

Discussion of “Holding Up the Prophet’s Hand”

*Some Dynamics of Supporting Pastors and
Collaboration with Members and Leaders*



FOR PASTORS AND PASTORS' WIVES



by the Rev. Rob Foote

Notes and questions adapted from the book
 *Holding Up the Prophet's Hand — Supporting
 Church Workers* by Rev. Dr. Bruce M. Hartung

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Introduction

The account of Moses winning the battle against the Amalekites via the supporting role of Aaron and Joshua is recorded in Exodus 17 (vv. 8–16). The account follows the Passover/Exodus and the provision of meat, manna and water from the rock. Often we are like the people of Israel who focus on the negative, instead of celebrating God’s deliverance, protection and provision.

1. What deliverance, protection or provision can you acknowledge and celebrate in your life, or the life of your congregation, right now?

2. **Spouse & Family:** When we face enemies (from within or beyond the family and marital unit), how might the Exodus inform our perspective and enable us to see that we — as leaders in spiritual warfare — will indeed face enemies, but we, too, have seen and unseen spiritual resources of strength?

- › What is your typical family response in the face of trials?
- › How might you want your family (and you as a couple) to respond in a different way than the status quo?

3. One of the reasons God permitted the original scarcity of water, bread and meat was to “test them.” Even when He provided water, manna and meat, there was a test included in the gift.

- › What tests are going on for your congregation right now?
- › What tests are going on for you right now?

Before you continue...

Each of the following units begins with a Bible passage and a quote from the chapter. Consider spending some time meditating on the verse and the quote before answering the questions. Consider issues such as: What word grabs you in the verse? How does the Gospel speak to you in the verse, given your current situation?

NOTE: While all questions may be appropriate and have significance to the pastor’s wife and family members, those labeled “Spouse & Family” were written intentionally with those relationships in mind.

Chapter 1

“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

“First, I would seek to destroy the significant relationships of church workers: their relationships with their spouses, children, friends, co-workers, parish leaders, congregation members and even other church workers.

Second, I would work to destroy the relationships of congregation members with one another, isolating them and fracturing community.

Third, I would cause the faithful to question their beliefs” (Pages 13-14).

“Satan’s Strategy” — The devil and his demons dining on the disciples (1 Peter 5:8)

1. Spouse & Family: One of the reasons Satan was successful in his original temptation was his ability to get Eve and Adam (apparently) to focus on the artificial restrictiveness of God’s kingdom and provision (i.e., “you shall not eat of any tree”). How are pastors, wives and their families caught up in this “temptation of limitation” at times? How about the flock? How do we battle this temptation?

2. Hartung contends that the demonic scheme is to attack pastors and leaders from within. The assumption is that you agree. He identifies three assaults:

- › Destroy the leader’s key relationships (spouse, friends, congregational leaders)

- › Destroy congregational relationships
- › Cause the faithful to question beliefs (Page 14)

Is this happening in your life? What are you doing to combat it? How has God responded?

3. Spouse & Family: In the Ephesians 6 passage about putting on “the full armor of God,” describe how this happens in your life, marriage and family (Page 14).

4. In the Luther quote of an unknown church father — “I cannot keep a bird from flying over my head. But I can keep it from nesting in my hair, or from biting off my nose” — we have an image of effort to ward off roosting demons/sins or the lethargy that permits this.

- › Describe the effort(s) you contribute to preventing nests from being built.
- › Do you or your congregational leaders have any ministry in place to specifically prevent demonic nests from being built in the lives of the people? (Think spikes on the top of buildings.)
- › Spouse & Family: What potential intentional “spikes” might be constructed in your ministry or family life?

Chapter 2

“And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful” (Mark 4:18–19).

“Research findings are clear: the more often an individual church worker experiences a chronic stress response, the less healthy that individual becomes. Conversely, the less healthy a church worker is, the more often he or she will experience less healthy recovery from the stress response” (Page 28).

Stressors and Stress — Eustress and Distress

1. Eustress is good or motivational stress (Pages 21–22).

- › Identify at least two of these in your life.
- › What desired eustressors do you seek that are not yet in your life?

2. Distress is negative stress that appears when the challenges appear too large or the resources to deal with the stress appear too limited (Page 21). Describe a time when you were really stressed by a looming task/deadline.

- › Who/what were the resources you called upon to aid you?
- › Were they sufficient? If not, what did you do?
- › Did you make substantive changes to reduce stress? (Recall Hartung’s account of moving closer to work to avoid commuting stress.)

3. “Research findings are clear: the more often an individual church worker experiences a chronic stress response, the less healthy that individual becomes. Conversely, the less healthy a church worker is, the more often he or she will experience a less healthy recovery from the stress response” (Page 28). Pastors, who in your congregation is concerned about your level of stress? What signs have you seen of this? If too few or no one seems concerned, what are your resources for changing this?

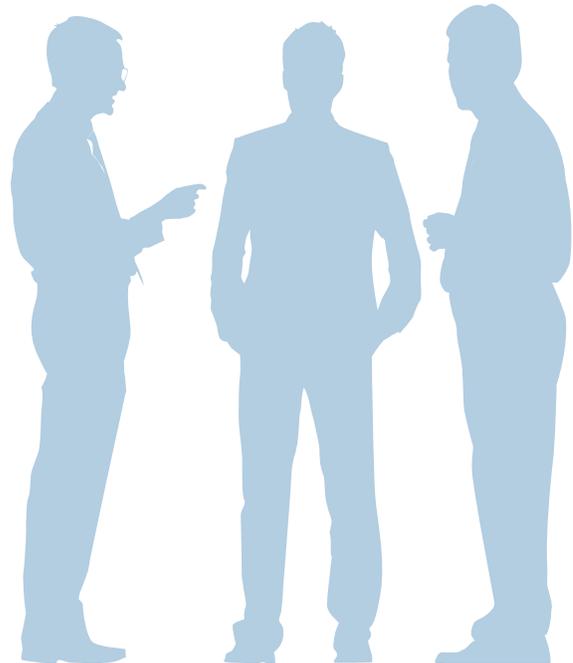
4. Spouse & Family: In a pastor’s family, a wife is often “in a goldfish bowl” while feeling like there are a lot of cats looking in. Do you think this is more often imagined or real?

In Luke 6:7 and 14:1, Luke writes that Jesus’ detractors were “watching him carefully.” He knew this. In each case, He boldly did what was right, despite knowing this would alienate the scribes and Pharisees from Him even more. In

the first case, they were enraged. What was His response to their response? (See vv. 12–13.)

