

# Encourage

Inspiration for IPHC Leaders

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# One of My Heroes from the Past Generation

This past summer we lost Lawrence A. Pfaff, a dear IPHC missionary who was a role model for us all.



BY DOUG  
BEACHAM

DOUG BEACHAM is the presiding bishop of the IPHC. He has served in various roles in the church including Georgia Conference Superintendent, executive director of Church Education Ministries, and executive director of World Missions Ministries. You can follow Bishop Beacham on [Facebook](#) or Twitter [@DougBeacham](#).

After graduating from college, I attended graduate school at Union Theological Seminary (UTS) in Richmond, Virginia (now called Union Presbyterian Seminary). Though I was accepted at other seminaries, Union's strong Bible department and financial aid, along with an excellent local IPHC church, led me there. The Presbyterian money must have been predestined to educate a Pentecostal Wesleyan Arminian!

In the chapel services I heard and learned new hymns, such as "For All the Saints." I always have that hymn in my mind when I attend a funeral service. I've been blessed to know personally many of the "saints" whom the Holy Spirit used to affect the IPHC since the 1950s. If I started naming them, it would be like reading 1 Chronicles 1–9. They were mighty women and men in the IPHC family.

In July of this year I learned that one of those saints, Lawrence A. Pfaff, joined his late wife with the Lord. Born in Pennsylvania on St. Valentine's Day 1929, Pfaff attended Holmes Bible College (where he met his wife, Lola Rankin), Furman University, and then obtained a master's degree from William and Mary.

I first heard the Pfaff name in the early 1970s as he had pastored in the Eastern Virginia Conference and had responded to the mission's call. They began serving in White River, South Africa, along with their three daughters (Ethelyn, Barbie, and Cheryl).

Later that decade the Pfaff's brought their youngest daughter Cheryl to Emmanuel College where I met this amazing family. When they visited Emmanuel, I was always impressed by the Pfaff's gracious and friendly demeanor.

**"Lawrence and Lola Pfaff are part of a generation that is joining that 'great clouds of witnesses' we read about in Hebrews 12:1."**

I remember Cheryl remarking that her father was often in Nigeria, but her mother was in the USA helping with fundraising and the family. At times he would return to the USA to be with his family and raise funds. I didn't realize when they would visit that I was in the presence of such humble and faithful servants of Christ in the IPHC in West Africa.

It wasn't until I became World Missions Director that I began to understand the Pfaff's significant impact in West Africa. I knew the IPHC had a Bible school in Lagos but knew little of its history. While IPHC missionary Johnny Brooks had started the IPHC work in West Africa in 1955, and a small school in 1957, the school had closed in the 1970s.

However, Lawrence Pfaff came to Nigeria and began a new dream that continues to this day. Initially traveling across Nigeria, he journeyed westward into Benin to encourage the IPHC presence in that nation. But it was in Lagos that Pfaff found the opportunity to establish a strong IPHC Bible College.

IPHC missionary Willard Wagner told me, "Rev. Pfaff and his wife almost singlehandedly raised all the funds for the purchase of the land, and the construction of the facility, where the present Bible College is permanently established." That property is a short distance from the Gulf of Guinea and when it is quiet, one can sit on the school roof and hear the ocean.

It was a major project. Pfaff lived among the Nigerians whom he served, once living with nineteen Nigerians in the same house! He later slept in the unfinished rooms of the college.

At one point an IPHC Nigerian family opened their home to him and provided better shelter and food. He hired Italian contractors to build the outstanding facility. He was responsible for hiring Dr. Luke Nnadi as the head of the West Africa Bible College, a position Dr. Nnadi holds today as well as the IPHC

Nigeria national leader.

Today this property is valued at over \$1 million U.S. dollars. Lawrence Pfaff saw an opportunity that others did not see, and his faith and work continues. The WABC has trained nearly 3,000 men and women who are serving Christ and the IPHC around the globe.

In November 2007, Willard Wagner invited Brother Pfaff to return to Lagos for the dedication of the new conference center named in memory of his beloved wife Lola Pfaff. This needed facility was made possible by funds raised through World Missions, the Pfaff family, and Willard and Yvonne Wagner. Traveling with Lawrence were two grandsons, David Peyton (son of Ethelyn) and Karl Stefan (son of Barbie). I was honored to join the Wagner's and Pfaff family for this special event.

