



Ethical Foundations for Church Leaders

NWMN New Minister's Orientation Manual

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Ethical Foundations for Church Leaders

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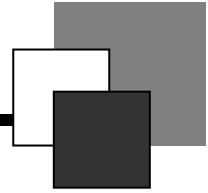
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Part 1: Understanding the Issue of Ministerial Ethics and the NWMN

NWMN Ministerial Ethical Standards

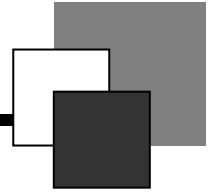
The 10 Commandments were the original code of ethics for all people, instituted by God nearly 3,500 years ago. Since then, these have served as a standard of ethical conduct, the foundation for the rule of law and the basis for civilized society.

There are numerous references to ethical standards in the NW District Bylaws, which give both specific and general directives for ministerial behavior. Ignorance and apathy often prevail in this area, since the Bylaws are not generally read or studied.

The New Testament provides guidance in ethical conduct, and specifically addresses ministerial behavior in numerous references. Examples in the Pastoral Epistles include:

1 Timothy 3:1-5 (NLT) "It is a true saying that if someone wants to be an elder, he desires an honorable responsibility. For an elder must be a man whose life cannot be spoken against. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exhibit self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guests in his home and must be able to teach. He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, peace loving, and not one who loves money. He must manage his own family well, with children who respect and obey him. For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church?"

Titus 1:7-8 (NLT) "An elder must live a blameless life because he is God's minister. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered; he must not be a heavy drinker, violent, or greedy for money. He must enjoy having guests in his home and must love all that is good. He must live wisely and be fair. He must live a devout and disciplined life."



2 Timothy 2:22-25 (NIV) “Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth.”

The dictionary defines ethics as, “A set of principles of right conduct.”¹ While there are general ethical principles and standards of conduct applicable to all Christians, some are unique to pastoral ministry. Ministerial ethics is not intuitively known or developed, and should be taught at all levels of ministry. Paul told Timothy, “I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God.” (1 Timothy 3:15 NKJV)

Current Trends in Ministerial Ethics

21st century pastors find themselves facing many moral and ethical dilemmas. Computer and communication technologies have produced a plethora of temptations unknown to earlier generations. Medical technology has produced an entire genre known as bioethics and pastors are often asked to give counsel on life or death situations. Our consumer-oriented society has made church hopping and shopping a way of life for many people. Pastors need training to develop healthy relationships and make wise choices regarding situations within their congregations, with neighboring congregations, with fellow ministers, and their own marriages and families.

¹ Excerpted from *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition* 1996 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

Societal changes have brought about lower standards of ethics, morality and integrity over the past several decades, thus lowering the bar for standards of behavior in general and ethics in particular. Scandals involving abuse of power and ethical violations by clergy have rocked the church. A standardized code of ethics for our ministers is needed to address the challenges of 21st century ministry and serve as a baseline for ethical conduct.

An article in the January 2003 edition of *Leadership* asked, “Why is it important, especially now, for pastors to have a code of ethics?”

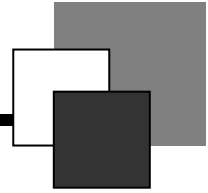
The response was, “In a word, accountability. A code of ethics by itself will not keep anybody from sinning. Nevertheless, a good code of ethics, rightly used, is an encourager to do the right thing.”²

Serious ethical violations by members of clergy result in hurt, humiliation mistrust and reproach. Ramifications often adversely affect the minister’s family, congregation and community. Violations of trust can erect obstacles to effective ministry for generations. Because of his adultery and other sins, the prophet Nathan told David, “But you have given the enemies of the LORD great opportunity to despise and blaspheme Him.” (2 Samuel 12:14 NLT)

The Pastor’s Expectations

Our modern, changing world demands more than ever from the pastor. He or she is expected to wear many hats and become an expert in many different areas both directly related to the ministry and in other areas only indirectly