5. Jesus prayed and sought out support (both to mentor and to receive strength from their fellowship and friendship). Share your prayer life, how you seek out friends, and how you both mentor others and open yourself to vulnerable accountability in deeper friendship.

6. Sometimes out of deference to the pastor or for the sake of working towards “shalom” (Eph. 4:3) — and on occasion out of fear of a confrontation — we decide not to confront others or boldly do the right thing. What are your guiding principles in these decisions? Would you like to change the way you usually respond to people? If so, what will it take to change?



Chapter 3

“Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation” (Ps. 42:5).

“The worker feels helpless, hopeless, and trapped. In addition, workers suffering from burnout develop negative attitudes about themselves, their work, and life itself. They often have trouble praying and reading the Scriptures” (Page 37).

Burnout

People at greater risk for burnout “share a passion for the gospel of Christ, a desire to fulfill the calling given them by the Holy Spirit, a passion to help people develop a relationship with the triune God, and a vulnerability by walking closely with people whom they are called to serve by sharing joys and burdens” (Page 36). Symptoms of burnout include physical symptoms (sleep disruption, weight changes, gastrointestinal problems, low-grade depression, fatigue) and spiritual/psychological issues (hopelessness, spiritual exhaustion, trouble praying and focusing on Scripture, waning faith) (Page 38-39).

1. Where do you presently stand with your potential for burnout? Are there any symptoms you are now experiencing? Are you making any changes to address these concerns?

2. When you commune, what are some of your thoughts/beliefs/feelings as you receive Christ?

3. Spouse & Family: How do you share your feelings about your emotional status and spiritual zeal with your spouse? (Think context, frequency, depth and response.)

4. “In order to burn out a person must once have been on fire” (Page 35). From where is the fuel coming?

› What are you on fire about?

› What are the risks of this fire fizzling out (and the elements that might extinguish it)?

› In 2 Tim. 1:6, St. Paul tells Timothy to “fan into flame the gift of God.” What are the ways that Timothy may have fanned into flame the gift he received? What are ways in which you feel reignited for ministry, marriage or living by faith?

5. “Over the months she had become more inward-focused, keeping her feelings more and more to herself” (Page 35). Inward focus can be helpful for confession and a bit of meditation, but it is deadly if it becomes our general modus

operandi. Who holds the mirror in front of you if you become this way?

› **Spouse & Family:** What are the expectations that you and your family have for ministry?

6. Factors and symptoms of burnout (consider identifying those you may have, or have had in the past):

- › A progressive loss of energy, idealism and purpose
- › Task overload
- › Too many hours at work
- › Low pay
- › Bureaucratic and political constraints
- › Physical symptoms (Page 36):
 - › Difficulty sleeping
 - › Weight loss or gain
 - › Gastrointestinal disturbances
 - › Low-grade depression
 - › Nagging boredom
 - › Chronic tiredness (that does not go away after a good night’s sleep or vacation)

› Pastors, what are the expectations that your congregation and congregational leaders have for your ministry? Wives, has your congregation expressed expectations for your involvement in the church?

› How far apart are these two sets of expectations?

7. The difference between the “real church” and the “ideal church” (Page 38-39). You may have heard it reported that a person did not want to come to church because there was “too much drama.” When we hear this, we may think about the following things: the disciples arguing about who would be the greatest; Paul and Barnabas arguing about whether or not to take John Mark with them; the church at Corinth and their incest, lawsuits, drunkenness at the Lord’s Supper, infighting and factions, licentious behavior, etc. The church is filled with drama both because we are sinners and because we are passionate about what we believe.

8. “The deeper the sense of mission, the more vulnerable to burnout; the greater the passion to serve, the deeper the vulnerability to burnout” (Page 40). What do you think about this quote? Are there any applications to your marriage, your key relationships, your own personal faith walk?

What do you think about church drama? How do you approach this in a way that protects you from burnout, frames it in a Law-and-Gospel orientation and even inspires you to serve with greater zeal?

9. Read Heb. 12:1-3 — “Run with endurance.”

› What are the elements that enable endurance as they are described in these three verses?

› When is faith a “race,” and when is faith a “walk”?

Chapter 4

“And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, ‘We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and there are four hundred men with him.’ Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. He divided the people who were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two camps, thinking, ‘If Esau comes to the one camp and attacks it, then the camp that is left will escape’” (Gen. 32:6–8).

“Recently, clinicians and researchers have begun to study in depth a concept they call ‘Secondary Traumatic Stress.’ They have discovered that a person does not have to be personally involved in a trauma to be affected by it; the person simply needs to be available to the emotional state of those who are directly involved” (Page 47).

Secondary Traumatic Stress

1. Acute or persistent stress can cause burnout-like symptoms. Employing Hartung’s “hypothetical trauma-level scale 1–10” (Page 46–47), try to identify the highest stress level you have achieved since your or your husband’s ministry began, assign a number to it and be prepared to share the story.

› At the time, were you aware just how dramatic your stress was?

› Did you realize that in hindsight after the event? If so, how much after?

› What did you do to manage the stress? What were your resources?

2. Pastors, have you ever considered a “Worker Support Team”? If so, do you have any idea who might serve on the team? (Pages 46 and 54)

3. On Page 46, Hartung introduces the concept of cumulative trauma — episodes of successive stress that wear out one’s energy and ability to sustain compassion. Can you share a story about cumulative stress in your ministry or life? Who supported you then?

4. Regarding progressive and cumulative stress in ministry, the story of Micah’s tragic funeral for the young child killed in a house fire (Page 44ff) revealed that acute and chronic stress in the lives of others can and will migrate into our own lives. In the scenario, Micah described being “shell shocked ... feeling dead inside ... dreading all the things I used to love” (Pages 44–45). The author lays out a hypothetical trauma scale from 1–10, and he begins to add up the stressful events in Pastor Micah’s ministry over the years. Most of these events ranged between .75 and 3.

› **Spouse & Family:** On a separate piece of paper, add up all of your critical life stressors over the last five years and give them a rating (based roughly upon the criteria used on Pages 46–47). Where is your current total? Is it a higher or lower than what you thought?

5. Reflect on these observations from the book (Page 49):

- › “The formula is relatively straightforward and simple: the more deeply a caregiver opens himself or herself up to the thoughts and feelings of others, the more vulnerable the caregiver will be to ‘catching’ those thoughts and feelings.” How much do you “open yourself up to others”?