Lawrence Pfaff was then 78 years old but full of energy and enthusiasm. I kept some notes about that trip and wrote about his preaching, "He (Pfaff) spoke from Psalm 92:12 on the palm tree and did a great job. He's a very good teacher and repeatedly had us quote the passage! His applications were great also."

The West Africa Bible College graduation was on Saturday, November 17. There were over two thousand people present and Lawrence, his grandsons, the Wagners, and I were on the platform. At one point in the praise music, hundreds of Nigerians entered the aisles and front area to dance. I could tell that Lawrence was loving it.

He leaned over to me and said, "You can do that, go on out there." I replied, "I'll go if you go." He stood up and together we joined the dancers and spent the next fifteen minutes with the Nigerians in praise to the Lord.

When we returned to our seats, his grandson David was sitting next to me. I turned to him and said, "Your Granddad is the happiest man

# Encourage

**A place of hope. A people of promise.**

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A 'never-retiring missionary': Lawrence Pfaff at the Bible college in Nigeria in 2007.

on earth!" I saw with my own eyes why Lawrence was called the "never re-tiring missionary."

Our core value emphasis this year is "We Prayerfully Value All Generations." Lawrence and Lola Pfaff are part of a generation that is joining that "great clouds of witnesses" we read about in Hebrews 12:1. But their testimony continues to inspire us. □



# Why the Church Must Break Racial Barriers

I've experienced racism most of my adult life.  
But I want to join forces with you to break its power.



BY DR. KEVIN  
D. ROBINSON

DR. KEVIN D. ROBINSON was a Jehovah's Witness before he found Jesus Christ. Today he and his wife, Sheila, pastor Divine Empowerment International in Fayetteville, N.C., a church they planted in 2006. A member of the IPHC's North Carolina Conference since 2009, he is also a public speaker, life coach, leadership consultant and a team member with the John Maxwell Group.

I was the sixth child in a family of nine. From childhood I was taught the importance of prayer, study, diligent work, and family. As a child I never experienced racism. To be honest, I didn't believe racism existed until I was in my teens.

My father constantly told me why it was important for me, a young, African-American male, to be educated, polite and well-spoken. He urged me to treat all people with respect and dignity regardless of their ethnicity.

I also remember him coming home from work frustrated and angry at times. He described how he was racially profiled or discriminated against in the workplace, denied opportunities for advancement and rejected at banks even though he was a homeowner with excellent credit.

Unfortunately I've had several bad experiences with white police officers since my teens. Once when I was en route to a chiropractor's office, a white officer claimed that I committed a traffic violation. He got out of his vehicle, walked up to my car, pulled his weapon and pointed it six inches from my face. He demanded that I give him my license and registration.

In that moment I feared I might not see my family again. This happened the week after I accepted the call of God to serve Him! I prayerfully and calmly asked the officer why he pulled his gun and assured him that I was of no threat to him.



As I looked in the officer's eyes, I could see conviction come over him. He holstered his weapon and asked me for my identification. He ran my license number and released me without any explanation. All he said was, "You never know what to expect out of 'you people.'"

I've also witnessed horrible behavior in the workforce. I've unexpectedly stumbled upon information that proved African-Americans and other minorities who were more experienced and educated than some whites were paid significantly less money for the same jobs. I heard co-workers refer to blacks and Hispanics as weak-minded dummies.

I honestly never thought I would experience racism among Christians. But there have been times when white congregants didn't want me to minister in their churches because of my skin color. I've been called racially insensitive names, including the n-word, as I walked into the pulpit to declare the gospel.

Believe me when I say that racism is alive in 2018. This wicked spirit peers into my eyes every week. I choose to peer back into its wicked eyes and condemn it to hell where it belongs.

We all must speak out against racism in any form that it dares to show its ugly face.

I remain grateful for the white brothers and sisters who have shown me and my family love, respect and compassion. It's people like this who continue to give me the passion to serve God—and to never forget that we are all God's children.

*Love*

## IS THE ANSWER!

1 John 4: 15-20 teaches us valuable lessons on being loved by God and loving one another! The instructions outlined in these passages affirm that we can love one another beyond our cultural norms, religious traditions, and political preferences.

When we love one another, we give God place to live in us. This love that originates with God and is gifted in us

is perfected as we abide in God and He in us. As God lives in us, He lives in all believers who live in the earth; likewise, we must unapologetically love one another as Christ loves us.

How are we going to break the stronghold of racism in the church today? We need a plan of action. The only way we can break barriers is to understand the process of breaking them.