² “Up to code: Why it’s time to re-write your ministerial code of ethics” interview with Joe E. Trull, editor of the journal *Christian Ethics Today* published in *Leadership Today*, January 2003 online at http://www.christianethicstoday.com/NonJournalArticles/Up_To_Code_Why%20it%E2%80%99s%20time%20to%20rewrite%20your%20ministerial%20code%20of%20ethics-Interview%20with%20Joe%20Trull.htm



associated with the church. As far as church ministry goes, a pastor is often expected to:

- Live an exemplary life.
- Grow spiritually
- Know the Bible thoroughly in both an academic sense and its practical application.
- Preach the Word to a variety of audiences (churched, unchurched, young, old, married, single, and more).
- Represent the church to the community.
- Counsel people with wisdom and common sense through trials and difficult situations.
- Be available at all times to all people for all purposes.

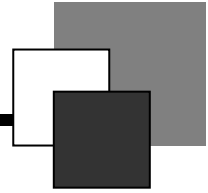
Of course, this list of duties applies only to the pastor's direct ministerial work. But the expectations of a pastor don't stop there. They continue in other areas that he or she may or may not have any experience with, but are required to have expertise. These Include:

- Office manager: including the hiring and termination of employees; organizing business and financial records; and managing the day-to-day operations of the church organization.
- Financial manager: overseeing financial statements, budgets, taxes, income, and expenditures.
- Planning, understanding, and managing construction projects.
- Being involved in community service.

- Interpreting and complying with the law and the legalities of various church decisions.
- Being committed to his or her family, a positive family role model, and raising children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.
- Keeping a pace with the latest trends and developments in church life and with the culture at large.
- Building significant relationships with members of the congregation.
- Acting as the president of the church board.
- Running the church in a professional, businesslike manner.
- And of course other duties such as musician, Sunday school teacher, bus driver, recreation director, computer technician, printer, usher, and more.

The commitment to being a pastor is a huge undertaking, much more than a 40-hour per week job. It truly requires the call of God and the willingness to sacrifice and serve. A minister must go into the profession fully aware of the high expectations in many areas in which he or she may not necessarily have special expertise.

Most importantly, a pastor must have a genuine heart for ministry. Although the ministry is a profession, it cannot be viewed merely in professional terms but should be primarily viewed as a spiritual endeavor. The salary, benefits, and advancement may be viewed as perks that allow the pastor to earn a living and do what he or she is called to do. In order to meet the high expectations of ministry, a pastor must have a willingness to continually learn new things, take on new challenges without fear, learn from mistakes, and be flexible and moldable to meet the many varied situations and expectations that are called for. Additionally, a pastor must have good common sense and judgment as they



apply to all things spiritual and carnal. It takes more than head knowledge or business instincts. It takes wisdom and spiritual discernment as well.

Why Have Ministerial Ethics Training?

Training is critical to raise the ethical bar because it levels the playing field and removes the inconsistency that arises when individuals apply general sets of guidelines differently. Although Christians are united in their spiritual beliefs and basic moral principles, the specific application and interpretation of many principles can differ wildly. While this diversity is healthy and normal, it creates the potential for error and misinterpretation when too many people find themselves on different pages of the rulebook. Here is where our ministerial ethics training comes into play. No matter where the individual has received his or her education or what background or past experiences he or she has, ethics training unites all parties around a common set of core ethical standards and codes of conduct.

The ultimate goal of this ministerial ethics-training program is more than to merely transfer information at the knowledge level, but to have the information synthesized by the minister and put into action.

This ethics training program should be viewed as a positive endeavor that will strengthen your ministry and deepen your spiritual awareness. Ethical struggles and temptation will always exist. Even the most pious and holy individual will find ethical struggles coming from every direction both inside and outside his or her center of influence. Consider this program to be another asset in the daily struggle.