- › “The deeper the struggle, pain, heart, and grief the hurting person experiences, the deeper the effect will be in the caregiver.” Do you typically keep your pain and experience of trauma to yourself?

- › “The more church workers keep what is happening to them caged up inside themselves, the more vulnerable they become, and the more likely it is that their experiences will have a toxic effect.” When do you share those feelings and experiences and where do you share them?

6. Have you ever talked with church workers who have “retired” emotionally while still serving actively? Where are they in their careers? How would you describe their families? What do you take away from this?

7. Recall the beheading of St. John the Baptist (Mark 7:14–32). How did this trauma influence Jesus? How did He deal with it?

Chapter 5

“So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Rom. 12:5).

“I ignored one key and often missing ingredient — my own responsibility and willingness to hold myself and others accountable for healthy, Christlike behaviors” (Page 65).

Life Together as Christ’s Body

1. Pastors, organizations can be “health enhancing/sickening.” What efforts have you, your predecessors and/or colleagues, or current leadership made to improve the spiritual vitality of your congregation?

2. As you look at the verses referenced on Pages 58-59 (from Ephesians 4, 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12), how do you make sense of the following phrases, and how are they practically applied in your life and your congregation’s ministry?

- › “Grow up into Christ ... held together ... builds itself up in love” (Eph. 4:15-16)
- › “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit ... God ... empowers them all in everyone ... given ... for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:4-7)
- › “Individually members one of another” (Rom. 12:5)

3. Hartung shares 11 hallmarks of community faith characteristics that lend themselves to healthy organizations:

- › Tell the truth
- › Do not let emotion cause division
- › Work
- › Speak graciously
- › Remember your Baptism
- › Get rid of the negative and destructive stuff!
- › Live out the Christlike attitudes and behaviors of your new identity!
- › Love
- › Share feelings liberally with others
- › Avoid vengeful thoughts and behaviors
- › Make it your aim to do good

Spouse & Family: If you like, try rating the above list, using various scales like these: personal priority, congregational priority, personal weakness, congregational weakness, etc.

As you consider the above list, please note the following:

- › In the list, which one do you find yourself most easily and effectively employing?

- › In the list, which one do you find Satan exploiting in the church most often because of your congregation’s characteristics?

- › In the list, which one do you find Satan exploiting because of your own faith/personality composition?

- › Where is God in this mix?

- › How are people held accountable in your congregation?

- › Who holds you accountable in your congregation? How?

- › Be prepared to share a story of personal accountability (both you being held accountable and you holding others accountable).

4. The resources Christ gives — the head is Christ and His body is the Church

- › Satan opposes those workers for Christ who are prayerful and faithful: “the more effective the worker’s service, the more dangers grow — spiritually, physically and emotionally” (Page 52). How can a Christian community respond to these challenges?

- › How would you describe your congregation’s “way of being”? (read Paragraphs 1 and 2 on Page 53).

- › “When the organization dynamics and behaviors are positive and healthy, based in authentic relationships, and formed and urged by Word and Sacrament, they deliver the best

kind of support a church worker can receive” (Page 53). How do we build such communities?

- Worker Support Team (WST)
- The use of behavioral covenants to guide relationships and expectations between parishioners and their workers

5. Read the three passages on Pages 58-59. Identify what are — to you and your understanding — the key elements of church unity in these passages: Eph. 4:15-16; 1 Cor. 12:4-7; Rom. 12:4-5

- › Which of these elements are present in your congregation and ministry?

6. Spouse & Family: On Pages 60-63, Hartung identifies his understanding of these key elements. After each element, write a brief description of how this factor is dealt with in your marriage (if applicable) and your congregation.

- › Tell the truth

- › Do not let emotion cause division

- › Work

- › Speak graciously

› Remember your Baptism

› Get rid of the negative and destructive stuff

› Live out the Christ-like attitudes and behaviors of your new identity

› Love

› Share feelings liberally with others

› Avoid vengeful thoughts and behaviors

› Make it your aim to do good

7. On Pages 63–64, the author shares a hypothetical story of Jill, who needed to approach Anne for forgiveness. How is forgiveness expressed in your marriage/family (if applicable)?

› How is forgiveness expressed in your ministry and congregation?

› Many pastors make a big deal about actually saying the word “forgive” when forgiveness is exchanged. In your own life, do you notice a difference when you use the word “forgive” when you forgive someone else?

Chapter 6

“Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body” (Prov. 16:24).

“When do you see your boss?” Ken Blanchard of *One Minute Manager* fame once asked a group of industrial workers. Many replied, ‘When I’ve done something wrong.’ Blanchard suggests that a supervisor’s more appropriate role is to ‘catch’ people doing things well in order to recognize and support both the behavior and the workers’ positive sense of themselves” (Page 69).

Communities of Authentic Encounter and Appreciation

1. Spouse & Family: Describe your typical practices for saying thanks and showing appreciation in the congregation, in your family and to your PALS facilitator (just kidding on that last one!).

2. How do you protect yourself/the congregation from inequitable appreciation?

3. Which prayer requests do you typically find most refreshing and authentic?

› How can these prayer requests be encouraged and shared?

4. Hartung identifies unhealthy behaviors that lead to a diminishment of authenticity: don’t talk/don’t feel/don’t trust/don’t want... The opposites also sustain inauthentic communities: appear good/pious/happy/look good (Pages 73–74). How does one manifest authenticity without exhausting a congregation (i.e., as we all know, when you become compassionate and you truly care in body and soul, you become tired — so how do we sustain authentic care)?

5. Hartung reminds us of Luther’s important comment in the Smalcald Articles about the “mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren.” A great quote from Luther in a letter to George Spalatin (June 10, 1521), where Luther writes, “I am both very idle and busy here; I am studying Hebrew and Greek, and am writing without interruption. The man in charge of this place treats me far beyond what I deserve. The trouble from which I was suffering at Worms has not left me but rather has increased. *I am more constipated than ever in my life, and despair of remedy.* The Lord of us afflicts me, that I may not be without a relic of the cross. May he be blessed. Amen.”

› With whom do you share your comments about constipation? (What significance do you take from your answer?)

› What do you do with your idle time?

