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy.[30] Much contemporary literature on emotional intelligence centers on improving workplace efficiency.

Emotional Maturity – The capacity to stay connected to people while staying committed to a shared mission. Emotional maturity requires self-regulation in response to others for the flourishing of a shared mission. A shared mission for pastors and church members emanates from the mission of God given in God's covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3 and throughout successive revelation including Jesus' parting words in Matthew 28:18-20.[31] Emotional maturity is necessary for spiritual maturity according to Peter Scazzero.[32]

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[30] Daniel Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, chap. 13, Kindle.

[31] Christopher Wright explains the church's mission as "our committed participation as God's people, at God's invitation and command, in God's own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation" [Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 23]. In response, Michael Goheen notes that this understanding does not emphasize mission first as what individual church members accomplish. Rather, the church's mission is a calling with a communal nature bound in relationship with God and his people (Michael Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today*, 25-26).

[32] Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, 19.

Mission – A mission is the stated objective of an organization which leadership expert Peter Drucker further explains as the "specific social function" of an institution.[33] Regarding mission for Christians, Michael Goheen states simply, "Mission is participation in the story of God's mission."[34]

Differentiation of Self – The capacity not to allow the emotions of others, especially anxiety, to determine one's emotions and behavior.[35] Differentiation includes separating one's intellect from emotions and separating the self from emotional family systems.[36] Murray Bowen acquired this concept from biological processes including cellular division.[37] Brian Majerus and Steven Sandage describe differentiation as a relational concept anchored in the three persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—as they are inextricably connected and yet remain distinct persons.[38]

Family Systems Theory – This theory espouses that in any family system, e.g., a conventional nuclear family or church family, two key variables affect each other: emotional maturity and anxiety of people in the system. Well-differentiated leaders have a capacity to modify the anxiety through their nonanxious presence and can help people and the family system to flourish in ways that benefit everyone.[39]

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[33] Peter F. Drucker, *Management – Revised Edition* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 26.

[34] Michael Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 11.

[35] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 18.

[36] Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory*, 26.

[37] Bowen, 394.

[38] Brian D. Majerus and Steven J. Sandage, "Differentiation of Self and Christian Spiritual Maturity: Social Science and Theological Integration," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 42.

[39] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 33.

Pastor – In the Presbyterian Church in America, a pastor is a person and called by a church body to provide spiritual leadership in accordance with the structures and policies of the Presbyterian Church in America. Pastors are sometimes referred to as teaching elders. With few exceptions, pastors in the PCA have completed graduate school seminary education and a rigorous ordination process.

Seasoned Pastor – A pastor who has been in ordained ministry for at least one generation, at least 20 years.

Assistant Pastor – A pastor called by the session to provide spiritual leadership under the authority of the senior pastor and session. An assistant pastor can be hired and removed from his position by a church session without the input and vote of a congregation.

Associate Pastor – A pastor called by the church congregation to provide spiritual leadership under the authority of the senior pastor and session. An associate pastor has often been an assistant pastor for several years before the session (that is, the group of elders and pastors elected by the congregation who exercise spiritual leadership and governance of the church) asks the congregation to elect the assistant pastor to become an associate pastor. An associate pastor is also a member of the session. For this reason and other reasons, some sessions will not allow associate pastors and will only allow a church to have assistant pastors.

Session – The group of elders and pastors who exercise spiritual leadership and governance of the church. Every session member is elected by the congregation. The session's members include the senior pastor, associate pastors (if any), and ruling elders.

Ruling Elder – A church leader who undergoes a training process to provide spiritual leadership under the authority of the session. A man must be elected by the congregation to serve before joining the session. While ordination for ruling elder is lifelong, some churches elect for elders to cycle off the session for a period of time, usually one year, after serving three to four years. Usually, the ruling elder must be elected again by the congregation to rejoin the session.

Deacon – A person elected by a congregation to serve in a diaconal role. Deacons often tend to the material, physical, and financial needs of the congregation and community while also providing spiritual assistance and encouragement.

Presbytery – A presbytery is a governing church body comprised of all churches, pastors, and a proportion of ruling elders in the geographical region. A pastor's church membership resides in his local presbytery. Presbytery meetings occur usually three to four times per year and ideally provide opportunities for encouragement, accountability, and mutual laboring toward pastoring and growing churches.

RUF Campus Minister – RUF is an acronym for Reformed University Fellowship, which is the official college campus ministry of the Presbyterian Church in America. An RUF campus minister is a pastor who has graduated from seminary and completed a rigorous ordination process.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to explore how seasoned pastors pursue emotional maturity in their ministry context.

The literature review provides a foundation for conducting and interpreting the qualitative research of interviews with six pastors. Four relevant areas of literature provide a context for understanding emotional maturity in the lives of pastors:

1) Defining emotional maturity and describing it in the lives of pastors;
2) Differentiation of professional leaders as the literature claims that differentiation is essential for emotional maturity;
3) Family systems theory and its relevance for emotional maturity in the lives of pastors;
4) A study of biblical and theological data relevant to emotional maturity.

This survey of emotional maturity in contemporary and ancient literature will demonstrate that spiritual maturity requires commensurate growth in emotional maturity, especially in the lives of pastors who desire to lead people in spiritual renewal.

Emotional Maturity and Pastors

Emotional intelligence is recognizing one's feelings, as well as those of others, and managing emotions well in relationships, according to Daniel Goleman, a pioneer

and premier researcher of emotional intelligence.[40] Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, in their book *Primal Leadership*, further define emotional intelligence with four emotional capacities: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.[41] Moreover, Goleman subdivides these four domains into eighteen emotional competencies.[42] While emotional intelligence can improve workplace efficiency for teams of people, emotional maturity includes an additional dimension for pastors. For pastors in their ministry context, emotional intelligence is the capacity to stay connected to people, as researchers of emotional intelligence advocate, but it also includes leading people toward a shared mission.

The Value and Limit of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is a burgeoning field of study that focuses on research and categories for awareness and emotional connection in workplace relationships. Goleman grounds our capacity for emotional intelligence in the lower regions of the brain known as the limbic area.[43] This is the emotional area of the brain, or the "heart" of the "head and the heart" dichotomy that people reference in daily decision making, he says.[44] In contrast to emotional intelligence, or EQ, the center of our intellectual intelligence, or IQ,

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[40] Daniel Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam, 1998), chap. 13, Kindle.

[41] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, chap. 2, Kindle.

[42] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, chap. 3, Kindle.

[43] Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, appendix 1, Kindle.

[44] Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* (New York: Bantam Books, 1997), 8.

lies in the upper region or neo-cortex of the brain. Roy Oswald, founder of The Center of Emotional Intelligence and Human Relations Skills in Pasadena, California, writes that while a person's IQ remains constant over a lifetime, research indicates that the limbic, or "feeling," region of the brain can dramatically grow in wisdom and dexterity over time through connection with people. In addition, while Edwin Friedman notes from brain research that the brain "always processes emotional processes and data simultaneously," Oswald offers that the limbic area exercises control over the intellectual area of the brain as "it is the limbic brain that decides which kind of reasoning to follow in addressing any particular challenge."[45]

The field of emotional intelligence offers invaluable research-based recommendations toward growing in emotional intelligence. However, regarding the limiting nature of the term emotional intelligence, Friedman writes that "the very term shows how difficult it is to get away from models of the brain that are not reduced to psychological concepts."[46] He argues that a conceptual leap beyond mere intelligence is needed for a deeper understanding of our emotions. To develop a deeper understanding of our emotions that goes beyond the goal of managing emotions and relationships in the workplace, Oswald notes that communities such as churches and our families-of-origin can provide healthy opportunities to grow in self-awareness and emotional maturity.[47]

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[45] Oswald, 104.

[46] Edwin Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (New York: Seabury Books, 2007), chap. 3, Kindle.

[47] Oswald, 105.

Emotional Maturity for Pastors Includes a Shared Mission

For pastors in their ministry context, emotional maturity is the capacity to stay connected to people while staying committed to a shared mission. In their book, *The Leader's Journey*, Herrington, Creech, and Taylor describe emotional maturity in a pastor as the capacity "to call a congregation to discern and pursue a shared vision, to remain connected with those who differ with the leader or the majority, and to remain a calm presence when the anxiety rises."[48] Emotional maturity functions like a reservoir that holds the water of inevitable anxiety.[49] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor state that pastors who stay connected to people, while managing anxiety and encouraging people toward a vision, "create waves of growth toward maturity capable of spreading through the congregation and the surrounding community, even in these interesting times."[50]

R. Robert Creech, professor of pastoral leadership at Baylor University, in his article, "Sustainable Church: Practices that Make for a Lifetime of Service," advocates that pastors must provide two essential qualities for congregational leadership: a missional focus and a clear vision. Like a midwife, Creech argues, pastors must guide the congregation, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to give birth to a shared mission that can provide clear direction and hope.[51] Such guidance presumes a pastor's emotional

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[48] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 54.

[49] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 43.

[50] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 95.

[51] R. Robert Creech, "Sustainable Church: Practices That Make For a Lifetime of Service," *Review and Expositor* 113, no. 3 (August 2016): 291-292.

connection to the congregation to be able to lead people to define and embrace a shared mission.[52]

Leroy T. Howe, professor emeritus of pastoral theology at the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, also calls for pastoral leadership that goes beyond emotional connection. Howe writes that church members need leadership that is anchored not only in emotional connection with the pastor "but also in the integrity of their pastors' commitment to a God-inspired vision that challenges both its purveyors and its hearers to a deeper, more authentic faith."[53] Howe argues that a God-inspired mission can draw both pastor and parishioners into a deeper connection with each other and with God, challenging the whole church to reach out beyond themselves. The challenge for pastors who desire to grow in emotional maturity is to stay connected to people while staying committed to a shared mission.

Staying Connected to People

There is broad consensus as to the four areas of emotional intelligence in which people can grow. Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves, in their book *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, concur with Goleman that these four areas are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.[54] They further divide these

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[52] Creech, "Sustainable Church," 290-291.

[53] Leroy T. Howe, "Self-Differentiation in Christian Perspective," *Pastoral Psychology* 46, no. 5 (May 1998): 361.

[54] Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves, *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* (San Diego, CA: TalentSmart, 2009), 23; Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, chap. 2, Kindle.

four areas into two categories: personal competence and social competence.[55] Bob Burns, Tasha Chapman, and Donald Guthrie, in their book *Resilient Ministry*, likewise bifurcate the four areas using the terms "EQ-self" for personal competence and "EQ-others" for social competence:[56]

Personal Competence *(EQ-self)*	1. Self-Awareness	2. Self-Management
Social Competence *(EQ-others)*	3. Social Awareness	4. Relationship Management

Table 1. Emotional Intelligence in Quadrants

Self-Awareness

The essential importance of self-awareness relative to the other areas of emotional intelligence can hardly be overstated. Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee argue that cultivating self-awareness is the foundation of emotional intelligence and is essential for connecting with people.

> Self-awareness—often overlooked in business settings—is the foundation for the rest: Without recognizing our own emotions, we will be poor at managing them, and less able to understand them in others. …In short, self-awareness facilitates both empathy and self-management, and these two, in combination, allow effective relationship management.[57]

[55] Bradberry and Greaves, 23.

[56] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 103.

[57] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*, chap. 2, Kindle.

"[S]elf-awareness makes the other emotional intelligence skills much easier to use," say Bradbury and Greaves.[58] Oswald also asserts that self-awareness is foundational for growth in emotional intelligence.[59] From his research, Goleman argues that self-awareness is also the prerequisite for empathy.[60]

Goleman defines self-awareness in his article, "What Makes a Leader?", as "a deep understanding of one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, needs, and drives."[61] Indications of self-awareness, he states, include "self-confidence, realistic self-assessment, self-deprecating sense of humor, [and] thirst for constructive criticism."[62] Chris Adams, director of the Center for Vocational Ministry at Azusa Pacific University, and Matt Bloom, director of the Wellbeing at Work Program at Notre Dame, from their research on resilience in their article, "Flourishing in Ministry: Wellbeing at Work in Helping Professions," write that self-awareness is "the capacity to step back from the flow of life to notice what we are feeling, thinking and doing. Self-awareness creates the potential to think about whether these thoughts, feelings and actions are good for ourselves and others."[63]

"People high in self-awareness are remarkably clear in their understanding of what they do well, what motivates and satisfies them, and which people and situations

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[58] Bradberry and Greaves, 26.

[59] Oswald, 105.

[60] Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, 136, 182-183.

[61] Goleman, "What Makes a Leader?", 7.

[62] Goleman, "What Makes a Leader?", 4.

[63] Chris Adams and Matt Bloom, "Flourishing in Ministry: Wellbeing at Work in Helping Professions," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 36, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 256.

push their buttons," explains Bradberry and Greaves.[64] Furthermore, self-aware leaders are able to speak realistically and candidly "although not necessarily effusively or confessionally" concerning their emotions and their work, says Goleman.[65] In short, people with self-awareness can recognize and interpret their emotions, delineate their strengths, weaknesses, and motivations, and orient themselves to connect and empathize with people.[66]

Growing in self-awareness requires reflective practices. "Reflection is the discipline to stop and consider what we are thinking and feeling, as well as what we have been doing and saying to others," state Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie. They further state that a lack of reflection can subvert growth in emotional intelligence.[67] Adams and Bloom write that their research indicates that the unique nature of pastoral work leads to role complexity and role ambiguity that may reduce happiness.[68] Their research on resilience suggests that self-awareness requires reflection upon our emotions "especially in terms of whether or not they are appropriate, good, helpful, or otherwise positive for ourselves, other people, and the world around us."[69] Their research with pastors who

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[64] Bradberry and Greaves, 25.

[65] Goleman, "What Makes a Leader?", 10.

[66] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, chap. 2, Kindle.

[67] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 110.

[68] Adams and Bloom, 255.

[69] Adams and Bloom, 256.

burned out indicate a lack of reflective practices such that subjects admitted they were unaware of their downward spiral and were surprised when they crashed.[70]

A good place to start with self-awareness of emotions, according to Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, is to ask a friend to offer feedback on visual and verbal communication.[71] They suggest specifically asking about one's facial expressions, rhythm and tone of voice, and posture.

From their research with pastors, additional reflective practices include slowing down to feel and family-of-origin work. Acknowledging that people often slow down only during vacation or sickness, they offer the practice of journaling one's emotions including feelings, hopes, and fears.[72]

Family-of-origin work, through the creation of a family genogram, can help a person identify unknown patterns of thinking and behavior.[73] In sharing the significance of his own genogram work, Peter Scazzero strongly advocates for family-of-origin processing to increase self-awareness:

> The work of growing in Christ…does not mean we don't go back to the past as we press ahead to what God has for us. It actually demands we go back in order to break free from unhealthy and destructive patterns that prevent us from loving ourselves and others as God designed.[74]

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[70] Adams and Bloom, 257.

[71] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 120-121.

[72] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 119.

[73] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 121-122.

[74] Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, 28.

As self-awareness grows and strong emotions surface, Bradberry and Greaves caution that a common and immediate human response is to designate emotions as good or bad. They caution against such initial judgment:

> When you allow yourself to sit with an emotion and become fully aware of it, you can understand what is causing it. …Passing judgment in whether you should or shouldn't be feeling what you are feeling just heaps more emotions on top of the pile and prevents the original feeling from running its course.[75]

Self-awareness that reveals the presence and power of one's own emotions naturally lays a foundation for self-management.

Self-Management

Self-management, also known as self-regulation, is "the managing of one's internal states, impulses, and resources" according to Goleman.[76] Bradberry and Greaves further explain that self-management is "your ability to use awareness of your emotions to actively choose what you say and do. …This means managing your emotional reactions to situations and people."[77]

Emotional self-management is not synonymous with suppressing emotion. Goleman writes that his research shows that persistent stifling of emotion impairs thinking and social interactions.[78] Instead, Goleman offers, healthy self-regulation "frees us from being prisoners of our own feelings" as we manage and redirect emotions and

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[75] Bradberry and Greaves, 63-64.

[76] Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, 26.

[77] Bradberry and Greaves, 97, 32.

[78] Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, 81.

impulses to healthy outcomes.[79] More specifically, Bradberry and Greaves explain that healthy self-management "ensures you aren't getting in your own way and doing things that limit your success. It also ensures you aren't frustrating other people to the point that they resent or dislike you."[80]

Healthy self-regulation of emotions is essential for resilience according to Adams and Bloom. They further observe and recommend, "Helping professions require a great deal of self-regulation, by the very nature of their work."[81] Their research with pastors who burned out indicates that pastors with high resilience exercise self-regulation as anxiety rises. Aware of their rising stress level, they create and honor boundaries for work to prevent overworking.

Characteristics of healthy self-management include self-control, trustworthiness, and adaptability according to Goleman.[82] If emotional maturity is like a reservoir and rising anxiety is the water level, using the metaphor that Herrington, Creech, and Taylor propose in *The Leader's Journey*, then emotional self-management requires a growing capacity to manage one's own anxiety and the anxiety of others.[83] Moreover, indicators of healthy emotional self-management are easy to observe and include "a propensity for

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[79] Goleman, "What Makes a Leader?", 12.

[80] Bradberry and Greaves, 98.

[81] Adams and Bloom, 256-257.

[82] Adams and Bloom, 256-257.

[83] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 43.

reflection and thoughtfulness; comfort with ambiguity and change; and integrity—an ability to say no to impulsive urges."[84]

To address sustainable ministry for pastors, Creech draws from author Wendell Berry to suggest spiritual practices of self-care that aid in self-regulation of emotions. Creech asserts that emotional and relational health as well as the physical well-being of the pastor must be addressed to foster personal wholeness. Starting with the pastor's relationship with God, he cites the gospels for guidance from the life of Jesus as he recommends solitude, fasting, prayer, and meditation.[85] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie add reflection, continual repentance, and Sabbath.[86] Acknowledging that the mere mention of spiritual disciplines elicits feelings of failure for most of us, they advocate for every Christian to consider carefully which rhythms and routines may nurture spiritual formation according to each person's "mental, physical, emotional, and social aspects."[87] Scazzero highlights the practices of a Daily Office (including a routine of stopping, centering, silence, and scripture) and Sabbath.[88] In addition, Andy Crouch, in his book *Strong and Weak*, emphasizes solitude, silence, and fasting as the three most essential spiritual disciplines. He claims these routines aid in self-awareness as they reveal our

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[84] Goleman, "What Makes a Leader?," 14.

[85] Creech, "Sustainable Church: Practices That Make For a Lifetime of Service," 295.

[86] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 48, 53-54.

[87] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 40, 48.

[88] Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, 159-162.

limits and expose our dependence on affirmation, self-assertion, food, and other good things.[89]

Creech also highlights the value of a pastor's physical well-being for increasing energy.[90] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie note that physical exercise assists with management of emotions.[91]

Siang-Yang Tan and Melissa Castillo in their article, "Self-Care and Beyond: A Brief Literature Review from a Christian Perspective," argue that rest enhances self-care and management of emotions. They offer nine ways to experience rest:

> …shepherd-centeredness in Christ that involves abiding in Christ (John 15:5), Spirit-filled surrender such that one fully submits oneself to the Lordship of Christ, solitude and silence, simplicity, Sabbath-keeping, sleep, spiritual community, servanthood, and stress management from a biblical perspective that promotes love and humility….[92]

While acknowledging that self-care can help people manage their emotions and avoid burnout, Tan and Castillo warn that the goal of self-care should not be emotional or spiritual balance, noting that spiritual disciplines "stretch us and may knock us out of balance at times, but lead to spiritual maturity…."[93] Similarly, in her article, "Out of Balance: Why I Hesitate to Practice and Teach 'Self-Care'," Sally Schwer Canning of Wheaton College states that both secular and religious literature position self-care chiefly

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[89] Andy Crouch, *Strong and Weak: Embracing a Life of Love, Risk, and True Flourishing* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 167.

[90] Creech, "Sustainable Church," 294.

[91] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 117.

[92] Siang-Yang Tan and Melissa Castillo, "Self-Care and Beyond: A Brief Literature Review from a Christian Perspective," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 92.

[93] Tan and Castillo, 92.

as a means to avoid burnout and to cultivate balance in life.[94] Canning agrees with the value of self-care practices including attention to spiritual disciplines and the body. However, instead of the term "self-care", she recommends the term "stewardship"[95] due to the New Testament's focus on using our gifts for the benefit of the community of faith.[96] Furthermore, Canning says that the lives of Jesus, Moses, Esther, and Paul do not appear balanced to her.

Rather than thinking of self-care primarily as a means to avoid burnout and to achieve emotional balance, Canning places self-care within the New Testament metaphor of athletic training.

> Employing the perspective of athletic training…allows me to consider how rest and replenishment may be woven into the overall fabric of my identity and purposes in the Lord. In other words, the framework provides me with an alternative to viewing them as *distractions* from my calling to service, or *competing interests*. Instead, I may come to see them as integral components of a life oriented around an overarching, defining devotion to God and to my calling as a caregiver.[97]

Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee claim that emotional self-management lays the foundation for the essence of social awareness which they define as empathy.[98]

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[94] Sally Schwer Canning, "Out of Balance: Why I Hesitate to Practice and Teach 'Self-Care'." *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 30, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 70.

[95] Canning, 71.

[96] Canning, 71.

[97] Canning, 73-74.

[98] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, chap. 3, Kindle.

Social Awareness and Relationship Management

Social awareness centers on "your ability to recognize and understand the emotions of others," according Bradberry and Greaves.[99] Beyond accurately perceiving others' emotions, Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee emphasize that social awareness must include empathy which they define as "sensing others' emotions, understanding their perspective, and taking active interest in their concerns."[100] They use the words social awareness and empathy interchangeably.[101]

Empathy includes a concerted quieting of one's own heart to be able to focus on other people. Bradberry and Greaves put it plainly that empathy initially means that we must "stop talking, stop the monologue that may be running through our minds, stop anticipating the point the other person is about to make, and stop thinking ahead to what we are going to say next."[102] This self-management allows the listener to receive visual and verbal cues from others. Going deeper than perceiving others' emotions, Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie state that empathy must include "the willingness to understand and seriously consider the other's views and objectives, especially when those perspectives differ from our own."[103]

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[99] Bradberry and Greaves, 136.

[100] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, chap. 3, Kindle.

[101] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, chap. 3, Kindle.

[102] Bradberry and Greaves, 38.

[103] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 113.

Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee write that their research shows that "the triad of self-awareness, self-management, and empathy culminate in relationship management."[104] Goleman distills relationship management to "friendliness with a purpose."[105] Bradberry and Greaves define relationship management as the connections you build and your ability to manage interactions successfully.[106] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee argue that relationship management includes developing others through providing feedback and building bonds through extensive networks.[107]

Relationship management skills grow through developing the first three areas of emotional intelligence and include skills that can be learned.[108] To grow in relationship management, Bradberry and Greaves highlight openness and curiosity.[109] These heart postures communicate desires of genuine connection and interest.

Beyond growing in relationship management skills including teamwork and collaboration, Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee claim that relationship management includes guiding and motivating people with a compelling vision that by its nature aids connection.[110]

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[104] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, chap. 3, Kindle.

[105] Goleman, "What Makes a Leader?", 19.

[106] Bradberry and Greaves, 43.

[107] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, chap. 3, Kindle.

[108] Bradberry and Greaves, 177.

[109] Bradberry and Greaves, 181.

[110] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, chap. 3, appendix b, Kindle.

> A vision that "tunes people in"—that creates resonance—builds organizational harmony and people's capacity to act collectively. The invisible threads of a compelling vision weave a tapestry that binds people together more powerfully than any strategic plan.[111]

Goleman, Boyatzis, McKee argue that while developing emotional intelligence is necessary to stay connected with people, organizational transformation requires the modifying power of a compelling vision.[112] Pastors, by nature of their calling to lead people, must lead people with a shared mission. The capacity to stay connected to people while leading them with a shared mission is the heart of emotional maturity for pastors.

Differentiation of Professional Leaders

Murray Bowen developed the concept of differentiation in the context of his work in family therapy. He theorized that the primary reason people struggle in their relationships is the fusion of emotional and intellectual functioning.[113] When intellect is overrun by emotions, Bowen argued, people become less flexible and easily stressed.[114] His solution was to encourage people to separate, or differentiate, their intellect from their emotions to allow their intellect to reign in decision making. Friedman further explains that differentiation is the capacity to define clearly one's own life and priorities "apart from surrounding togetherness pressures, to say 'I' when others are demanding 'you' and 'we.' It includes the capacity to maintain a relatively nonanxious presence in

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[111] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, chap. 10, Kindle.

