

GS 96263  
**HOW SOCIETAL CHANGES  
ARE AFFECTING PREACHERS AND PREACHING**

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**INTRODUCTION.**

- A. Scripture text: **1Timothy 4:1; 2Timothy 3:1-5.**
  - B. In a 1991 *Survey of Pastors* by the Fuller Institute of Church Growth the following RISK FACTORS were uncovered:
    - 1. 90% of preachers work more than 46 hours a week.
    - 2. 80% believed that ministry affected their families negatively.
    - 3. 33% said that being in ministry was an outright hazard to their family.
    - 4. 75% reported a significant stress-related crisis at least once in their ministry.
    - 5. 50% felt unable to meet the needs of the job.
    - 6. 90% felt they were inadequately trained to cope with ministry demands.
    - 7. 70% say they have a lower self-esteem now than when they started out.
    - 8. 40% reported a serious conflict with a parishioner at least once a month.
    - 9. 37% confessed having been involved in inappropriate sexual behavior with someone in the church.
    - 10. 70% do not have someone they consider a close friend.
  - C. James Dobson says that 40% of church leaders are thinking about giving up and that 90% of the churches are in "survival mode." They are hanging on for dear life and trying to make ends meet.
  - D. H.B London (*Pastor to Pastor*) says that the reality is that most preachers will never serve churches of more than 100 members.
  - E. In a recent letter from the Pikes Peak Ave. Church of Christ in CO; half of students fresh out of two year schools give up the ministry after 1 year. About one-third trained in colleges will leave during their first job.
  - F. Preachers feel victimized because the work is harder and more complicated than ever before. They work harder now and see less response and fewer results. Church members place more value on success and show, than on spiritual reality, wholehearted repentance, and authentic holy living.
  - G. Preachers are asking questions like:
    - 1. "Is it worth it all?"
    - 2. "Are we doing any good?"
    - 3. "Does anyone care?"
    - 4. "Will it ever change?"
  - H. The following quotes are from *Pastors at Risk* by H.B. London, Jr. & Neil B. Wiseman.
- I. **HOW SOCIETY HAS AFFECTED PREACHERS.**
- A. (p. 29). The prevailing crisis among preachers is crystal clear. Contemporary spiritual leaders are under a two-fold assault--one from within and one without.
    - 1. On the inside of the church, many believers have succumbed to the snares of secularism. Preachers deal daily with diluted dedication, family disintegration, superficial commitments, and accepted churchly consumerism no longer interested in sacrifice, suffering or servant-hood. Well-worn, friendly old words are still used, but the new meanings refer to a Jesus who provides comfortable happiness and makes no demand on conduct or money. Without our realizing it, the enemy has secularized the church without a shot being fired by anyone.
    - 2. Outside the church, preachers face a new dark age where the masses have no Christian memory, success is king, and faith issues are far down the average person's priority list after the PTA meeting, latest video release, Little League game, or weekend diversion. The secular masses simply do not see the point. Even though they are sometimes magnanimous toward preachers, they really think ministers are wasting their lives for an absurd cause.