6. Spouse & Family: Hartung references the great research done on the ratio between negative and positive comments and marriage (Page 79). John Gottman has found that effective marital relationships have at least a 5:1 ratio of compliments to criticisms. But when considering only the number of criticisms over a long period between two groups — those who remained married for over 10 years and those who divorced — the actual difference in the number of criticisms was small. The lesson is that only a few more criticisms can be the difference between a strong relationship and separation. If you were to quantify your comments to your leaders, would it tend to be more positive or negative?

› What about your preaching and teaching (Law vs. Gospel and the potency of each message)?

› Is the same reflected in your leadership and the bulk of your membership?

› What role does being loved and loving have in our words (Ephesians 4)?



Chapter 7

“And he told them a parable, saying, ‘The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry’”” (Luke 12:16–19).

“My own focus on pathology (the problem side of things) is mirrored by the health-care system in the United States. We spend 95 percent of our medical dollars on healing disease and only 5 percent on prevention and wellness” (Page 90).

Emphasizing Health and Well-Being

Hartung talks about establishing a congregational atmosphere of well-being. He believes it is actually counterproductive to single out pastor or staff when it comes to good health care (Page 88). Of course, we know that health care is simply a stewardship issue. As a nation and often as the communion of saints, we focus more on problems and prevention (Page 90).

1. Spouse & Family: In the United States, we spend 95 percent of our medical dollars on healing disease and only 5 percent on prevention and wellness. What would be your own spending ratio? What are some of the activities you, your spouse or family do proactively to take care of your health?

2. Does your congregation do anything to sustain wellness (physical and/or psychological)? Note: Dr. Lois Klatt makes a comment about the lack of preventative prayers. She wonders why we don’t pray more that God would help us prevent problems. Your thoughts?

Chapter 8

“And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, ‘Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.’ But the Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things’” (Luke 10:39–41).

“What happens when the care committee meets with a worker? Conversation should revolve around three basic questions: (1) How are you doing, and how is the work going? (2) What areas are going especially well in your life, both professionally and personally? (3) What areas both professional and personal need attention?” (Page 103).

Worker Support Teams

The WELS began to study the quality of life of church workers and church workers’ families about 20 years ago. They recommended that each congregation create a care committee for workers. Pages 99–100 list their responsibilities, which include salaries and benefits, fellowship activities, providing guidance based upon handbooks, responding to incapacity and evaluating formal statements to make sure that the workers’ needs (and the congregation’s) are being addressed. In 1988, the ELCA prepared a draft congregational constitution, which delineated a similar support model.

1. Describe any staff/pastoral support that is set up in your congregation. If you do not have any, describe any overtures that have begun to initiate the process.

2. When a congregation evaluates or changes its bylaws and constitution, this is an opportunity to initiate some sort of staff support. Hartung suggests that people trained in behavioral science, financial planners and fitness trainers are appropriate leaders of this group. For most pastors, the elders’ group is in charge of their care. How does your group do it? Whom can you identify in your congregation to help improve this work?

3. **Spouse & Family:** Ideally, the committee meets with the worker once every six months for at least 90 minutes as a group, and in one-on-one meetings perhaps every three months. Conversations should revolve around how the worker is doing and how the work is going, what areas are growing especially well both professionally and personally, and what areas need attention. Can you imagine this happening in your congregation? How would the congregation respond to doing this for church workers’ spouses also?

Chapter 9

“And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds” (2 Cor. 11:14–15).

“The white good-looking devil is the one who does the most harm, the devil who eggs people on to commit spiritual sins, which are not regarded as sins at all but as pure righteousness and are defended as such. He causes more harm than the dark devil, who only eggs people on to commit gross, carnal sins which are so obviously sins that even Turks and heathen can recognize them as such” (Pages 113–114).

Promises, Covenants and Accountability

1. Hartung writes about a congregation in Illinois that adopted a four-point approach for handling disagreements and hurts:

- › Tell the truth
- › Avoid gossip
- › Remain faithful
- › Address conflict

Tell a story about working to contain your angst, and eventually simply letting down your guard, to tell the truth — a sort of confessional tone — in a situation where you were upset by the behavior of a member. When you did this, how did your feelings evolve? In the end, was this action successful, or was there more pain than at the beginning?

2. Hartung talks about “behavioral covenants” (Page 115–118). Behaviors include rejoicing about Christ’s presence during our conversations, remaining focused on the task given to that specific group, emphasizing prayer, respecting the schedule, prioritizing listening over speaking, talking with rather than about people, taking time out during intense discussions to pray and reflect, permitting freedom for everyone to voice concerns, avoiding personal silence during a meeting and gossip thereafter, practicing confession and absolution, working toward consensus and avoiding votes, and assessing and evaluating work together on a regular basis. Hartung presents a five-point Likert scale for evaluating effectiveness/problems in abiding by a behavioral covenant (Page 118). What would it take for this to be accepted by your congregation?

3. Spouse & Family: Hartung addresses the use of power in the congregation on Page 119. How do you handle temptations to abuse power (either from within or from without)? How do you come to the aid of your spouse when the Eighth Commandment may have been bent or broken?

[The following sections deal with congregational interventions and preventions]

Chapter 10

“Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are” (1 Cor. 5:6-7).

“Compartmentalization can become a significant problem for church workers, as it can for everyone else. If all aspects of life connect, then church workers will find it helpful to think and behave more holistically, recognizing that every action has a systemic effect” (Page 128).

The Wholeness Wheel

1. Spouse & Family: Hartung talks about a compartmentalized versus integrated life. The wholeness wheel involves four areas of life. Describe your family's:

› Playfulness/humor

› Marriage and family

› Other interests/commitments and hobbies

› Professional responsibilities

2. Within the reach of the four realms above, you also have five ingredients:

- › Emotional well-being
- › Physical well-being
- › Intellectual well-being
- › Vocational well-being
- › Social/interpersonal well-being

3. At the center of the entire wheel is our Baptism/our new creation. How do you remember/renew your Baptism in your daily and weekly life? Is this done on a congregational basis also?

4. Imagine you and your closest relative/friend (it would probably be your spouse) rating the subpoints of 1 and 2 above on a five-point Likert scale, from “extremely enriched” to “impoverished.” How would they be similar or different? How would they be related to remembering or renewing your Baptism?

5. Pastors, Hartung warns of “binary options,” such as “the congregation needs to...” and “the worker needs to...” His concern is that these ignore the collaboration that should naturally happen between the congregation and the worker. Give examples of collaboration in your ministry.

Chapter 11

“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm” (Eph. 6:11–13).