[112] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, chap. 10, Kindle.

[113] Bowen, 362.

[114] Bowen, 362.

the midst of anxious systems, to take maximum responsibility for one's own destiny and emotional being."[115]

Bowen created a differentiation of self scale from 0-100 to demarcate assessment of differentiation by quartiles.[116] Roberta Gilbert, a student of Bowen's and author of *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory*, explains that people at the lower end of the scale are emotionally fused with other people, easily passing anxiety back and forth with others. Due to emotional fusion with others, they succumb to what Bowen called a force of togetherness.[117] People at the higher end of the scale separate their thinking from what they feel, have less anxiety, and thus increase capacity for relationship.[118] They embrace the power of separateness while remaining connected to people.[119] Bowen states that while a differentiation of self scale may seem similar to an emotional maturity scale, his view of differentiation avoids concepts of emotional health and emotional maturity.[120]

Separateness and Togetherness

Individuality, or separateness, is central to understanding differentiation according to Gilbert.[121] Growth in self-differentiation requires individuality—understood first as the

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[115] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 27.

[116] Bowen, 364.

[117] Bowen, 218.

[118] Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory*, 28.

[119] Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory*, 31.

[120] Bowen, 472. This is a reason why the terms differentiation and emotional maturity are not interchangeable.

[121] Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory*, 26.

internal work of separating thinking from emotion. Second, growth in self-differentiation requires individuality within the emotional systems, that is, the relationship networks, in which a person lives.

The prime example of an emotional system in which a person must do the hard work of differentiation is a person's family-of-origin. The work environment also operates as an emotional unit. Peter Steinke, author of *Uproar: Calm Leadership in Anxious Times*, explains how the forces of separateness and togetherness, respectively, can pull professional leaders to extremes:

> Either the leader becomes unengaged with others (acts rigidly, dominates, withdraws, becomes overly dogmatic) or too close (panders, seeks consensus, shifts with the wind for the sake of harmony). Rather than leading from one's convictions and vision, the leader allows nonthinking and reflexive action to determine behavior.[122]

Steinke advocates for a leader to lead out of conviction to maintain a nonanxious presence.

Bowen proposed that his theory of differentiation applies in all contexts and cultures and with all genders: "This concept is so universal it can be used as a way of categorizing all people on a single continuum."[123] Researchers around the world challenge his overarching assumption that his theory of differentiation has universal application. Carmen Knudson-Martin, professor of counseling at Loma Linda University, writes in her article, "The Female Voice: Applications to Bowen's Family Systems Theory," that Bowen's embrace of separateness as the hallmark of healthy relationships

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[122] Peter L. Steinke, *Uproar: Calm Leadership in Anxious Times* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006), chap. 1, Kindle.

[123] Bowen, 362.

"leaves out the female experience in which women discover themselves through connections with others."[124] While praising Bowen's teaching that the family operates as an emotional unit, Martin warns that his theory of differentiation may marginalize the female experience:

> Traditional theories of human development [like Bowen's] have been based on a "separate" model where maturity is equated with increasing autonomy and rational, self-directed behavior. When judged according to this model, women often appear not to have developed a sense of self, and persons with highly developed reason have been considered more mature than those with highly developed emotions.[125]

As the theory of differentiation emphasizes separateness in contrast to togetherness, Martin asserts that Bowen's theory "does not fully capture the reciprocal nature of individuality and togetherness and therefore does not completely include the female experience."[126]

While Bowen's theory of differentiation may omit the female experience, the theory may also ignore the experiences of people in other cultures who see separateness and togetherness in reciprocity. Gizem Erdem, professor of psychology at Koç University in Istanbul, Turkey, and Ommay Aiman Safi, research assistant at Koç University, in their article, "Bowen Family Systems Theory from a Cultural Perspective: An Integrative Framework," cite research conducted in Turkey, South Korea, and Japan that indicates healthy functioning in relationships among people who evidence both high separateness

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[124] Carmen Knudson-Martin, "The Female Voice: Applications to Bowen's Family Systems Theory," *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 20, no. 1 (January 1994): 35.

[125] Knudson-Martin, 36-37.

[126] Knudson-Martin, 37.

with high togetherness.[127] They argue that these cross-cultural findings show that separateness and togetherness, seen in different contexts, are more complex than Bowen's theory of differentiation that presents these two dynamics in opposition to each other. They propose that the theory of differentiation should also include a continuum of individualism-collectivism to allow that separateness and togetherness may work in reciprocity.[128]

Also arguing for a collectivist understanding of differentiation, Jehad Alaedein, professor of counseling at Hashemite University in Jordan, writes in his article, "Is Bowen Theory Universal? Differentiation of Self among Jordanian Male and Female College Students and Between Them and A Sample of American Students Through Bowen's Propositions," that collectivist cultures in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East emphasize interdependence and do not value independence and separation of the self.[129] "In these cultures, the self is made meaningful through the relationships of which the self is a part," Alaedein says.[130] Knudson-Martin, Erdem, Safi, and Alaedein together argue that the concept of differentiation must include the experiences of women and people in Eastern, collectivist cultures who can provide insight as to how togetherness can inform and strengthen self-differentiation.

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[127] Gizem Erdem and Ommay Aiman Safi, "Bowen Family Systems Theory from a Cultural Perspective: An Integrative Framework Framework," *Journal of Family Theory & Review* (April 2018): 7.

[128] Erdem and Safi, 10.

[129] Jehad Alaedein, "Is Bowen Theory Universal? Differentiation of Self among Jordanian Male and Female College Students and Between Them and A Sample of American Students Through Bowen's Propositions," *Dirasat* 35, no. 2 (2008): 480.

[130] Alaedein, 480.

Differentiation in Christian Context

The Bible describes the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as one being in three persons. Orthodox theologians, creeds, and confessions employ the term "Trinity" to express succinctly the triune essence of God. Inherent in understanding the Trinity is that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, according to *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, are "the same in substance, equal in power and glory."[131] This means that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit co-inhere: each person "is a complete manifestation of the divine essence" and "every divine attribute applies equally to all three hypostases [persons]: all are omnipotent, omniscient, eternal and so on," according to Gerald Bray, research professor at Beeson Divinity School, in his book, *The Doctrine of God*.[132]

While the three persons of God exist in spiritual union, we may still identify and distinguish the individuality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in their creative and redemptive work. John W. Mahony, in his contributing chapter, "Love in the Triune Community?" in the book *The Love of God*, explains the diverse roles of the Trinity in creation and salvation:

> In creation, for example, the Father willed it, the Son superintended the process (and still does, Col. 1:17), and the Spirit brought it into existence. Accordingly, our salvation is an action of the triune God. The Father chose us, the Son died for us, and the Spirit seals us (Eph. 1:3-14).[133]

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[131] Westminster Assembly, *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (Lawrenceville, GA: Committee on Discipleship Ministries, 2005), 360-361.

[132] Gerald Bray, *The Doctrine of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 158. Bray notes that the Greek term for this is *perichōrēsis*.

[133] John W. Mahony, "Love in the Triune Community?" in *The Love of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 106.

Bray specifically cites the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit during Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:16-17) and in the work of salvation described in John 14-16 as examples of their diverse roles.[134]

Mahony further contends that these diverse roles are the natural outworking of the Trinity's eternal relationships which are rooted in love.

> Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are eternal relationships based in love. Thus the Son's submission to the Father is an expression of their eternal relationship that transcends the period of the incarnation. The incarnation did not cause the Son's submission; rather his incarnation was an expression of his essential role as Son to the Father. Their separate and distinct roles are an expression of the essence of deity.[135]

In their article "Differentiation of Self and Christian Spiritual Maturity," Majerus and Sandage suggest that the Trinity models healthy differentiation, and that this differentiation provides a vision for spiritual maturity.[136] Toward this end, they describe unity and diversity in the Trinity as togetherness and separateness among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Majerus and Sandage propose that a trinitarian vision of relationship has the power to help people avoid the extremes of emotional fusion or emotional cutoff in relationships. The togetherness and yet separateness of the Trinity instead models and recommends "a relational self that can know one's own desires, feelings, and thoughts in the midst of being with, and giving themselves to, other people while maintaining

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[134] Bray, 144, 148.

[135] Mahony, 107.

[136] Majerus and Sandage, 42.

boundaries."[137] They refer to differentiation as separate-togetherness and together-separateness as a means of understanding the unity of Christians in the Body of Christ.

Majerus and Sandage further suggest that healthy differentiation is also present in the life of Jesus, especially in the final week of his life before dying. They argue that Jesus did not defer or succumb to the anxiety of his followers and instead remained resolute in his goals while staying connected to people.[138] David Hooper in his article, "Cruciformity, Differentiation, and Christian Spiritual Formation," cites the Apostle John's description of Jesus washing his disciples' feet as an example of differentiation. Hooper writes:

> Jesus knew that the Father has put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet (John 13:3-5, NIV).[139]

Hooper says Jesus was able to wash the disciples' feet, despite the anxiety surrounding him and present within him in the final week of his life, because he was anchored in a clear knowledge of who he was in relation to his Father as mentioned in John 13:3.

Differentiation for Pastors

Friedman applies the concept of emotional fusion with others to clergy. He states that differentiation is the capacity to define oneself, despite the pressures of togetherness,

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[137] Majerus and Sandage, 42-43.

[138] Majerus and Sandage, 46.

[139] David Hooper, "Cruciformity, Differentiation, and Christian Spiritual Formation," *Discernment: Theology and the Practice of Ministry* 3, no. 1 (2017): 15.

and to maintain a nonanxious presence.[140] He describes a well-differentiated person as one who "has clarity about his or her own life goals, and, therefore, someone who is less likely to become lost in the anxious emotional processes swirling about. I mean someone who can be separate while still remaining connected, and therefore can maintain a modifying, nonanxious, and sometimes challenging presence."[141] Differentiation, he further argues, is not autonomy or independence from others and requires staying connected with people.[142]

Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, in *The Leader's Journey*, define differentiation as "the ability to remain connected in relationship to significant people in our lives and yet not have our reactions and behavior determined by them."[143] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie apply it to pastors as "the capacity to hear and empathize with parishioners' frustrations while not necessarily agreeing with their analyses or taking the attacks personally. It is the ability to care for church members while not taking responsibility for them or their emotions."[144] Contemporary literature on differentiation for pastors does not elevate the Bowenian notion that separating intellect from emotions is the sine qua non of healthy differentiation. Bowen taught explicitly that a well-differentiated person is someone whose intellect operates separately from their emotions.[145] While recognizing

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[140] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 27.

[141] Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, introduction, Kindle.

[142] Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, chap. 5, Kindle; Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 229.

[143] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 28.

[144] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 74.

[145] Bowen, 363.

the peril of emotional fusion for pastors, Herrington, Creech, and Taylor explain that a well-differentiated pastor has "the ability to allow the life and teaching of Jesus to serve as one's compass rather than reading everyone else's emotional chart."[146] According to these authors, differentiation for the pastor is not allowing our behavior to be controlled by others' emotions while staying connected in relationship to people.

The Importance of Healthy Differentiation for Pastors

Religious leaders are "frequently idealized and ascribed significant influence by followers" according to Peter Jankowski et al. in their article "Humility, Relational Spirituality, and Well-being among Religious Leaders: A Moderated Mediation Model."[147] The authors argue that some people identify and conflate their religious leaders with their deeply-held beliefs. A problem ensues as followers expect their religious leaders to be exemplars of humility while speaking with great conviction and authority. This expectation of humility, juxtaposed with great authority, creates the tension of a "humility-religiousness paradox" in religious leaders' lives, according to Jankowski et al. The tension can degenerate into a "humility-narcissism paradox" as religious leaders negotiate how to be humble while exercising and speaking with great authority. The authors argue that this leadership tension can have a dysregulating influence in the lives of religious leaders and can cause leaders to embrace insecure

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[146] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 28.

[147] Peter Jankowski et al., "Humility, Relational Spirituality, and Well-being among Religious Leaders: A Moderated Mediation Model," *Journal of Religion and Health* (February 2018): 2.

models of attachment with followers and even with God in an effort to resolve the tension.

Simply put, according to Jankowski et al., religious leaders feel enormous pressure to lead with both humility and conviction. Some leaders seek to resolve this tension through insecure models of attachment including self-abasement and pathological narcissism ("i.e., feelings of entitlement, self-centeredness, arrogance, attention-seeking").[148] Jankowski et al. cites Bloom and Adam's research that suggests that leaders can address these tensions through emotional self-regulation.[149]

Poor Differentiation in the Lives of Pastors

A well-differentiated religious leader does not embrace insecure models of attachment, including self-abasement and narcissism, because the leader is able to stay connected to people while not allowing others' emotions to control their own behavior. Other insecure models of attachment that pastors embrace to address their anxiety include overfunctioning, underfunctioning, and conflict. In her book, *Extraordinary Leadership: Thinking Systems, Making a Difference*, Gilbert writes that leaders low on the scale of differentiation "are fused into their important relationships" and carry anxiety according to how these relationships are doing.[150] These emotional fusions produce an unhealthy togetherness. Leaders then seek to assuage their anxiety through overfunctioning or underfunctioning. Gilbert describes that an overfunctioner does not listen well, feels

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[148] Jankowski et al., 2.

[149] Jankowski et al., 3.

[150] Roberta M. Gilbert, *Extraordinary Leadership: Thinking Systems, Making a Difference* (Falls Church, VA: Leading Systems Press), 93.

compelled to have all the ideas, overworks, bullies people, and is easily threatened.[151]

Hooper elaborates on overfunctioning in pastors:

> Lacking a clear view of self, overfunctioning leaders take too much responsibility for the group, either becoming tyrants or overworking by not delegating enough and eventually suffering from burnout. From the outside, overfunctioning leaders may appear to be great spiritual examples of the cruciform life, and, therefore, most are shocked when overfunctioning finally takes its toll.[152]

Overfunctioning pastors may appear humble as they seek to resolve their anxiety through overworking. However, Howe explains that their overworking is unsustainable and reveals a lack of connection to the real needs of people: "For overfunctioning pastors, pastoral actions are dictated more by the necessity of reducing their own anxiety rather than by any objective discernment of what their parishioners might truly need."[153]

While some pastors may assuage their anxiety through overworking, others choose to underwork and to avoid people. Howe describes the ways in which pastors can distance themselves from people, including engaging in inherently good endeavors such as "immersion in managerial details, volunteering for judicatory committees, contributing time to social action programs, preaching in other churches, extending continuing education leaves, etc."[154] Gilbert describes that unhealthy distancing can include ignoring phone and email messages, finding ways to avoid meetings, and not taking part in conversations.[155] The burden of enduring life under the leadership of a pastor who

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[151] Gilbert, *Extraordinary Leadership*, 94.

[152] Hooper, 14.

[153] Howe, 357.

[154] Howe, 357.

[155] Gilbert, *Extraordinary Leadership*, 96-97.

embraces insecure models of attachment with people and even with God, Howe explains, is that "the quality of the pastor-parish relationship rather than of the God-congregation-world relationship becomes the focus of attention and effort."[156]

The Power of Healthy Differentiation in the Lives of Pastors

Religious leaders who stay connected to people while not allowing others' emotions to control their own behavior have high levels of differentiation. Jankowski et al. cite research that associates higher levels of differentiation in religious leaders with less anxiety and depression and increased self-awareness.[157] They also write that differentiation anchored in relationship with God can counteract the "humility-religiousness" and "humility-narcissism" tensions and temptations that religious leaders feel. Furthermore, their research indicates that a religious leader's relationship with God that includes self-differentiation serves to activate "the intra- and interpersonal self-regulatory aspects of relational spirituality in the form of safe haven (i.e., dwelling) and secure base (i.e., seeking) functions."[158] This means that relationship with God that includes healthy differentiation can foster both psychological safety and exploration in the form of curiosity toward others.

Pastors with higher levels of differentiation can also experience freedom from needing to provide an answer for every problem. Instead, Howe writes, pastors with high differentiation can focus on providing a nonanxious presence that will foster a

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[156] Howe, 358.

[157] Jankowski et al., 4.

[158] Jankowski et al., 5.

community where people feel free to exercise their gifts.[159] Friedman concurs that a pastor's nonanxious presence can alter anxiety throughout an entire congregation and is more important than having the right answers to problems.[160] He writes that in families and in institutions, "emotional processes are always more powerful than ideas" and that "real power lies in presence rather than method."[161]

While Friedman extols the paramount value of leaders maintaining a nonanxious presence, Herrington, Creech, and Taylor use the term "less-anxious presence" to acknowledge that no one can avoid anxiety completely.[162] In his book, *Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership, and Congregational Life*, Ronald Richardson emphasizes how a pastor's less-anxious presence can equip the congregation to succeed.

> The leader's main job, through his or her way of being in the congregation, is to create an emotional atmosphere in which greater calmness exists—to be a less anxious presence. "Knowing everything" is not necessary to be a healthy, competent leader. When you can be a less anxious presence, there is often enough experience and wisdom in the group for the group itself to figure out its own solutions to the challenges it faces.[163]

A leader's less-anxious presence provides a calm emotional environment that enables the experience, wisdom, and spiritual gifts of others to flourish.

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[159] Howe, 353.

[160] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 208, 225, 229.

[161] Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, introduction, Kindle.

[162] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 78.

[163] Ronald W. Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership, and Congregational Life* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1996), chap. 13, Kindle.

How Pastors Can Grow in Healthy Differentiation

Differentiation is a lifelong process of learning how to stay connected to people while not allowing others' emotions to control our own emotions and behavior.[164] According to Friedman, differentiation includes "taking maximum responsibility for one's own emotional being and destiny rather than blaming others or the context."[165] What practices can pastors embrace to grow in differentiation?

Spiritual Practices to Increase Awareness of Self and God's Presence

The capacity for a pastor to maintain a less-anxious presence while addressing one's own anxiety and the anxiety of others requires a clear sense of self in relation with others including with God. Crouch offers a path to gain a clear sense of self: "Embracing the three most essential spiritual disciplines opens us to the deepest kind of risk: the risk of discovering who we really are, in all our flaws and confusion."[166] God especially uses solitude, silence, and fasting, he says, to increase our self-awareness through revealing our limits and our foolishness:

> Solitude forces us to step away from the continual affirmation of our authority by others; silence compels us to practice quietness rather than noisy self-assertion; fasting exposes our dependence on food and other good things to prop up our sense of agency and capacity. …Without solitude, silence and fasting, we have no true authority—we are captives of others' approval, addicted to our personal soundtracks and chained to our pleasures.[167]

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[164] Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, chap. 5, Kindle; Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 75.

[165] Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, chap. 5, Kindle.

[166] Crouch, chap. 8, Kindle.

[167] Crouch, chap. 8, Kindle.

Peter Scazzero also praises the value of silence and solitude to grow in differentiation. Scazzero was overfunctioning to address his own anxiety by working 70 hours a week. When he adjusted his work to 45 hours a week, he discovered that silence and solitude are foundational to emotionally healthy spirituality. He also mentions that these spiritual practices have been essential "from Moses to David to Jesus to all the great men and women of the faith who have gone before us."[168] Scazzero writes that these practices of contemplative spirituality, which include meditation on scripture, prayer, and Sabbath, increase self-awareness and "awareness of God's inexhaustible love for us."[169]

Devoting Attention to Family Relationships

"The best leaders have the best family relationships," says Gilbert.[170] A foundational principle of Family Systems Theory is that people who work on relationships with their family-of-origin strengthen their other relationships.[171] Remarking on the power of one's family-of-origin, Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie warn that unexamined, painful memories from childhood and adolescence can lead to sinful behavior. They counsel that such sinful ways of relating in response to earlier wounds "need to be recognized, acknowledged and worked on for such change to take place."[172]

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[168] Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, 85-86.

[169] Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, 55.

[170] Gilbert, *Extraordinary Leadership*, 29.

[171] Ronald W. Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor: Family Systems Theory and the Pastor's Own Family* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 61.

[172] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 67.

Gilbert offers that while this work is hard, it can be more difficult to work in one's current nuclear family. And she further advocates, "If we are trying to change a pattern that does not serve well, there is no substitute for working on it in the emotional field where it was developed."[173] Gilbert recommends that if this work cannot be done with family members, there may be extended family members available for connection.[174]

Ronald Richardson, in his book *Becoming a Healthier Pastor: Family Systems Theory and the Pastor's Own Family*, offers several principles for family-of-origin work along with practical considerations borne of personal experience and teaching family systems theory.[175]

1) Maintain active, intentional, regular contact – Richardson advises that "frequent, shorter visits every few months are better than longer, less frequent visits."[176] The goal simply needs to be to be present in ways that allow for connection. He also recommends not announcing to family members that you are doing family-of-origin work to improve how you engage in all your relationships.
2) Develop a multigenerational family diagram[177] – Also known as a genogram, this family diagram often includes at least two generations into the past and uses symbols to indicate marriages, divorces, addictions, and other significant life

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[173] Gilbert, *Extraordinary Leadership*, 29.

[174] Gilbert, *Extraordinary Leadership*, 29.

[175] Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor*, 78.

[176] Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor*, 78.

[177] Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor*, 81.

events. Observing multigenerational patterns can help a person move on from focusing on the effects of one person in a family.[178] While the family-of-origin shapes a person in profound, lifelong ways, Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie offer that "God's grace, gifting and sovereign purposes can shape and even override the influences of our families."[179] Richardson recommends sharing the genogram with family members to honor them and to elicit conversation about family members and significant life events.[180]

3) Research the toxic issues – Richardson recommends that discussion of toxic issues occur after meaningful connection has been established. Examples of such issues include money, death, divorce, wills, relationship cutoffs, alcohol, and many more.[181] A research posture, particularly after sharing with family members about a genogram, can provide objective cover that can lower anxiety for these conversations.

Having Conversations with Safe People

When Peter Scazzero was transitioning out of his role of senior pastor of his church, in addition to meeting with a mentor and older pastor, he met with a counselor to

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[178] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 68. For guidance on how to construct and interpret a genogram, see Appendix D (page 275) in Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie and Appendix A (page 191) in Herrington, Creech, and Taylor.

[179] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 275.

[180] Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor*, 84.

[181] Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor*, 85, 87.

process family-of-origin dynamics and his emotional state.[182] He found conversations with these safe people to be indispensable for understanding his role in pastoral transition. Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie add that their research with pastors on growing in differentiation revealed two key practices: regular conversations with safe people and regular prayer.[183] Specifically, pastors relayed that conversations with safe people enabled them to grow in differentiation through embracing an objective view of their situations.

Gaining an objective, bird's eye view of life can help leaders grow in differentiation as they see how their roles fit into a larger system of relationships. Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, in their book *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through The Dangers of Change*, teach leaders to "get on the balcony" to gain an objective view of their lives to see the role they play in a larger network of relationships.[184] Getting on the balcony allows for stepping back from powerful emotions of the moment to see the larger picture. Heifetz and Linsky stress that a critical goal for getting on the balcony is not just to see others but especially to see yourself objectively. Increasing self-awareness through getting on the balcony can generate clarity as to one's own values and goals which is part of differentiation.

Heifetz and Linsky write that leaders must have both allies and confidants to survive the storms of life and to grow in leadership. Allies exist within the same system

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[182] Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), chap. 9, Kindle.

[183] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 75.

[184] Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through The Dangers of Change* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2017), chap. 3, Kindle.

of relationships; they may pull you to the balcony to alert you to what you are not noticing. Confidants serve a different and equally important purpose for leaders. Heifetz and Linsky write that confidants provide a safe place to process thinking and emotions:

> Confidants can do something that allies can't do. They can provide you with a place where you can say everything that's in your heart, everything that's on your mind, without it being predigested or well packaged. …Confidants must be people who will tell you what you do not want to hear and cannot hear from anyone else, people in whom you can confide without having your revelations spill back into the work arena.[185]

They further state that almost every leader they know has been able to endure hardship because of their conversations with safe people who care more about the person than any role the leader plays.[186]

Pastors who desire to grow in the hard work of self-differentiation must become aware of their roles in the family systems in which they live, including in their congregations, families, and other relationship networks. They must do this not only for their own spiritual growth but also because of the nature of their calling to lead others.