A barrier is defined as a fence or obstacle that prevents movement or access. Break is defined as a separation or to cause to separate because of a blow, shock or strain. This definition explains the way many of us attempt to confront culture and break barriers.

Unfortunately, this method usually causes more division. We must learn to be confrontational and intentional without being combative and dishonorable. A break is also defined as an interruption of continuity or uniformity. Therefore, a break can be healthy if it is done in a manner to break cultural barriers with the right revelation and plan of action.

A fractured bone might have to be rebroken and reset if the bone has been damaged for some time prior to receiving treatment, if the break is set crooked or if it is growing out of alignment. The wounded patient yields to advice and the trained hands of the orthopedic specialist allowing the bone to be broken—all the while knowing that through discomfort and some pain the bone will heal and grow properly.

Repentance allows us to become broken again before God, to submit to His plan of action so we can be properly aligned with His will. Being broken before God and submitting to His will guarantees that we will be set straight, aligned and prepared for proper growth.

"Believe me when I say that racism is alive in 2018. This wicked spirit peers into my eyes every week."

Finally, we must exercise wisdom in breaking any barriers in our lives that hinder the celebration of diversity. We never want to take the approach that we no longer value or honor those who may be bound to existing cultures. The honor principle teaches us to honor those who are of the household of faith. We must exercise wisdom as we implement

our plan of action. Remember, honor will bring out the best in anyone who is honorable.

Jesus said in Matt. 5:17 that he came not to destroy the law nor the prophets but rather to fulfill. His plan of action was not to exterminate or eliminate those who were bound in the limits of the Torah nor the prophetic books, but rather to show them the next

phase of their lives in Him, the Door of Hope!

If we are going to be successful at breaking cultural barriers in our churches we must flow in the mind of Christ, love one another as Christ love us, and demonstrate that love in our relationships with diverse people groups. Our efforts to expand the kingdom of God's influence in the earth will be great if we will take on the heart of Christ Jesus and become a servant of all!

As an IPHC family, let's fight racism together! I refuse to allow the sins of others to change the person God has redeemed me to become. I also refuse to allow the sins of others to cause me to blame an entire ethnic group of people because of the behaviors of others. I'll fight for peace, love, honor, and respect until it becomes contagious in the church—and in the world we are called to reach. □



# Celebrating the Heroes of Our Heritage



Photos above (L to R): B.H. Irwin, J.H. King, G.F. Taylor

A look at four IPHC pioneers: B.H. Irwin, J.H. King, G.F. Taylor and G.B. Cashwell.



BY DR. TONY  
MOON

DR. TONY MOON has more than 25 years of pastoral, conference-level and church planting experience in the IPHC. With an M.Div., Th.M. and D.Min. degrees, he is a professor of Christian Ministries at Emmanuel College in Franklin Springs, Georgia. He has published academic and popular articles on J. H. King's theology, and he is the author of *From Plowboy to Pentecostal Bishop: The Life of J.H. King*.

As of 2017, the IPHC has full-length published biographies of four of its early leaders. These books were published in the order that these leaders served the denomination: B.H. Irwin, J.H. King, G.F. Taylor and G.B. Cashwell. Vinson Synan and I believe that, among the world's Classical Pentecostal denominations, probably only the IPHC can make such a claim.

The following paragraphs contain a thumbnail sketch of the contributions of these pioneer leaders and their legacy for our church, and then a list of the biographies in the order of their publication.

**Benjamin Hardin Irwin** was a "hard-shelled" (predestinarian) Baptist pastor in 1870s–1880s Nebraska. In 1891 he received his Wesleyan entire sanctification experience. During the early to mid-1890s, he ministered as an Iowa Holiness Association and Wesleyan Methodist Church evangelist in some of the Midwestern and Plains states. In 1895 Irwin began to preach about a third spiritual experience in the Christian life which he called "the fire."

During the mid-to-late 1890s, Irwin organized local and regional Fire-Baptized Holiness Associations in the Southern Plains, Midwest and South. In 1898 the charismatic and controversial evangelist led those independent bodies to form a new Protestant denomination in Anderson, South Carolina: The Fire-Baptized Holiness Association of America (FBHAA), with himself elected as general overseer.