“A general who reinforces only one flank leaves troops elsewhere vulnerable to attack. The enemy will likely not attack the reinforced side of the battlefield” (Page 139).

Using the Wholeness Wheel

1. Spouse & Family [all questions]: Hartung talks about the dangers of strengthening what is strong and strengthening (exclusively) what is weak in our wellness wheel factors (Page 139). Those familiar with Natural Church Development (Christian Schwarz) know that he addresses the “lowest stave” of the barrel. Honestly, we probably don’t do real damage if we are strengthening anything — either our strengths or weaknesses — but Hartung encourages honest work on all areas simultaneously. What your thoughts about this?

2. Emotionally, how are you doing? What are the variables in your emotional health? (In other words, what are the environmental factors that influence your emotional health, for better or for worse?) What would people in your congregation think if you saw a counselor? Would you make it public? What would be the blessing/burdens of doing so?

3. Describe your *physical* fitness regime. Do you schedule exercise? Describe your preaching on the physical aspects of stewardship. What Gospel reading (or readings) might be a good text to talk about the physical aspects of stewardship?

4. When was the last time you were really challenged *intellectually*? Did it make you feel good or bad? What do you really want to learn? What is your plan to achieve this knowledge? Will you be supported by your spouse, colleagues and congregation? If not, what will you do?

5. What is the most satisfying aspect of your *call/vocation*? What is the most dissatisfying aspect of your vocation? As you consider both satisfaction and dissatisfaction, how have these two factors changed over time — and what have been the catalysts to send them up or down? Do you have any control over this?

7. All of the areas above flow from our *baptismal identity*. Which element above feels disconnected from your faith? Why might that be? Do you set aside time to have a spiritual retreat each day with your spouse? When and what was involved in your last spiritual growth spurt?

6. When was the last time you were out *socially* (apart from colleagues/staff/members)? Who were you with? Was it enriching or tedious? What were the factors that made it so? Who do you really enjoy hanging out with socially? Is this healthy? Do you schedule time for social activities? When was the last time someone in the congregation invited you out and did not talk about congregational life? Could you plant the seed for this to happen?

Chapter 12

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:31–32).

“Thus it is important, indeed vital and crucial, for church workers to have a place and space where their basic and core spiritual needs are addressed — directly, specifically, and concretely. Of all the support functions, the spiritual life and its support are most basic, the foundation on which all other support functions stand” (Page 159).

Preventing Burnout

1. Spouse & Family: Hartung emphasizes the need for confession and absolution (Pages 159–160). Can you identify your father confessor? Is this someone whom you speak with on a regular basis? If you lack such a person in your life, can you identify people whom you might consider seeking out to hold regular conversations about your spiritual welfare?

2. Prov. 27:17 emphasizes how “one man sharpens another.” Although the following verse may not be necessarily contextually related, it seems to be: “He who tends the fig tree will eat its fruit, and he who cares for his master will be honored.” Caring for your own spiritual fruit and the work of the Vine Dresser is actually self-serving in a beneficial way. We recall from Hebrews that discipline is actually an expression of love. Who is the person who holds you accountable for your spiritual walk? This most likely is the same person who is your father confessor, but this may also be a different

person. If you are particularly blessed, it could be a number of people. Tell a story about when you were actually held spiritually accountable by an advocate or a perceived enemy.

3. Spouse & Family: Who is your counselor and/or your greatest encourager? What is your relationship like with your circuit counselor/visitor, others in the circuit, colleagues in your community? Jesus’ greatest advocate was His Father (recall “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased”). Does your baptismal identity and working through prayer bring you encouragement? If so, how? How does your congregation encourage listening?

4. Spouse & Family: Reality checks — Hartung shares a delightful story about a European congregation and an extroverted pastor (Page 164). A 92-year-old woman had to correct his perception of reality. How often do you do reality checks, and with whom do you seek them out? How do you know their sense of reality is to be trusted?

A pastor took a call to a liberal, collegiate, small-town congregation after coming from a fairly conservative larger city. His initial perception was that the town was spiritually dark — a perception validated by both members and other

evangelicals of the community. He noticed that after some time he became antagonistic toward the community in which he was called to serve. After interviewing the pastor of a growing congregation, he learned that the pastor and congregation's perception was: "We love being here. We love being on the cutting edge of culture and being able to translate the love of Christ to people who are intelligent and confident, yet who lack spiritual insight. This is a vital place to do ministry." That new perspective helped realign the pastor's understanding of his call to serve the community. Have you ever had such a "minority report"? Have you ever had a realignment to your view of your ministry or your husband's call? When was the last time you felt that God gave you a new spiritual gift? When was the last time you prayed for a "greater gift"?



Chapter 13

“Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another” (Eph. 4:25).

“J.L. Moreno, the noted psychiatrist who founded a school of counseling called psychodrama, asserted that the human being is never totally reducible just to himself or herself. There is a community that surrounds that person. Moreno called this community the person’s social atom. Surrounding the person are numbers of people who fulfill significant needs” (Page 179).

Using Social Support Functions

1. Spouse & Family: Hartung has extensive scales and fill-in-the-blank questions between Pages 181–185. Among the questions regarding scaling priorities of social supports, identify any of those answers which received a rating of 5 (“very important”), and then ask yourself the questions:

- › Am I surprised that this received such a high rating?

- › What elements in my faith, life and ministry have made it so?

- › What environmental changes have happened within my family or my relationships that have made this a priority?

2. “Task Number Four” on Page 184 is of particular note. Hartung helps us see that if we have rated a social need high but the resources to meet that need are low, we are more vulnerable to vocational struggle. Can you share an experience in your life or ministry when this happened? Can you share an experience where you were able to identify and raise up the resources, or where God simply blessed you with this particular gift of grace?

3. Spouse & Family: Godly critics are a blessing (see Page 192). Is there anyone in your congregation that acts as your editor?

Chapter 14

“There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’ He said, ‘I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away’” (1 Kings 19:9, 10).

“When we fail to focus on where people are at, we stir up less of hell’s animosity” (Page 196).

Spiritual Warfare and Church Workers

1. The chapter begins with St. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians — the section on “the whole armor of God.” Do you have a personal ritual for dressing up in the armor of God for daily battle? If so how do you do it? If not, how might you do it?

2. As you think about “the devil’s schemes” in your daily ministry, do you find yourself praying like Luther that “the wicked one may have no power over you”? When you see your daily walk with Christ as a spiritual battle, what are the possible benefits of that orientation?