Family Systems Theory and Emotional Maturity

Murray Bowen initially proposed family systems theory from his years of research and therapy with people with schizophrenia.[187] He explains how he began to see illness with a family system mindset:

> In the beginning I was working with schizophrenia, and I was deeply invested in psychoanalysis. I thought the family research might eventually make a contribution to psychoanalytic theory as it applies to schizophrenia. I had no idea the research would take the direction it did. …In my research the change

[185] Heifetz and Linsky, chap. 9, Kindle.

[186] Heifetz and Linsky, chap. 9, Kindle.

[187] Bowen, 470.

> [observing and interacting with entire families while treating the person with schizophrenia] came as a sudden insight shortly after schizophrenic patients and their entire families were living together on the research ward. Then it was possible to really see the family phenomenon for the first time. After it was possible to see this phenomenon in schizophrenia, it was then automatic to see varying degrees of the same thing in all people.[188]

Through this research, Bowen began to form a systematic understanding of physical and emotional illness in families and how entire families may contribute to the worsening or amelioration of illness in a family member. This is how Bowen came to conceive the family as an emotional system. He principally used insights and research from psychiatry, psychotherapy, and biology to form his theory. Examples of dynamics he acquired from biology include differentiation, fusion, and symbiosis.[189]

Following his research in the 1950s and 1960s, Bowen published his foundational book *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice* in 1978. In the book, Bowen applies his theory to family dynamics in families with schizophrenia and alcoholism as well as to administrative systems including his own at Georgetown University.[190] Since the 1980s, family systems theory has been reshaped and applied to a wide variety of disciplines including academia, business, medicine, and churches. Edwin Friedman's book *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* in 1985 ushered family systems theory into understanding congregational life in terms of systems thinking rather than focusing solely on a congregation's leader. Israel Galindo and Betty Pugh Mills in their article "Long-Tenured Ministry and Systems Theory: Bowen Systems

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[188] Bowen, 394.

[189] Bowen, 398.

[190] Bowen, 461.

Theory as a Resource for the Long Haul" also suggest that family systems theory can be especially applied to congregational life: "Churches tend to function more like families than most groups and institutions with only a little less emotional intensity than biological families."[191]

Roberta Gilbert, a student of Bowen's at the Bowen Center for the Study of the Family at Georgetown University, explains that family systems theory describes relationship networks as being emotional systems. Emotions, including anxiety, run through relationship networks such as families and organizations like electricity runs through wires.[192] Understanding how people relate to each other, including the emotions people have and why they have them, can benefit everyone through helping people understand why they behave the way they do. In her book *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory*, Gilbert explains family systems theory by delineating eight descriptive dynamics of human behavior that follow a logical progression.[193] Seen as a coherent whole, these eight dynamics describe how emotions affect how people relate to each other and suggest how people can relate to each other in healthier ways.

The Eight Descriptive Dynamics of Family Systems Theory

The eight dynamics of family systems theory exist to guide people to accurately describe what emotions are present in the family system and what effects these emotions are producing. The theory is not inherently prescriptive, and this allows for the theory to

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[191] Israel Galindo and Betty Pugh Mills, "Long-tenured Ministry and Systems Theory: Bowen Systems Theory as a Resource for The Long Haul." *Review and Expositor* 113, no. 3 (August 2016): 357.

[192] Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory*, 3.

[193] Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory, 3.*

be compatible with diverse ideologies that propose their own vision of what is the good life. R. Robert Creech, professor or pastoral leadership at Baylor University, asserts in his article, "Generations to Come: The Future of Bowen Family Systems Theory and Congregational Ministry," that the theory helps clergy think systematically and holistically about their congregations "without having to develop expertise in counseling, management, conflict resolution, and other fields."[194] He further claims that a working understanding of the eight concepts helps pastors focus on themselves and their contribution to the congregational system rather than focusing on how others behave.[195] Gilbert explains the big picture thinking of family systems theory that frees a leader to focus on one's own role in the congregation: "Systems thinking strives to look at the emotional process going on among people, while never losing sight of the facts of a given situation. Rather than trying for control or blaming the other, one tries always to better manage oneself and one's own contribution to the situation."[196]

Relationship Dynamic #1: Nuclear Family Emotional System

This dynamic conceives the nuclear family as an emotional system and thus brings attention to the family rather than solely one individual. According to Bowen, the term includes emotional patterns among spouses, the relationships they have with their families of origin, and dynamics with their children.[197]

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[194] Creech, "Generations to Come: The Future of Bowen Family Systems Theory and Congregational Ministry," 73.

[195] Creech, "Generations to Come," 73.

[196] Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory*, 2.

[197] Bowen, 476.

Gilbert explains that viewing the nuclear family as an emotional system emphasizes that emotional processes travel from person to person easily, especially anxiety. Anxiety may occur from a variety of stressors including anger, elation, and depression.[198] Chronic anxiety, often received from one's family-of-origin, and acute anxiety due to immediate stressors can lead family members to assume relationship postures such as distance, conflict, over/underfunctioning, and triangles.[199] People assume these relationship postures, Gilbert says, to address anxiety and relationship fusions. Fusion is intense togetherness with others that leads to a loss of a sense of self and increasing anxiety.[200]

The value of observing and addressing emotional processes in one's own nuclear family extends into other relationship networks. Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, in their book *The Leader's Journey*, assert that as a leader addresses their most intense emotional systems—their marriage and nuclear family—they are better equipped to address anxiety and other emotional patterns in congregational life.[201] "The basic patterns in social and work relationships are identical to relationship patterns in the family, except in intensity," argues Bowen.[202] Claiming that work relationships typically carry a little less anxiety than family relationships, Bowen assiduously applied family systems theory to his administrative work at Georgetown University. In addition, Friedman maintains that

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[198] Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory*, 6.

[199] Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory*, 11.

[200] Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory*, 20.

[201] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 3.

[202] Bowen, 462.

principles from the nuclear family emotional system apply to all work systems including nursery schools, law firms, and congregations.[203]

Relationship Dynamic #2: Differentiation

Differentiation is a relationship concept that Bowen acquired from biology including cellular division. Bowen created a differentiation of self scale from 0-100 to measure a person's capacity to avoid emotional fusion through internal and external differentiation. Internal differentiation includes separating intellect from emotions, and external differentiation includes separating self from emotional systems.[204] The goal in differentiation is to avoid being controlled by one's own emotions or another's emotions and behavior. As such, individuality and autonomy are held in highest regard.[205]

In congregational systems, differentiation of self can help leaders avoid extremes of emotional fusion (unhealthy togetherness) and emotional cutoff according to Brian Majerus and Steven Sandage in their article, "Differentiation of Self and Christian Spiritual Maturity."[206] Well-differentiated leaders are informed but not controlled by others' anxieties and are able to reflect and engage with others while maintaining a clear sense of one's own beliefs and mission.[207]

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[203] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 197-202.

[204] Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory*, 26.

[205] Bowen, 362.

[206] Majerus and Sandage, 41.

[207] Majerus and Sandage, 42-43

Relationship Dynamic #3: Triangles

As two people experience rising anxiety, they often turn to a third person or to something else to reduce their anxiety and to stabilize their relationship.[208] Family systems theory identifies this emotional pattern as a triangle. Gilbert offers that triangles are neither good nor bad but are naturally occurring phenomena in all human relationships.[209] Examples include when two intense people corral a third person into a brief conversation; when two spouses triangulate their child into their marriage; when two people turn to a friend for stability; when anxiety rises among two people such that one of them turns to drinking, eating, or spending.[210] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor suggest that Jesus taught the value of an emotional triangle in his teaching on conflict resolution and church disciplines in Matthew 18:15-17.[211]

Relationship triangles occur frequently for pastors and congregational leaders. Herrington, Creech, and Taylor suggest that detriangling involves staying emotionally connected to the two other people in the triangle while not coming between them: "The effort to detriangle is an effort to 'differentiate' ourselves from the emotionality of the other two, not an effort to distance ourselves from them."[212] They suggest that a good example of detriangling in Jesus' ministry is when anxious Martha attempted to

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[208] Bowen, 478.

[209] Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory*, 45.

[210] Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory*, 44, 46; Majerus and Sandage, 43; Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, chap. 7, Kindle.

[211] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 61.

[212] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 63.

triangulate Jesus into her relationship with her sister, Mary.[213] Jesus stayed connected with Martha and Mary while guiding Martha to accept Mary's priorities and choices.

Detriangling from unhealthy triangles first involves noticing one's own participation. Bowen argues that observing one's own participation in a triangle is not possible until a person can control one's own emotional processes.[214] The only way to detriangulate, according to Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, is "to work seriously on the disciplines required to become more emotionally mature…change requires serious engagement in personal transformation."[215] They further suggest that as a leader grows in the capacity to observe triangles, the leader also grows in the capacity to provide a less anxious, modifying presence in a congregation.[216] Friedman offers that a clear understanding of triangles in congregation life can guide a pastor through interaction in triangles with staff, leadership, and key events in the life of a congregation.[217]

Relationship Dynamic #4: Cutoff

Emotional cutoff is an extreme form of distancing from another person to cope with anxiety in the relationship.[218] Emotional cutoff can occur through a geographical move or in close proximity with another person.[219] Bowen observes that cutoff especially

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[213] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 63.

[214] Bowen, 480.

[215] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 62.

[216] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 60.

[217] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 212-215.

[218] Majerus and Sandage, 42.

[219] Creech, "Generations to Come", 71.

occurs between generations, typically as a child withdraws from parents.[220] The more intense the cutoff, the more likely that cutoff will continue to occur in other relationships with family, friends, or at work.[221]

Bowen states that cutoff and its anxiety can be meaningfully addressed as a person reconnects with their family-of-origin.[222] As described earlier, Ronald Richardson offers three practices for addressing cutoff: frequent, shorter contact with family members, researching toxic family issues, and family-of-origin genogram work.[223]

Robert Creech, in his book *Family Systems and Congregational Life,* proposes several possible examples of cutoff and reconciliation from the Bible including the story of Joseph as his brothers.[224] He also suggests that cutoff can be easily seen in congregational life in interpersonal relationships and in church splits.[225]

Relationship Dynamics #5, #6, and #7: Family Projection Process, Multigenerational Transmission Process, and Sibling Position

Family projection process occurs when parents project their immaturity onto their children.[226] Bowen states that projection most often occurs as a mother attempts to

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[220] Bowen, 535.

[221] Bowen, 382, 535.

[222] Bowen, 383.

[223] Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor*, 78-81.

[224] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 124.

[225] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 110.

[226] Bowen, 477.

alleviate her anxiety through emotional fusion with her child.[227] Parents may seek to procure emotional dependency from a child to alleviate anxiety in their marriage, and the child consequently emerges into adolescence with a lower level of differentiation.[228] This process is an example of an unhealthy triangle.

Bowen claims that children who are not the focus of family projection process have the capacity for higher differentiation than their parents.[229] Gilbert therefore encourages people to manage their own anxiety well to give their children an opportunity for higher differentiation.[230]

Family projection process that occurs from generation to generation creates a multigenerational transmission process according to Bowen.[231] Creech suggests that a multigenerational transmission process of emotional immaturity may be evident in the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob across generations. For example, Creech suggests that after the birth of Isaac, Abraham and Sarah experience anxiety in their marriage. As Sarah becomes jealous of Hagar, she projects her anxiety onto Isaac and urges Abraham to send Hagar and her son, Ishmael, away.[232] Is Isaac's passivity in his marriage with Rachel due to lower differentiation borne of excessive focus placed on him? Creech argues this is possible though we cannot be certain.[233] Clearly Isaac and Rebekah's

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[227] Bowen, 205.

[228] Creech, "Generations to Come", 70.

[229] Bowen, 477.

[230] Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory*, 64.

[231] Bowen, 168.

[232] Creech, *Family Systems and Congregational Life*, 131.

[233] Creech, *Family Systems and Congregational Life*, 132.

children, Jacob and Esau, lack emotional maturity, Creech proposes. This is evident later in Jacob's life in his excessive focus on his son, Joseph.[234]

Herrington, Creech, and Taylor state that a family diagram, or genogram, can illuminate multigenerational transmission processes. They further suggest that seeing such processes over multiple generations can present a systemic view of emotional immaturity across generations.[235]

Building on work by Walter Toman, Bowen found in his research that the order of birth in siblings can indicate personality characteristics and aid in prediction of behavior. Bowen found sibling position to be the most helpful single piece of data in predicting how a person forms relationships, relates to others, and engages in conflict. As Bowen saw from his research and therapy that sibling position is a dependable indicator of behavior, he decided to make sibling position its own concept in family systems theory.[236]

While acknowledging that sibling position has merit in predicting behavior, Friedman warns that it is not wise to place too much investment into the concept of sibling position. He suggests that sibling position can be helpful in understanding how people relate to each other at work and in observing multigenerational transmission of emotional processes.[237] Gilbert notes that the concept of sibling position helps leaders

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[234] Creech, *Family Systems and Congregational Life*, 133.

[235] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 115.

[236] Bowen, 206, 385, 478.

[237] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 54.

evaluate others who are youngest or oldest siblings as middle siblings tend to adopt characteristics of one or several of their siblings.[238]

Relationship Dynamics #8: Emotional Process in Society

Bowen theorized that emotional reactivity in society and in families exists in a relationship of reciprocity. He taught that as a family endures chronic, sustained anxiety, the family's intellectual functioning and dedication to its principles weaken which leads to decision making centered on alleviating anxiety. Such decision making is emotionally reactive in the moment and leads to problems. Bowen believed that this phenomenon occurs not only in families but also in larger groupings of people in society and ultimately to the whole of society including its institutions. He believed that relationship triangles, for example, exist at every level of society, and this led him to expand his family systems theory to include this last concept.[239]

Creech notes that regression in society and in families is reciprocal and is evident in multigenerational transmission process. He also notes the profound impact of societal regression upon congregations and their leaders:

> The symptoms of an anxious society swirl about us. Distance grows to the point of cutoff as media figures, partisan political leaders, and politically active citizens choose to speak about—rather than to—each other. Social media has developed as a platform for both the public expression of views and the rapid spread of misinformation and disinformation. Adults focus on upcoming generations, projecting their anxiety onto their children and grandchildren. …Our congregations worship and serve in a society that is observably anxious.[240]

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[238] Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory*, 79.

[239] Bowen, 386-387.

[240] Creech, *Family Systems and Congregational Life*, 49.

Creech calls pastors to step into societal regression through the nature of their office, claiming that the church has resources to provide both hope and justice to a society in desperate need.[241]

Family Systems Theory and Emotional Maturity

In her book *Extraordinary Leadership: Thinking Systems, Making a Difference*, Roberta Gilbert argues that while congregations are not families, they exhibit many of the same emotional processes that families experience:

> Congregations…show many of the same characteristics of emotional systems as do families. Given enough anxiety, they all exhibit conflict, distance, cutoff, overfunctioning/underfunctioning reciprocity, and triangling. That is because, like families, at least to some extent, they are emotional systems.[242]

Friedman also maintains that emotional processes that occur in families occur in congregations. He further states that systems thinking can help a pastor notice and comprehend emotional reactivity in three key family structures: the congregation as a whole, families in the congregation, and the pastor's own family. Friedman offers that family systems thinking can even apply to preaching.[243]

Family Systems Theory with Emotional Maturity Empowers Pastors to Observe Well

Creech asserts that pastors can have greater effect upon people in their congregations as they utilize the eight concepts of family systems theory and work on

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[241] Creech, *Family Systems and Congregational Life*, 51.

[242] Gilbert, *Extraordinary Leadership*, 19.

[243] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 195.

their own emotional maturity.[244] Pastors can utilize the eight concepts to observe and make sense of how people relate to each other. For example, Creech offers that a pastor may notice that siblings in the same family have widely varying levels of emotional maturity. Family projection process across generations may help the pastor grasp both marriage dynamics in the parents and the different levels of emotional maturity in the children.[245]

In addition to observing multigenerational transmission process in families, Galindo and Mills argue that pastors can observe this process in congregations.[246] "We've always done it that way!" may be what pastors encounter when they inquire as to why certain decisions were made, say Galindo and Mills. The reasoning behind such a response may have little to do with who currently sits in leadership and more to do with relationship patterns previously embraced by the congregation in times of high anxiety.

Gilbert notes that pastors are often triangulated into relationships of high anxiety. The ability to recognize being placed into a triangle by church members can help the pastor address the instability of the other two persons through encouraging them to work together.[247] A pastor by virtue of his hierarchical position in a denomination is continually placed into triangles according to Friedman.[248] Denominational leaders in

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[244] Creech, *Family Systems and Congregational Life*, 33.

[245] Creech, *Family Systems and Congregational Life*, 110.

[246] Galindo and Mills, 349.

[247] Gilbert, *Extraordinary Leadership*, 23.

[248] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 254.

higher authority, elders and deacons in the local church, and church members continually triangulate pastors to address their concerns and often their anxiety.

A pastor who will leave his congregation can reflect upon the concept of emotional cutoff and instead engage his congregation with emotional maturity. Friedman counteracts conventional thinking that once a pastor declares he will depart, he becomes a lame duck and his remaining ministry time becomes ineffective. Contrary to this, Friedman suggests that a pastor who stays connected to people during his terminal period of ministry can affect how people view all the years of previous ministry.[249] A family systems approach to leaving, Friedman offers, includes managing one's own emotions, permitting and receiving emotional reactivity from others, maintaining a nonanxious presence while being involved in the transition, and staying in touch after leaving while nevertheless detriangling for the benefit of both the congregation and the pastor.[250]

Family systems theory has also been instrumental for pastors in broadening their pastoral attention as they care for individuals. Barbara McClure in her article, "Pastoral Theology as the Art of Paying Attention: Widening the Horizons," argues that the dominant view of pastoral care and theology through much of the 20th century, borne of Freudian influence, was to focus on the individual's personal psychology and spirituality. Family systems theory in the 1980s began to expand pastoral attention through stressing the interdependence of family members.[251]

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[249] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 252.

[250] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 257.

[251] Barbara J. McClure, "Pastoral Theology as the Art of Paying Attention: Widening the Horizons," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 12, no. 2 (2008): 195.

Family Systems Theory with Emotional Maturity Empowers Pastors to Stay Connected with People

Herrington, Creech, and Taylor state that in an anxious system, leaders tend to focus their energies upon addressing complaints and problems rather than the systemic issues that maintain anxiety. They contend that as pastors observe with clarity the emotional processes at work, they can then ask two questions: "What is my role in keeping this problem in place? and How can I change my role?"[252] As family systems theory enables pastors to see systemic anxiety with clarity, they are empowered to connect with people in ways that lead to systemic change.

Creech states that pastors who proactively work on their differentiation can become a calmer presence and can be more fully present with people even when anxiety is high.[253] One of the great insights of systems theory, according to Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, is that people without emotional maturity tend to react to anxiety in several predictable ways. These include "conflict, distancing, over/underfunctioning, and projection [of their anxiety] onto a third person."[254] To counteract the appeal of these reactive postures, Herrington, Creech, and Taylor recommend that leaders cultivate calming practices that foster reflection rather than reactivity. Calming practices toward a less anxious presence that they recommend from their own experience are (1) increase your self-awareness, (2) monitor your thinking patterns, (3) manage your feelings, and (4) slow the pace.[255]

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[252] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 58.

[253] Creech, "Generations to Come," 81.

[254] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 65.

[255] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 80.

Friedman contends that a nonanxious presence for pastors "will modify anxiety throughout an entire congregation."[256] Pastors may presume that the way to modify anxiety in a congregation is through playing the hero through overworking or having an answer for every problem.[257] Ronald Richardson instead states that the leader's main responsibility in a congregation is to foster greater calm through providing a less anxious presence. Rather than consistently turning to the pastor to address systemic anxiety, a congregation that enjoys an emotional atmosphere of increasing calm will feel encouraged to exercise their spiritual gifts and talents to address problems.[258]

Overfunctioning in a leader drives the leader to burnout and promotes anxiety in a congregation.[259] As the major tone of anxiety in a family or congregation is seriousness according to Friedman, he advocates playfulness as one aspect of a leader's nonanxious presence:

> The capacity of clergy to be paradoxical, challenging (rather than saving), earthy, sometimes crazy…often can do more to loosen knots in a congregational relationship system than the most well-meaning "serious" efforts.[260]

Friedman claims that playfulness is an aspect of a nonanxious presence that frees people to engage with others. In addition to playfulness, Richardson recommends that curiosity helps pastors to increase calm in a congregation through their nonanxious presence. A curious pastor adopts the position of a researcher who asks questions and shows genuine

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[256] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 180.

[257] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 210; Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church*, 173.

[258] Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church*, 173.

[259] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 211-212.

[260] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 209.

interest. They ask simple questions, Richardson says, that begin with "who, where, when, what, and how."[261]

Emotional maturity that creates a nonanxious presence for a group grows as leaders connect with their own nuclear and extended families and family-of-origin. Bowen describes this dynamic as a "startling revelation" as he discovered that therapists who applied family system concepts to their own family relationships matured as therapists more than others who did not do such personal family work.[262] Creech recommends that deliberate work in connecting with nuclear and extended families increases emotional maturity as leaders work on their differentiation in these relationships.[263] Regarding this dynamic, Gilbert says simply, "The best leaders have the best family relationships."[264]

Pastors who employ the eight concepts of family systems theory while working on their own emotional maturity can modify anxiety in their congregations.[265] Family systems theory assists pastors to observe how anxiety manifests in their congregations through triangles, multigenerational transmission process, overfunctioning, and emotional cutoff. Pastors who grow in emotional maturity through connecting with their nuclear and extended families and their family-of-origin have the capacity to provide a nonanxious presence for a congregation. A nonanxious presence that includes playfulness and

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[261] Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church*, chap. 13, Kindle.

[262] Bowen, 533.

[263] Creech, *Family Systems and Congregational Life*, 99.

[264] Gilbert, *Extraordinary Leadership*, 29.

[265] Creech, *Family Systems and Congregational Life*, 33; Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 180.

curiosity can create an emotional atmosphere of increasing calm that frees people to exercise their spiritual gifts and talents.

A Biblical-Theological Framework for Emotional Maturity

Emotional maturity for pastors is the capacity to stay connected to people while staying committed to a shared mission. If deliberate cultivation of emotional intelligence can help pastors stay connected to people, what role might a shared mission play in emotional maturity? And what is this shared mission?

The Mission of God

Christopher J. H. Wright, in his book *The Mission of God*, laments that many books anchor the church's mission in Matthew 28:18-20, known as the Great Commission, and ignore the Old Testament.[266] Michael Goheen, professor of missional theology at Covenant Seminary and author of *Introducing Christian Mission Today*, states that this approach was his experience as a college student when studying mission at an evangelical Bible college.[267] Goheen explains that a geographically expanding view of mission that he studied fit a preconceived notion of mission centered on the word "Go…" in the Great Commission.[268] Both Wright and Goheen note, however, that the primary command of the Great Commission is not "Go…", as this word is a participle in service to a greater command. Rather, the primary command is to make disciples of all

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[266] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 33.

[267] Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today*, 35.

[268] Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today*, 35.

nations.[269] Michael Williams, professor of systematic theology at Covenant Seminary, also notes in his book *Far as the Curse is Found,* that many books on Christian mission omit the mission of God in the Old Testament as they anchor mission exclusively in Matthew 28 and the New Testament.[270]

In contrast to understanding the church's mission solely from Matthew 28:18-20, Wright states that the Apostle Paul continually directs God's people to consider God's covenant with Abraham to understand their mission.[271] Citing Paul in Galatians 3:8, "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all the nations be blessed.'", Wright claims:

> And *this*, says Paul—this dynamic narrative of God's saving purpose for all nations through Abraham—is the heart of *the gospel* as announced by the Scriptures. …The ingathering of the nations was the very thing Israel existed for in the purpose of God; it was the fulfillment of the bottom line of God's promise to Abraham.[272]

Wright asserts that Paul desires that God's people understand that their mission in Jesus Christ is to be a blessing for all nations and that this mission springs forth from God's covenant with Abraham.

God's Covenant of Grace with Abraham

The gospel preached beforehand to Abraham that the Apostle Paul references in Galatians 3 is God's covenant with Abraham initiated in Genesis 12:2-3:

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[269] Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today*, 508; Wright, *The Mission of God*, 35

[270] Michael D. Williams, *Far as the Curse is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P& R Publishing, 2005), 117.

[271] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 193.

[272] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 193-194.