Irwin resigned in disgrace as the church's head in June 1900. However, he left a substantial doctrinal and spiritual-experiential legacy for the later-developing Wesleyan-Pentecostal movement and in particular the IPHC and other Wesleyan-Pentecostal organizations: the idea of a "third blessing" in the believer's life beyond Wesleyan "perfect love" as a second, definite work of divine grace. Today this belief is encased in the IPHC's eleventh Article of Faith.

**Joseph Hillery King** was converted to the Christian faith in Wesleyan-revivalist fashion on his sixteenth birthday. It happened at a Methodist Episcopal Church South (MECS) congregational camp meeting near Carnesville in Franklin County, in northeast Georgia. His first self-claimed experience of Wesleyan entire sanctification occurred two months later at a



Carnesville MECS holiness convention.

King became convinced that God had called him to preach even before he got saved! He began credentialed ministry in the MECS in 1890, in 1891 transferring to and receiving a preaching license from the Georgia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC). Until 1898 he served MEC congregational circuits in middle and north Georgia. That year he left the MEC and joined Irwin's FBHAA as an "ordained evangelist."

King succeeded Irwin as the general overseer of the FBHAA in 1900. For some six years he led the leadership in extricating from the organization's doctrinal, mystical, experiential and public worship extremism. This is when he began to build his reputation as a stickler for relative "order" and an opponent of "brainless fanaticism" and "religious extravagance."

At the 1902 General Council meeting, the organization's name was changed to the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church (FBHC). The denomination merged with the Pentecostal Holiness Church (PHC) in 1911. King was elected in 1917 as general superintendent of the PHC. He served in that capacity for some twenty years, and then from 1937 until his death in 1946 he served as one of multiple chief executive officers.

At the 1937 General Conference, King, Dan Muse and all future general superintendents were bestowed the honorary title of "Bishop." The legacy for the IPHC of "the Pentecostal aristocrat," Bishop J.H. King, may be summarized in terms of three major contributions to its history, development, and culture.

First, King had a strong vision for and actively pursued quality general and higher education "under Pentecostal Holiness influences" for the denomination's constituency. Second, he worked persistently for adequate Bible and ministry training for the church's clergy. Third, he labored incessantly over the decades for a balanced approach to spirituality and public worship which avoided the mystical, experiential, demonstrative and doctrinal "enthusiastic" extremes of "Irwinism" and the early Fire-Baptized Holiness and Classical Pentecostal movements.

**George Floyd Taylor** was born and raised in eastern North Carolina during the 1880s-1890s. His earliest religious influences were various, including Universalist, Freewill Baptist, Methodist Episcopal Church South

"I encourage you to read all four biographies of these legendary leaders. Their lives will inspire you to continue a legacy of Spirit-filled leadership."

and independent Wesleyan-Holiness. In 1903 he became a member of the Holiness Church (HC) in Magnolia and was also licensed to preach and ordained to the ministry by that tiny denomination.

Taylor suffered his whole life from a serious physical-neurological disability, but he was highly intelligent and eventually completed both the baccalaureate and master's degrees in history. Most importantly, he was used by God to accomplish great things for the kingdom as a leader in the Holiness Church/Pentecostal Holiness Church.

Taylor made his mark as a preacher, educator, school administrator and innovative entrepreneur, writer and editor of Pentecostal Sunday School literature, and as an early Pentecostal theological thinker and writer. He served as general superintendent of the PHC 1913–1917, general treasurer 1917–1925, editor of the *Pentecostal Holiness*

*Advocate* 1917–1925 and 1929–1934 and superintendent of Franklin Springs Institute 1919–1926 and 1929–1931. Taylor shared Bishop King's concerns for PHC-sponsored general and higher education, good ministerial training and a balanced private and public worship spirituality.

In 1936, some two years after Taylor's untimely death, Bishop King wrote the following in praise of Taylor's accomplishments:

"The Pentecostal Holiness Church owes more to him in the way of obligation than to any other man [who] has labored in its fold and [he] preached the gospel as one of its most able ministers."

**Gaston Barnabas Cashwell** was also an eastern North Carolinian. He transferred his clergy credentials from the MECS to the HC in 1903. He gained recognition as a leading evangelist, especially after he returned in 1906 from visiting the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles. Cashwell received the Pentecostal "third blessing" baptism in the Holy Spirit there, experiencing the "initial evidence" of speaking in tongues.

Starting on December 31, 1906, and

continuing through most of February 1907, Cashwell hosted revival meetings in Dunn, North Carolina, where he introduced the Azusa Street-style pentecostal message to the mesmerized congregations. Many preachers and members of the HC, FBHC and Pentecostal Free-Will Baptist Church "went through" to their Pentecostal baptisms.