3. Do you typically find your congregation supportive or resentful of time spent away with colleagues in prayer and spiritual development? Do you find yourself drawn toward those events that are spiritually nurturing, or are you indifferent or possibly even averse to them? If so, why? Besides Jesus, who do you think among the early New Testament leaders had a rich devotional life, and why do you identify them as having such a life?

4. Several years ago, a congregation provided a pastor with a sabbatical — seven weeks off to develop the pastor’s spiritual life, to rest and to refocus. This was beneficial. The elders identified a Jonah-like syndrome that had developed in the pastor’s preaching and teaching (“bring the fire and brimstone, I’m ready for judgment, forget about mercy”). The pastor was to have continued this sabbatical exercise by taking one day off per month — something that never happened. It did not happen because it was not scheduled. You need to schedule your own sabbaths to restore your soul. What day will you choose? How do you or your congregation feel about taking a sabbatical break every seven to 10 years? Who in your congregation might advocate for you to do this? Do you think that the district or the Synod should also endorse such a sabbatical break?

5. Spouse & Family: Do you or your spouse work five, six or seven days a week?

6. Spouse & Family: How many hours a day do you or your spouse typically work? Do you, your family, your staff or your elders think this is a problem? God creatively solved the problem of sin. What might be a creative way to reduce the work, share the load or build in more spouse/family time?

7. Hartung mentions in “Speaking Personally” his requirement to have his students all attend pastoral counseling sessions. In the end, they all appreciate it. Do you think that it’s possible to either see a pastoral counselor or a colleague? Dr. Peter Steinke says that all pastors should be in counseling. What do you think about that?

Chapter 15

“And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you” (Luke 10:6–8).

“Additional research has shown that while increased compensation has little long-term positive effect, the perception of under-compensation has significant long-term negative effect” (Page 208).

Compensation

1. Spouse & Family: Do you know how much you are paid? Do you care how much you are paid? What would be a godly and good stewardship answer to that last question? Do you/your spouse resent the amount that you are paid?

2. Prov. 24:12 reads, “Does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?” Typically, we look at these verses as we talk about good works born out of faith or through works righteousness. Is it also possible to read this in a way in which the Lord weighs our hearts to discern that we work through faith (and not works) and that in the end — the ultimate end, at the resurrection — He will repay us for our faithfulness?

3. Pastors, how well do you understand the stewardship patterns in your congregation? Do you think your congregation would resent it if they knew that you knew how much each of them gave?

4. How can the circuit visitors/districts/Synod improve stewardship?

Chapter 16

“And he said to them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.’ For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat” (Mark 6:31).

“When we encourage church workers to take time off and to advocate for a reasonable policy concerning vacation time and compensatory time, we put them in an awkward position. Self-advocacy can easily be misunderstood as self-promotion or even selfishness. But without appropriate benefits, including time off, the work and its stress will drain strength, energy and enthusiasm” (Page 229).

Time and Work Load

1. Hartung identifies a number of helpful practices that your congregation (or WST) could put in place:

- › An encouragement for staff members to mutually discuss their workload and use of time (this might even include data on time slept, time with family, time in devotions)
- › An evaluation of comparable congregations’ expectations
- › Working together to evaluate priorities
- › Updating job descriptions and evaluating with the worker how to address changes in job descriptions
- › Using the “21 module system” (page 225) to designate blocks of time at work
- › Publishing and honoring staff vacation days and fixing them at an appropriate level
- › Setting the guidelines for sabbaticals
- › Describing continuing-education expectations and making provisions for such

What might you add?

2. Spouse & Family: Hartung references his “Pressure Points” articles in the *Reporter* newspaper. He comments that “some of the most painful of these questions have concerned compensation and the church workers’ use of time. The pain usually comes because the congregation in question has hurled general accusations about how the workers are prioritizing time and effort, while no one in leadership has specified the congregation’s priorities. Mistrust quickly grows on both sides in circumstances like that. Then it erupts into generic, global conflict. In such a context, solutions are difficult to find” (Page 230).

› Have you ever experienced anything like this? If so, what happened to resolve the issues?

› What are some of the ways in which this might have all been prevented?

› Pastors, when you are planning on beginning a new aspect of ministry, especially one in which the current creation may not see much feedback or fruit, how do you present it for approval by the council/board of elders/staff?

3. Spouse & Family: A district president came up with the idea of having the pastor identify the many church/ministry tasks in which he participates and/or those activities in which the congregation expects him to participate. He suggests making copies of these 15–30 tasks and then asking leaders and members to prioritize the list, ranking them numerically. It is a helpful task because it clearly reveals to everyone that there are many ideas about how the pastor should be spending his time and that there is no way he could possibly accommodate everyone’s differing lists of priorities.

It may also be a good idea to do this prioritizing exercise with your spouse and/or children regarding marital and family responsibilities and interests.



Chapter 17

“Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Eph. 4:15-16).

“Resurrection clearly cares about their pastor’s relationships with his wife and children. It demonstrates this by intentionally assigning people to meet the needs of his wife and family” (Page 235).

Marriage and Family

1. Spouse & Family [all questions below]:
Describe how your relationship with your spouse and children changed since entering the ministry.

2. Miners used to use canaries in the mines to perform an early warning function to protect the miners from toxic fumes. Who are the canaries in your life who serve this function to protect your family and marriage?

3. Do you have a strong support system or a close friend inside or outside of the congregation?

4. Do you know the congregation’s expectations for the pastor’s wife and/or your children? Have they ever been explicitly stated (by either members or the pastor and his family)?

5. Pastors, when you have elders’ meetings, do you intentionally pray for each other’s families?

6. Hartung mentions that the WST might “appoint a liaison whose primary focus is the care and support of the workers child/children” (Page 240). Do you have this in place at your congregation? If not, name the person or persons who you think would be best suited for this position.

7. Do you pray by name for staff persons in the congregation during worship?

8. Hartung says, “For every ‘the son of a pastor shouldn’t behave that way...’ church members should provide 10 ‘Jesus forgives you all your sins and loves you with an everlasting love.’” This is a great idea. Let’s preach it!

Chapter 18

“I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand” (Phil. 4:2–5).

“He did not ignore or deny what was actually going on. In fact, his words called attention to the intensity of the conflict, acknowledged the importance of the issue on the part of one participant (Noah), and recognized the unanswered questions on the part of the other (Pastor Ed). Noah’s strategy was to create a safer space for conversation. He wanted to focus the energy of the group on solving the problem, rather than on continuing the war that someone had declared” (Page 251).