- B. (p. 31). Contemporary people, the bedrock reason for ministry, are harder to reach. American's preferences and values are shifting more swiftly and profoundly than at any time since the rugged agrarian and individualistic ideals of the early pioneers and settlers.
1. As a result, a confusing bewilderment, or maybe a downright disorientation about ministry, is being heard across the whole religious spectrum. One church leader said, "Morale is at an all-time low in our geographic area; so many people have lost their jobs and moved away that our preachers are working harder than ever and showing smaller gains."
  2. A third-year seminary student questions if investing his future in service through the church is "good stewardship of life."
  3. *Preachers* who check the polls are worried about members and prospects. Recent surveys reveal nearly half of all adults (47%) agree that the Christian faith is relevant to life, but only slightly more than one quarter (28%) think churches in their area are relevant.
- C. (p. 36). Today, long-held assumptions about doctrinal devotion and congregational commitments no longer apply. Fewer and fewer people choose a church or continue to attend because of Biblical teaching or particular tradition. And apparently faithful members might move any day without much warning.
1. Member migration is a national problem that reaches across denominational boundaries. So in spite of the combined efforts of all churches to win new converts, it is estimated the 80% of church growth in recent years is a result of people moving from one church to another.
  2. This migration causes substantial membership loss in mainline churches. It means thousands of smaller churches...lose members in droves to larger, multiple-program churches. And denominational labels seem to make little difference in these choices.
  3. The migration works to the advantage of mega-churches. Such explosive growth churches, sometimes called "seeker sensitive," generally emphasize the worshiper rather than God, theology, or ritual. Their public worship includes lots of contemporary music, usually without a hymnal; drama; and sermons organized around felt needs, preached topically and applied to life situations with a minimum exegesis of Scripture. .
  4. Meanwhile, mainline churches, now somewhat mislabeled, seem to be moving to the sidelines of influence with their severe membership losses. Evangelicals are flocking to mega-churches from traditional churches. In the wake of this volatile mobility small churches get smaller, feeding their feelings of inferiority and promoting a survival mentality. In the process, members and ministers who continue in small churches are left to sink or swim as they mourn the losses of members and money.
  5. When faithful members move to new locations, they leave volunteer ministry assignments vacant. As a result, it may take years to nurture others to replace the loss of even one stable, involved family.
- D. (p. 37). This member migration makes many preachers lose spiritual impetus. Many ministers go to their offices daily more out of a sense of duty than calling, performing tasks with absent vigor. Little happens as they constantly dress old wounds and go through the motions of old routines. They feel frustrated because they do not make a difference. All of this is so unlike the idealism they enjoyed at the beginning of their ministry careers.
1. These feelings of futility shrink a preacher's soul. At the same time, incentive dries up. It is hard to keep going in a job where little impact is possible, where too much effort is required in too little time, or where no support system helps one to see the value of his work. As a result many *preachers* quit trying to lead- They are convinced nothing will happen, and it doesn't.
  2. The loss of relationships in member migration can feed a preacher's vocational depression. Looking at such a situation, examining the limited resources available, evaluating the apparently impossible challenge, and then realizing there is no chance to make a difference is a longhand

description of ministerial depression. To say it concisely, spiritual burnout comes from believing there is no reason to try because the situation is always going to be the way it is, or worse.

3. For the *preacher* this debilitating despair undermines his ability to function in his marriage, family, or ministry. In the process, his self-esteem dehydrates. Then to protect his diminishing self-worth, he turns to survival more than outreach. He gives up on all expectation of achievement. The limited opportunities and his frame of mind combine to create a treadmill of hopelessness.
4. In light of the pressures, many preachers are settling into sickening monotony or withdrawing from ministry altogether. These grim realities can begin to terrorize a preacher and hypnotize a declining congregation.

## II. HOW SOCIETY HAS AFFECTED PREACHING.

### A. Hazard 1: The Walk-on-the-Water Syndrome (p. 32-33).

1. Far different from earlier in this century, the man of God is viewed as a kind of third gender--out of touch with the real world. Every minister has his own story about a friendly stranger in the next seat on a plane who stops talking when he learns his fellow traveler is a preacher. Most preachers have been served by a waitress who puts a spiritual spin on the conversation when she learns her customer is a minister. Conversation at other times shuts down completely when a minister walks up as someone warns, "Clean up your act; the preacher is here."
2. To find satisfying effectiveness, a preacher's view of himself and his ministry must resist the delusive mirages from both the past and present culture. He must cultivate an accurate awareness of contemporary realities about his environment and about himself.

