

Dangerous Calling

Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry

By Paul David Tripp

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Discussion Guide to be used with the Conference on DVD

Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry... Why do so many pastors get lost in the middle of their own ministry story? What's wrong with the way we call and relate to our pastors? What are the temptations that are unique to or intensified by local church ministry? Why do so many pastors live in isolation from the body of Christ? Why is so much ministry motivated by fear and not by faith? Where does our current ministry culture need to change? This study will answer these questions and more in the most honest discussion of ministry you will ever encounter. If you are a pastor, a ministry leader in your church or someone who loves and cares for your pastor, this resource is for you. Learn how the gospel can radically alter the way you think about yourself and the ministry to which God has called you.

Live conference recorded on 3 DVDs in 10 twenty-five minute sessions, including a CD with a reproducible Leader's Guide and Discussion Guide. Ideal for leadership training, small group use, or personal study.

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DANGEROUS CALLING

INTRODUCTION

The call to care for God's people is invaluable. Pastors are in a position to bring Christ—the Way, the Truth, and the Life—to the hearts of people whom God loves. Pastors are called to proclaim and lead people to eternal life, authentic truth, and empowering grace. The pastor is called to feed and care for “God's people, holy and dearly loved” (Col. 3:12). However, this invaluable calling is also a challenging calling.

Pastors cope with the pressures of expectations. They burden a weight of responsibility for a healthy and vibrant church body. They are concerned for the finances of the church and to properly use God's resources. They strive to balance family, the church body, and their own well-being. Pastors strive to be diligent and effective in preaching while meeting the individual needs of the people. They face criticism, opposition, and unrealistic expectations. Consequently, this calling is not only invaluable and demanding, but also dangerous. Pastors face specific temptations as a result of their roles as shepherds.

This series will require you to look honestly at your heart and at the ways in which you deal with those temptations. This study is a reminder of what God has truly called you to do and how He has and will provide for this calling to be achieved. Whether you are a pastor or in a position to care for your pastor, this study will assist you in examining your church culture so that those in ministry can fulfill the work they have been called to do in a way that is glorifying to our Savior King.

Dangerous situations necessitate slowing down in order to accurately examine one's surroundings. As you go through this study guide, be alert and aware of your own heart and the culture of ministry in your church. Prayerfully seek what God wants to reveal and change in you and your church. May the eyes of your heart be wide open as you look into the mirror of God's Word. As the people of God, we are not called to hide or ignore the dangers; we are called to stand firm, to be strong and courageous, and to resist the devil.

The following pages will provide practical discussion and application of material presented in the *Dangerous Calling* DVDs. It is recommended that you use this guide within a small group setting of ministry leaders and/or pastors. Reading the book, *Dangerous Calling*, will further benefit you since material in the book, although related to the DVD, is distinct. At the end of each session are suggested Scripture passages and chapters from the book *Dangerous Calling* that can deepen your study and understanding of each topic.

May God greatly bless you for the praise of His glory!

Here are some endorsements about the DANGEROUS CALLING material:

“My friend Paul Tripp shines the spotlight of God’s Word into the heart of every pastor in this book, *Dangerous Calling*. If you have been in ministry for 20 minutes or 20 years, I commend it to you. Approach it prayerfully, passionately, and be prepared for the change God will make in your heart, life, and ministry.”

James MacDonald, Senior Pastor, Harvest Bible Chapel; author, *Vertical Church*

“My friend Paul Tripp has done it again. With probing insight and robust realism, he takes an honest look into the challenges that are unique to, or intensified by, pastoral ministry. Gospel-centered and grace saturated to the core, *Dangerous Calling* is a must read for any pastor or pastor in training who needs to be encouraged by the reminder that Jesus came to do for us what we could never do for ourselves or others.”

Tullian Tchividjian, Pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church and author of *Jesus + Nothing = Everything*

“*Dangerous Calling* is a dangerous book to read. It is also a book every person in ministry should read. It will cut you to the heart and bring massive conviction if you read it with a humility and ask God to expose sins deeply hidden in your soul. It cuts, but it also provides biblical remedies for healing. I would love to put this book in the hand of every seminarian who walks on my campus.”

