

Dangerous Calling

Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry

LEADERS' GUIDE

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.

Opening Discussion Questions: These questions are designed to create discussion and stimulate initial thoughts that will help participants connect the ideas of each session to their own lives. They are designed to be discussed before viewing the material of each session. If you are leading a small group, you should consider how much time is available and limit the opening discussion based on the amount of time you have. You may need to select only one opening question that you think would be most "discussable" by your group.

Scripture: These passages are ones that are referred to in the session.

Notes: The notes section follows the slides on the DVD and provides a place for notes to be written down and referred to later.

Review/Discussion Questions: These questions are intended to help the participant review the content presented in each session. Possible answers for questions are included below.

Application Questions: These questions are designed to help participants apply the principles and key ideas to their own lives. As leader, you may want to allow time for each participant to answer questions on his/her own and then select a question(s) that you think your group will be willing to share their answers with one another. If you have a large group, you can have participants break into smaller groups of 2-4 to share their answers.

Further Study: This brief section includes chapters from the book *Dangerous Calling* that connect to and support the principles and key ideas presented in each session.

NOTE: Encourage yourself and/or your group to write down answers as much as possible. Writing it down helps stimulate thinking and strengthens commitments.

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

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?
[They did not listen to God's Word; they did not honor God's name but sought their own glory; they did not live the message they were teaching; they compromised truth and taught with partiality; they had caused many to stumble as a result of these failings.]
3. Explain the danger of familiarity.
[The danger that we become so familiar with God is that we lose our excitement, joy, compassion, gratitude, and awe of God and become bored with the things of God.]
4. Why is our awe of God so important?
[It is how God designed and wants us to live, it is what should shape the way we live and relate to others; it is the foundation of wisdom; it is the proper source of our passion and motivation.]

Your Lord isn't only protecting, providing for, and enabling you, but He is working to change you as well.

Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 126

SESSION 2

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to Isaiah 55:10-13, what is one of the purposes of the Word of God?
[It's to bring people to an awe of God, to celebrate the wonders of God, especially the transformation that God's Word brings into the lives of others.]
2. What do we gain from having awe of God and not awe of things or ourselves?
[humility, passion, confidence, discipline, rest]
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.

SESSION 3

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can fear shape our decisions and motivations?
[It shifts our focus off God and God's glory onto whatever it is that we fear. As a result, we may fight for control in situations, avoid confrontation, avoid leading, look for the easiest path, trim the truth, manipulate, refuse to be honest and confess our sin; we may make decisions to protect or enhance our reputations.]

2. Explain the four debilitating ministry fears.
[fear of yourself—ruled by your knowledge of your own inadequacies instead of ruled by the power and grace of God; fear of others—ruled by the opinions and thoughts of others which then shape and motivate your decisions instead of focusing on God’s opinion and glory; fear of circumstances—ruled by all the things that do or could happen instead of trusting that God is always in control; fear of the future—ruled by your desire for comfort and predictability instead of trusting God for the unknown]

SESSION 4

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is the act of preparation for ministry important for bearing fruit?
[It provides time for the truth and work of God to grip you so that you are able to minister and present truth from a changed and worshipful heart; it is the act of preparation that transforms “ingredients” into a “meal”; excellence can motivate and encourage the listener to listen and apply God’s Word.]
2. What can lead ministry leaders to need to seek refuge?
[Some answers could be: the pressures and stresses of working with needy people, the ever-present fears that tempt them, battles with their own sin nature, busyness.]
3. How does one seek refuge in God?
[prayer, time in the Bible, spiritual fellowship/worship with other Christians, taking a break from ministry to spend time with God]

SESSION 5

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain the “Danger of Arrival”.
[It’s forgetting who you are, forgetting that you are still in need of grace, that you struggle with temptation, that you have weaknesses and flaws. We begin to think those in ministry have reached complete maturity, that they/we are not in need of accountability, God’s grace or the mirror of the Word of God. You are defensive when confronted with your own sin or weakness; you are more concerned about the sin of others than your own sin.]
2. The “Danger of Arrival” short-circuits which two important character qualities?
[humility of approachability and the courage of loving honesty]
3. Explain the lie of autonomy and self-sufficiency.
[The lie of autonomy is that we are and should strive to be independent; the lie of self-sufficiency says: “I have everything I need in myself and do not need God or others.” Both are lies because we are designed and intended to be dependent on God and interdependent on others.]

No one is more gracious than a person who is deeply persuaded that he needs grace himself and is cognizant that it is a gift from God.

Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 69

SESSION 6

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference in meaning between iniquity, transgression, and sin?
[iniquity=moral uncleanness, impure thoughts and desires; transgression=conscious rebellion, willful sin; sin=inability to hit a target]
2. Explain the theology of uncomfortable grace.
[God will bring hardship and difficulty to turn our hearts toward Him, to cause us to depend on Him; God will take us where we did not want or plan to go, to produce in us what we could not achieve on our own.]
3. What is the danger of isolating yourself from the body of Christ?
[You can stay hidden and unknown and be unprotected from other temptations; you do not have others God can use to rescue you from you; we need help to clearly see our own sins.]

Perhaps every pastor needs to humbly recognize that, because of the blinding power of remaining sin, self-examination is a community project.

Dangerous Calling, 2012, p. 40

SESSION 7

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What types of self-glory tempt those in ministry?
[Possible answers: wanting to be liked and admired, wanting to be in control, wanting to be popular, wanting to be powerful and successful]
2. What is significant about being called as Christ's ambassador in your ministry?
[Everything you do and say, and the way in which you do/say it, represents Christ; your ministry is never about you, but is always intended by God to be for His glory and His kingdom; you are God's instrument to bring about His work.]

SESSION 8

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?
[A believer seeks the reconciliation of sanctification; since sin causes us to live for ourselves, we must continually be reconciled to God; we must continually restore our relationship with God by confessing and repenting of our sin. We must continually turn away from living for ourselves and be reminded to live for God. The command is significant because it means this is one of the primary objectives in ministry, i.e. help other believers continually reconcile themselves to God. The most important relationship is between a person and God; through a reconciled relationship with God, our other relationships and concerns will be able to be properly and effectively addressed because we can't fix problems if we are still living for ourselves.]
2. What defines a Christian's devotional life?
[It's more than just a system of reading the Bible, more than just growing in knowledge. A devotional life is, first and foremost, loving God and interacting/communing/connecting/spending time with Him. It is seeking God out of gratitude, need, and awe, and not just as a means of preparing for ministry.]

SESSION 9

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?
[Sin has hardened our heart; we have defined ourselves by our public ministry; we are self-righteous and see ourselves as having "arrived"; we do not see our private lives as the ministry it is; we have justified it in some way using plausible lies; we wrongly equate our public ministry with our relationship with Christ.]

SESSION 10

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is a pretense? *[a plausible lie]*
How do we use pretense to make ourselves comfortable with a separation between our public ministry and our private lives?
[We lie to ourselves, but we use believable lies to convince ourselves that other things or people are to blame for the separation; we make the separation comfortable by making it about someone or something other than ourselves.]
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?