### B. Hazard 2: Disastrous Personal Problems (p. 34-35).

Consider what preachers think about work, home, and lifestyles as reported in a recent survey by "Leadership" magazine:

1. 94% feel pressured to have an ideal family.
2. The top four problems in preacher's marriages are:
  - a. 81% -- insufficient time.
  - b. 71% -- use of money.
  - c. 70% -- income level.
  - d. 64% -- communication problems.
3. 24% have received or are receiving marital counseling.
4. 69% of the spouses work outside the home to make ends meet.
5. 9% of the preachers have extramarital affairs.
6. 19% have had inappropriate sexual contact with another person other than spouse.

### C. Hazard 3: Church Member Migration (p. 35-36).

The history of the church has never seen a phenomenon like the contemporary "member migration." Like wild geese, church members are on the move--moving to another church. This superficial loyalty puts preachers among the most vocationally thwarted people in the world.

### D. Hazard 4: Electronic Technology Shapes Preferences (p. 38-39).

1. Videocassettes have now joined top-notch television, audio cassettes, and religious radio to bring the most accomplished preachers, capable musicians, and airbrushed churches into our living rooms and automobiles. Since the masses experience flawless performance firsthand, is it any wonder that church members believe such programs are models of what an exemplary church and effective preacher should be?
2. In these environments, preachers are victims of technology unlike anything ministers have ever faced. They have no way to come up to the standard created by technology in worshiper's minds. All this results in stiff competition--where the preacher always feels like a loser. Uncertain how to cope with the overwhelmingly demanding dynamics that technology brings, faithful preachers usually push ahead, doing their best and invoking holy words long after optimism is gone and their own souls are starved.

- E. Hazard 5: People Are More Distracted (p. 39).
1. Moderns live hectic lives. People are busier than most preachers realize. Their overstuffed calendars may include daily hours spent in commuter traffic, an acrobatic schedule to allow children to keep staggering school and sports routines, overtime far beyond the traditional 40-hour work week, workouts at the health club, and jobs that require mother and father to work different shifts. Hundreds of distractions stress them every day.
  2. When average people are bombarded daily by such commitments and diversions, the church becomes just another appendage to modern living. Now, the church has become only another small part of an overbooked schedule. As a result, it is an uphill struggle to get people to attend anything more than one activity per week. And their distractions undercut their stewardship and service.
- F. Hazard 6: The Consumer Mentality (p. 39,40).
1. Consumer mentality saturates the American way of life. Shopping malls are centerpieces of community life. Consumers can purchase almost anything whenever they desire. They expect to find an abundant supply of sizes, colors, and prices. These same people naturally want church programs and ministries to appeal to varied interests. Frighteningly, however, they frequently have little commitment to make things happen or to help fund the cost of such a smorgasbord approach to ministry.
  2. This reality means that when people move to a new community, they choose a church on the basis of what it does for them rather than what they can do for it. This is the result of our contemporary focus on self-fulfillment and happiness at any cost. Doctrinal lines have become so blurred that few people choose a church anymore for its biblical teaching or theological soundness.
  3. This consumer mentality sometimes cause people to change churches to dodge responsibilities. They do not want to teach Sunday School. They want nothing to do with teenagers. Or they do not want to “baby sit” in the nursery. They simply want a church which provides inspiration and encouragement for themselves. Such consumers view the church as a means to achieve their goals of bliss and respectability.
  4. Those of the consumer mentality often ask, “What has the church done for me lately?”
- G. Hazard 7: Suffocating Expectations (p. 40-41).
1. Expectations in the church are going up while commitments are going down. Emotionally robust preachers find it takes lots of energy and large doses of patience to simultaneously cope with whining traditionalists, demanding baby boomers, and lethargic church members. And in times of tight budgets and declining volunteerism, some congregations increase the preacher’s burden by expecting him to deal with trivia like folding bulletins and cutting the grass.
  2. As a result, dehumanizing fatigue of faithfulness becomes a way of life for too many preachers. Unfinished tasks dog them, so they are never free from the omnipresent demands.
- H. Hazard 8: Decimated Absolutes (p. 00-00).
1. Our permissive society has trashed absolutes. “For sures” have been bartered for maybes. Little is being done to repair ethical foundations that are crumbling everywhere. The Ten Commandments have been rejected as the code of conduct in our culture. The U.S. population has increased 41% since 1960. “But during that time there -has been a 560% increase in violent crimes; a 419% increase in illegitimate births, a quadrupling in divorce rates; a tripling of the percentage of children living in single parent homes; more than 200% increase in teenage suicides; and a drop of almost 80 points in SAT scores.” Society may be dying because we have such a short supply of self-control, compassion, tolerance, faith, integrity, and respect for authority.