> And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.[273]

Wright states that the essential theme of this covenant is that God will bless Abraham and that all families of the earth will be blessed through him:

> God declares that he will *bless* Abraham, that Abraham is to be a *blessing*, that God will *bless* those who *bless* Abraham and that all families on earth will count themselves *blessed* through him.[274]

Goheen concurs that through this covenant, Abraham is to be "a channel of redemptive blessing to all the families of the earth."[275]

Wright further explains that blessing according to Genesis 12 is unlimited, universal in scope, and, therefore, deeply missional for God's people: "This universal scope of the Abrahamic promise is the clinching argument for recognizing the missiological centrality of this text—which is already quite explicit anyway in the command 'Be a blessing.'"[276] Blessing, therefore, with its outward focus must be understood as a command, task, and role for God's people.[277] God's covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12 is the launch of God's mission of redemption for all of creation according to Wright.[278] Rather than seeing Jesus' Great Commission in Matthew 28 as the starting point for contemporary mission, Wright argues that God's covenant with

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[273] Genesis 12:2-3, ESV.

[274] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 208. Italics his.

[275] Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today*, 41.

[276] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 216.

[277] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 211.

[278] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 212.

Abraham begun in Genesis 12 is the Great Commission for the church now and the foundation for Jesus' missional command in Matthew 28.[279]

Anchoring our understanding of the mission of God in God's promise to Abraham has serious and far-reaching consequences according to Wright:

> One of the reasons for the appalling shallowness and vulnerability of much that passes for the growth of the church around the world is that people are coming to some kind of instrumental faith in a God they see as powerful, with some connection to Jesus, but a Jesus disconnected from his Scriptural roots. They have not been challenged at the level of their deeper worldview by coming to know God *in and through the story that is launched by Abraham*.[280]

Wright contends that the Apostle Paul challenged Christians in Galatia to recognize that their faith in Christ is grounded in God's promise to Abraham. Wright argues that Paul did this to empower them to turn from their idolatry as they embraced a deeper faith.[281]

For a mature and growing faith, the mission of God must be understood from the foundation of God's promise to Abraham to bless the whole world through his descendant the Lord Jesus Christ.[282]

The Church's Mission in Light of the Kingdom of God

As the church grasps its mission from scripture as flowing from God's covenant with Abraham, the church can understand its role in the redemption of the whole world through the kingdom of God. Michael Goheen explains how the church must perceive and live out its role in God's Kingdom for the sake of the world:

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[279] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 214.

[280] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 219. Italics his.

[281] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 219-220. Wright cites Galatians 3:26, 29.

[282] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 220.

> The church must be defined in terms of the coming kingdom proclaimed in the gospel. The church is a sign, preview and instrument of the kingdom of God. If the kingdom involves a comprehensive restoration, the church is to be a preview of that restoration, including cultural and societal renewal, which is coming fully at the end of the age. Moreover, it is to be an instrument in God's hand to struggle for the justice, reconciliation, righteousness and peace of the kingdom today. Thus, is it a sign of the new world that is breaking in by the work of the Spirit.[283]

Goheen says that the church must perceive itself and its role as a sign that God is restoring the world through his kingdom. The church must conduct itself as a preview of cultural renewal which will come in full. And for the church to struggle for justice, reconciliation, righteousness, and peace now, the church must be a willing, malleable instrument led by the Spirit.

Michael Williams explains that for the church to position itself as a sign, preview, and instrument by the power of the Spirit, the church must conceive its mission according to the kingdom of God: "The church does not exist for its own sake apart from the kingdom. The power of the gospel of the kingdom has called the church into existence, and the church exists for the sake of the kingdom of God. Thus, the kingdom must be the ultimate horizon of the church's existence and work."[284] The church's mission must serve and align with the priorities of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is, in part, "a subset of all of God's sovereignty under which there is eternal life" according to D. A. Carson.[285] It is the redemptive rule and reign of God extending into the hearts of people and into our world.[286]

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[283] Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today*, 257.

[284] Williams, 267.

[285] D. A. Carson, "A Holy Nation: The Church's High Calling," Thegospealcoalition.org, March 19, 2005, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/sermon/a-holy-nation-the-church-s-high-calling-1-peter-2-9-10/.

[286] Williams, 265.

For the church to advance the priorities of God's kingdom, the church must be an attractive community that gathers people while cultivating an outward focus. Israel in the Old Testament was called to live with God in such deep relationship that people from other nations would desire salvation from the Lord. God calls the new Israel—his church—likewise to be a community that attracts people to life with God, according to Williams. However, Williams elaborates that while God calls the church to embody such an attractive life, Jesus expands the church's mission to include a "centrifugal missionary mandate," that is, an outward focus.[287] Williams describes this expanded, dual focus for the church now:

> The church has been entrusted with the gospel not only to mature its own members but also to proclaim to those beyond its walls. God calls the church to the missionary task of proclaiming the significance of the gospel for all peoples. He calls the church to model the kingdom by displaying the righteousness, justice, and peace of the kingdom.[288]

For the church to serve and align with the priorities of the kingdom of God, the church must be an attractive community that cultivates an outward focus.

The Church's Mission and Pastors' Emotional Maturity

For any organization that strives to fulfill its mission, the organization's leaders are who people turn to for motivation and guidance according to Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee:

> Throughout history and in cultures everywhere, the leader in any human group has been the one to whom others look for assurance and clarity when facing uncertainty or threat, or when there's a job to be done. The leader acts as the group's emotional guide. …Whether an organization withers or flourishes

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[287] Williams, 256.

[288] Williams, 256.

> depends to a remarkable extent on the leaders' effectiveness in this primal emotional dimension.[289]

For the church to fulfill its dual focus as an attractive community that cultivates an outward focus, the church needs leaders who commit themselves to embody emotional and spiritual maturity. "The overall health of any church or ministry depends primarily on the emotional and spiritual health of its leadership," says Peter Scazzero in his book *The Emotionally Healthy Church*.[290]

Scazzero proposes a model of emotional maturity for a church that includes eight concentric circles with change radiating outward from the center. The center circle, or starting point, for healthy church leadership that is faithful to a church's mission always begins with the senior pastor's emotional maturity.[291] Moreover, Scazzero aligns emotional maturity as an essential component of spiritual maturity: "It is not possible for a Christian to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature. For some reason, however, the vast majority of Christians today live as if the two concepts have no intersection."[292]

Scazzero's eight concentric circles of emotional maturity illustrate that as emotional maturity radiates from pastoral leadership into the congregation, the wider community outside the church's walls receives blessing as well. Herrington, Taylor, and

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[289] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*, chap. 1, Kindle.

[290] Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church: A Strategy for Discipleship That Actually Changes Lives* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 20.

[291] Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, 34.

[292] Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, 52.

Creech also draw a direct line from a pastor's emotional maturity to blessing for the wider community:

> Pastoral leaders have the capacity to influence our congregations toward emotional maturity and progress. Higher functioning congregations, clear on their own mission and purpose and vitally connected to their own communities, can extend this progress outward as the ripple effect moves beyond the congregation to families, schools, civic organizations, businesses, corporations, and even into the legal system.[293]

To fulfill its kingdom mission to bless the whole world, the church needs pastors with emotional maturity.

Christopher Wright explains the church's mission as "our committed participation as God's people, at God's invitation and command, in God's own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation."[294] Michael Goheen extols this definition as he notes that this understanding does not emphasize mission first as what individual church members accomplish. Rather, the church's mission is a calling with a communal nature bound in relationship with God and his people.[295] According to Goheen, the church's mission is nothing less than "participation in the mission of the triune God."[296] Wright and Goheen thus ground the church's mission in relationship with the triune God and his people.

Since the church's calling has a communal nature that is bound in relationship with God and his people, the church must consider the depth of its relationship with God

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[293] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 93.

[294] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 23.

[295] Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today*, 25-26.

[296] Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today*, 26.

and its relationship with his people. The Bible's emphases on the fear of the Lord and abiding in Christ lead the church to meditate on the intimacy of these relationships.

The Fear of the Lord

The primary link between God's covenant with Abraham and the law and wisdom of the Old Testament is the phrase "the fear of the Lord" according to Rolex M. Cailing, professor at Biblical Seminary of the Philippines, in his article, "Fear God and Keep His Commandments: Foundation for a Relationship with God."[297] Noting this connection, Cailing cites the prevalence of "the fear of the Lord" throughout the Old Testament as the description of a pleasing life to God in Exodus and Leviticus, as an exhortation in Deuteronomy and the historical books, and as a call to wisdom in Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes.[298]

Proverbs reveals its covenantal headwaters as it exhorts God's people to pursue wisdom in light of their covenant relationship with God, according to C. John Collins, professor of Old Testament at Covenant Seminary, in his articles, "Proverbs and the Levitical System" and "Psalms 111-112: Big Story, Little Story."[299] Collins notes that God's covenant name, Yahweh, occurs on average three times per chapter and that the fear of Yahweh structures Proverbs.[300] Collins and Bruce Waltke, retired professor of Old

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[297] Rolex M. Cailing, "Fear God and Keep His Commandments: Foundation for A Relationship With God," *Review and Expositor* 115, no. 2 (2018): 258.

[298] Cailing, 258-259. Among other Old Testament scripture where the phrase "the fear of the Lord" appears, Cailing cites Exodus 1, 14, 20; Leviticus 19, 25; Deuteronomy 4-6, 28, 31; Joshua 4; Judges 6, 1 Samuel 12; 2 Kings 17; Job 1; Psalm 111; Proverbs 1; Ecclesiastes 5.

[299] C. John Collins, "Proverbs and the Levitical System," *Presbyterion* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 13; "Psalms 111-112: Big Story, Little Story." *Religions* 7, no. 9 (2016). https://doi.org/10.3390/rel7090115.

[300] Collins, "Proverbs and the Levitical System," 13, 29.

Testament, cite Proverbs 29:18 to note the connection of Proverbs to the prophecy and law of the Pentateuch.[301] Far from being merely general counsel for how all people may live together peaceably, Collins argues that Proverbs is covenantal wisdom to guide God's people to be a blessing for all people as understood from the covenant with Abraham initiated in Genesis 12:1-3.[302] Furthermore, according to Collins, Proverbs teaches that the fear of the Lord should be our response to God's covenant with us.[303]

Moreover, according to Carl Bosma, author of "Jonah 1:9—An Example of Elenctic Testimony," the standard confession of covenant faithfulness by God's people in the Old Testament is the fear of Yahweh.[304] Bosma cites that when mariners question Jonah's occupation and origin, he replies: "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."[305]

But why is the fear of the Lord the standard confession of God's people throughout every genre of the Old Testament? Tremper Longman, professor of biblical studies at Westmont College and author of "Wisdom's Response to the Divine Initiative", poses this contemporary question:

> Why fear? Why not the love of God or joy in the Lord? Fear sounds so negative to us. According to John, does not "perfect love cast out fear" (1 John 4:18)?... Fear here is the emotional response to someone much greater than ourselves. It is more than respect; "awe" may be too passive a term, but it gets close. The fear of

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[301] Collins, "Proverbs and the Levitical System," 14; Bruce Waltke, "The Authority of Proverbs: An Exposition of Proverbs 1:2-6," *Presbyterion* 13, no. 2 (1987): 72.

[302] Collins, "Proverbs and the Levitical System," 9, 11.

[303] Collins, "Proverbs and the Levitical System," 24.

[304] Carl J. Bosma, "Jonah 1:9—An Example of Elenctic Testimony," *Calvin Theological Journal* 48 (2013): 73.

[305] Jonah 1:9, ESV.

> the Lord is an acknowledgement that God is the creator and we are his creatures.[306]

The fear of the Lord is an emotional response to God. Moreover, Collins contends that the fear of the Lord is essential for the goal of redemption which is "to renew the image of God in human beings."[307] We image God and reflect his character as we fear him and follow his commandments.

The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom

Wisdom (*ḥokmâh*) in Proverbs correlates with wisdom applied in everyday situations such as family and work relationships, work responsibilities, and stewardship of time and money according to Bruce Waltke in in his article, "The Authority of Proverbs: An Exposition of Proverbs 1:2-6."[308] He explains that wisdom includes the ability "to relate to God and man, to speak well, raise a family, cope with enemies, handle one's finances, and so on."[309] In addition to these social skills, Waltke adds that wisdom in Proverbs refers to a created and fixed order of the world including the context of human relationships. Waltke cites the proverbs, "A wise son brings joy to his father, a foolish son grief to his mother" (10:1), and "Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth" (v. 4) as examples of a divine, ordained cause-effect connection in life.

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[306] Tremper Longman, III, "Wisdom's Response to the Divine Initiative." *Ex auditu* 30 (2014): 27.

[307] Collins, "Proverbs and the Levitical System," 31.

[308] Waltke, 72.

[309] Waltke, 72.

From this understanding of wisdom—social skill exercised with an awareness of God's fixed cause-effect order—Waltke proposes what he calls a three-"c's" conception of wisdom: "character effects conduct and conduct in turn effects consequences."[310] Wisdom is not only "the fixed cause-effect order that God creates and upholds," explains Waltke, but it is also the way we choose to live based on our character.[311]

In addition to the consequences of our daily decisions, Collins similarly defines wisdom (*ḥokmâh*) as how we live. "Since the covenantal framework defines what is proper in both the path and the result," Collins explains, "we may call this 'covenantal wisdom': skill in the art of godly living."[312] To understand how such wisdom generates, Collins states from Psalm 111 that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord.[313] He asserts that the fear of the Lord is the appropriate response to God's covenant love and that this response rests upon "the steadfast love and faithfulness" (Proverbs 16:6) of the Lord's character.[314] Collins, in effect, presents a three-fold understanding of how wisdom generates and grows in a Christian's life: the character of God (his "steadfast love and faithfulness") elicits the fear of the Lord which, in turn, is the beginning of wisdom.

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[310] Waltke, 72. Emphasis mine.

[311] Waltke, 73.

[312] Collins, "Proverbs and the Levitical System," 14.

[313] Collins, "Psalms 111-112: Big Story, Little Story," 3.

[314] Collins, "Proverbs and the Levitical System," 30.

What is The Fear of the Lord?

Collins says the fear of the Lord is "a personal response to his covenant revelation" and Longman states that it includes "acknowledgement that God is the Creator and we are his creatures."[315] F. Scott Spencer, professor of New Testament at Baptist Theological Seminary, adds that the common Hebrew and Greek words in the Bible for the fear of the Lord denote more than a holy respect:

> But the common Hebrew (יראה) and Greek (φόβος) terms for God-directed "fear" (there is no special word for sacred fear), though potentially including notions of respect and awe, primarily denote an ominous, terrible emotion, reflected in the hendiadys "fear and trembling" (Ps 55:5; Jdt 15:2; 4 Macc 4:10, Mark 5:33; 1 Cor 2:3; 2 Cor 7:15; Eph 6:5; Phil 2:12). The element of *perceived threat* cannot be excised from "fear" without changing the lexicology, psychology—and theology—of this basic emotion.[316]

Jesus extols this emotional response of fear and trembling as he pleads with his disciples and the Pharisees to fear his Father: "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!"[317] The prophet Isaiah responds to seeing the LORD upon his throne with such fear and trembling: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in

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[315] Collins, "Proverbs and the Levitical System," 31; Longman, 27.

[316] F. Scott Spencer, "To Fear and Not to Fear the Creator God: A Theological and Therapeutic Interpretation of Luke 12:4-34," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 8, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 230. The prophet Isaiah relays this sense of the fear of the LORD as the LORD tells Isaiah not to fear what his contemporaries fear; instead: "But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread" (Isaiah 8:13, ESV).

[317] Luke 12:4-5, ESV.

the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"[318]

The Fear of the Lord and the Love of God

How can fear of the Lord coexist with love for God? Spencer acknowledges that fear and love appear to be polar opposites.[319] As Longman earlier demurred, even the apostle John in 1 John 4:18 appears to set fear and love in opposition to each other: "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love."[320]

Jesus warns his followers to fear the Lord as he teaches them to revel in the love of the Father for them: "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows."[321] While Jesus calls for fear of the Lord, he also desires that God's people exult in the love of God, experienced in his kindness and provisions for them. Jesus teaches that fear of the Lord can coexist with love for God, and it is the love of God for his people that generates and elicits love for God. Similar to Luke 12:4-7, Psalm 147 couples the fear of the Lord with the love of God as it also speaks of how God provides for defenseless birds:

> He gives to the beasts their food,
> and to the young ravens that cry.
> His delight is not in the strength of the horse,

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[318] Isaiah 6:5, ESV.

[319] Spencer, 229-230.

[320] 1 John 4:18, ESV.

[321] Luke 12:6-7, ESV.

nor his pleasure in the legs of a man,
but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him,
in those who hope in his steadfast love.[322]

Furthermore, Collins connects the fear of the Lord to the love of God as he asserts from Proverbs 16:6 that the fear of the Lord is the called for response to the steadfast love and faithfulness of the Lord.[323]

John Calvin also taught that fear of the Lord and love for him can coexist precisely because of the love of God for his people. In her article, "John Calvin: Sojourner through Fear to Fear of the Lord," Julie Canlis explains that Calvin taught that the love that casts out fear mentioned in 1 John 4:18 is the love of God. Canlis says that Calvin cultivated a sincere emotion of fear of the Lord with love for him as Father:

> This is Calvin's great breakthrough—God as both Lord *and* Father. This is not so much a conversion of the thoughts (though it certainly is that) as it is a conversion *of the emotions*. …Great fear and great love best summarize Calvin's newfound emotional and theological state, so much so that Calvin summarizes the gospel as the following: "Our salvation consists in having God as our Father" (*Comm. Rom.* 8:17).[324]

The Fear of the Lord and Emotional Maturity

Emotional maturity is the capacity to stay connected to people while staying committed to a shared mission. Staying connected to people certainly includes growing in emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy.[325] Staying committed to a shared mission requires a thorough understanding of the mission, rooted

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[322] Psalm 147:9-11, ESV.

[323] Collins, "Proverbs and the Levitical System," 30.

[324] Julie Canlis, "John Calvin: Sojourner through Fear to Fear of the Lord," *Crux* 54, no. 3 (Fall 2018): 6. Italics hers.

[325] Daniel Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, chap. 13, Kindle.

in the mission of God. How might the fear of the Lord grow the capacity of pastors to stay connected to people while staying committed to a shared mission?

The Fear of the Lord Leads to Listening and Self-awareness

Collins explains from Psalm 112 that the fear of the Lord leads to blessings such as "delight in divine commandments (112:1), a character of righteousness, grace, and mercy (112:3-4), [and] dealings with fellow covenant members that are just and generous (112:5, 9)."[326] The psalm implores as it instructs that God instills his own gracious and merciful character into the heart of the person who fears the Lord. God's character is evident, then, through how a person responds to him, his Word, and the needs of others with a heart that is firm, steady, and generous.

The person who is able to respond to others with such mercy and generosity delights in receiving instruction from God. Longman asserts that the fear of the Lord has a modifying influence on a person that leads to humility and to listening to God and to others:

> One who fears will learn from the Lord and will follow the Lord's instructions. In other words, and this is important, the fear of the Lord entails obedience. Fear breeds humility and eschews pride, a virtue and a vice respectively often addressed in the book of Proverbs. Those who fear the Lord are not wise "in their own eyes," but listen to God and his agents (the sages/father) and will be open to learning from their mistakes, which only a fool will repeat.[327]

As the fear of the Lord generates humility, people feel their need for wisdom and listen to God and his people. Reflective listening then can increase self-awareness that enables

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[326] Collins, "Psalms 111-112: Big Story, Little Story," 4-5.

[327] Longman, 27-28.

people to admit and to learn from their faults. Self-awareness of such need for others' voices is one step toward participating in a truly shared mission.

A lack of self-awareness leads to an inability to manage one's own feelings in personal interactions according to Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie.[328] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee further assert that without self-awareness, our emotions dominate us and impede the ability both to connect with others and to achieve our goals.[329] The fear of the Lord increases self-awareness which empowers people to stay connected to people while staying committed to a shared mission.

The Fear of the Lord Leads to Turning Away from Evil

Collins also states that the fear of the Lord leads a person to turn away from evil.[330] He explains that Proverbs 16:6 contains both the proper response to the covenant ("fearing the Lord") and the frequent exhortation in wisdom literature to turn away from evil as he paraphrases the verse: "'by the human act of fearing the Lord a person will turn away from doing evil.'"[331]

Wright adds that the fear of the Lord is a counterbalance in the heart to the temptation to covet. Addressing more than an individual's heart-felt greed, Wright argues that the tenth commandment, "You shall not covet," is "the guiding ethos of Old

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[328] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 104.

[329] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*, chap. 3, Kindle.

[330] Collins, "Proverbs and the Levitical System," 30.

[331] Collins, "Proverbs and the Levitical System," 24.

Testament economics."[332] As such, fidelity to this commandment would have profound effect upon the whole community of the people of God including their interactions with surrounding nations. Wright explains:

> The prophet Micah saw behind the socio-economic evils of his day to the private covetousness of individuals who "plot evil on their beds" (Mic. 2:1). The antidote to "covetousness which is idolatry' (Col. 3:5, RSV) is that "fear of the LORD" which engenders the wisdom of contentment.

Contentment in God, established and experienced in the fear of the Lord, counteracts the temptation to covet. Coveting weakens commitment to a shared mission.

Derek Kidner in his book, *The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes*, claims that the fear of the Lord undergirds every good heart posture. "For the 'fear of the Lord'—that filial reverence which the Old Testament expounds from first to last—is not a mere beginner's step in wisdom, to be left behind, but the prerequisite of every right attitude."[333] Kidner asserts that Proverbs 8:13 ("The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil….") is the motto of Proverbs as it also describes that turning away from evil is a modifying influence of wisdom.[334]

The fear of the Lord expels lesser fears that drive pastors to give in to temptation. "It is only fear of God that has the spiritual power to overwhelm all the horizontal fears that can capture your heart. These relational-situational-location fears are only ever put in their proper place and given their appropriate size by a greater fear—fear of the Lord,"

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[332] Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for The People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), chap. 5, Kindle.

[333] Derek Kidner, *The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job & Ecclesiastes: An Introduction to Wisdom Literature* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 19.

[334] Kidner, 24.

writes Paul David Tripp, in his book *Dangerous Calling*.[335] Tripp explains that fear of the Lord leads to a larger view of God that diminishes fear of others, fear of circumstances, and fear of the future.[336]

The communal nature of the covenant is the context for both social ethics and individual ethics in the Old Testament according to Wright:

> God wants a community that will reflect God's own character and priorities, especially marked by justice and compassion. Now if *that* is the kind of society God wants, *this* is the kind of person you must be if you belong to it. …The covenant was established between God and Israel as a *people*, but its moral implications affected every *person* in it.[337]

This communal understanding of individual ethics continues in the New Testament as the community that God creates in Christ becomes the context for his people to receive ethical instruction.[338]

Abiding in Jesus and Emotional Maturity

God planted a vineyard with choice vines on a very fertile hill, and he looked for his vineyard to yield grapes. In this metaphor, the prophet Isaiah in the eighth century B.C. explains that God, the vinedresser, planted his vineyard, the house of Israel, and he looked for the fruit of justice and righteousness. Isaiah laments that God's search for justice and righteousness was met with "bloodshed" and "outcry."[339] The prophet

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[335] Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry.* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 129.

[336] Tripp, 131-134.

[337] Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for The People of God*, chap. 11, Kindle. Italics his.

[338] Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for The People of God*, chap. 11, Kindle.

[339] Isaiah 5:7, ESV.

pronounces woe upon Israel who calls evil good and good evil. God then consigns his vineyard to nations from far away who will trample it such that only "briers and thorns shall grow up."[340] Isaiah proclaims that "the anger of the LORD was kindled against his people" because they rejected the law of God and despised his word.[341]

As Isaiah grieves for the judgment upon Israel and Judah, he also prophesies their return from exile. King Cyrus of Persia will become God's shepherd as he releases God's people and charges them to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem in the sixth century B.C.[342]

Jesus is the True Vine of Israel

The vine metaphor in the Old Testament tends to emphasize judgment of God's people, according to Dr. Steven Gjerde, pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Wausau, Wisconsin.[343] While the vinedresser/vineyard relationship reveals "the tender covenantal relationship between Israel and God," according to Gjerde, the metaphor also points to God's exasperation and anger with Israel's unfaithfulness.[344] Gjerde notes that God the vinedresser in Isaiah 5 cultivates his vineyard and expects the fruit of justice and righteousness. When God sees the rebellion of his people, he vows to cut down their vine (Psalm 80:16) and trample their hedge (Isaiah 5:5).[345] In his article, "Abiding in the

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[340] Isaiah 5:6, ESV.