Daniel L. Akin, President, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Pastoral ministry is a dangerous calling, and this is a dangerous book. It will not leave you unchanged. Pastors need pastors, and by God’s grace, every page of this book will minister to your heart, your marriage, your family, and the people you serve—in ways you never thought you needed it. This book digs down into the inner recesses of our hearts to reveal our greatest idols and point to our greatest needs. It will make you joyfully uncomfortable and, by God’s grace, will bring you to your knees in tears of thankfulness only to help lift your weary head to fix your renewed gaze on Christ. This book is like a mirror that redirects our hearts’ reflection from ourselves to Christ. If this book were a sermon, it would be the most weighty and refreshing sermon you’ve ever needed to hear. My sincere hope is that this book would be translated into multiple languages, become required reading in seminaries, and be distributed to Christians everywhere who know they’re called to serve God and others with the gifts the Holy Spirit has equipped them.”

Burk Parsons, Associate Pastor, Saint Andrew's Chapel, Sanford, Florida; editor, *Tabletalk* magazine

“Our wives, children, and the members we serve will have a new husband, father, and pastor by Friday if we follow Tripp’s example and give a humble and honest reading of this book—one with our inner Pharisee and scribe turned off. We will see the need to save our selves from a very dark and destructive force working against pastors: undiagnosed pastoral self-righteousness. With much wisdom and conviction, Tripp’s *Dangerous Calling* preaches the gospel of grace to the men who are preaching the gospel Sunday after Sunday to everyone but themselves.”

Eric C. Redmond, Executive Pastoral Assistant and Bible Professor in Residence, New Canaan Baptist Church; Council Member, The Gospel Coalition

“Few would regard a pastor’s role as a dangerous calling, but few people are as qualified and insightful as Paul Tripp to penetrate the snares and potential pitfalls associated with pastoral ministry. Fewer still would prescribe such gospel based and local church rooted remedies. This excellent volume should be read, re-read & applied.”

Terry Virgo, founder of Newfrontiers.

SESSION 1: MINISTRY DANGERS

Opening Discussion:

What assumptions are often made about ministry and/or people in ministry?

What needs and problems do people in ministry have as a result of being in ministry?

The reality and confession of personal spiritual weakness is not a grave danger to your ministry. God has chosen to build His church through the instrumentality of bent and broken tools. It is your delusions of strength that will get you in trouble and cause you to form a ministry that is less than Christ-centered and gospel-driven.

Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 87

Scripture Passage:

Malachi 2: 1-9

“And now, O priests, this command is for you. ²If you will not listen, if you will not take it to heart to give honor to my name, says the LORD of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart. ³Behold, I will rebuke your offspring, and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings, and you shall be taken away with it. ⁴So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may stand, says the LORD of hosts. ⁵My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name. ⁶True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. ⁷For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. ⁸But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of hosts, ⁹and so I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you do not keep my ways but show partiality in your instruction.”

NOTES:

**Dangerous
Calling:**
The Unique Temptations
of Pastoral Ministry

The Danger of
Familiarity
(Losing Your Awe)

KEY POINTS:

- God’s grace is sometimes painful.
- The culture of ministry is often flawed in that it expects people in ministry to be perfect, fully mature, and able to personally see and deal with their own sin.
- Ministry does not protect us from the temptations of sin or excuse us from the need of God’s grace and our continued sanctification.
- Your ministry is never shaped by just your knowledge, ability, and experience, but is also shaped by the true condition of your heart.
- Ministry has two principal dangers: The danger of familiarity and the danger of arrival.
- We were made to live in awe of God.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the prevailing culture of ministry in your church? How has/does that culture of ministry affect you?

2. What indictments does God make against the priests in Malachi 2?

3. Explain the danger of familiarity.

4. Why is our awe of God so important?

APPLICATION

➤ **Pastors/Ministry Leaders:**

- Is there an area in your life that others have expressed concern about, but you have been quick to dismiss?
- What level of importance do you place on the condition of your own heart for effective ministry? Do you tend to focus more on your own knowledge and skill?
- What could your church do for you to help you renew or protect your own spiritual life?
- What glories compete for your attention in ministry?
- Has your awe of God diminished? Has your passion and motivation for ministry changed? What do you need in order to rebuild and regain your awe of God?

It is nearly impossible in ministry to give away what you, yourself, do not have.
Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 41

➤ **Supporting others in ministry:**

- Your pastor is in the process of growth and sanctification just like you. He too needs your gentleness, patience, and encouragement. Write a note of affirmation to your pastor.
- Your pastor's ministry must flow from the condition of his own heart. Find ways to feed and care for your pastor's own spiritual condition: send him on a retreat; give, or if necessary, force him to take time off; encourage your pastor to be part of a Bible study where he is not expected to lead; send your pastor on a missions trip.
- In what ways or areas of life have you expected your pastor to be perfect? How can you adjust these expectations to be more realistic and supportive?