2. Whatever the reasons, biblical absolutes have deteriorated into mere opinions. In many seminaries and theological schools, old lines of doctrinal differences have been obscured between conservatives and liberals to the point where debate and controversy are no longer necessary. No absolute standard is embraced or accepted. The salt is losing its saltiness.
- I. Hazard 9: Money Struggles (p. 43).
    1. Contemporary money problems are forcing churches to radically revise their economic priorities. Giving is down and costs are up. Two paychecks are the norm in most households, including the preacher's.
    2. Other problems complicate economic issues. The graying of members also means many need ministry well beyond their peak earning and giving years. Middle-income jobs are being eliminated throughout society. And health insurance for everyone, including preachers, has skyrocketed to inconceivable levels.
    3. Studies indicate baby boomers give less to the church and more to other charitable causes. And with downturns in the national and international economies, individual, foundations, corporation, and even government funding have shrunk for charitable, social, and educational causes. There is less money from all sources at a time when needs are increasing and costs are going up.
  - J. Hazard 10: Dwindling Public Confidence (p. 44).
    1. The Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart scandals plummeted public trust for ministers to all-time lows. Less prominent but equally offending preachers have belittled the cause of Christ. In light of these moral breakdowns, preachers should not be surprised that society no longer reveres them as shapers of conscience or communicators of values. Like it or not, millions view ministers as trifling, demagogic, self-seeking, lazy, or even immoral.
    2. As a result, few people seriously listen to what preachers have to say about anything, especially the meaning of life, faith, morals, or redemption.
  - K. Hazard 11: Dysfunctional People (p. 45-46).
    1. The breakdown of the American home and family has greatly complicated ministerial care and expanded the need for it. No end of dysfunctional family problems is in sight.
    2. A preacher, serving his first church which describes as an averaged-sized rural/resort church, summarizes the overloads dysfunctional people cause for preachers: "I spend enormous time rescuing people from their sins--sexual problems of every kind (rape, child abuse, surrogate parenting, shattered marriages, homosexuality, sex education), addictions to drugs and alcohol, addictions to laziness and work, anorexia, anger and rage, stunted personality development, low self-esteem, and hopelessness."
    3. Blackman and Hart (*Clergy Assessment and career Development*) report that 12% of ministers surveyed were depressed often or always in their ministry. Consequently, seasoned preachers are terrified by the personal and family crises they observe in ministerial colleagues. Since they fear what burnout can do, many are reexamining ministry decisions once settled for life. To make matters worse, they are afraid to go for help because they do not know whom to trust with their inward secrets.
  - L. Hazard 12: Defection Spirals (p. 46-47).
    1. Ministerial AWOL is on the increase. Front-line troops desert because they are shocked by secularism on the inside and overwhelmed by chaos on the outside. In this current down-grading of ministers in our society, recruits are baffled because even rudimentary assumptions about ministry apparently fly in the face of present values.
    2. And armchair pessimists, even inside the church, goad prospects with queries about how preposterous their occupational plans seem from a commonsense point of view. Accurately, the doubters suggest that ministry requires one to forsake family roots, submit to rigorous training,

and commit to life-long low pay. They argue: Why pay such a high price for a cause which may be losing it soul?