Through 1907–1908, he led protracted meetings in the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee and other locales, and founded and edited the early Pentecostal periodical *Bridegroom's Messenger* in Atlanta. Cashwell became a prominent figure in the early spread of Pentecostalism all over the Southeast.

I encourage you to read all four biographies of these legendary leaders. Their lives will inspire you to continue a legacy of Spirit-filled leadership:

Doug Beacham, *Azusa East: The Life and Times of G.B. Cashwell* (Franklin Springs, GA: LSR Publications, 2006).

H. Stanley York, *George Floyd Taylor: The Life of an Early Southern Pentecostal Leader* (Xulon Press, 2013).

Tony G. Moon, *From Plowboy to Pentecostal Bishop: The Life of J.H. King*, The Asbury Theological Seminary Series in World Christian Revitalization Movements, Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies Subseries (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2017).

Vinson Synan and Daniel Woods, *Fire Baptized: The Many Lives and Works of Benjamin Hardin Irwin, A Biography and a Reader*, The Asbury Theological Seminary Series in World Christian Revitalization Movements, Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies Subseries (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2017). (Synan wrote Section One, the biography. Woods produced Section Two, the Irwin Reader.)

All of these books are available at LifeSprings Resources in Franklin Springs, Georgia. 📖



G. B. Cashwell



# How Africa's Women Are Breaking Free From Abuse



In August I witnessed how IPHC leaders are challenging cultural strongholds.

Beauty for ashes: These women and their children are receiving care in an IPHC shelter in Iringa, Tanzania.



BY J. LEE GRADY

J. LEE GRADY is an ordained IPHC minister who directs The Mordecai Project, an international outreach focused on confronting gender-based violence. For 18 years he served as an editor with Charisma magazine, and he is the author of several books including the newly released *Set My Heart on Fire*, a Bible study on the Holy Spirit. He and his wife, Deborah, live in LaGrange, Georgia.

In Iringa, Tanzania, where I spent a week in August, most women have never heard of the #MeToo movement. Many women there are illiterate because school isn't considered necessary for girls. And women who can read don't spend much time on social media following reports about famous American movie stars who were abused by Hollywood producers.

But Africa is ripe for its own version of #MeToo. So many of the women I met in Tanzania, and in the neighboring country of Malawi, shared painful stories of abuse, harassment, rape and forced marriage.

For the first time, some of them are willing to speak about it publicly.

One brave woman told her story in a conference held at Bethel Life Church, an IPHC congregation in Iringa. She shared how a married man more than twice her age began harassing her. He dangled promises of money to tempt her. She felt intimidated because he held an important position in the government, so she reluctantly gave into his advances.

When she found out she was pregnant, he refused to admit the baby was his—and he took no financial responsibility. The man is an elder in another local congregation in Iringa.

During my time in Tanzania, and in neighboring Malawi, I met so many women with similar stories. One girl went to the Tanzanian island of Zanzibar to work in a hotel. But her dreams of a better life were shattered when her employer raped her. She got pregnant and had her baby at age 15.

Several other women told me they were raped as young as 14, and now they care for their children with no help from the men who took advantage of them.

A woman from Mbeya, in the south of Tanzania, told me how her





Breaking the stronghold: Men in Tanzania publicly repented for abuse in August

husband—and the father of her two daughters—abandoned her and then sold their house without her knowledge. A woman from Arusha, in northern Tanzania, pleaded with me to help the women from the nomadic Masai tribe. She said parents are selling their young daughters to older Masai men just to get the dowry payments.

In Malawi, where IPHC Bishop Tony Mkamanga and his wife, Charity, are building churches, women have similar stories of rape, abuse, and forced marriage. During my visit there in August I learned of one young teenage girl who was tempted to go into prostitution to collect school fees. Her pimps would have enslaved her if her pastor had not intervened.

I hear these stories everywhere I go in Africa, where the abuse of women has many forms: domestic violence, the cruel treatment of widows, forced prostitution, rape by soldiers, the degradation of polygamy, the sexual abuse of housemaids or the horrific practice of female genital mutilation.