Fractured Relationships

1. Tell a story about a relationship that was strained and then restored in the Gospel.

2. Tell a story about a relationship that was broken and then restored in the Gospel.

3. Tell a story about a relationship that is broken and remains broken.

4. What are the differences between these stories?

5. In some cases, confession and absolution are verbally expressed and personally given, hugs are exchanged, and the Sacrament may even be celebrated in an intimate setting to bring reconciliation. These are stories to be celebrated; sadly, they are rare.

› How do you handle alienation within the congregation?

› Sadly, in some cases, relationships have regressed to the hostile state they were in before reconciliation. How can this erosion be prevented?

6. **Spouse & Family:** Hartung discusses “behavioral covenants,” which describe how disagreements will be handled. In an example he gives, a covenant might say, “We agree to listen to the other person and seek to understand him/her more fully.” Another example says, “We agree that

if previous divisions arise in which conflict has become personal, we will seek spiritual guidance and mutual forgiveness.” The book suggests that we make these covenantal statements as part of our official documents — job descriptions, bylaws and such. Would your congregation go for this? Can you see doing this in your marriage/family?

7. A regular evaluation of relationships and how we have dealt with conflict is appropriate. Hartung also suggests other ways to prevent escalation of hostilities and to help healing occur:

- › Set a tone to indicate a willingness to understand.
 - › Listen! Let the other person have more airtime.
 - › Pray freely — before, during and after conversations.
- › Pray specifically for the person with whom you are at odds.
 - › Own your own contribution to the rift. Name it, confess it and ask for forgiveness.
 - › Remember Christ’s presence when two or three are gathered. (Consider setting up an empty chair as a reminder of His presence.)
 - › If things become heated, return to a posture of wanting to understand and listen to the other person.
 - › Take down any barriers to the Holy Spirit’s work (e.g., a spirit of self-justification). Be aware of your preferred defense mechanisms and refuse to use them.
 - › Continue a tone that indicates you want to understand.
 - › See Christ in the other person.
 - › Remember Satan’s schemes to destroy relationships.

Chapter 19

“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed” (1 Peter 2:24).

Cross of Christ has two alternatives: they can let the harm continue or they can dismiss Anita. Of these two alternatives, dismissal may be the best. Though painful, it will protect others from harm.

A third alternative, though, would be healthier in the long run. It is the most difficult. It involves getting Anita to reflect on her way of being and to change it. But how?” (Page 265).

When Personality Becomes the Issue

1. Hartung helps us remember that the “personality” is a bundling of enduring attitudes and behaviors that influence the way we think, orient ourselves and relate to others. Interestingly, new research reveals that personality disorders are less enduring than we once believed. At a recent conference where a pastoral counselor spoke, he said, “People with narcissistic personality disorder tend to be terribly insecure when you really investigate how they think — which explains why they come across so aggressively; they are desperate to protect the last vestiges of self-esteem.” (Keep in mind that this is a close approximation of what he said; it is not a verbatim quote.) How many of your particular battles in the church do you think are about personality versus issues of doctrine, faith or practice? Do you approach them differently because of this? What are some initial steps that can help frame the discussion?

2. The book has the important quote: “Personality styles lie along a continuum of harm to oneself or to others” (Page 261). Hartung then goes on to talk about dependency versus dominance and points out that each style has its own pitfalls. Which style creates most frustration for you? What do you take from this? Think about the contrasting styles of St. Paul and St. John; of these two disciples, with whom would you have preferred to work? Why? Think about Jesus’ personality. What made His personality at times approachable or aversive?

3. Spouse & Family: Young pastors often get caught up in the mistake of thinking, “It’s all up to me,” which is theologically wrong, administratively handicapping and a terrific burden for wives and families. It can also come across as pompous, ignoring the body of Christ in the priesthood of all believers. When you compare Luke 22:25 and 2 Cor. 1:24 about “lording it over” people, what differences do you note?

In the discussion on Pages 264–265, Hartung helps us see that there are three alternatives when dealing with a personality issue: (a) letting the harm continue, (b) dismissal of the offending party and (c) helping the person to reflect upon his or her own way of being and change it. In order to accomplish this last one, he makes two suggestions:

- › Understand that you’re committing to a long-term process, helping the individual to develop secure relationships with a number of people in the congregation. (Hartung suggests that these people be part of the WST group.)

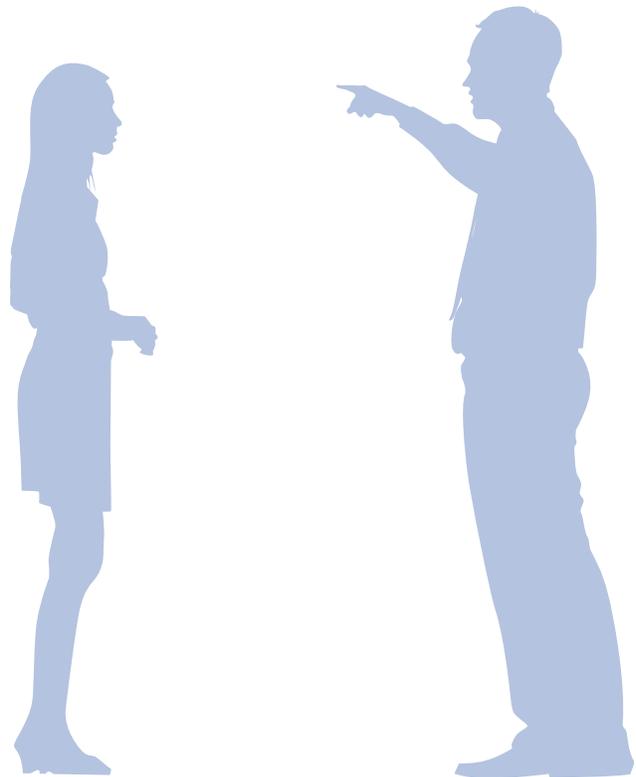
› It requires the worker to commit to a self-reflective process and may involve outside help (e.g., counseling). Conversations on the value of self-reflection are a good preparation for this process. As such, counseling should be valued and encouraged through support (both verbal and financial, if necessary).