3. The future of ministry is in crisis because fewer exemplary candidates are answering God's call to ministry. Both the quality and numbers have tapered off.
- M. Hazard 13: Infidelity Escalates (p. 47-48).
1. Each week brings heartbreaking news about another moral failure by a fellow minister. Some say infidelity by preachers is the bottom line of an accumulation of a thousand small things that go wrong in a marriage that no one takes time to fix. When ignored, what seems to be innocuously unimportant flares into a moral or emotional earthquake that ends in episodes of adultery. Could it be that the overly fatigued preacher does not heed the spiritual withering in his own heart?
  2. Don't miss an important fact: preachers are alarmingly vulnerable to outside emotional support during seasons of frustration futility. This is why every possible prevention component that flow from a fulfilled marriage must never be permitted to falter. Every preacher should scrupulously weigh two often overlooked facts: 1) infidelity by one minister hinders the kingdom work and may turn someone from Christ forever, and 2) a happy, satisfying marriage energizes ministry.
- N. Hazard 14: A Leadership Crisis (p. 48).
1. Major institutions from medicine to military to ministry are undergoing a leadership crisis. In many places, the church is adrift without vision or purpose for want of competent, Christ-centered leaders.
  2. The leadership crisis could be a character issue because rigorous principles of integrity and devoted, distinguished service for the common good have been quietly abandoned. These values have been replaced by a quest for personal privilege and professional advancement. Everybody knows someone who uses the church for personal gain. As a result we all grieve and suffer.
- O. Hazard 15: Lonely in a Crowd (p. 49-50).
1. Loneliness is growing problem in our culture, especially among preachers. Divorce, transience, and economic displacement create wrenching disruptions of relationships with "significant others." Like a chronic virus, loneliness incapacitates preachers. One preacher said, "Loneliness feels like God is gone and has taken everyone who mattered with Him." Loneliness is an occupational hazard for ministers--though the opposite is often assumed--because so much of their work is done alone behind the scenes like sermon preparation, administrative details, and personal prayer.
  2. Another root of loneliness comes from being different, and the essence of preaching makes a minister different. Author Elizabeth Skoglund makes a riveting point that applies to both members and preachers: "Interestingly enough, I believe that it is the more sincere, the thinkers, those who follow hard after God, who are at times the most lonely in the church..."
  3. Most preachers have few close friends though members surround them. How sad, because we all need relationships to be emotionally and spiritually whole. In the wastelands of ministerial isolation, preachers find easy agreement with Mother Teresa's answer when asked what she thought was the worst disease, "It is not AIDS, leprosy, or cancer, it is loneliness."