At one point during our conference in Tanzania, dozens of women streamed to the front of the auditorium to receive prayer for abuse or abandonment. Two of the women began to scream and writhe on the floor, obviously tormented by

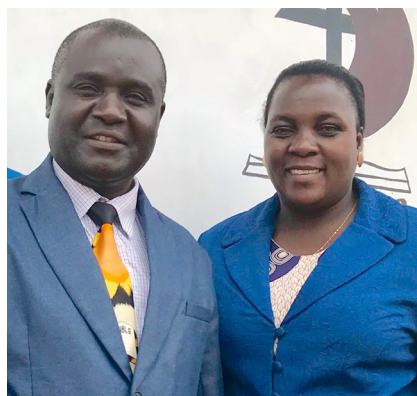
demons. IPHC leader Berrings Mlambya, who serves as bishop of Tanzania, said both women had experienced traumatic sexual abuse, and the man who abused the second woman was deeply involved in witchcraft.

“The majority of women here have been abused, and this often opens

them up to demonic problems,” Mlambya said. “Yet few pastors here are prepared to deal with this problem because they are so bound by African traditions. Our culture has told women that they must stay in their place.”

Pastor Mlambya, who moved to Iringa from the city of Mbeya in 2014, has opened a shelter to care for abused and abandoned women. He provides a room, meals and basic job training for 11 single mothers. He also plans to instruct IPHC pastors in how to confront cultural traditions that oppress women.

“If God does not help us, the change will be difficult,” Mlambya said.



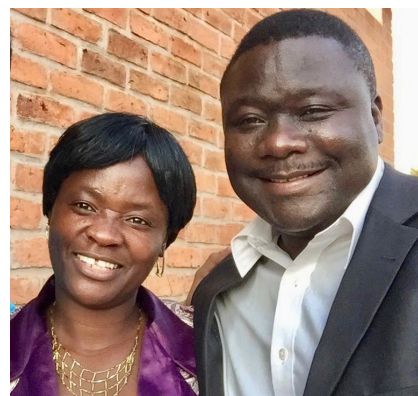
IPHC Bishop Berrings Mlambya and his wife, Grace.

Africa should be ground zero for the #MeToo movement, but women here don't have the platform to speak out like women in Western nations. Abuse is rampant but African women are expected to protect the status quo. So they suffer quietly. While abuse is discussed openly in the United States, Africa's crisis remains hidden behind a smokescreen of shame and cultural taboos.

Yet I'm encouraged because I see God breaking through the darkness. In our women's conference in Tanzania last month, male pastors from several churches gathered on the platform and knelt in front of the women. Before anyone could say anything, the women begin to wail. They had never seen men humble themselves and apologize for anything, especially sexual abuse.

As Pastor Mlambya prayed in Swahili, repenting on behalf of the husbands, fathers, uncles, boyfriends and bosses who abused these women, a wave of healing flowed through the church.

I expect this miracle to be repeated all across the African continent in my lifetime. It is a blessing to see the IPHC positioned to bring this healing on a huge scale. As the Holy Spirit brings His freedom, the silence will be broken, and women who have been shrouded in shame will finally make their voices heard. □



IPHC leaders Tony and Charity Mkamanga in Mzuzu, Malawi.

“Abuse is rampant but African women are expected to protect the status quo. So they suffer quietly.”



# You Must Care for Yourself or You Can't Care for Others

Too many pastors today are burning out. Please ask yourself the tough questions.



BY CHRIS MAXWELL

CHRIS MAXWELL served 19 years as lead pastor in Orlando, Florida, and is in his thirteenth year as campus pastor and director of Spiritual Life at Emmanuel College. He speaks in churches and schools, and is the author of nine books, including *Pause for Pastors*, and his latest, *a slow and sudden God: 40 years of wonder*. Visit him at [www.chrismaxwell.me](http://www.chrismaxwell.me).

**M**y friend's text message was deep, though only including three words: "I am done."

My response only used one word to ask, "Why?"

"I'm emailing you a long note right now. We can talk after you read it," my friend said.

Yes, he emailed me. Yes, the note was long—actually, 2,726 words of total desperation. Yes, I read it. And, yes, we engaged in a long dialogue about how he felt, what had brought him to that point, and what next steps would be helpful.

After our conversation I walked outside, staring at the moon and stars. I prayed deep, simple prayers for my friend and for others who are battling similar wars. So many leaders like this man feel the weight of pastoring a congregation is too heavy for them. They are bruised and bitter. They've tried hard—possibly too hard—to succeed in their callings.