[341] Isaiah 5:24-25, ESV.

[342] Isaiah 44:28 – 45:1, ESV.

[343] Steven K. Gjerde, "The True Vine of Israel," *Lutheran Forum* 48, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 15.

[344] Gjerde, 15.

[345] Gjerde, 15.

Vine," Collins notes that God in Jeremiah 2:21 also uses vine imagery to explain that judgment will come to Israel for their failures to bear fruit.[346]

God searches for good fruit in Israel whom he calls his "son," "servant," and "firstborn," and he finds good fruit in his servant, the Messiah, who is the faithful Davidic king according to Collins.[347] Jesus in John 15:1 tells his disciples that he is the true vine. "And in claiming to be the true vine," Collins argues, "Jesus claims to be in the line of David, the long-awaited Messiah, true Israel."[348]

Gjerde further states that Jesus' designation as the true vine is a metaphor full of national and spiritual identity that connects to God's hope in Genesis 12:2-3 for Abraham and his family to be a blessing for the world.[349] He explains that seeing Jesus as the true vine, the faithful covenant representative who excelled where Israel did not, invites a renewed perspective of Jesus' life and death as a blessing for the whole world.[350] The preaching, teaching, resurrections, healings, and forgiveness in the life of Jesus is the fruit of justice and righteousness that God looked for in Israel. The image of the vine assumes additional meaning in Jesus' death of propitiation according to Gjerde:

> By using this image to describe himself on the night in which he was betrayed, the very same night in which he identified the product of the vine with his own shed blood, Jesus presents himself as assuming not only the call of Israel but also its condemnation. Given up on the cross, he becomes the trampled vine, forsaken by God, all defenses torn down, his blood pressed out, and his honor plucked off by those who passed by. True Vine, indeed! With the completion of his death, Jesus

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[346] Collins, "Abiding in the Vine," *Christianity Today* (March 2016): 48.

[347] Collins, "Abiding in the Vine," 48. Collins cites Exodus 4:22-23 and Isaiah 41:8-9, 49:3.

[348] Collins, "Abiding in the Vine," 48.

[349] Gjerde, 15-16.

[350] Gjerde, 16.

> embodies the two extremes of Israel's life under the covenant: both its fruitfulness and its accursedness.[351]

Jesus' death ends the curse upon Israel for unfaithfulness according to Gjerde. And the resurrection of Jesus ensures that justice and righteousness will never end through Jesus, the true vine, and his people.[352]

Abide in Christ's Love

"The death and resurrection of Jesus are not the end of Israel but the start of its cosmic vintage, as the blessing of Abraham comes to all nations at last," says Gjerde.[353] How can the blessing of Abraham flow to all nations through Jesus? Jesus instructs:

> Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. …If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.[354]

Collins teaches that Jesus' call to abide is not a call to greater piety for an experience or emotional state of deeper fellowship in Christ.[355] To abide is not merely a call to deepen one's individual connection to Jesus. Instead, Collins states that to abide in Jesus is to remain in him while staying connected to other Christians as well.[356] Being in the vine, that is, connected to Jesus, naturally brings with it connection to other branches who are

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[351] Gjerde, 16.

[352] Gjerde, 16.

[353] Gjerde, 16.

[354] John 15:4-5a, 7-9, ESV.

[355] Collins, "Abiding in the Vine," 48.

[356] Collins, "Abiding in the Vine," 49.

also connected to the vine. While acknowledging that abiding in Christ includes spiritual practices of Bible reading and prayer, Collins exhorts, "To abide in Christ is to use our connection to other Christians as the vehicle by which Christ ministers to us—and each of us is a vehicle of Christ's life to others."[357]

J. Ramsey Michaels, in his commentary *The Gospel of John*, argues that Jesus' command to abide only makes sense in light of Jesus' statement in John 14:20: "In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you."[358] Michaels states that the "in that day" that Christ mentions is the day of resurrection when he and his Father will make their home in all who love Jesus.[359] From John 14, Michaels interprets Jesus' command, "Abide in me, and I in you," to mean "'Make your dwelling in me, and I in you'" and further explains that this means embracing this relationship.[360] Mutual indwelling is God's work, according to Michaels, and it is the responsibility of all who love God to embrace this relationship by making God's love their chief identity.[361]

Connection to Jesus, as a branch connects to a vine, points to the doctrine of union with Christ, according to Sarah Lebhar Hall, professor at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, in her article, "The Key to a Purposeful Life."[362] Hall explains:

> The possibility is staggering: that I, a creature, might have my life linked—actually, organically, eternally linked—to the Son of God himself. Like a freight

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[357] Collins, "Abiding in the Vine," 49.

[358] J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 804.

[359] Michaels, 803-804. Michaels cites John 14:23.

[360] Michaels, 804.

[361] Michaels, 810.

[362] Sarah Lebhar Hall, "The Key to a Purposeful Life," *Christianity Today* (November 2012): 38.

> car coupled with an engine, where Jesus goes, I go. What happens to him, happens to me. I follow him and share his life, his character, his suffering, his future, his inheritance, even his reign with the Father.[363]

Union with Christ is an often-neglected doctrine that is great news for all who struggle with uncertainty and discouragement according to Hall.[364] Since the Christian has a predictable storyline that aligns with Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, the Christian is free to focus less on particular life decisions and more on staying connected to Jesus.[365] Hall explains that this means that the Christian is, therefore, free to center her life on important questions such as: "Am I feeding myself on Jesus? Am I hearing his words and putting them into practice? Am I loving him with all my heart? Am I living in his body, the church?"[366]

"Abide in me, and I in you," is both a command and a promise. According to Collins, Michaels, and Hall, to abide in Jesus is to stay connected to him and to his people by the power of Christ's indwelling love.

Abiding in Christ and Emotional Maturity

Jesus is the true vine of Israel who produces the fruit of justice and righteousness in his life, death, and resurrection. And he promises in John 15 that all who abide in him will bear much fruit to the glory of his Father.[367] What is this fruit in the lives of pastors?

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[363] Hall, 38.

[364] Hall, 38.

[365] Hall, 38.

[366] Hall, 38.

[367] John 15:5, 8, ESV.

The Fruit of Abiding in Christ is Holistic Covenant Faithfulness

Citing Galatians 5:22, Colossians 1:6, and other New Testament verses, William Hendriksen, in his commentary *John*, states that good fruits are "good motives, desires, attitudes, dispositions (spiritual virtues), words, deeds, all springing from faith, in harmony with God's law, and done to his glory."[368] Collins notes that Christians debate whether spiritual fruit is the fruit of the Spirit (as listed in Galatians 5:22-23) or the fruit of evangelism seen as people become Christians.[369] According to Collins, The Old Testament addresses this false dichotomy through God's call upon his covenant people:

> When the Old Testament uses the image of bearing fruit, fruit usually signifies covenant faithfulness, particularly a character that displays God's own beauty. The focus is on God's people as a whole and how the rest of the world perceives them. God called Israel so that they would live out their embrace of his covenant—with its requirements and provisions for forgiveness—and in so doing advertise to the world that the God of Israel is the one true God, whom all of us were created to know and to love.[370]

Fruit bearing includes a holistic embrace of covenant faithfulness including "a character that displays God's own beauty" according to Collins. This fruit was to bring glory to God as it also advertised God's goodness and thus served as an invitation to everyone to know and love God.

The Fruit of Abiding in Christ for Pastors Includes Staying Connected to God's People

If abiding in Christ is staying connected to Jesus and to his people, then abiding in Christ has profound meaning for pastors who are called to stay connected to people they

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[368] William Hendriksen, *John* (1953; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 298.

[369] Collins, "Abiding in the Vine", 48.

[370] Collins, "Abiding in the Vine", 48.

lead. Emotional maturity for pastors is staying connected to people while staying committed to a shared mission. Pastors cannot hope to stay committed to a shared mission if they will not also stay connected to people. Abiding in Christ requires deep connection to people according to Siang-Yang Tan and Melissa Castillo in their article "Self-Care and Beyond":

> Abiding in Christ, as members of his body, also involves interdependency. Empowered by Christ through the Holy Spirit and supported by one another, we can care for one another and carry one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2). By God's grace, we serve one another as good stewards of God's resources. As children of God and members of the body of Christ, we give to and receive from God and others. Reciprocal caring goes beyond "self"-care to what one may recognize as "we"-care or "community"-care.[371]

Abiding in Jesus and his love includes staying connected to his people. Pastors must lead the way in staying connected to God's people. Given the unique role of pastors in the local church and the pressures they face, what should be the nature of their connection with people?

Jesus Defines What Staying Connected to People Means for Pastors

Joas Adiprasetya, president of Jakarta Theological Seminary, argues that defining pastoral leadership chiefly as servant leadership omits Jesus' view of what faithful shepherding must be.[372] Adiprasetya admits that pastoral leadership construed as servant leadership has its place, particularly as an antidote to imperious leadership.[373]

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[371] Tan and Castillo, 93.

[372] Joas Adiprasetya, "Pastor as Friend: Reinterpreting Christian Leadership," *Dialog* 57, no. 1 (March 2018): 48-49.

[373] Adiprasetya, 47. Adiprasetya quotes Jesus' response in Mark 10:42-44 to James and John when they ask to sit next to Jesus in his glory. Jesus responds: "But whoever would be great among you must be your servant."

Furthermore, he lauds the idea of servant leadership from Mark 10:45 and notes that the cross of Jesus is the ultimate example of servant leadership.[374] However, Adiprasetya suggests that the cross is not the apex of the Christian story and therefore should not be the standard of pastoral leadership:

> It is the resurrection of Christ that anticipates the renewal of all things that becomes the pinnacle of the life of all creation. In this perspective, the subversive message of the cross would be meaningless if it did not pronounce the coming of an equal community centered on the triune *koinonia*.[375]

Adiprasetya proposes that the church needs "a more constructive model of leadership that points to an ideal concept based on resurrection and the renewal of all things."[376]

A better model for pastoral leadership according to Adiprasetya resides in Christ's words to his disciples in John 15:15: "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." From this narrative, Adiprasetya suggests that this change from servanthood to friendship provides a post-resurrection concept of pastoral leadership as "friend-leadership or *philiarchy*."[377]

From two passages in the Gospel of John, Adiprasetya buttresses the concept of friend-leadership as the ideal concept of post-resurrection pastoral leadership. Quoting John 15:13: "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends," Adiprasetya states: "It can be said that Jesus had an ideal view of philia as the

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[374] Adiprasetya, 48. Mark 10:45, ESV: "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

[375] Adiprasetya, 49. *Koinonia* is fellowship.

[376] Adiprasetya, 49.

[377] Adiprasetya, 49.

highest form or agape, because philia is manifested in one's willingness to die for one's friends. *Philia* can be seen as the sacrificial face of *agape*."[378] This "friend-leadership" concept does not omit servant leadership but is instead the foundation for servanthood, including the willingness to die for friends.

Adiprasetya believes that Jesus' three questions to Peter regarding shepherding in John 21 also elevate the pastoral concept of friend-leadership. As Christ asks Peter, "Do you love me?" three times, he changes his third question to include the concept of friendship. While Christ uses the word *agape* for love in the first two questions, he changes his third question as he asks Peter, "Do you love [*philia*] me?" Adiprasetya suggests that this shift from agape to philia in Christ's third question is not a concession to Peter but is rather Christ's attempt to deepen Peter's understanding of pastoral leadership.[379] Peter must embrace pastoral leadership as friend-leadership if he will be faithful in tending and feeding Christ's sheep.

From John 15, Adiprasetya proposes for pastors that friend-leadership includes a willingness to die for others but also must include the courage to stay connected to people on a consistent, day-to day basis:

> The quality of a Christian leader is confirmed in his or her daily relationships and interactions with those people he or she leads. In other words, one has to "die" every day to give life for others as friends. Thus, Jesus' once-for-all death empowers leaders to die for others every day. Seen from this perspective, Christian leadership receives its quotidian meaning. Unless one is faithful as a friend-pastor to others in one's daily life, one will not be able to die as a sacrifice for the sake of one's friends.[380]

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[378] Adiprasetya, 49.

[379] Adiprasetya, 50.

[380] Adiprasetya, 51.

While Adiprasetya praises the role of servant leadership, he proposes that Jesus defines pastoral leadership most essentially as friend-leadership.

Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie note in their research that some pastors do not believe it is possible to have friends in their congregation.[381] The authors suggest that pastors who do not believe that friendship is possible with church members display the common failure to differentiate between allies (casual and close friends) and confidants (intimate friends).[382] In addition, the authors highly recommend that pastors form peer groups. Peer groups are self-selected small groups with confidentiality, intimate friendship, and structure. Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie state that Lilly Foundation research indicates that pastors who participate in peer groups experience improved emotional health, better self-care habits, enhanced ministry skills, and even church growth.[383]

Summary of Literature Review

In light of the literature examined, four primary themes arise for pastors who desire to grow in emotional maturity. First, emotional maturity for pastors includes staying connected to people, and pastors can cultivate connection through developing emotional intelligence. Emotional maturity for pastors also involves staying committed to a shared mission. Pastors who provide a less-anxious modifying presence as they stay

[381] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 83.

[382] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 82-83

[383] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 87.

committed to a shared mission foster a community where people feel free to engage fully with their spiritual gifts and skills.

Second, a pastor's healthy or poor differentiation can have profound, far-reaching effects upon church members. Pastors can grow in differentiation through spiritual practices, and the Trinity is the best model of healthy differentiation.

Third, family systems theory, incorporated into a pastor's emotional maturity, empowers pastors to stay connected to people through increasing self-awareness and observing well.

Fourth, emotional maturity includes staying committed to a shared mission that emanates from the mission of God in his covenant with Abraham. Pastors must apprehend and embody this mission in their lives and leadership. The grace of fearing the Lord and abiding in Jesus helps pastors stay connected to people while staying committed to a shared mission.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gain a richer understanding of how seasoned pastors pursue emotional maturity in their ministry context. It makes two assumptions: first, pastors who desire to be faithful and joyful must vigorously pursue emotional maturity, and, second, pastors who grow in emotional maturity adopt practices of spiritual and emotional formation through which God works by his grace. In order to address this study's purpose, the research identifies three areas of focus: adult development of emotional maturity, differentiation of professional leaders, and family systems theory for growth in emotional maturity and differentiation. To examine these areas more closely, the following research questions guided the qualitative research:

1) How do pastors first become aware of their need to pursue emotional maturity?
2) How do pastors describe the goal of emotional maturity they are pursuing?
3) How do pastors pursue emotional maturity in their ministry context?
    a) How do pastors pursue healthy differentiation?
    b) What challenges pastors as they pursue emotional maturity?
    c) What helps pastors as they pursue emotional maturity?
4) What continues to motivate pastors to pursue emotional maturity?
    a) What motivates pastors from their emotional life?

b) What motivates pastors from their cognitive life?

c) What motivates pastors from their physical life?

d) What motivates pastors from their social life?

e) What motivates pastors from their relationships?

Design of the Study

Sharan B. Merriam, in her book *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, states that qualitative 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."[384] Merriam identifies four characteristics of qualitative research: "…the focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the process is richly descriptive."[385] The researcher labors to understand how participants perceive and construct meaning from their life experiences rather than how the researcher interprets the participants' experiences. This focus upon how participants construct meaning is the insider's perspective, or emic view, in contrast to the outsider's view.[386] In addition, the researcher employs an inductive approach to the participants' data. This means that the researcher does not seek to test a hypothesis

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[384] Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2016), 14.

[385] Merriam and Tisdell, 14-15.

[386] Merriam and Tisdell, 15.

posited prior to securing the data. Rather, the researcher collects and analyzes data to propose concepts and theories.[387]

This study employed a qualitative research design and conducted semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data gathering. This qualitative method provided for the discovery of comprehensive and descriptive data from participant perspectives in the narrow phenomena of seasoned pastors who pursue emotional maturity in their ministry contexts.[388] All participants have pastored or are currently pastoring in Presbyterian churches in the United States. As such, they share similar backgrounds in terms of education, spiritual formation, and cultural expectations. They also reside in middle- to upper-middle socioeconomic classes. Demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural similarities among participants minimized variables among participants and thus allowed for focused research into how these pastors pursue emotional maturity in their contexts.

Semi-structured interviews exist in contrast to highly structured or unstructured interviews. Semi-structured interviews include questions that may vary in wording or order from participant to participant. The researcher desired a conversation that would procure the interpretation of the participants' key life experiences as well as a free-flowing discussion that would engender new ideas.[389]

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[387] Merriam and Tisdell, 16.

[388] Merriam and Tisdell, 5.

[389] Merriam and Tisdell, 110.

Participant Sample Selection

This research required participants to communicate how to pursue emotional maturity while encountering significant leadership challenges in ministry settings. Purposeful sampling, through which the researcher may gain insights into the research problem, requires that the researcher choose participants through whom the most data can be understood.[390] Therefore, the purposeful study sample consisted of a criterion-based selection of people from a population of seasoned, veteran pastors known for their emotional maturity while serving in leadership positions in their ministry context.[391]

Participants were chosen for a unique type of sample in order to provide for relevance in the data collected.[392] Unique sampling, sometimes referred to as atypical sampling, refers to atypical attributes or behavior in participants that merit review.[393] Participants were purposefully chosen to provide variation in leadership positions in ministry contexts. As such, participants reflected a variety of pastoral positions in churches and educational leadership. They also varied in age (from pastors in their forties to their eighties) and life stage, which provided a wide spectrum of life experience. These variations allowed for consideration of the pursuit of emotional maturity across several decades of pastors' lives. The final study was conducted through personal interviews with six pastors who have served in the Presbyterian Church in America. They were invited to

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[390] Merriam and Tisdell, 96.

[391] Merriam and Tisdell, 97.

[392] Merriam and Tisdell, 97.

[393] Merriam and Tisdell, 97.

participate via a personal invitation by the researcher followed by a personal phone call.

All expressed interest and gave written informed consent to participate.

Participant Consent Form

To respect and to protect human rights of the participants, each participant signed this "Research Participant Consent Form":

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

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

The following points have been explained to me:

1) The purpose of the research is to investigate emotional maturity of pastors.
2) Potential benefits of the research may include increased leadership capacity, new insights, and spiritual encouragement for the researcher and participants. Though there are no direct benefits for participants, the researcher hopes that participants will be encouraged through sharing their life experience with an eager learner.
3) The research process will include interviewing six PCA pastors. Andrew Flatgard will record and analyze these interviews to aid in his dissertation research process.
4) Participants in this research will engage with the researcher's questions via videoconferencing for a minimum of 60 minutes.
5) Potential discomforts or stresses: the researcher is unaware of discomforts or stresses.
6) Potential risks: Minimal. Participants will be asked to reflect upon their lives in accord with the subject of this inquiry.
7) Any information that I provide will be held in strict confidence. At no time will my name be reported along with my responses. The data gathered for this research is confidential and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. Audio or

video recordings of interviews will be erased following the completion of the dissertation. By my signature, I am giving informed consent for the use of my responses in this research project.

8) Limits of Privacy: I understand that, by law, the researcher cannot keep information confidential if it involves abuse of a child or vulnerable adult or plans for a person to harm themselves or to hurt someone else.
9) The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the study.

In addition, as the researcher completed Institutional Review Board requirements for human rights in research, the Human Rights Risk Level Assessment is "no risk" according to the seminary IRB guidelines.

Data Collection

This study utilized semi-structured interviews for primary data gathering. The open-ended nature of semi-structured interview questions facilitates the ability to build upon participant responses to complex issues in order to explore them more thoroughly.[394] Semi-structured interviews allow for follow-up questions, or probing, according to the participants' replies, and this dynamic encourages the exploration of new ideas and thoughts. Ultimately, these methods enabled this study to look for common themes, patterns, and concerns, as well as contrasting views across the variation of participants.[395]

Initial interview protocol categories were derived from the literature but evolved around the explanations and descriptions that emerged from doing constant comparison

[394] Merriam and Tisdell, 110.

[395] Merriam and Tisdell, 122.

work during the interviewing process. Coding and categorizing the data while continuing the process of interviewing also allowed for the emergence of new sources of data.[396]

The researcher interviewed six pastors for one and one-half hours each in locations suitable for focused conversation. Prior to the interview, the researcher fully advised participants of the nature and purpose of the interviews in accordance with the Doctor of Ministry program of Covenant Theological Seminary. Participants also signed a consent form. In order to accommodate participant schedules and given that the pastors reside in several different states, the researcher spent approximately two months conducting interviews and gathering data. The researcher audio recorded the interviews with two digital devices. Directly after each interview, the researcher also wrote field notes with descriptive and reflective observations from the interview time.

The interview protocol contained the following questions.

1) **ON SELF-AWARENESS:** Can you tell me about a time in your life when you sensed that you needed to grow in your emotional maturity?
    a) What were the circumstances of this awareness?
    b) Who or what did God use to initiate this awareness?
    c) How did you respond?
2) **ON EMOTIONAL MATURITY:**
    a) What is your understanding of emotional maturity?
    b) What does emotional maturity look like in your life?
    c) How have you experienced emotional maturity in the lives of your mentors?

[396] Merriam and Tisdell, 199.

3) **ON PURSUING EMOTIONAL MATURITY:** In what ways have you pursued emotional maturity in your ministry contexts?
    a) How have you pursued healthy differentiation?
    b) What adjustments have you made to this pursuit as you have grown older?
    c) What has surprised you as you have pursued emotional maturity?
4) **ON MOTIVATION:** What motivates you to pursue emotional maturity now?
    a) What motivates you from your emotional life?
    b) What motivates you from your cognitive life?
    c) What motivates you from your physical life?
    d) What motivates you from your social life?
    e) What motivates you from your moral life?
    f) What motivates you from your relationships?
    g) What challenges you as you pursue emotional maturity?
    h) What helps you as you pursue emotional maturity?

Data Analysis

As soon as possible and always within one week of each meeting, the researcher personally transcribed each interview by using computer software to play back the digital recording on a computer. The software allowed for careful, slow review of the data for accuracy in transcription. This study utilized the constant comparative method of

routinely analyzing the data throughout the interview process. This method provided for the ongoing revision, clarification, and evaluation of the resultant data categories.[397]

When the interviews and observation notes were fully transcribed into computer files, they were coded and analyzed using software search tools. The analysis focused on discovering and identifying (1) common themes, patterns, and observations across the variation of participants, and (2) congruence or contrasts between the participants.

Researcher Position

This section reveals areas of researcher preference, relevant experiences, and potential researcher bias that may affect the findings. The researcher is aware of at least two preferences, experiences, or biases that may be relevant to this study.

First, the researcher is a pastor in the Presbyterian Church in America. He has been an RUF campus minister on college campuses, an assistant pastor in three large churches, and is an associate pastor. He has chaired presbytery committees and served on PCA General Assembly Host Committees. This varied experience provides an insider's perspective to the church structures, policies, and unwritten expectations of being a pastor in the Presbyterian Church in America.

Second, borne of personal experience and ongoing dialogue with church leaders, the researcher believes that many pastors in the Presbyterian Church in America underestimate the importance of pursuing emotional maturity. The effects of this omission include but are not limited to missed opportunities to pastor God's people well and, at its worst, include disastrous effects upon people in local churches. The researcher

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[397] Merriam and Tisdell, 32, 201.

further believes that the pursuit of emotional maturity, concurrent and within a holistic pursuit of God, is essential for pastors to remain faithful and joyful.

The researcher is thus sympathetic to the participants in this study, all of whom pursue emotional maturity and are eager to follow God. The researcher also believes that family systems theory can guide pastors to understand any unresolved emotional issues in their families-of-origin and that family systems theory can help pastors grasp their role in their ministry. When a pastor lacks self-awareness in these family systems, the researcher believes, the pastor may knowingly or unknowingly abuse his power and authority.

Study Limitations

As stated in the previous section, participants interviewed for this study were limited to those serving as pastors in the Presbyterian Church in America. Therefore, the participant sample was limited to this populace. In addition, the Presbyterian Church in America ordains only men to the office of pastor. Therefore, this study does not specifically consider how women in pastoral ministry pursue emotional maturity though the researcher nonetheless trusts that women in pastoral ministry can adapt some of its findings to their ministry contexts. As stated previously, participants in the study reside in middle- to upper-middle socioeconomic classes in the southeastern United States as well.