### III. RECOVERY FROM STRESS AND BURNOUT.

- A. According to Archibald Hart stress is primarily a biological phenomenon: too much adrenaline and too much pressure. Stress is the loss of fuel and energy which often produces panic, phobic, and anxiety-type disorders. (p. 161).
- B. Hart goes on to say that burnout is different. In burnout, the victim becomes demoralized and knows things are not going right. He begins to lose the vision. He suffers a loss of hope. It is a state of crushing discouragement--almost despair. The preacher lives with feelings of helplessness and hopelessness every day. He will think things like, "I no longer care. I no longer feel like I once did. My heart is numb." (p. 162).
- C. The signs of burnout are subtle. Slowly you find yourself beginning to hate the telephone. You begin to avoid people. You go into panic whenever there is a new problem. You begin to lose confidence in yourself. (p. 165).
- D. Some things to do to avoid stress and burnout (p. 168-171):
1. Rethink your day off. Monday may not be the best day due to post-adrenaline let down. Take a day off where you are more charged up and can really enjoy it.
  2. Understand your personality type. Are you a melancholy, sanguine, choleric, or phlegmatic? Depending on what you are how you will react to the problems of ministry.
  3. Reach across the isolation. Try to find someone in your congregation or another preacher in which you have great trust, to share your problems. James says we must confess our faults to one another to be healed (Jas. 5:16).
  4. Limit the number of clinging vines. There will be people that will constantly need "maintenance counseling." They do not have the emotional or spiritual energy to live life on their own. Don't allow them to bleed the preacher dry. If there is no break from these people, the preacher will become like them. Preachers should do their best to limit the time they spend with these people.
  5. Get back to doing what you want to do. There will always be the urgent things (counseling, mediating problems). There is also the important things (sermon and class preparation). But there also needs to be time to do the necessary things. This list includes doing the things that produce relaxation, satisfaction, and a sense of accomplishment. Schedule one or more of these activities each week.
- E. Pursue personal holiness:
1. It is easy to forget that visible success is not the issue, but a genuine relationship with Christ and absolute dependence on Him is. It is possible to be successful without being holy, or it is feasible to be a miserable failure without being holy. (p. 176-177).
  2. In seasons of success, we sometimes tried to paddle-our own canoe. Perhaps there was too much pride, too much dependence on self or not enough trust in God's transforming grace. But the effort was awfully human--paddling a canoe rather than moving ahead in the power of Christ. But hundreds of preachers are like that. They try to do ministry in their own strength without relying on God's transforming grace. It is a subtle, but deadly temptation. What difference does it make if you had a great crowd and a big offering last Sunday if you find your own heart uninhabited and empty so you are not satisfied or fulfilled? (p. 178).
  3. "My observation of Christendom is that most of us tend to base our personal relationship with God on our performance instead of His grace. If we've performed well, whatever well is in our opinion, then we expect God to bless us. If we haven't done well, our expectations are reduced accordingly. In that sense, we live by works rather than by grace. We are saved by grace, and we are living by the sweat of our performance." Too many preachers base their relationship with God on the success of their ministry or the level of their performance. (p. 180).

4. The real “resourcing” for ministry is personal holiness. Effective ministry to people grows out of intimate experiences with God. When a preacher gives his first priority to personal holiness, he will be astounded at what he is able to accomplish in his ministry. (p. 183).
5. The preacher’s first obligation to his church and to himself, no matter how many hours he works or what pressures he experiences, is to live a life of personal holiness as an example to the congregation. (p. 185-186).

#### IV. **OVERCOMING.**

##### A. Twelve steps in overcoming the risks:

1. Resist Personal Spiritual Leakage (p. 210-211).
  - a. Like the necessity of oxygen for human life or gasoline for an automobile, a preacher’s intimacy with Christ is the irreducible minimum for useful ministry. Without personal faith shining through all expressions of his ministry, a preacher is an empty echo of what God intends him to be.
  - b. No spiritual leader who is not holy can be productive. Without clear personal faith, a preacher soon becomes shallow, his vision superficial, his influence minimal, and his satisfaction near zero. He becomes a pathetic imitation of the real thing. No ministry is more powerless than that of a preacher who seldom prays personally.
  - c. Eugene H. Peterson makes a strong argument that ministry cannot be shaped by God without three connecting angles--Scripture, prayer, and accountability to a friend.
2. Commit to Contentment and Change (p. 212).  
Contentment (in material things) and change (in spiritual things) are tied together so that when a leader shows contentment with what he has, he gains credibility for asking the people to do better. The contented preacher usually asks for and gets change that benefits the church rather than himself.
3. "Re-Visit" Your Mission (p. 212-214).  
Why does the church exist and why are you in the ministry? These are probing questions that help “re-vision” ministry for oneself and the church. To return to what really matters, it is helpful to write and purpose statement that incorporates your most compelling purpose for ministry, your goals, and timetable for them. Use this purpose statement to control your ministry and life.
4. Choose Abundance Mentality (p. 214-216).
  - a. The term “abundance mentality” comes from Stephen Covey, but its application in the church is as old as the NT. Jesus taught over and over again that His little band of weak, spiritually blinded followers could transform their world because of His profuse provisions for them. The Lord intended their scarcity to remind them of His abundance.
  - b. Abundance mentality simply means that for everyone there is sufficient grace, faith, victory, provision, good results, creativity, imagination, and accomplishment. None of these provisions has a limited supply. God’s provision is bigger and more abundant than we allow ourselves to be.
  - c. Abundance mentality, believes God wants to bless His people in every situation and that there is enough of His “enablement” to make every congregation succeed. It believes there are more successes in ministry for those who move forward with initiative and dependence on God than for those who are afraid to risk living on the cutting edge.
  - d. The issue is not how little we have, but how much our Father has to give. The potential for a fulfilled ministry may be at our fingertips, but we miss it because we live by scarcity suppositions rather than abundance mentality.