Further Reading: *Dangerous Calling* chapters: 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 12

SESSION 2: THE DANGER OF FAMILIARITY

Opening Discussion:

What puts you in awe of God?

How has God’s Word transformed you? What sermons do you remember having a life-changing impact on you?

What were you passionate about, if anything, this past week?

The content and theology of the Word of God is not an end in itself but must be viewed as a means to an end. The intended end of this content is God-honoring, life-shaping worship.

Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 27

Scripture Passages:

Isaiah 55:10-13

¹⁰ “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

¹² “For you shall go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall break forth into singing,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

¹³ Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall make a name for the LORD.

Psalms 145

I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.

² Every day I will bless you
and praise your name forever and ever.

³ Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised,
and his greatness is unsearchable.

⁴ One generation shall commend your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.

⁵ On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.

⁶ They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds,
and I will declare your greatness.

⁷ They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

NOTES:

The Danger of Familiarity
(Losing Your Awe)



KEY POINTS:

- Theology must never be held as an end in itself; theology leads to an awe of God and should result in a holy life.
- Spiritual maturity must be more than just attaining theological knowledge.
- God gave us His Word and gives us grace to restore our awe of Him.
- The ministry of the Word of God should result in renewing an awe of God and, therefore, must be prepared and given in awe of God.
- We all have an awe problem—we replace an awe of God with awe of other things or people.
- Ministry characteristics flow from an awe of God.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to Isaiah 55:10-13, what is one of the purposes of the Word of God?

2. What do we gain from having awe of God and not awe of things or ourselves?

3. Where would you like a reigniting of awe in your life?

4. Share with each other a moment where God reminded you of His awesome power and grace.

APPLICATION

➤ **Pastors/Ministry Leaders:**

- Do you study God's Word so that it might transform you? Is your pursuit of knowing God motivated only by your desire to have an increase in knowledge? Or do you seek to know God so that He might work in you and reveal His glory?

Rate yourself in each of the areas below with 1 as low and 10 as high.

pride: _____ passion: _____ confidence: _____

discipline: _____ rest: _____

➤ **Supporting others in ministry:**

- Do you listen to the pastor's sermons only because you are expected to or only when it catches your interest? Or, do you listen so that God might work in you and reveal His glory?
- Share with your pastor how God uses His Word in your life.

Biblical maturity is never just about what you know;
it's always about how grace has employed what you
have come to know to transform the way you live.

Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 13

Further Reading: *Dangerous Calling* chapters: 3, 8, 10

SESSION 3: FEARS

Opening Discussion:

What attitudes and mindsets can have a destructive effect on a ministry?

Relational-situational-location fears are only ever put in their proper place and given their appropriate size by a greater fear—fear of the Lord.

Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 74

Scripture Passage:

Psalm 37:8

Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath!
Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil

Romans 4:18-20

¹⁸ In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be."¹⁹ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb.²⁰ No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,

NOTES:

The Danger of
Familiarity
(Losing Your Awe)

Fear

SESSION 4: MEDIOCRITY

Opening Discussion:

What does excellence in ministry look like? Sound like?

What does mediocrity in a ministry look and sound like?

What do people do to escape the overwhelming pressures of life?

We have lost our commitment to the highest levels of excellence because we have lost our awe.

Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 81

NOTES:

**The Danger of Familiarity
(Losing Your Awe)**

Mediocrity

Numbing

Dangerous Calling

- A true awe of God should lead us to want to represent God well by ministering with excellence and not mediocrity.
- The stresses, fears, and temptations of ministry bring the need to seek refuge either in God or some other way.
- God will not reject you when you look at yourself with honesty, confess your sin, and cry out for help.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why is the act of preparation for ministry important for bearing fruit?
2. What can lead ministry leaders to need to seek refuge?
3. How does one seek refuge in God?

APPLICATION

- **Pastors/Ministry Leaders:**
 - Where have you settled for mediocrity?
 - How can you bring a greater level of excellence into your ministry?
 - How can you model excellence to those you minister with and to?
 - How would you describe your need for refuge right now? What can you do to find that needed refuge in Christ?
- **Supporting others in ministry:**
 - Is there a way you can make sure your pastor and other ministry leaders are given adequate time to prepare sermons?

SESSION 5: THE DANGER OF ARRIVAL

The standards you set for yourself and your ministry are directly related to your view of God.

Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 79

Further Reading: *Dangerous Calling* chapters: 6, 7, 8, 10

Opening Discussion:

What parts or stories in the Bible tend to shock you or remind you of how destitute we are?

What passages or stories in the Bible tend to give you hope?

No pastor has graduated from his need for forgiving, transforming, empowering, and delivering grace.

Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 15

Scripture Passages:

1 Timothy 1:12-16

¹² I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ¹³ though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶ But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

Psalms 51

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!

NOTES:

The Danger of
Arrival
(Forgetting Who You
Are)

KEY POINTS:

Dangerous Calling

- The Bible is shockingly honest about the brokenness of this world but is, also, gloriously hopeful.
- Since the Bible is honest and hopeful, we should be the most open and honest community.
- There is a danger of identifying or defining ourselves and each other by positions of ministry.
- Effective ministry requires an intentionally intrusive, Christ-centered, grace-driven, redemptive community based on humble approachability and loving honesty.
- We are all tempted to live according to the lie of autonomy and the lie of self-sufficiency.
- The greatest problems and temptations of life lie inside of me and not outside which means I need the grace of God in me much more than I need changes in situations.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain the “Danger of Arrival”.

2. The “Danger of Arrival” short-circuits which two important character qualities?

3. Explain the lie of autonomy and self-sufficiency.

If we have produced a culture where pastors have to deny sin and live in fearful hiding, we have built a pastoral culture that cannot work, because it is a contradiction of the gospel that this culture is called to both proclaim and live.

Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 117

APPLICATION

- **Pastors/Ministry Leaders:**
 - Is there someone in your life whom you have made yourself approachable to and will allow them to intrude into your life? If not, why not? Who could be such a person in your life?

 - Are you still a person who hungers and thirsts for God’s grace?
- **Supporting others in ministry:**
 - How can your church help develop and support the spiritual growth of your pastor?
 - Pray for and with your church leaders.
 - Is there someone to whom the pastor is able to confess sin and be held accountable?

Further Reading: *Dangerous Calling* chapters: 6, 11

SESSION 6: ISOLATION

Opening Discussion:

How effective have other believers been in your spiritual development?

How effective have other believers been in lovingly and truthfully confronting sin issues in your life?

What hardships has God used in your life to refine you and draw you closer to Himself?

There is a war that is still taking place for the rulership of our hearts. And because there is, we all need the warning, protective, encouraging, rebuking, growth-producing ministry of the body of Christ.

Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 48

Scripture Passage:

Romans 7:14-20

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

Psalms 51: 1-2, 7-8

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.

² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than
snow.

⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken
rejoice.

Amos 4:6-11

⁶ “I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities,
and lack of bread in all your places,
yet you did not return to me,” declares the LORD.

⁷ “I also withheld the rain from you when there were yet three
months to the harvest; I would send rain on one city, and send no
rain on another city; one field would have rain, and the field on
which it did not rain would wither;

⁸ so two or three cities would wander to another city
to drink water, and would not be satisfied;
yet you did not return to me,” declares the LORD.

⁹ “I struck you with blight and mildew; your many gardens and
your vineyards, your fig trees and your olive trees the locust
devoured; yet you did not return to me,” declares the LORD.

¹⁰ “I sent among you a pestilence after the manner of Egypt;
I killed your young men with the sword, and carried away your
horses, and I made the stench of your camp go up into your
nostrils; yet you did not return to me,” declares the LORD.

¹¹ “I overthrew some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and
Gomorrah, and you were as a brand plucked out of the burning;
yet you did not return to me,” declares the LORD.

Hebrews 3:12-13

¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil,
unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living
God. ¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is
called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the
deceitfulness of sin.

NOTES:

**The Danger of
Arrival
(Forgetting Who You
Are)**

Isolation

KEY POINTS:

- When you begin to believe that you have arrived, you will be unprepared for the violence of grace. God will bring the grace of refinement and rescue to reclaim your heart.
- God wants you.
- Ministry can lead to the temptation of isolation.
- Sin blinds, and therefore, we will have an inaccurate view of ourselves and will not be able to repent of sins.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference in meaning between iniquity, transgression, and sin?

2. Explain the theology of uncomfortable grace.

3. What is the danger of isolating yourself from the body of Christ?

APPLICATION

➤ **Pastors/Ministry Leaders:**

- Have you isolated yourself from or above the body of Christ?
- Have you been using your position as pastor to justify not revealing your struggles and temptations to others?
- Do you tell yourself that, as a leader, you must set a good example and, therefore, not confess sin?
- Have you told yourself that you must not show weaknesses in order to be an effective leader?