Some of the study's findings may be generalized to other denominations in the church as well as other ministry contexts. Readers who desire to generalize some of the particular aspects of these conclusions might strongly consider testing those aspects in their particular ministry context. As with all qualitative studies, readers bear the responsibility to determine what can be appropriately applied to their context. While this study centers on the pursuit of emotional maturity especially in relation to pastoral

ministry responsibilities, the results of this study may also have implications for how all Christians grow in faith. The researcher thus encourages all readers to consider the pursuit of emotional maturity in light of a holistic pursuit of God.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this study is to explore how seasoned pastors pursue emotional maturity in their ministry context. This chapter provides the findings of six pastoral interviews and reports on common themes and relevant insights pertaining to the research questions. In order to address the purpose of this study, the following research questions guided the qualitative research.

1) How do pastors first become aware of their need to pursue emotional maturity?
2) How do pastors describe the goal of emotional maturity they are pursuing?
3) How do pastors pursue emotional maturity in their ministry context?
    a) How do pastors pursue healthy differentiation?
    b) What challenges pastors as they pursue emotional maturity?
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4) What continues to motivate pastors to pursue emotional maturity?
    a) What motivates pastors from their emotional life?
    b) What motivates pastors from their cognitive life?
    c) What motivates pastors from their physical life?
    d) What motivates pastors from their social life?
    e) What motivates pastors from their relationships?

Introductions to Participants and Context

The researcher selected six pastors to participate in this study. All names and identifiable participant information have been changed to protect identity. These six pastors have served an aggregate of 200 years of ordained pastoral ministry. They occupy or have occupied the roles of senior pastor, associate pastor, assistant pastor, RUF campus minister, seminary professor, and senior roles in ministry administration.

Research Subjects

Demographic and vocational information concerning research subjects, or pastors, is below. The researcher selected pseudonyms for these pastors and identifies the location of their ministries by broad geographical region. Pastors are listed in descending age.

John

John is married with children and grandchildren. He was a senior pastor in several churches for almost forty years. John continues to serve churches in several roles and is known for his ingenuity and creativity in meeting the needs of churches.

Michael

Michael is married with children and grandchildren. He was an assistant pastor in several large churches and a seminary professor. Michael also led several ministry organizations for more than thirty years and currently works in a large ministry in the United States. He is known for his abilities to see the big picture and to guide ministries toward organizational health.

Gregory

Gregory is married with children. He has been a PCA pastor for thirty years, serving as an associate pastor, assistant pastor, and RUF campus minister. He is currently

a seminary professor in a large city in the United States. Gregory is known for his ability to empathize with people, to increase organizational health, and to communicate vision with warmth and clarity.

Eric

Eric is married with children. He was an assistant and associate pastor for five years. As senior pastor of a large PCA church in the southeastern United States, Eric negotiated several leadership challenges concerning divergent desires of younger and older church members. He currently pastors and leads a large ministry in the southeastern United States.

Brian

Brian is married with children. He was an assistant pastor and RUF campus minister for almost twenty years and is now a senior pastor in a large PCA church in the southeastern United States.

Bob

Bob is married with children. He led an RUF campus ministry for six years and was an assistant pastor for seven years in a PCA church in the southeastern United States.

How Pastors Become Aware of Their Need to Grow in Emotional Maturity

The first research question focuses on how pastors become aware of their need to grow in emotional maturity. Several interview questions provided pastors the opportunity to identify and to describe the circumstances when they initially sensed that they needed to grow in emotional maturity. The researcher discovered a similar and sequential theme. Pastors early in their pastoral ministry experienced a breaking point. Key people in the

lives of these pastors spoke challenging words during these breaking points. The pastors' responses include listening, reflection, repentance, and surrender.

Breaking Points Reveal the Need for Emotional Maturity

All pastors experienced a breaking point early in their ministry that revealed to them the need to grow in emotional maturity. For most of them, their key breaking point included overfunctioning, or overworking. In the early years of his pastoral ministry, John was working seven days a week from early morning into the night. Reflecting in sorrow about his overworking, John offered:

> I was pretty detached. I was driven by success. I wanted to be a successful pastor, and I was sinfully competitive. Between my totally being consumed by the church and church politics, my wife and my children got squeezed out. Finally, one day one of my elders confronted me.

John described his work patterns as very selfish and sinful due to his desire to make a name for himself. He said that he attributed his overworking "to what I consider to be a very, very common sin in the pastor, the sin of people pleasing."

Michael described his breaking point as severe physiological burnout due to overworking. He was a young associate pastor and was eager to impress his senior pastor, yet he sensed that his senior pastor did not like him at all. "I wanted to do a good job, so I was working way too hard and taking no time off. Running too hard and pressing the pedal down too hard until I ran out of gas," Michael explained. He further offered that his overworking led to running on adrenaline to the point that his body finally gave out: "You can run on adrenaline for a long time, but, eventually, you're like a car that never pulls into a gas station. You end up sitting on the side of a road."

While Eric's breaking point early in his ministry included overworking, he remembers that his breaking point especially revealed to him a total lack of self-awareness. The breaking point began when one of Eric's close friends said to him, "I don't know how to be friends with you. You know everything about me. Does anyone know you?" Eric's internal response was a rush of emotions that he did not understand and could not interpret, including feelings of anger, shame, loneliness, and deep exhaustion. He explained: "I realized for the first time in my life how lonely I was, how much performing I was doing, and how I was terrified of being exposed."

To assuage his loneliness, Eric embraced overworking in an attempt to finally be loved and accepted through his work. The fast pace of his life and work, however, rendered him unable to understand his own heart and, therefore, he could not reveal his heart to others. Eric reflected back on that time, "I didn't even know how much I was going. …I realized on all fronts that I didn't have any idea who I was, where I was, where I was going. I just knew I was going fast." Yet through this breaking point, Eric was coming alive in his heart:

> I know now that those emotions mean X marks the spot: that's where you dig. But I had never gone there, so it felt like I was on the edge of living and dying. It was limbic. I couldn't find words for it. I felt seen, and I loved it. And I wanted more of it. And I knew that I was messed up and that I didn't have the resources to solve the puzzle. For the first time, I came to a place in my life saying that there is something wrong with me, and I want to live and not just survive.

His deep emotions led to an increasing self-awareness and a burgeoning desire to grow.

Brian experienced a series of breaking points early in his ministry that revealed to him a devastating lack of self-awareness. He recalled one afternoon meeting with a college student who was struggling with depression. Brian was sensing in his own life that he was spread too thin, that the cumulative total of sermons to write, decisions to be

made, one-to-one meetings, and more had left him unable to give anything more to anyone. Brian shared that while he was listening to a student talk, he had a strange experience:

> I just remember having this out-of-body experience with him, feeling like I have nothing else to say to this person, and I want to stop this meeting immediately. There was an emotional check engine light. I now realize it was my emotional world showing and saying to me, "Hey, there is a problem there. You're not aware of what's going on inside of you. There is a depth that's not there."

Brian's interior, emotional life revealed to him that he must look inside his heart and life to grow in self-awareness.

Challenging Words That Invite Pastors to Grow

While the breaking points for these pastors include different circumstances, the breaking points for all of them included key people who spoke challenging words. These challenging words confronted the pastors as the words also invited the pastors to grow. For Eric, the challenging words he received from his friend spurred the breaking point. The words challenged Eric's disposition toward others and yet were also an invitation to deeper relationship.

When Michael was burned out due to overworking, his wife offered words of encouragement and unqualified support. Michael experienced her unconditional love when she told him that it would be fine for him to stop pastoring and instead start work at a 7-Eleven convenience store or a hardware store. She would love him no matter what. They relocated to a new city as he took a new assistant pastor position. Michael's senior pastor was supportive and very sympathetic as Michael shared aloud what he was thinking and feeling in recovery from his breaking point. Yet Michael's new pastor would not allow Michael to wallow in self-pity. When Michael's sharing about his father

veered into self-pity, his pastor quickly spoke challenging words that Michael says he needed: “Michael, quit. Quit complaining about your father. God gave you that father. And for one thing, it’s your father that put the fire in your belly to do better and to succeed and to work hard. And it may what wore you out. But it also put the fire in your belly.” Michael’s pastor spoke these words to draw Michael away from self-pity and toward gratitude.

For John, the key people who spoke challenging words into his life were his wife and an elder. Working seven days a week from the early morning into nighttime left his wife feeling abandoned. She voiced her loneliness and made it clear to John that his work patterns must adjust. An elder realized that John was headed for disaster in his marriage and ministry unless something changed, so the elder lovingly confronted John about his overworking. The elder also inquired as to how much time John was spending at home with his wife and children.

Brian’s self-described “out-of-body experience” he felt during a meeting, which revealed to him that he was fully spent and had nothing left to offer, led to self-awareness and reaching out to others. He responded to his inner turmoil by turning toward his wife and by reaching out to pastor friends who were confidantes. As they encouraged him to explore his overworking, his emotions, and his heart, they also challenged him to see a professional counselor. Brian immediately contacted a counselor and began to meet with him regularly.

Bob is in a cohort of five pastor friends who have committed to communicate and meet regularly for encouragement, accountability, and friendship. For two consecutive years, he noticed upon returning from their annual gathering that he carried anger in his

heart for the suffering that his friends endured in their ministry contexts. Bob reflected that when he listened to his friends share what they endured, he voiced his anger for them and their pain. During these gatherings, Bob's sharing of his anger led to an awkward mix of quiet and focus upon Bob's anger borne of sympathy. When Bob asked his wife why this happened, she explained to him, "Your anger becomes so big that they have to take care of you in your emotions rather than the person who is talking." Her challenging words, he says, helped him see his lack of emotional maturity.

The Pastors Reflect, Repent, and Surrender

While breaking points for several pastors initially included responses of confusion and defensiveness, all pastors eventually embraced heart dispositions of reflection, repentance, and surrender.

When one of Eric's friends asked him, "Does anyone know you?", he entered into a time of reflection that included paying attention to his interior world. Eric experienced strong emotions: "I felt lonely, ashamed, angry, afraid, every emotion. It was almost like a kid went into the elevator and pushed every single button…all my buttons worked. I felt raw and exhausted." As he felt his emotions, he did not run away from them. He did not suppress or ignore their power. Instead, Eric's emotions served as lanterns to light the way deeper into his heart. As he asked himself why he was feeling such strong emotion in response to his friend's questions, Eric uncovered a longing in his heart that stretched back to when he was a boy. "What was underneath was just a very safe, simple, deep question. 'Do you like me? Will you love me just for me?' That question was always there, covered over in performance and doing, but underneath was just a really basic question." As Eric refused to ignore, suppress, or self-medicate his emotions, he came

face-to-face with the question he has asked his entire life. And he began to realize that his work and success were ways to provide his own answer to the question.

When Michael's body began to break down due to overworking, he had to listen. His anxiety needed to be addressed immediately. He shared:

> I had what the doctors in those days called a nervous breakdown. I was working way too hard, taking no time off. Running too hard and pressing the pedal down too until I ran out of gas. That was the time when I realized that I really needed to grow. I had run out of gas. I was running on adrenaline. You can run on adrenaline for a long time, but eventually, you know, you're just like a car that you never pull into a gas station. You're going to end up sitting on the side of the road. The person who helped me the most was my wife.

Michael reflected on his overworking, asking himself questions about his family-of-origin and their effect on him. His wife was supportive in every way, helping him to process aloud what he was feeling and thinking. This processing gave Michael time to consider what boundaries he would need to draw both for his sake and for his wife. He committed to taking off work one full day a week and staying home at least two evenings every week. Michael learned how to say no to work for the first time in his life. He instituted these boundaries in his life prior to taking a new job in a new city.

When John's wife and key elders confronted him concerning his overworking, his initial reaction was defensive and accusatory. "I humbly yielded because everything they said to me was true, and I knew it was true. They said, 'Your schedule is too tight. You're saying yes too often. And you're neglecting your wife and your children. Do you realize what this is costing you? What this is costing your family?'" He knew they were right in their assessment. As they continued to press John, he relented, agreed with their assessment, and repented to his wife and elders. John describes his repentance to his wife as far more than mere acknowledgment of mistakes or oversights. He told her that his

heart was broken, he immediately scheduled regular time for them to be together, and, with the prodding and financial backing of his elders, scheduled retreat weekends away with his wife. Reflecting on how his session challenged him, John said:

> The good part of this is that they modeled for me how a session ought to function. They were loving. They were confrontational. They were not just accusatory. They strategized to help me get out of my trouble. So I would say that self-awareness began for me when I began to face my sin that was resulting in a major crisis in my marriage. I was rescued by key elders who convinced the session that it was their responsibility to rescue and help their pastor.

In tears as he told this story, John noted with joy that this breaking point led to repentance and new life in his marriage and ministry due to the challenging words his wife and elders spoke to him.

Brian listened to his wife and reflected upon her counsel and the counsel of his pastor friends. One local friend strongly encouraged him to see a counselor, so Brian engaged in further listening and reflection with the counselor. Bob likewise began to see a counselor to deal with his anger. He also listened to a wise seminary professor who explained how understanding and practicing differentiation could help him properly contain his anger for his friends' suffering.

John's repentance necessarily led to turning away from overworking and turning toward his wife in specific ways. He shared that his heart was broken by a letter from his wife to him that shared her hurt and deep disappointment in him as her husband and friend.

For Michael, repentance included reflecting on his responses and relationship patterns that he learned and developed from his family-of-origin. Of the importance and ongoing nature of repentance, he offered:

> I do believe God taught me something about repentance. Repentance for me is the door to change. It's not change itself. Repentance will not bring emotional maturity. Repentance opens the door to emotional maturity. …Repentance is a way of life. It's always knowing you need God as much as you needed him yesterday, that God wants to move you from here to there.

Similar to John, Michael turned away from overworking and made sure to take at least one day off of work every week to rest his body and to rest in the Lord.

When Bob was asked how he became aware that there was a problem in the first place so that he could reflect meaningfully on his life, he mentioned that his continuing education provided opportunities for professors to speak into his life. These professors directly challenged Bob to grow in emotional maturity, and he credits their challenging words for his increasing self-awareness.

Eric, Brian, John, Michael, and Bob were able to listen to wise friends and then move toward the actions of repentance and surrender. Eric understands surrender to Jesus in terms of being with Jesus, "instead of being around Jesus or dogmatically coming up with some schema to protect me from Jesus and the world," he said. Eric described a return to simplicity in his relationship with the Lord that opened up deeper relationship with Jesus and others.

Michael stated emphatically that emotional maturity includes that "we've got to surrender our will to God's will." He understands surrender to God as accepting God's design for himself. This includes accepting the unique constitution of who Michael is, both body and soul, as well as receiving God's ordained will and thus his leading for his life. Michael explained his surrender to God's will for his life: "I came to this place of believing that obedience to Christ is more important than success. It's okay to fail. With God, failing is definitely better than being a success without him."

Every research subject shared a breaking point early in their ordained ministry that God used to reveal to them their dire need for emotional maturity and deeper relationship with him and others. A key overlapping theme in the breaking points was overworking by pastors to address areas of life that they long neglected considering including their self-identity, work-life balance, and family-of-origin dynamics.

Challenging words from family members, elders, and friends served as a catalyst to initiate actions to change long-embedded living habits and heart postures toward others. These challenging words invited pastors to reflect upon their lives, repent to God and others, and surrender their hearts and lives unto deeper relationship with God, family, and friends.

How Pastors Understand and Experience Emotional Maturity

The second research question focuses on emotional maturity. The researcher sought to elicit each research subject's current understanding of emotional maturity. Several interview questions also investigated the pastors' experience of emotional maturity including through their interaction with mentors.

Understanding of Emotional Maturity

Pastors grounded their understanding of emotional maturity, first, in self-awareness that impels curiosity about one's own emotions and physiological responses to others. They further construed emotional maturity to include their felt sense of the love of God present in their lives and differentiation, albeit in a limited sense.

"When your reaction is larger than the event, you've gone home," Eric offered in regard to his own self-awareness. Eric stated that emotional maturity for him means

stopping to examine and assess his strong emotions when he senses that he is having an outsized emotional reaction to a person or situation. For Eric, his cauldron of emotions that did not match his present situation sent him "home," that is, into analysis of his family-of-origin and reactions to it. "I'm learning to become curious about what's happening in me when I'm triggered," he explained. Eric asks himself when emotionally triggered, "Why am I having such fear and so much fear?" He further explained that for him, emotional maturity includes a self-awareness that fosters curiosity about his emotions rather than condemnation. The way to stay curious, Eric said, rather than condemning oneself, is to "stay in the pain," that is, not ignoring or suppressing one's own emotions through unhealthy choices but rather staying engaged with oneself and others. Strong emotions for Eric, in effect, function as lanterns to light his way into deeper parts of his heart, provided he can avoid self-condemnation and can stay in the pain.

Brian concurs that self-awareness is a critical part of emotional maturity. "Do I actually know who I am, and do I know what's going on inside of me? And am I actually aware of how people experience me?" are questions Brian said that are part of his understanding of emotional maturity. He continued: "So when I think of emotional health, it means I am *aware* of my own desires and my emotional needs."

When the researcher asked Michael directly what his understanding of emotional maturity is, Michael immediately offered that his understanding includes that God loves him and that, he said, "I needed to believe that deeply." Michael continues: "I needed to believe that there would be nothing I could do that would cause God to love me more and nothing I can do that would cause him to love me less. This is the most important

emotion. I believe that human beings really grow and thrive on high-octane love." Michael asserts that the love of God is the bedrock of emotional maturity in part because, he stated, "All creation is an extension of God's love."[398] Also arguing for the primacy of God's love in understanding emotional maturity, Eric declared: "It's thinking and actually living from a premise of love and believing that GOD REALLY LOVES ME in all caps."

Brian and Gregory put forth that their understanding of emotional maturity includes differentiation although they construe the value of differentiation differently. Brian explains that differentiation is a necessary part of his understanding of emotional maturity:

> You can be self-aware but still not possess emotional maturity. When I think about emotional maturity, it is understanding where I stop and where you begin. For example, two people enmeshed are kind of connected to each other emotionally. For them, the thought that "I'm not okay unless I know that you're okay with me" is immaturity. So when I think about emotional health, it means I am aware of my own desires and my emotional needs. But it also means that I'm not going to allow our communication to affect what's going on in my own emotional world. I'm not going to be controlled by our communication.

Brian perceives that differentiation, as part of his understanding of emotional maturity, includes that he will not allow himself to become enmeshed, or fused, with another's emotions. Therefore, he desires that his interaction with others would not affect his emotional world.

Gregory's understanding of emotional maturity emphasized the importance of intrapersonal differentiation but also criticized it in practice. He lauds that separating our emotions from our thinking can have fruitful effects in our relationships. Healthy

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[398] Regarding this understanding of God's love, Michael cited the book *Delighting in the Trinity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2022) by Michael Reeves.

differentiation, he says, is "learning how to communicate about difficult things without emotions overwhelming you or the person or the conversation which can lead to conflict." A real-life example of such emotional flooding where learning differentiation of emotions and thoughts can be helpful, he says, is while losing your temper and yelling at your kids. However, Gregory cautions that differentiation of emotions and thinking can swerve into developing a pattern of suppressing emotions through a posture of stoic suppression. He further explained that the extremes of emotional venting and suppression do not lead to emotional maturity. Gregory elaborated on the strengths and limits of differentiation for emotional maturity:

> I do think that differentiation, Bowen's work, attachment, and family systems theory is very helpful in work environments. And it is very helpful in terms of self-control, self-regulation, and communicating well so that we can get something done. In that setting, I think it's very wise for pastors. But not all of life is work. What happens if a pastor only differentiates? I think that differentiation doesn't honor the other sides of who we are. Work is work. I have to get friendship somewhere else, too. Deeper kinds of nurturing, formative relationships outside the work context, are revolutionary for me. I don't want to disrespect differentiation, but it's not the whole picture. And I'm worried that pastors are starting to think, "Oh, this is the holy grail." It's not. It's not going to fix the church, and it's not going to fix you. It's a good, but it's not holistic, too.

For Brian and Gregory, differentiation is essential for emotional maturity in work contexts. However, Gregory cautioned that differentiation is not holistic and consequently has a limited though worthwhile value in pastors' lives.

Experience of Emotional Maturity Including Through the Lives of Mentors

Pastors received pivotal guidance in their emotional growth through experiencing and receiving emotional maturity from their mentors. Pastors relayed that they experienced gentleness, safety, and a willingness to listen from their mentors. Several

pastors also shared their personal experience of emotional maturity as they first began to grow after their breaking points.

Michael, Eric, Gregory, Brian, and Bob experienced gentleness and safety from their mentors. By safety, Michael, Brian, and Bob shared that they felt free to share their thoughts and emotions with their mentors without fear, in a setting of confidentiality, and knowing that their mentors would listen patiently. Gregory further elaborated on the gentle nature of his mentors as they listen to him:

> It's their willingness to love and care for me as they set aside their own immediate needs, including whatever they have going on, to connect. They listen, point me to Christ, spend time with me, and pray these things. There's obviously a self-sacrifice there. Their effect in these things are moments of gentle calm. This is emotional maturity in a relational setting. It's a willingness to be burdened, a willingness to enter into what you're actually experiencing or feeling yourself. So there is empathy, and there is love as you experience it.

Gregory experienced emotional maturity from mentors through their listening which communicated that they were willing to be burdened with the pain and challenges in Gregory's life.

Brian experienced emotional maturity in his relationship with his counselor whom Brian describes as also his mentor. "I wanted someone to see me and love me and care about my development enough to tell me things that I don't want to hear," Brian shared. But for Brian to receive hard things from his mentor, he says it was essential that his mentor exhibit consistency in relationship with him. Brian described and experienced such consistency as his mentor carried his story confidentially and listened patiently while not jumping to conclusions. Brian also added that an evident congruency between what his mentor said and how his mentor lived his life was also essential for Brian to trust his mentor.

Eric experienced emotional maturity, as previously mentioned, when a friend told Eric, “I don’t know how to be friends with you. You know everything about me. Does anyone know you?” Eric stated that upon hearing this that he felt lonelier than at any other time in his life. In the context of these challenging words from a friend, Eric experienced safety and the freedom to share openly.

Michael stated that he experiences emotional maturity through self-awareness as he interacts with people. Michael’s persistent anxiety pushed him to become more self-aware. As he is self-aware of any rising level of anxiety in his heart and body, he turns to the Lord in prayer, seeking to turn his anxiety over to the Lord. He further noted that self-awareness for him included looking at his family tree. Noting that significant anxiety is present on both sides of his parents’ lineage, Michael began to study the effects of such anxiety passed down through generations and noted how he adopted patterns of relating modeled for him.

Brian also shared that he experienced emotional maturity as he prepared to have a difficult conversation with someone. He said that he felt freedom in his heart from the love of God in his life. He felt free to enter into this hard conversation without fear that the person might hurt him or be disappointed in him. This freedom, he said, came from self-awareness that he realized as he thought to himself, “This conversation is about something bigger than me.” Brian continues to explain, “That’s where self-awareness and emotional health fit in with God’s vision of the kingdom. The kingdom of God is important so my kingdom has to die. And I think when we’re emotionally immature, we’re really focused on our own little kingdom of protection.” Brian’s self-awareness of

his role in God's kingdom during this hard conversation gave him freedom to enter into the meeting without fear and with love from the Lord.

Pastors based their understanding of emotional maturity in self-awareness. Their self-awareness fostered a curiosity about their emotions and physiological responses rather than a condemnation that ended any further self-inquiry. Several pastors also emphasized that their experience of the love of God for them is foundational for emotional maturity. While several pastors affirmed that differentiation is important for emotional maturity, one pastor cautioned that its application in work settings does not necessarily correlate well in other relationships.

Pastors experienced emotional maturity as they encountered gentleness and safety in their relationships with mentors. One pastor noted with appreciation that his mentors have "a willingness to be burdened" with his pain and his story. Another pastor experienced emotional maturity form his counselor who is also his mentor. The pastor said he could trust his counselor because his counselor exhibited consistency in listening well and a congruency between his words and his life.

How Pastors Pursue Emotional Maturity in Ministry Contexts

The third research question focuses on how pastors pursue emotional maturity in their ministry context. Specifically, the researcher asked pastors how they pursue healthy differentiation. The researcher asked pastors to identify challenges they experience as they pursue emotional maturity and to identify what helps them pursue emotional maturity.