5. Cultivate a Break-Out Spirit (p. 217-218).
  - a. Such a break-out spirit requires preachers to be proactive in ministry, a trait few have observed firsthand in the church.
  - b. Proactive means taking the initiative to find solutions, to make things happen, and to make the church more influential in the lives of the people it serves. Initiative is the key ingredient. That should not be too hard to accomplish because human beings were created to be active rather than reactive and to solve problems rather than be overwhelmed by them.
  - c. The Serenity Prayer helps preachers boldly respond to their own break-out spirit: "God grant be the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference." The break-out spirit in us must replace nonchalant compliance with resolute competence so that situations which victimize preachers can be transformed into golden opportunities for the Gospel.
6. Question the Quality vs. Quantity Myth (p. 218-220).
  - a. A preacher only increases his frustration if he thinks someone is chasing him with a demand for increased numbers; a glance over his shoulder might reveal it is a self-imposed expectation.
  - b. False choices in ministry need not be made between quality and quantity because they're inexorably tied together. Ministry usually gets bigger when it gets better. Quality determines quantity. Quantity is not necessarily a reflection of quality.
  - c. Why not be free from the numbers game by recommitting to the basic motivation that initially drew you into ministry? Preachers can rid themselves of a draining inner menace if they can come to terms with the reality that they need not choose between quality and quantity. Bona-fide quality in ministry means more people become interested in what the church has to offer them--Christ.
7. Transform Ambiguities into Authenticities (p. 220-223).  
 Regarding ambiguities, contemporary churchmen have four communication impediments that have probably grown out of their training or their common practices:
  - a. Professional language--technical vocabulary that speaks clearly to theologians, Bible scholars, and fellow preachers.
  - b. Insider language--sometimes known as King James speech; that is wonderfully familiar and generally understood by believers but sounds like a foreign tongue to those outside the church.
  - c. Pop psychological language-jargon which describes phobias, aggression, obsessions, compulsions, co-dependency, and anxieties in place of clearly articulated demands and Christ-provided solutions found in Scripture.
  - d. Empty speech—words calculated to sound impressive but say nothing. Plain speech, eternal truth, and logic on fire release the Gospel's authentic life-changing power. It is not the foolishness of preaching that people have discarded, but foolish preaching. Nobody needs any more religious double-talk, but many may be ready for a life-changing word from the Lord that they can truly understand.
8. Cherish people (p. 223-224).
  - a. A veteran preacher lectured beginners: "You can't learn ministry in commentaries, classrooms, or cloisters. All three help, but flesh-and-blood human beings are the raw material of ministry just as the human body is the basic element of medicine. You only learn ministry among people." And he is right.
  - b. The genuinely fulfilled preacher authentically loves people even though they often surprise him. They are the reason Christ came. Their heart for ministry is what provides millions. of

hours of volunteer service every week for the cause of Christ. People make life both fulfilling and frustrating for preachers.