4. The book makes some suggestions about dealing with personality issues that arise (Pages 267–268):

- › Create relationships that are secure and transparent. Personal note: Appropriate, honest humor can be refreshing and disarming.
- › Psychological testing can be helpful for all staff to understand their personality styles (see his suggestions on Page 267).
- › Intervene early. Don't ignore problems when you see a pattern; they won't get better.

› Remember “life together”; this means that we are members of one another. One body working together (rather than the pastor working independently) can more effectively deal with personality issues.

› God's people are to be protected (not attacked or harmed). This means protecting both the individual and the group. His implication is that the group takes precedence.



Chapter 20

“My heart is struck down like grass and has withered; I forget to eat my bread. Because of my loud groaning my bones cling to my flesh” (Ps. 102:4–5).

“Anxiety disorders are real and they are serious. Thankfully, they are also treatable. Anxiety disorders include conditions like generalized anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorder, agoraphobia, post-traumatic stress disorder, social anxiety disorder, and various phobias. Together, these affect over 19 million people in the United States” (Page 276).

“Of all the mental disorders, depression is the most common” (Page 278).

Anxiety and Depression

1. It is helpful to remember that anxiety disorders typically worsen over time and require outside intervention (usually medication and/or counseling). Hartung states that 19 million people in the United States have anxiety disorders of some sort, so the probability is high that we will run across it either in our leadership or our membership. Hartung makes some helpful suggestions regarding dealing with people suffering from anxiety disorders. Here are a few highlights:

- › Create high levels of trust within the staff, leadership and membership.
- › Learn the basics about anxiety disorders.
- › Encourage medical intervention and mental-health support.
- › Involve the pastor and pastoral care.
- › Reduce workload for those who are afflicted.
- › Keep the discussion open and active when evaluating the progress of the person dealing with anxiety. Include family members, and regularly have prayer for them.

- › Be patient.
- › Explore options for disability.
- › Help “interpret” the process for the congregation and/or school.

2. Hartung notes that depression is the most frequent ailment for Americans and citizens of the world (Page 278). He directs us to Ps. 102:1–5; the phrase that is translated “my heart is struck down like grass and has withered” is especially poignant. Exegete that phrase in light of your understanding of depression.

3. Spouse & Family: What is the family history of depression, anxiety, other psychological disorders or substance abuse in your and your spouse’s family of origin? Have you seen any of these tendencies in your own life/marriage? If so, monitor it, and seek counseling or medical care sooner rather than later.

Chapter 21

“For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ... Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin” (Rom. 7:19–20, 24–25).

“Appeals to willpower generally accomplish nothing. They force addicts back on themselves. It doesn’t help because, at that point, the power lies with the addiction, not with the person” (Page 293).

Addictions

1. Oftentimes, addictions are genetically based. About 25 percent of them can be linked to a family’s gene pool. As you scan your own family of origin, where were their addictions?

2. Spouse & Family: Have you ever thought that you might be susceptible to addictive behaviors? Have you discussed this with your spouse? Do you have a plan to intervene in a preemptive way before things escalate?

3. Addictions usually operate within the survival loop in the base of the brain. This explains, in part, why they are so difficult to break — the person believes that he or she needs the substance/behavior to survive. Interestingly,

both behavioral addictions and chemical addictions (drugs and alcohol) operate very similarly in the brain. They artificially elevate the neurotransmitters that are responsible for pleasure.

People who are addicted usually go through four phases of recovery. As you probably know, the key to recovery is helping to move the person from pre-contemplation to contemplation to action and then to sustaining recovery.

At each point in the recovery, a person needs support and accountability (environmental resources, personal conviction, counseling supports — including A. A., which is still the most effective way of keeping a person sober). The congregation’s task is to encourage these involvements and be “for” the one working toward recovery (i.e., Rom. 8:31).

› **Spouse & Family:** Addiction treatment now acknowledges that confrontation is less valuable in recovery, than identifying a person’s strengths. 2 Tim. 4:2’s “complete patience” comes to mind. How can a congregation/spouse/family commit to “complete patience”?

Chapter 22

“And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.’ And he went out and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:61–62).

“Churches, schools, and other Christian institutions need to recognize the vocational hazards spiritual leaders face by virtue of their calling. The more dedicated, effective, and competent a worker is, the more vulnerable that worker will be, both personally and spiritually” (Page 298).

Hopes and Prayers

Hartung summarizes his book as follows:

1. Christian institutions need to recognize the vocational hazards their spiritual leaders face in their calling.
2. Workers are involved in a spiritual battle.
3. The more committed the Christian walk, the more potential damage workers expose themselves to.
4. Workers who bring a high level of idealism to their tasks will encounter significant temptations to disillusionment.
5. Healthy institutions know that God calls them together to support one another; they develop the following attitudes:
 - › They acknowledge God bringing them together; they see their presence together as one of God’s gifts.
 - › They understand Eph. 2:10, where the Bible says Christ has called them to a behavioral effort that includes telling the truth, supporting one another, positive interaction and love.

- › They develop a genuine expectation to be honest and transparent with one another. They are not satisfied with outward piety.
- › They support holistic experiences of their members, and they link together mind, body and spirit.
- › They create worker support teams to advocate for workers.
- › They initiate covenants, agreements and promises as part of their everyday life together. They weave the accountability into the fabric of their relationships and give one another permission to call them to account when agreements are broken.
- › They make liberal use of repentance, confession and absolution.
- › They proactively plan strategies to support their workers’ strengths and minimize their workers’ weaknesses.
- › They recognize the need to assess and evaluate church or worker support systems.
- › They specifically and compassionately attend to matters of compensation, workload, time off, vacation, Sabbath and continuing education.
- › When things do not go well, healthy congregations address the matters directly.
- › Healthy congregations always return to an understanding of who they are and whom they serve as they live out their calling to be the body of Christ brought together in Him.

Conclusion

Moses was often in a confrontational role with the people of Israel. But like Abraham with Sodom, and Jesus with those who were crucifying Him, Moses often pled for God to be merciful to His people. Pastor praying for people, people praying for pastors; mutual confession and absolution (think of the mutual confession and absolution of Compline [LSB, Page 254]) and living out faith in Christ in an imperfect shadow of heavenly communion is the design of the visible Church. We are shepherding the flock of God, while the

flock enables the shepherd to serve with joy with their supporting hands and hearts and words. To build an environment of humble faith, intent on an attitude of advocacy and mercy for each other, is what the Church is about as a communion of saints. May God grant this through His faithful servants, His Word and His Spirit, and the blessed and mysterious sacred Sacraments.

“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:1–5).



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