➤ **Supporting others in ministry:**

- Have you improperly judged those in ministry or placed unreachable expectations upon them? If so, perhaps you need to confess this to them.
- Are you prepared to show compassion, mercy, and grace toward those in ministry? Have you made yourself approachable should anyone want to share or confess their struggles to you?
- Are you prepared to speak the truth in love to those in the body who need to hear difficult truths spoken in love?

Your Lord is not just after the success of your ministry; He is working to dethrone you as well. It is only when His throne is more important than yours that you will find joy in the hard and humbling task of gospel ministry. And His grace will not relent until our hearts have been fully captured by His glory.

Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 104

Further Reading: *Dangerous Calling* chapters: 5, 6

SESSION 7: THE DANGER OF SELF-GLORY

Opening Discussion:

What is the role of an ambassador?

What typically makes you angry or frustrated?

What typically makes you excited and joyful?

You are constantly naming things as important and other things as not so important. You are always attaching your inner hope and contentment to something, and when you do, those things take on life-shaping value.

Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 57

Scripture Passage:

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

¹⁴For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

NOTES:

The Danger of
Arrival
(Forgetting Who You
Are)



KEY POINTS:

- Through ministry we can build God’s glorious Kingdom, or we can attempt to build our own glorious kingdom.
- The DNA of sin is selfishness.
- Your actual position in ministry is God’s ambassador; as such, we are called to incarnate the King.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What types of self-glory tempt those in ministry?
2. What is significant about being called as Christ’s ambassador in your ministry?

If you and I have been guaranteed a place in eternity with our Savior, then we also have been guaranteed all the grace we need along the way.

Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 126

APPLICATION

- **Pastors/Ministry Leaders:**
 - Examine your frustrations in ministry. Is your anger righteous because it defends the glory of God, or is it self-righteous because you are defending your own glory?
 - When are you most excited about your ministry? Is it only when you are at the center and can share in the glory?
- **Supporting others in ministry:**
 - In your recognition and encouragement of those in ministry, be sure to place the focus on God and His glory instead of exalting the person.

Further Reading: *Dangerous Calling* chapters: 7, 10, 11, 12

SESSION 8: BE RECONCILED

Opening Discussion:

What does it mean to be reconciled?

Read John 15:4-5. What does Jesus mean when he says, "Apart from me, you can do nothing."?

The private nurture of your own heart as a pastor is not only a humble confession of need and a confession of your love for your Savior; it is also a statement of your love for the people that God has placed in your care.

Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 108

Scripture Passage:

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

NOTES:



**Always
Preparing**
(What Happened to My
Devotional Life?)

KEY POINTS:

- We must continually be reconciled to God.
- Ministry is only made effective, safe, and attractive when it is fueled by our own devotional life.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean for one who is already a believer to be reconciled to God? What is significant about this command for those in ministry?

2. What defines a Christian's devotional life?

I am more and more convinced that what gives a ministry its motivations, perseverance, humility, joy, tenderness, passion, and grace is the devotional life of the one doing ministry.

Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 18

APPLICATION

- **Pastors/Ministry Leaders:**
 - In what areas have you been seeking self-glory and living for yourself? Be reconciled to God.

 - How is your relationship with Christ? Do you spend time with Christ, communicating and seeking Him—not just for ministry preparation, but in order to worship, enjoy, and hear from Him? If not, figure out how to rearrange your schedule and your priorities.

- **Supporting others in ministry:**
 - Your devotional life needs to be more than just depending on Sunday sermons. The ministries that serve you can not be your devotional life.

Further Reading: *Dangerous Calling* chapters: 8, 10, 13

SESSION 9: THE DANGER OF SEPARATION

Opening Discussion:

Read Amos 5:21-26

- ²¹ “I hate, I despise your feasts,
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
²² Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept
them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them.
²³ Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen.

²⁴ But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

²⁵ “Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings during the forty years in the wilderness, O
house of Israel? ²⁶ You shall take up Sikkuth your king, and Kiyyun your star-god—your
images that you made for yourselves,

and Isaiah 1:10-17

- ¹⁰ Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom!
Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah!
¹¹ “What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD;
I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts;
I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats.

¹² “When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my
courts?
¹³ Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me.
New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations—
I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.
¹⁴ Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates;
they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them.
¹⁵ When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you;
even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.
¹⁶ Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil,
¹⁷ learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression;
bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.

Why was God not pleased with their sacrifices and acts of worship? What might this problem look like today? How could it be a problem for those in ministry as well?