- c. Every congregation has difficult people, and some churches have many. But when the preacher is tied with cords of Christian affection to a congregation of generous, devoted, loving people, even the worst tribulations of ministry are bearable.
9. Fuel Perseverance with Passion (p. 224-225).
    - a. Someone correctly observed, "The main problem of ministry is that preachers give up a minute, a week, or a month too soon." It is a fact of ministry that achievement often results from a fairly long process of doing the right thing for the right reason. And though many preachers believe and preach perseverance, they frequently detest it because of its exacting and continuous demands. This notion believes achievement results for doggedly hammering away at a task. So in many minds, perseverance is high on obligation and low on enjoyment.
    - b. Passion produces perseverance. Passionate perseverance rekindles motivation, so ministry is a joy instead of a drag, an ecstasy instead of an obligation. Passionate perseverance makes ministry more interesting; impacts those around us; and increases our own stability, resiliency, and buoyancy.
  10. Treasure the Pleasure of God (p. 225-226).
    - a. Eric Liddell, 1924 Olympics gold medalist said, "When I am running, I feel the pleasure of God." Balance, a key concept for healthy ministry, is difficult to achieve because it requires striving with the never-ending demands placed upon preachers. Often it all seems like a circus juggler's act.
    - b. The useful combination for increasing satisfaction in ministry is to feel the pleasure of God and look at something straight. See Heb. 12:2. In an ultimate sense, it is God whom the pastor must please with a balanced life and a fruitful ministry. And He sometimes defines balance and fruitfulness differently than we do. Be assured that God is always satisfied with our best effort. He knows every detail of our lives and ministries, and He is a thousand times easier to please than most of us think.
  11. Dare to Lead (p. 226-228).

Two important points; 1) leadership is always earned, and never bestowed; and 2) no one follows those who do not lead. No call, no contract, credential, or ecstatic religious experience makes an individual a leader. The most impressive and magnetic characteristic of the effective preacher/leader is single-minded devotion to lead people into the deeper depths of Christ-likeness. Strong, capable people stand in the wings in many churches waiting to follow a competent, Christ-like leader who dares to lead them to accomplish worthwhile objectives.
  12. Exegete Your Environment (p. 228-231).
    - a. One trainer of preachers suggests the task of hermeneutics is to bridge the differences of time, place, culture, and meaning between the biblical writer and the modern hearer--the preacher connects the two. However, another set of slightly different exegetical skills is the quest by a preacher to exegete his world--himself, his family, his congregation, his denomination, his town, and his culture. The preacher must develop a thorough and accurate awareness of the unique dimensions of his assignment.
    - b. Exegeting the environment for ministry means making a positive Gospel response to the conditions and demands of a particular situation. For a preacher it is a lethal delusion to assume every situation is like the previous one, or like the one down the road, or like the one in the next town, or maybe just remains static. Tools for exegeting the environment include: awareness, sensitivity, reflection, and listening, as well as having knowledgeable persons in the congregation and community.

- B. Falling in love with preaching again (p. 233-234).  
The world needs preachers more than ever. Five things to remember:
  1. God trusts you.
  2. Ministry is the center of all the action that matters.
  3. Intimacy with Christ fuels constructive ministry.
  4. Marriage and family stability strengthens ministry.
  5. Perplexing times provide growth opportunities.
- C. A trustworthy cornerstone for rekindling this love affair and for reinventing ministry for troubled times comes from the apostle Paul, "Since we have this ministry, we do not lose heart" (2Cor. 4:1). (p. 235).

## **CONCLUSION.**

- A. Spiritual dryness and emotional starvation are occupational land mines for preachers who do their work continually in a world of half-hearted commitments, moral bankruptcies, devastating sins, and dysfunctional people. (p. 208-209).
- B. Their situation can easily become hypnotic, so that they see only problems with no hope in sight. Then blaming others or suffering in stoic silence wastes emotional energy that could be used more constructively. These foes--dryness and starvation--are hard to recognize, and it is difficult to imagine what havoc they will trigger tomorrow, next week, and into the next century.
- C. Where, then, can preachers find help? The positive resources they already possess, if properly used, could alleviate the present predicament quickly: a Bible in their hands, God's love in their hearts, a passionate will to do right in their souls, and an energized commitment to win their world in their plans.