How Pastors Pursue Healthy Differentiation

Pastors offered that they pursue healthy differentiation through spending time with mentors and counselors, reflecting on who they once were compared to who they are now, embracing Sabbath rest one day a week, and engaging with books and podcasts.

Bob pursued healthy differentiation through spending time with his mentor. He said his mentor, a seminary professor, modeled healthy differentiation. The professor explained to Bob that part of healthy differentiation is, "You being you and disagreeing with me and me still being me, and we disagree, and I'm okay with that. Neither of us has to win. We don't have to get insecure. We are different, and we can both be ourselves." The professor then modeled this differentiation for Bob when Bob was insecure and anxious while telling his own life story. Bob offered that his experience of his mentor was that the professor was "unflappable, contained, and compassionate" as he inquired into aspects of Bob's story.

When the researcher asked Brian how he pursues healthy differentiation, Brian answered, "What motivates me is to look back and see how reactive I was. I was like a ship being tossed by every conversation. I was consumed by how people were experiencing me. That was such a different way of living that I want no more of." Brian pursues differentiation now by actively remembering what life felt like for him when he was poorly differentiated. He added, "I want more of being centered and grounded with the love of Christ so that I can move out toward people with conviction and confidence. I'm able to move out from a place of emotional strength. Jesus really is enough."

John and Michael both shared that they pursue healthy differentiation through embracing Sabbath rest one day a week. John implemented one day a week of rest, he

admitted with regret, only when his wife made clear to him that something had to change. Michael embraced Sabbath rest when his body began to break down, signaling to him that he must change or he would be unable to continue in ministry.

Gregory and Brian stated that they seek healthy differentiation through turning to their counselors to work through their family-of-origin history and its effect on how they relate to themselves and to others. Gregory's motivation to pursue healthy differentiation through family-of-origin work emanates from his desires to be a better husband and to love his children well. He described that his story includes both heartache and glory, and he wants to pass on healthy ways of relating to his kids. He also shared that he gains motivation for healthy differentiation through relationships with friends. While praising the individual, one-to-one counseling relationship, Gregory offered that it is possible to hide in such a therapeutic setting with its inherent strictures of time and money. He offered that the group dynamic in a men's small group stretched him in different ways that motivated him to embrace healthy differentiation in all his relationships.

Brian and Bob stated that they are motivated to pursue healthy differentiation from resources by several authors and counselors. Brian stated that he turns to the book *The Leader's Journey: Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation*[399] and the podcast *Good Enough Living* by clinical psychologist Dr. John L. Cox.[400] Bob offered that he listens to *The Allender Center* podcast[401] and reads books by Brené Brown.

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[399] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor.

[400] John L. Cox, *Good Enough Living*, produced by Dr. John L. Cox, podcast.

[401] Dan B. Allender and Rachael Clinton Chen, *The Allender Center*, produced by The Allender Center, podcast.

How Pastors Pursue Emotional Maturity in Relationships with Family and Friends

All six pastors cited that the greatest challenge they experience as they pursue emotional maturity is their relationships with their family and, in particular, their nuclear family. Five of the six pastors cited that their family-of-origin work helps them pursue emotional maturity. All pastors explained that friendships outside of their immediate ministry context are essential for growth.

The impetus for the global change that occurred in John's life came from his wife who told him that he must mature or she might have to leave him for a time. Michael's wife also informed him that change in his emotional maturity must occur. Both John and Michael responded immediately in love and with humility and gratitude as they knew that their wives were correct and wise. Bob described that he lives in a home with "unbelievably intuitive and sensitive" women, that is, his wife and daughters. Their gracious interactions with Bob motivate him to acknowledge that he needs to change by growing in emotional maturity.

Eric states that while his relationship with his wife challenges him to grow, it is his relationship with his son that often triggers him emotionally. His son says and does things that Eric says and does, and this reflection of his life in his son's life leads Eric to overreact emotionally. Again, Eric offered, "When you reaction is larger than the event, you've gone home." The strong emotions Eric feels while interacting with his son serve as a catalyst for Eric to stay curious about why he is so emotional.

Michael, Gregory, Brian, and Bob joined Eric in citing how family-of-origin work is a challenge to emotional maturity. Michael had to take an honest and hard look at how his father lacked emotional maturity and how this was passed on. Michael had to further

assess how anxiety from both sides of his family-of-origin was affecting him. Brian stated that he is surprised at how much his family-of-origin has impacted him through generating conflict, fear, and anger. He noticed that in even in the smallest of disagreements with his wife, he would become defensive, take his wife's comments personally, and become accusatory toward his wife. Through taking a difficult, long look at his family-of-origin and seeing the challenge it became toward emotional maturity, Brian was able to assess how his interactions with his parents shaped how he related to his wife.

Eric stated that one of his biggest challenges in pursuing emotional maturity is his career, experienced in his question, "What am I supposed to do next?" He admitted that he almost always thinks about what to do next in his career. This leads to many conversations for him with his wife and close friends to process this challenge.

Brian shared that his pursuit of emotional maturity is invariably affected by the challenge of pursuing physical health. He shared that when he does not get enough sleep, he carries stress. His sleep schedule, exercise or lack of it, and the foods he chooses to eat either motivate or demotivate his pursuit of emotional maturity.

All of the pastors shared that a necessary help in pursuing emotional maturity is their friendships and especially with friends who are outside of their ministry work. Brian recommended that everyone should have at least two friends on speed dial, so to speak. He calls these friends when he needs to be radically encouraged because it is easy, he said, to become discouraged about ministry or marriage. These friends help Brian in that he knows he will not be too much for them, he said. He depends on them to love him enough to challenge him by pointing out where he may be lying to himself or shaming

himself. John shared that when he hit his breaking point, his elders, who were also his close friends, were loving, confrontational, and not accusatory. They strategized with John as to how he could respond well.

Gregory shared that equally important to the role of mentors in his life is his friendships. For Gregory, his friendships are a safe place to practice emotional maturity. The practice leads to learning how to express himself and how to interpret and understand his own emotional maturity in relating to his friends. Regarding the nature of these friendships, Gregory explains: "It's something much more specific than just an accountability group or a peer group or Bible study. It's a group of men you meet with regularly to work on issues in your life related to work, marriage, family, everything." Gregory observed that he thinks most men are crippled in their emotional maturity as they lack this kind of friendship. "This is a huge problem in the Christian world," he declared. Consequently, he argues, pastors, successful ministers, and wonderful Christian people lack a vocabulary for what's going on in their emotional lives. As for lacking a vocabulary to express emotions, Gregory says it's like when you sit down to get a haircut, and the stylist or barber asks what you want for your haircut. You have no idea what words to use to express what you want your hair to look like; you just want a haircut. You don't possess the language to describe what you want. Men especially, and women, too, he posits, lack the vocabulary to explain what is happening in their interior, emotional lives. Eric also shared that he is part of a similar men's group focused on spiritual direction that meets weekly.

Eric said that he has two or three friends he talks to at length once or twice a month. He describes how his friendships help him grow:

> I'm learning to be a friend rather than having fans. I think I just had fans [before my breaking point]. You can only keep a fan as long as you are producing good content. I now have friends who like me just because they do. Learning to build these friendships is like working a muscle. It feels like rehab, like I was paralyzed. There is still reluctance to say, "Hey, I haven't talked to you in a while. How is it going?" It's still hard, and I still don't want to do it. There is still a monster barring the way saying, "You don't do that." I have to walk by that monster every time.

In addition, Michael stated that his time engaged in morning prayers helps him pursue healthy differentiation. He explained that he knows that God loves him. Consequently, he tries to get that knowledge and understanding into himself every morning before any exercise and before breakfast. One way he does that is simply by thanking God for loving him and thanking God for Jesus' work on his cross.

Pastors pursue healthy differentiation through time with mentors who model differentiation and through remembering who they were before their breaking points. They also embrace Sabbath rest and engage in family-of-origin work. Several pastors cited podcasts and authors, as well.

As stated above, opportunities for pursuing emotional maturity for pastors include their relationships with their wives and children. Pastors mentioned how their wives offer insight into how and why they become emotionally reactive rather than emotionally mature. Pastors stated that their family-of-origin work is a challenge in that it is hard work that reveals painful relationships patterns passed on through generations. One pastor stated that maintaining good physical health has an irreducible effect on his ability to pursue emotional maturity. Pastors experience their friendships as a great help in their pursuit of emotional maturity. In particular, pastors cited intentional, weekly meetings with men from outside of their ministry context that include the sharing of their emotional lives.

What Motivates Pastors to Continue to Pursue Emotional Maturity

The final research question focuses on what continues to motivate pastors to pursue emotional maturity. In particular, the researcher asked the pastors what motivates them to continue to pursue emotional maturity from their emotional life, cognitive life, physical life, social life, and other relationships.

What Motivates Pastors to Continue to Pursue Emotional Maturity from Their Emotional and Cognitive Lives

"What motivates me is that I'll stay in the pain more than I used to instead of raging or reacting. I'm learning to become curious about what's happening in me when I'm triggered," Eric shared. What continues now to motivate Eric to grow in emotional maturity is that he says he is interested to understand why he has such strong feelings at certain times. He knows he can better understand his story and can grow in emotional maturity to the degree that he focuses on what is happening emotionally inside himself. Eric explains:

> I'm learning to pay attention to what I am paying attention to as Curt Thompson says. …Staying in those unpleasant emotions of shame and fear, I'm learning that. I'm learning that my reluctance or my hesitation, my pullback [at those times] is actually an invitation into deeper intimacy. That motivates me.

The possibility of deeper intimacy with God, family, and friends that can come after staying in the pain, including difficult emotions of shame and fear, continues to motivate Eric to stay in the pain.

Eric also offered from his cognitive life that he returns often to a quote about wisdom that continues to motivate him to pursue emotional maturity. When Eric came to a place of sheer exhaustion, he learned what this quote means: "Wisdom is the recovery

of innocence on the far side of experience." As Eric experienced his breaking point and had nothing left to give, he said that the only option remaining after such an experience was simplicity. Building on his earlier understanding of emotional maturity, Eric shares his experience of emotional maturity:

> The only option is simplicity, and the simplicity is God…. You return to a place of just being yourself with God. It is so very simple. It's not complicated. So, to me, emotional maturity is a recovery of innocence. And I don't mean innocence as in moral innocence. I mean innocence of the way of just seeing something and not having to figure it out. And emotional maturity is this abandonment. I think you begin to abandon strategies and self-help, and you just become obsessed with simplicity.

To understand what simplicity in this context means to Eric, he further elaborated: "Simplicity is just being human, like Mary Oliver calls it. In her poem, 'Wild Geese,' she says you don't have to walk on your knees, repenting and moaning and groaning. You just have to let the soft animal of your heart love what it loves. That's emotional maturity to me." Eric experienced emotional maturity through the simplicity of being himself with God without any pretension or artifice.

Eric added that he needs "quiet stillness" every day, and he finds this in poetry. Quoting poetry by Mary Oliver and Tomas Tranströmer, Eric offered that poetry provides quiet stillness and thus motivates him to pursue emotional maturity. He described poetry as life-giving, explaining, "Poetry accesses a part of my mind that allows healing to occur. That's very deep, and I don't really understand it, but it's wonderful."

What Motivates Pastors to Continue to Pursue Emotional Maturity from Their Physical Life

Pastors shared that what they feel in their bodies provides warning signs that they must change. Their bodies also provide opportunities to facilitate growth in emotional maturity through exercise, what they eat and drink, and sleep.

Brian stated that his body provides warnings that he needs to grow in emotional maturity as well as a key opportunity to experience growth in emotional maturity. When Brian's stress levels rise due to lack of sleep or eating poorly, he can very much feel and sense that something is wrong and that he is unbalanced emotionally and physically. These warning signs lead him to pause and reflect on decisions he has made and why his stress levels are higher than normal. His lack of sleep and poor eating can be a cause of high stress, but they can often be responses to experiencing highly reactive emotions after being triggered. Brian describes lack of sleep and poor eating habits as barriers to growth in emotional maturity but also as warning signs that can lead to meaningful reflection and growth.

Running with people motivates Brian to continue to pursue emotional maturity. Brian said that he began running with others during a time of intense mourning and grieving. He needed a place and an activity into which he could channel his anger and confusion. Running brought physical relief and reduced Brian's stress levels, so this led him to run even more with people. To his surprise, Brian experienced strong emotions and grief while running. Rather than ignoring these emotions, Brian shared that he would sometimes break down crying while running. At the finish of these emotional runs, Brian says he had a sense of satisfaction and a sense of being settled. He felt that his interior life

was less chaotic and more aligned with greater clarity. These rich emotional experiences during and after running continue to motivate Brian to pursue emotional maturity.

Eric also shared that his body provides warning signs that something is unbalanced emotionally in him and that his body provides a way to address this imbalance and strong emotions. When he feels shame that turns to rage, he experiences a shortness of breath, his body temperature rises, and he feels what he calls a sick pit in his stomach. These physical symptoms lead him to pause. And similar to Brian, Eric runs often, usually four to five times a week. Eric is motivated to pursue emotional maturity in both these warning signs and what his body experiences in the joy of running.

Michael exercises every morning and often in the afternoons as well. In addition to immediate physical benefits that he feels after exercise, Michael says that his exercise lessens his persistent anxiety. These benefits from exercise, be it on the treadmill or other equipment, continue to motivate Michael to pursue emotional maturity as he experiences emotional wellness through physical exercise. Michael also pays attention to what he eats, and he strives to get at least 7½ to 8 hours a sleep every night.

What Motivates Pastors to Continue to Pursue Emotional Maturity from Their Social Life and Other Relationships

Pastors reported that as their relationships with their spouses, children, and close friends grow deeper, they feel motivation to pursue emotional maturity for the sake of all of their relationships.

Bob shared that his wife and children continue to motivate him to pursue emotional maturity. He said that his children are often like mirrors to his behavior. When he becomes highly reactive with his emotions in the heat of a moment, and not reflective,

his children will respond in ways that show him that he needs to stop and reflect. His love for his children often leads him to respond with reflection and pause to try to grasp what is happening inside himself. Bob also offered that his wife's wise observations motivate him to seek deeper intimacy with everyone he knows. His wife stated aloud to him what he already knew but did not fully grasp. When Bob sees that a friend is has been mistreated, Bob carries anger like a chip on his shoulder, and his friends and family have to cater to his anger instead of whatever else is happening at the moment. Bob's wife confirmed to Bob that this is very much the case. His wife's gentleness in sharing her observations serves as an invitation toward emotional maturity for the sake of his family and friends.

Eric's wife as well provides wise observations with gentleness that motivate Eric to pursue emotional maturity. In the case of several personal issues, her kindness and recommendations for how to see things differently softened Eric's heart such that he became more interested in emotional growth.

Eric also has a few friends that he reaches out to with a phone call when his emotions are at a fever pitch and when he doesn't understand why. The conversations he has with these close friends spurs him on to pursue greater emotional maturity as his friends show care for him and love him well. Eric shared as well that he has friendships through a book club. He is able to be fully present with them, enjoying their friendship, sharing with a sense of freedom that he says is exhilarating. These friendships are not utilitarian and are not a means to a sole end of evangelism. As these friendships go deeper, Eric is further motivated to open his heart, share personally, and pursue emotional maturity for the sake of all of his relationships.

Toward a Holistic Pursuit of Emotional Maturity

In summary, research data indicates that much that happens in the emotional, cognitive, physical, and social lives of these pastors, as well as from their other relationships, serves to continue to motivate these pastors to pursue emotional maturity. Eric shared that he strives to "stay in the pain," meaning that when he feels hesitation or pullback while feeling shame and other deep feelings, he desires to stay in these hard feelings because he senses an invitation to greater growth and deeper living. He finds that the simplicity of being with God provides intimacy that motivates him toward further emotional openness and maturity.

Michael, Brian, and Eric testified to the value of exercise in that positive effects of exercise in their bodies include less stress, feeling settled, and emotional growth through grieving loss with tears. Brian and Eric also shared that their bodies provide warning signs from lack of sleep or poor eating that their emotional lives need attention. Bob and Eric gratefully shared that their wives provide wise observations about their lives with a spirit of gentleness. Their wives' gentleness serves as an invitation to continue to pursue emotional maturity in the context of these safe relationships. Bob shared that time with his children motivates him to further growth, as well, and Eric said that friendships through his book club continue to motivate him toward emotional openness and maturity.

Summary of Findings

This chapter examined how seasoned pastors pursue emotional maturity in their ministry context. Six pastoral interviews provided common themes and relevant insights. Pastors shared how they first became aware of their need for emotional maturity. Every

pastor experienced a breaking point early in their ordained ministry when they knew that something had to change in their lives or they would not be able to keep going. One pastor shared that he also knew his marriage was in peril, so he had to tend first to his marriage and then to his congregational work. All of the pastors had an established network of friends and family that immediately surrounded them and encouraged them as they addressed their breaking points. As these pastors received challenging words from loved ones, they reflected, repented, and surrendered to growing in grace through pursuing emotional maturity.

Pastors also described their understanding of emotional maturity and their experience of emotional maturity in themselves and from others including mentors. These pastors spoke of different aspects of emotional maturity while praising its overall importance for all of their relationships. All of them mentioned the value of self-awareness that fosters curiosity and exploration concerning their strong emotions rather than condemnation. “I know now that those emotions mean X marks the spot: that’s where you dig,” explained one pastor. Several pastors stated that emotional maturity must be grounded in God’s love, with one pastor explaining his belief that “All creation is an extension of God’s love.” Another pastor praised God’s love as the foundation for the pursuit of emotional maturity, arguing, “You have to be rooted somewhere.” While pastors praised both interpersonal and intrapersonal differentiation, one pastor noted that while differentiation has much value for workplace efficiency, pastors who differentiate in the same ways and to the same degree in their other relationships may experience problems in these relationships. Of this difficulty, the pastor stated that the concept of differentiation lacks appreciation for the holistic nature of human beings.

These six pastors described how they pursue emotional maturity through healthy differentiation. They shared openly about what challenges them as they pursue emotional maturity as well as what helps them. Challenges to pursuing emotional maturity included the difficult work of understanding one's family-of-origin and relationship dynamics passed down through generations. Pastors shared that a lack of physical health through, for example, lack of sleep and poor eating lessens motivation for pursuing emotional maturity.

They shared what continues to motivate them to pursue emotional maturity from their emotional, cognitive, physical, and social lives as well as from other relationships. The strong emotions one pastor feels, including shame, can lead him to want to pullback and hesitate from staying in the pain and confusion, that is, staying in the difficult-to-process emotions. He sees his hesitation as an invitation to deeper relationship and emotional maturity.

Several pastors stated their bodies provide both warning signs that they need to grow in emotional maturity as well as a constructive path forward for emotional maturity. When these pastors experience physiological changes such as rising body temperature, shortness of breath, or a pit in their stomach, they see that their bodies are inviting them to inquire as to what is happening in their emotions. They also mentioned that exercise, especially running outside with others and also on a treadmill, provides relief of anxiety and stress, positive physiological change and feelings, and even relief of difficult emotions. Pastors further relayed that their social lives and other relationships continue to motivate them to pursue emotional behavior. Wives who offer wisdom in a spirit of gentleness and children who react to these pastors' strong emotions are both invitations to

these pastors to pursue emotional openness and maturity so that they can respond in love to their wives and children.

Findings and conclusions from this research are in the next and final chapter. Chapter Five will also provide recommendations for practice and further research into the pursuit of emotional maturity.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore how seasoned pastors pursue emotional maturity in their ministry context. The study also provides biblical and theological teaching, psychological theory, and practical suggestions for how to pursue emotional maturity. The researcher hopes that this study will increase awareness in pastors and others of the need to pursue emotional maturity. Several assumptions prompted this study. First, pastors who desire to be faithful and joyful must pursue emotional maturity. Second, pastors who grow in emotional maturity adopt practices of spiritual and emotional formation through which God works by his grace. Three main areas of study were identified as primary to understanding and pursuing emotional maturity: development of emotional maturity, differentiation of professional leaders, and family systems theory for growth in emotional maturity.

To study these areas more closely, the following questions directed the literature review and were the focus of the qualitative research:

1) How do pastors first become aware of their need to pursue emotional maturity?
2) How do pastors describe the goal of emotional maturity they are pursuing?
3) How do pastors pursue emotional maturity in their ministry context?
    a) How do pastors pursue healthy differentiation?

b) What challenges pastors as they pursue emotional maturity?

c) What helps pastors as they pursue emotional maturity?

4) What continues to motivate pastors to pursue emotional maturity?

a) What motivates pastors from their emotional life?

b) What motivates pastors from their cognitive life?

c) What motivates pastors from their physical life?

d) What motivates pastors from their social life?

e) What motivates pastors from their relationships?

This chapter offers conclusions from this study including the researcher's perspective. Findings from the literature review and interviews confirm that pastors who desire to be faithful to God's mission and joyful must pursue emotional maturity. This chapter, first, provides a summary of the study literature followed by a summary of the interview data. Second, this chapter includes a summary of findings that includes the researcher's perspectives and opinions from the data as well as recommendations for practice. Third, this chapter provides recommendations for further research.

Summary of the Study Literature and Interview Data

This study reviewed relevant literature in four areas and analyzed interview data from six pastors. Below are summaries of the literature and interview data.

Summary of the Study Literature

Emotional Maturity and Pastors

Pastors who stay connected to people must grow in their emotional intelligence, and the foundation of emotional intelligence is a robust and perpetual self-awareness.[402] Pastors cannot recognize and respond to the emotions of others if they are not first aware of their own strong emotions and the effects of these emotions upon their mind, heart, and body.

While emotional intelligence is essential for staying connected to people, organizational transformation also requires the modifying power of a compelling mission.[403] The principles of staying connected to people while staying committed to a shared mission operate in a symbiotic manner. While staying connected to people is necessary for emotional maturity, staying committed to a compelling mission can generate increased relational connection as well.[404] Pastors who provide a less-anxious modifying presence, as they stay committed to a shared vision, foster a community where people feel free to engage fully with their spiritual gifts and skills.

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[402] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, chap. 2, Kindle. Oswald, 105.

[403] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, chap. 10, Kindle.

[404] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, chap 10, Kindle.

Differentiation of Professional Leaders

Friedman applied the concepts of separateness and togetherness for clergy as he defined differentiation as the capacity to define oneself, despite the pressures of togetherness, and to maintain a nonanxious presence.[405]

Pastors can evidence poor and healthy differentiation. Pastors with poor differentiation "are fused into their important relationships" according to Gilbert and carry anxiety in response to these relationships.[406] They may embrace insecure models of attachment such as overfunctioning, underfunctioning, and conflict to assuage their anxiety. An overfunctioning pastor does not listen well, overworks, bullies, and is easily threatened.[407] Howe describes how an overfunctioning pastor makes shepherding decisions: "For overfunctioning pastors, pastoral actions are dictated more by the necessity of reducing their own anxiety rather than by any objective discernment of what their parishioners might truly need."[408] However, pastors with healthy differentiation can "create waves of growth toward maturity capable of spreading through the congregation and the surrounding community" according to Herrington, Creech, and Taylor.[409]

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[405] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 27.

[406] Gilbert, *Extraordinary Leadership: Thinking Systems, Making a Difference*, 93.

[407] Gilbert, *Extraordinary Leadership: Thinking Systems, Making a Difference*, 94.

[408] Howe, 357.

[409] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 95.

Family Systems Theory and Emotional Maturity

Gilbert states that family systems theory describes relationship networks as emotional systems. She explains that emotions like anxiety run through relationship networks such as families and organizations like electricity runs through wires.[410] Friedman proposes that family systems thinking can help pastors recognize emotional reactivity in three key relationship structures: the congregation as a whole, families in the congregation, and the pastor's own nuclear family.[411]

As the major tone of anxiety in a family or congregation is seriousness according to Friedman, he advocates playfulness as one aspect of a leader's nonanxious presence.[412] Family systems theory, incorporated into a pastor's emotional maturity, can empower leaders to stay connected to people through increasing self-awareness and observing well.

The church cannot create and perpetuate an outward focus in its mission if its leaders are emotionally reactive, lack self-awareness, and are unknowingly caught in triangles and relationships of emotional cutoff and emotional fusion. To fulfill its kingdom mission, the church needs pastors with emotional maturity.

A Biblical-Theological Framework for Emotional Maturity

Wright, Goheen, and Williams lament that churches and books on Christian mission often anchor the mission of God solely in the Great Commission of Matthew

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[410] Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory*, 3.