You and I must never approach grace only as instruments of that grace in the lives of others; we must also remember that there is no grace that we offer to others that we don't, at once, need ourselves.

Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 111

Scripture Passage:

Ephesians 6:10-20

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² 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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak

NOTES:

**The Danger of
Arrival
(Forgetting Who You
Are)**

Separation

KEY POINTS:

- One of the dangers of arrival is that you become comfortable with a disconnect between who you are in public ministry and who you are in private.

Dangerous Calling

- Spiritual warfare is being waged in the little moments of life within our hearts.
- Since all of life is ministry, we are always in the role of ambassadors of Christ.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are possible disconnects that may exist between our ministry persona and who we are at home, with family, or in private?

2. What are some possible reasons why someone would become comfortable with a disconnected life such as is explained in this session?

APPLICATION

- **Pastors/Ministry Leaders:**
 - Are you doing things you would be embarrassed for your brothers and sisters in Christ to know about?

 - If your spouse honestly wrote down 5 character qualities that described you at home, what would she/he write? What 5 qualities would your children write down?

- **Supporting others in ministry:**
 - Is the culture of your church safe for those in ministry to confess sin?
 - Would you be quick to judge and condemn, or will you be quick to seek God and begin the process of restoration and forgiveness?

There is a way in which all of us have a separation in our lives between our more pristine public ministry persona and the more messy details of our private lives. This separation does not necessarily disqualify you from ministry, but it becomes spiritually debilitating to you and your ministry when you become comfortable with it.

Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 115

Further Reading: *Dangerous Calling* chapters: 6, 11, 14

SESSION 10: REMOVING PRETENSES

Because daily private worship puts the glory of God in front of me again and again, because it forces me to face the sad condition of my world, because it confronts me with my weaknesses and sin, and because it showers me with God's amazing grace, it progressively makes me *alert and ready* for the things that God has called me to do and the struggles I will face as I do them.

Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 110

Opening Discussion:

Review the material:

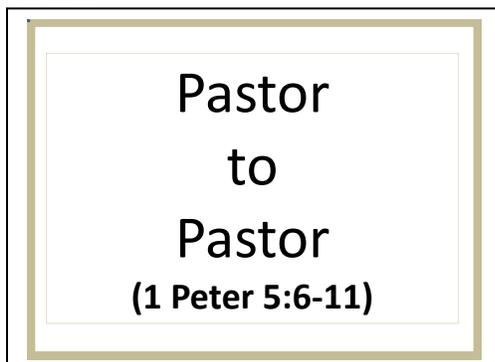
- How does familiarity and losing your awe result in fear-focused ministry?
- How does familiarity and losing your awe result in mediocrity?
- How does familiarity and losing your awe result in seeking refuge outside of God?
- How does a sense of arrival lead to thinking you can do ministry in isolation—apart from others and apart from a sincere relationship with God?
- How does a sense of arrival lead to a focus on self-glory?
- How does a sense of arrival lead to thinking you can do ministry in isolation?
- How does a sense of arrival lead to being comfortable with separating your public ministry life from your private, personal life?
- Why is the role of ambassador so significant to the Christian life?

Scripture Passage:

1 Peter 5:6-11

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. ⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. ¹⁰ And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. ¹¹ To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

NOTES:



KEY POINTS:

- We will blame situations or people for the separation we may have between our public ministry and our private lives.
- We all experience a loss of awe and feelings of arrival, but can fight these temptations by:
 - Remembering your place: Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God
 - Resting in God’s care
 - Taking the war of ministry seriously
 - Resisting, no matter what
 - Trusting God’s sanctifying grace

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is a pretense?

How do we use pretense to make ourselves comfortable with a separation between our public ministry and our private lives?

2. What changes would you like to see in your church ministry culture? In yourself?
3. What perceptions about yourself or ministry have changed as you’ve worked through this material?

APPLICATION

- **Pastors/Ministry Leaders:**
 - Which action do you need to be more mindful to incorporate into your life and ministry: Humbling yourself under the mighty hand of God; Resting in God’s care; Taking the war of ministry seriously; Resisting, no matter what; or Trusting God’s sanctifying grace?

There is nothing in you that could ever be exposed that hasn’t already been covered by the precious blood of your Savior King, Jesus.

Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 14

- **Supporting those in ministry:**
 - How can we build a healthy and effective culture of ministry together?

Further Reading: *Dangerous Calling* chapters: 7, 8, 12, 14, 15