Wounded, guilty, and unsure, they're asking, "Why?" With so many thoughts bombarding their brains, they're wondering, "What next?" They feel trapped. And alone.

Are you trapped in a similar dilemma? Are you asking yourself similar questions? Are you processing thoughts and feelings that are causing doubts, defeat, worthlessness and panic to attack you? Have you considered ending your career—or even your own life?

I want to sit with you in my office and listen to your story. I want to walk along the beach with you and ask you open ended questions about your past, your present, and your future. I wish we could meet at a table and eat lunch, engaging in honest dialogue about the painful storms in the land of ministry.

If you are sinking in despair or discouragement, and you haven't reached out for help because you fear being honest about your situation, let me ask you to process these questions:



- What deep hurts continue to dwell in your inner world?
- How long have they been there?
- How are those hurts influencing your personal life, your family and your vocation?
- Why aren't you talking with someone to work through those wounds?
- Who should you talk to?
- Will you contact them? Now?

Evaluating our lives by asking such questions isn't pleasant or fun. But it can be steps toward healing. It can begin to set us free from being controlled by past hurts and present stress. It can offer ways of "casting our cares" on Christ who cares so deeply for us.

Galatians 6:2 tells us, "Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ." Yet bearing one another's burdens is not to be done with effort of our human muscle to hold the struggles of others. In my latest book, *a slow and sudden God: 40 years of wonder*, one of the poems reveals the difference between caring for others and carrying all their pain in our own strength:

*people crave the medication of care,  
desiring what feels distant, hoping for  
deep listeners, genuine lovers, gentle  
shepherds, kind mentors,  
true friends at one table  
where diverse backgrounds merge  
into single stories.  
but care isn't to be carried.  
care doesn't mean obsessed or  
controlled.  
love hurts, as it should.  
it wounds, as it should.  
but love can cause deeper damage  
when not balanced with self-care and  
sabbath,  
when not protected by receiving love.  
care. each day, intensely.  
but do not carry the weight of others'  
burdens.  
care for them and help them learn  
to release, to receive.  
listen, and let go.  
love and bleed a little,  
but glance at the sky and realize  
all is not up to you.  
breathe deeply and  
rest well, knowing that  
you are the one who cares  
but not the one who carries.*

The two words "pastoral care" shouldn't

only refer to how we display pastoral care for others. It is a holy method of self-care—realizing our relationships with God are to bring healing our way before we preach or sing or serve such healing to others. Welcoming God's love into our own lives isn't just a conversion experience; it is a lifestyle.

Here are a few suggestions on addressing your own levels of stress and pursuing pastoral care:

- Do not only give care. Receive care.
- Do not only study Scripture to preach it. Dive into the Word. Deposit truth.
- Live in community, not in isolation. Find mentors, accountability partners, Christian counselors, and gentle shepherds to lead your in your life of shepherding.
- Take time off from pastoral work. Remember the Sabbath. Long walks, hours of silence, moments of wonder and relaxation—please care for the house of the Lord that is you.
- And, speaking about that "house of the Lord," work to take care of your physical body and your mental health. Get the heart beating, the body sweating, and the mind thinking. This doesn't mean becoming addicted to modern workouts to look cool and impress others. It means finding a life of balanced care.
- Refuse to let worship be what is only done in your church's setting. Worship alone. Worship in other groups. Worship deeply, sincerely, calmly, joyfully.
- Journal. Don't hold your feelings inside, but do not become a constant complainer. Release the wounds as a modern David journaling your own Psalms of lament, hurt, questions, confessions, praise, and reverence to your Listening Father.
- Keep priorities correct. Think about family. Think about self-care. Think about asking a friend to evaluate your priorities by examining your schedule and your budget.
- Reflect on the last times you laughed, you cried, and you enjoyed a wonderful night of sleep. Ask, "What do those answers tell me?"
- Make your own list of suggestions to improve pastoral care in your life...

Thankfully, my friend who texted

"Welcoming  
God's love into  
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me so desperately did not resign. He's still preparing sermons, leading board meetings, visiting his church members and preaching biblical truth. But he's found a better balance.

He's seeing a counselor. He's finding ways to sleep better and exercise more often. He's making time with his family a priority. And he has fallen in love with God again rather than letting his ministry take the place of his first love.

When I recently met with him and his wife, her smile answered the question I wanted to ask them. Her prayers were being answered. They were finding a healthy balance of pastoral care for others and for themselves. She said: "He is now enjoying life again. And so am I." □

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