[411] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 195.

[412] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 209.

28:18-20, omitting the Old Testament.[413] However, according to Wright, the Apostle Paul continually directs God's people to consider God's covenant of grace with Abraham to understand their mission.[414] As the church grasps its mission from scripture as flowing from God's covenant with Abraham, the church can understand its role in the redemption of the world through understanding the kingdom of God.

The Fear of the Lord and Abiding in Christ

Grasping the mission of God includes a thorough understanding of covenant faithfulness from the covenant of Abraham throughout the Old and New Testaments. Collins argues that the appropriate response to God's covenant is to have the fear of the Lord which rests upon "the steadfast love and faithfulness" (Proverbs 16:6) of the Lord's character.[415] The fear of the Lord relates to emotional maturity in that the fear of the Lord can expel lesser fears that lead a person to embrace temptation. While the fear of the Lord can help pastors fight temptation, it also can generate listening and self-awareness that can grow emotional maturity. As the fear of the Lord begets humility, a person feels the need for wisdom and listens to God and his people.

Given the corporate nature of the covenant of Abraham, Jesus' invitation and command in John 15 to abide in him must be seen within a communal prism. While teaching his disciples to abide in him, Jesus describes himself as the vine and his people as the branches. In contrast to an American contemporary understanding of following

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[413] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 33; Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today*, 35; Williams, 117.

[414] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 193.

[415] Collins, "Proverbs and the Levitical System," 30.

Christ that places a primary and paramount focus upon one's personal relationship with Jesus, Collins notes that Jesus' call to abide in him is not a call to an emotional state of deeper fellowship in Christ.[416] Rather, the call to abide in Christ is to remain in him while staying connected to other Christians.[417] Our connection to other believers is how Christ ministers to us, says Collins.[418]

Jesus defines what staying connected to people looks like for pastors. Adiprasetya argues from John's gospel that while servant leadership has its place, especially in contrast to imperious leadership, pastors are called to a better model of leadership that includes genuine friendship with church members.[419]

From the literature, four primary themes arise for pastors who desire to grow in emotional maturity. First, pastors can grow in emotional maturity through developing emotional intelligence. Staying connected to people while staying committed to a shared mission can produce a less anxious modifying presence which can enable people to feel empowered to exercise fully their spiritual gifts and fruit. Second, a pastor's differentiation will have profound consequences upon a congregation and its ability to fulfill its mission. Third, relationship dynamics appropriated from family systems theory, as part of a pastor's emotional maturity, can empower a pastor to stay connected to people through increasing self-awareness and observing well. Fourth, emotional maturity includes staying committed to a shared mission that emanates from the mission of God in

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[416] Collins, "Abiding in the Vine," 48.

[417] Collins, "Abiding in the Vine," 49.

[418] Collins, "Abiding in the Vine," 49.

[419] Adiprasetya, 48-49. John 15:15, 21:15-17.

his covenant with Abraham. The grace of fearing the Lord and the promise of abiding in Christ helps pastors to stay connected to people while staying committed to this shared mission.

Summary of Interview Findings

This study analyzed data from interviews with six pastors. Pastors were asked how they first became aware of their need to pursue emotional maturity, how they understand and experience emotional maturity, how they pursue emotional maturity, and what continues to motivate them to continue to pursue emotional maturity.

Initial Awareness of the Need for Emotional Maturity

All pastors interviewed relayed that they experienced a breaking point early in their ministries. Their breaking points presented this fork in the road: change and grow, or face the loss of a spouse, friends, and vocational ministry. The manner in which they received this directive came in the form of challenging words that invited these pastors to grow. In response, pastors were enabled by grace to listen, repent, reflect, and surrender.

For most of the pastors, the breaking point that revealed to them their need for emotional maturity included their overfunctioning, or overworking. For example, John shared that prior to his breaking point, he was working seven days a week. Michael described his breaking point as physiological burnout due to overfunctioning in the pastorate. John and Michael lacked self-awareness until they were confronted by their wives and others. Similarly, Eric and Brian shared that their breaking points revealed to them a total lack of self-awareness.

After their breaking points, pastors began to reflect upon how their lives reached a point where they embraced overworking to assuage their pain, anxiety, and loneliness. They began to examine their families-of-origin, going back several generations. As they reflected on their childhood and adolescence, with the help of their wives and close friends, they began to see where they adopted patterns of relating to people that left them unknown. They then repented of these patterns and began to ask questions of friends as to how they could open their hearts to others in the context of inviting and safe relationships.

Understanding and Experience of Emotional Maturity

Pastors based their understanding of emotional maturity, first, in self-awareness. They all stated that initial growth in self-awareness led them to become curious about their own emotions and physiological responses to others.

Michael's understanding of emotional maturity also includes an awareness of God's love for him. He asserted that God's love is the foundation of emotional maturity for Christians because, in part, all of creation is an extension of God's love.

Pastors also included that their understanding of emotional maturity includes differentiation which they defined as understanding where they stop and where others begin. Gregory praised the importance of differentiation in the workplace while cautioning that separating emotions from thinking is not always the best approach in relationships outside the workplace.

Pastors experienced emotional maturity through their relationships with their mentors and in hearing from loving friends.

While pastors grounded their understanding of emotional maturity in self-awareness, they also argued that self-awareness alone is not emotional maturity. They stated that self-awareness opens a door that makes emotional maturity possible. Pastors offered that self-awareness must lead to curiosity about what emotions one feels and why these emotions are at times intense.

How Pastors Pursue Emotional Maturity

Pastors pursue healthy differentiation through spending time with mentors and counselors, embracing a Sabbath day of rest weekly, reflecting on who they once were compared to who they are now, and engaging with books and podcasts.

Pastors were also asked how they pursue emotional maturity with family and friends. All pastors stated that the greatest motivation in their pursuit of emotional maturity is in their closest relationships, that is, their relationships with their nuclear family. Their wives offer frequent counsel for how these pastors can grow in their emotional maturity through listening, repentance, reflection, and surrender to God and others.

Pastors cited that their ongoing family-of-origin work is how they pursue emotional maturity. For example, Michael continues to assess how anxiety through his extended family relationships affects him now and how his father's lack of emotional maturity and expression affects him as well. All pastors pursue emotional maturity through relationships with their friends and especially with friends outside their vocational ministry work.

Motivations to Continue to Pursue Emotional Maturity

Pastors shared what motivates them from their emotional life, cognitive life, physical life, social life, and other relationships to continue to pursue emotional maturity. The possibility of deeper relationship with God and others while staying in his pain motivates Eric to continue to pursue emotional maturity. “Wisdom is the recovery of innocence on the far side of experience,” Eric shared. In this, he stated that this thought to him means that on the other side of his breaking point, when he had nothing left to give, he was left only with the simplicity of being with God without artifice or pretension.

Pastors offered what continues to motivate them from their physical life to pursue emotional maturity. Brian shared that his body provides warning signs for the need for emotional growth whenever he sleeps poorly and eats poorly. Eric also said that his body provides warning signs that he needs to pursue emotional maturity as he experiences shortness of breath, a pit in his stomach, or elevated body temperature. These warning signs from their bodies provide them an opportunity for meaningful reflection and growth. Pastors also exercise to strengthen their pursuit of emotional maturity as through exercise they experience relief of difficult emotions and insight into current emotions.

Discussion of Findings with Recommendations for Practice

To be faithful in following Jesus, we must conceive our church’s mission in relation to the kingdom of God. When Jesus launched his public ministry, he proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom. Matthew says Jesus was “proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom”; Luke declares that Jesus was “proclaiming and bringing the good news of the

kingdom of God."[420] Mark writes that Jesus began his ministry by saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."[421] The clear, common thread through all of Jesus' ministry from start to finish is that he came to bring the kingdom of God. Through healing people of diseases, teaching us to pray "thy Kingdom come," teaching us parables of the kingdom, and through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus launched his kingdom.[422] If we are to be faithful in following Jesus, particularly as leaders in his church, we must understand our role in the church in relation to Jesus' kingdom.

We Must See the Church's Mission as Part of God's Covenant of Grace with Abraham

Goheen, Williams, and Wright argue that our understanding of the church's role in the holistic blessing that the kingdom of God brings to the world must emanate from God's covenant with Abraham. Wright argues that God's covenant with Abraham begun in Genesis 12:2-3 is the Great Commission for the church now and the foundation for Jesus' missional command in Matthew 28:18-20.[423] For a mature and growing faith, the mission of God must be understood from the foundation of God's promise to Abraham to bless the whole world through his descendant the Lord Jesus Christ.[424]

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[420] Matthew 4:23 ESV; Luke 8:1 ESV.

[421] Mark 1:15 ESV.

[422] Luke 11: ESV, Colossians 1:13 ESV.

[423] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 214. Genesis 12:2-3, Matthew 28:18-20.

[424] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 220.

What does understanding the church's role as a sign, preview, and instrument of the kingdom of God have to do with being emotionally mature in our relationships? If we perceive our local church's mission and our sense of purpose exclusively in terms of the commands in Matthew 28:19 to go, make disciples, and baptize, we will experience an inevitable alienation in our relationships with God, other people, the beauty of creation, and even within ourselves about our own hearts and bodies. When we perceive our purpose and mission exclusively in instrumental terms of how much we contribute to going, making disciples, and baptizing, we will inevitably measure our worth in terms of how much money we give to the local church so that others can "go" and how often we can take mission trips elsewhere to fulfill the command to "go."

If you have ever spoken with someone who feels guilty for not taking more mission trips elsewhere than where God has planted them and who feels guilty for, in their words, "only" being in "secular" work like elementary school teaching, business, law, manual work, or the arts, then you have experienced such a truncated view of the church's mission at work in the heart of another person. Such a sacred/secular dichotomy of spirituality steals joy, devalues their God-given gifts, and leads them to perceive themselves as mere instruments and means to an end. Pastors as well as laity succumb to this truncated view of the church's mission and their purpose in life as they perceive the value of their life in terms of ministry production rather than in holistic relationship with God and others.

The Church's Mission Requires Leaders with Emotional Maturity

For the church to be a sign, a living preview, and an instrument of the kingdom of God, the church needs leaders who are capable of leading the church organization with

spiritual and emotional health. But it is not just pastors' relationships within their congregation that need tending and care. "The best leaders have the best family relationships," says Gilbert.[425] This means, therefore, that pastors must examine their emotional maturity in relation to everyone they spend time with, including especially their family-of-origin, current nuclear family, friends, congregants, co-workers, and neighbors.

Emotional Maturity for Pastors is a Healthy Triangle That Serves the Church's Mission and Increases Joy!

I propose that a succinct summary of emotional maturity for pastors is the capacity to stay connected to people while staying committed to a shared mission. Herein is a healthy relationship triangle that includes a pastor, other people, and a shared mission. Herrington, Creech, and Taylor define emotional maturity in a pastor as the capacity "to call a congregation to discern and pursue a shared vision, to remain connected with those who differ with the leader or the majority, and to remain a calm presence when the anxiety rises."[426] Their definition highlights the two parts of my definition of emotional maturity as they emphasize staying connected to people when anxiety rises while also calling a congregation to pursue a shared mission. We may consider emotional maturity at work in the lives of pastors as seen in three constituent parts that, when working together, yield fruit in accord with God's mission.

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[425] Gilbert, *Extraordinary Leadership*, 29.

[426] Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 54.

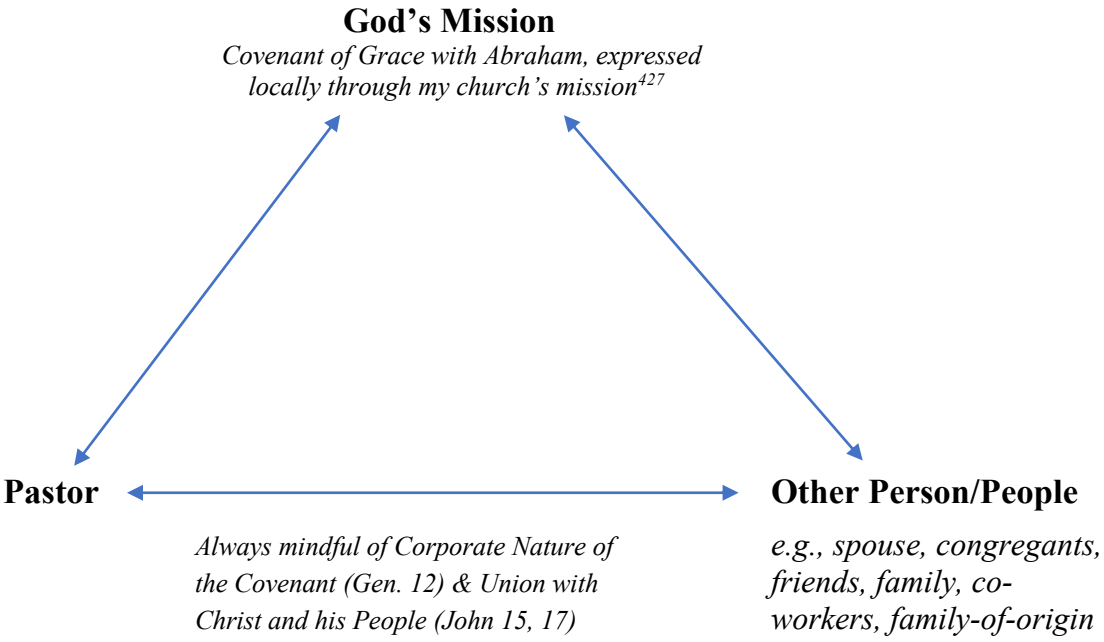

Figure 1. Relationship Triangle for Emotional Maturity in Practice

A possible limitation of this visual representation of emotional maturity in action is the individualistic relation of a pastor with just one other person such as a church member or spouse. However, it is best to view the connecting line between the pastor and other person as always bearing a corporate component in that these individuals keep in their heart a shared mission.

[427] Christopher Wright explains the church's mission as "our committed participation as God's people, at God's invitation and command, in God's own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation" (Wright, *The Mission of God*, 23). Michael Goheen extols this definition as he notes that this understanding does not emphasize mission first as what individual church members accomplish. Rather, the church's mission is a calling with a communal nature bound in relationship with God and his people (Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today*, 25-26).

Emotional Maturity is Not the Same as Differentiation

Teaching that equates emotional maturity and differentiation, claiming that these two terms are interchangeable synonyms, fails to address the complexity of human relationships. Differentiation includes two principals: one's thoughts and emotions (internal differentiation), and one person relating to another (external differentiation). Emotional maturity in a pastor includes three principals: the pastor, the other person, and a shared mission that constrains and impels the pastor. Even Murray Bowen stated that his view of differentiation avoids concepts of emotional maturity and emotional health.[428]

Furthermore, understanding differentiation as maintaining separateness internally (separating our thoughts from our emotions) and separating ourselves externally (separating ourselves from others to avoid emotional fusion) may only be helpful in certain cultures and may marginalize the female experience.[429] Differentiation has its strengths but must be appreciated and appropriated in its proper, limited sense of maintaining separateness to avoid emotional fusion.

How Pastors Can Pursue Emotional Maturity

Scazzero warns pastors that it is not possible to be spiritually mature without also being emotionally mature. We want and need pastors with emotional maturity! How can pastors pursue emotional maturity?

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[428] Bowen, 472.

[429] See page 37ff. of this dissertation for further explanation.

Pursue Self-Awareness of Your Story, Heart, Emotions, and Body

To relate to another person maturely, with their best interests always in mind in light of God's mission, we must understand who we are and what we are experiencing as we spend time with others. Without self-awareness, we will emotionally fuse with others, or we may react to others' anxiety with ever more anxiety.

Reflective practices and working with others can grow a pastor's self-awareness.[430] Pastors offered that their work studying their family-of-origin provides new insights as to why they think, speak, and act the way they do now.[431] Pastors who refuse to look into their past, inquiring about what they experienced and the coping behaviors they developed, run over their congregants, family members, and friends. Pastors must develop the capacity to pay attention to what they feel in their bodies. The body provides warning signs that can lead to meaningful reflection about what is happening in the present. Able-bodied pastors must also exercise their bodies to gain insight into their emotions, to increase self-awareness and self-management of emotions, and to experience relief of difficult emotions such as anxiety, shame, hurt, anger, and loneliness. Additional reflective practices to grow in self-awareness include solitude, silence, and fasting. Pastors who refuse to slow down and will not seek the Lord in simplicity through, in part, solitude, silence, and fasting, will remain chained to their unexamined narratives and pleasures. God's renewing grace is available for pastors who embrace simplicity, solitude, silence, and fasting.

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[430] Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, 110.

[431] For guidance on how to study one's family-of-origin through constructing and interpreting a genogram, see Appendix D (page 275) in Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie and Appendix A (page 191) in Herrington, Creech, and Taylor.

Revel, Rejoice, and Rest in God's Love

Pastors explicitly connected God's love to their understanding and practice of emotional maturity. There was no other aspect of God's character that they cited as foundational to their emotional maturity. Michael argued that God's love is the foundation of emotional maturity because, he offered, "All creation is an extension of God's love." Eric and Brian said that emotional maturity for them means thinking and living from the premise that God really loves him. Brian shared that when he prepares for a hard conversation with someone, the love of God gives him freedom to engage with courage.

Pastors must prize and reflect upon how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit interact and complement each other in creation and redemption. Such reflection can counter temptations of overworking and underworking, emotional fusion and emotional cutoff. Toward this end, Majerus and Sandage propose the Trinity provides a vision for spiritual maturity that has the power to help people avoid the extremes of emotional fusion or emotional cutoff in relationships.[432]

By Grace, Stay Connected to People While Staying Committed to a Shared Mission

Staying connected to people becomes easier to do as we recognize and appreciate from Jesus that we are already connected organically to him and to his people. Jesus explains in John 15 that he is the true vine and that we are the branches connected to him

[432] Majerus and Sandage, 42.

and to others in spiritual union.[433] God empowers us by his grace to live out this spiritual reality as we spend time with people.

Since Jesus wanted and had friends, shouldn't pastors do the same? It is far too easy for pastors to have no friends in their congregations and even no close friends at all. Pastors need confidants outside of their congregations. But they also need to experience friendship within their congregations, and they need to lead through friendship and not merely through a concept of servant leadership. While Adiprasetya lauds the idea of servant leadership from Mark 10:45, he proposes that Jesus' words in John 15:15 and John 21:15-17 provide a better model for pastoral leadership as friend-leadership.[434]

The Fear of the Lord Leads to Listening and Turning Away from Evil

Emotional maturity is the capacity to stay connected to people while staying committed to a shared mission. A leader with the fear of the Lord will listen to God and will pay attention to his mission explained in his Word. Collins asserts that the fear of the Lord is the appropriate response to God's covenant love and that this response rests upon "the steadfast love and faithfulness" (Proverbs 16:6) of the Lord's character.[435] The fear of the Lord, including fear and trembling, acts as a modifying influence upon one's heart, for the fear of the Lord leads a person to turn away from evil.[436]

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[433] John 15:5.

[434] Adiprasetya., 48-49.

[435] Collins, "Proverbs and the Levitical System," 24, 30.

[436] Collins, "Proverbs and the Levitical System," 30.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused on how pastors pursue emotional maturity. As with any study, there are limitations as to how extensive the research can be. Therefore, pursuit of the following areas of study could be highly valuable for covenant faithfulness to God's mission in our churches.

Goleman divides emotional intelligence into four domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. The second domain of self-management, also known as self-regulation, is "the managing of one's internal states, impulses, and resources" according to Goleman.[437] Bradberry and Greaves add that healthy self-management "ensures you aren't getting in your own way and doing things that limit your success. It also ensures you aren't frustrating other people to the point that they resent or dislike you."[438] The spate of middle-age PCA senior pastors who professionally implode suggests that they struggle with self-management of their internal states, impulses, and resources and that they also struggle with relationship management. Consequently, seen through the prism of emotional maturity, the stewardship and role of power in the PCA merits study including in regard to senior pastors in their forties, continuing education, the existence of the role of assistant pastor, and our judicial process.

First, leadership experts Bunker, Kram, and Ting wrote in the *Harvard Business Review* that "about one-third of senior executives derail or plateau at some point, most often due to an emotional deficit such as the inability to build a team or regulate their

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[437] Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, 26.

[438] Bradberry and Greaves, 98.

own emotions in times of stress."[439] They further state that the problem is a lack of emotional maturity. Similarly, an alarming number of PCA senior pastors (our "senior executives") show an inability to regulate their own emotions in times of stress. Why do PCA pastors in their forties implode? In part, they are unable to be team players, which is to say that they lack emotional maturity as they interact with leaders and laity. They either implode through calamitous sin or so mistreat and exhaust their staffs and congregants that that their staff resign and church members escape to other churches. The latter seems to occur more than the former.

Second, studying how other denominations facilitate spiritual and emotional maturity in their leaders could be another helpful area of study for the PCA. Other denominations require continuing education for their pastors. Many professions require continuing education to maintain licensure. In the PCA, again, there is grassroots pressure to pull power downward as far as possible and thus no required continuing education. But could it be that this grassroots pressure, as well as our historical suspicion of higher courts and agencies, hinder us from pursuing pastoral and organizational health through required continuing education for our leaders?

Third, study of the existence of the role of assistant pastor in the PCA merits further study. Associate pastors are elected by the congregation and are voting members of the session. Assistant pastors are hired and removed by the will of the session alone and without the vote of the congregation. They are not session members and thus have no ability to vote on the session. Ruling elders, in my experience, treasure the power to hire and remove assistant pastors without congregational input for the sake of expediency. But

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[439] Bunker, Kram, and Ting, 143.

at what cost is this session power to assistant pastors and their wives? Assistant pastors know they can be let go without warning in the next session meeting with a quorum.

Sessions ask assistant pastors and their wives to assimilate into a congregation, to cultivate deep friendships, to have families into their homes for dinners, to live life together. Yet the role and precarious station of assistant pastor, compared to that of associate pastor, undercuts their psychological safety.[440]

Current assistant pastors and their wives may not experience the psychological safety to voice how difficult it is to pastor in this tenuous position. Having served as an assistant pastor in three large churches and now serving in the role of associate pastor, I can affirm that serving in the role of assistant pastor, rather than the role of associate pastor elected by the congregation, creates significant internal tension that impedes psychological safety for assistant pastors and their wives. Why do some denominations choose not to have the role of assistant pastor and instead have only the role of associate pastor (in addition to senior pastor)? And what best practices for organizational health from within the PCA and from other denominations might we need to be faithful to God's mission?[441]

Finally, the stewardship of power relative to our judicial process merits further study. Can anyone argue on balance that our judicial process is healthy, applied with consistency across presbyteries, and achieving our stated aims for church discipline? Does our desire for power or does scripture shape our judicial process?

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[440] Assistant pastors are hired and removed by the session in the PCA. Associate pastors are elected and removed by the congregation. See page 5 of this dissertation for the value of psychological safety in the workplace.

[441] The historic First Presbyterian Church (PCA) of Jackson, MS, recently elevated an assistant pastor to the role of associate pastor.

Conclusion

Henri Nouwen conveys this thought from God's Word to underscore our desire for power and its accoutrements over the love of Jesus. But he also offers hope.

> What makes the temptation of power so seemingly irresistible? Maybe it is that power offers an easy substitute for the hard task of love. It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people, easier to own life than to love life. Jesus asks, 'Do you love me?' We ask, 'Can we sit at your right hand and left hand in your Kingdom?'…
>
> One thing is clear to me: The temptation of power is greatest when intimacy is a threat. Much Christian leadership is exercised by people who do not know how to develop healthy, intimate relationships and have opted for power and control instead. Many Christian empire-builders have been people unable to give and receive love.[442]

When we feel unsettled, and even scared, from just a glint of the vulnerability that intimacy requires, the temptation to choose power, instead of intimacy with Jesus and others, is greatest. For pastors and churches, the temptation of power might mean comfort, notoriety for hiring a well-known senior pastor, love of money, and, perhaps above all of these, control. But worshipping control negates the possibility of intimacy with God and others because, as Jesus taught, we cannot serve two masters.[443]

In this necessary reproval from Nouwen, a glimmer of hope remains. Prizing control above all else does cancel the possibility of intimacy with God and others. But God provides the path to joy: embracing Jesus and following wherever he leads you.

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[442] Nouwen, 77, 79.

[443] "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." Matthew 6:24 ESV

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