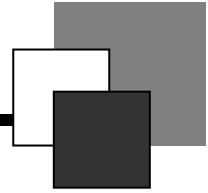
Dealing with Modern Ethical Dilemmas

The Bible is our ultimate source of ethical guidance and can speak to virtually any situation. But the problems and reality of life reveal that simply following the Bible verbatim does not always solve all of our moral and ethical questions. You cannot always quote chapter and verse for every complex situation. As Christians, our own human limitations, personal interpretation, and the situation at hand provide roadblocks between what the Bible says about a problem and finding the best and most biblical solution.

No matter what the Bible says about a problem, the final decision regarding an ethical dilemma rests with the judgment of a human being. Although the Bible provides many specific guidelines for day-to-day behavior, the vast majority of ethical dilemmas require a pastor to apply a philosophical idea to a real-life situation. A minister may face numerous ethical dilemmas in a day and is expected to be right 100% of the time.

Oftentimes, one's humanity gets in the way with various emotional, physical, and psychological responses to ethical crises. Emotion, stress, and pressure confuse us and pull us in opposite directions. In addition to our basic human fallibility, we tend to filter our Biblical standards through our own preferences, biases, or personal standards of right and wrong. We are all unique individuals with our own take on the events around us.

Besides the human roadblocks to good ethical judgment, the complexities of contemporary situations add even more confusion. Applying principles of scripture to modern dilemmas can be a stretch. Oftentimes, one simply can't open the Bible and find easy answers to tough modern-day questions. Many of our modern moral and ethical concerns did not exist in Bible times. Technology itself has provided temptations and ethical dilemmas unheard of a century ago.



Some contemporary ethical issues seem to be both condoned and condemned in the Bible (i.e. divorce, war). Ministerial ethical situations have changed significantly in recent times. Certain ethical situations in areas of church management and counseling could not have even been imagined just a generation or two ago. Given all this uncertainty, a minister must be grounded in the Word and listening to God's Spirit to see through the contemporary skin of a situation to the Biblical principle below.

Underlying all these problems is the negative influence of the culture in which we live. Although most Christians agree on traditional moral and ethical standards, our post-modern culture attempts to influence Christians away from traditional standards. In addition to this is the fact that cultural standards do not always stay the same. They tend to change with the times and the location. It can be difficult to keep up-to-date and on the cutting edge of what's happening.

Unfortunately, pastors can't rely on the culture to help them in ethical decisions. A pastor cannot simply defer to societal moral standards of right and wrong because they won't be there. Outside our church door, little is said or done to support what goes on inside.

A pastor must make sound Biblically-based ethical judgments in spite of all these roadblocks. The timeless Word of God transcends culture, the situation, or even human understanding. The Holy Spirit will grant the pastor wisdom and clarity as he or she applies God's Word to daily ethical situations.

Progress, Pitfalls and Potential in the NWMN

The ministry of elders in our Network provides pastoral care to our ministry families during times of crisis and other ministries facilitate the process of rehabilitation in cases of ministerial discipline. The NWMN provides firm and

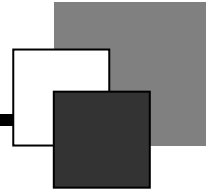
compassionate discipline to fallen ministers. As a Network, we also take a progressive approach to church health and growth. The Cohort process, among other positive changes, is equipping our ministers for more effective service.

However, there are gaps in our system and gaps in individuals that make up the system. Sometimes there is a dis-connect between preaching and personal practice. Private indiscretions (ethical violations) can lead to public disgrace. We do well to heed Paul's warning, "I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified." (1 Corinthians 9:27 NLT)

Because the cost of rehabilitation, discipline and recovery of fallen ministers is so high, and our efforts at restoration are often inadequate (though well-intended), we urge every church and minister to take a more proactive approach to prevent ministerial failure at the grassroots level. Working together, we could become more proactive by raising awareness about ethical behavior, taking advantage of ethical training, and making use of available opportunities for support to our ministers.

Not all ethical violations in ministry rise to a level requiring discipline or rehabilitation. Many ethical breaches happen because some of our ministers have inadequate training in this area. Violations as simple as not returning phone calls or as serious as not following through with promised remuneration are commonly reported by our itinerating missionaries.

Healthy ministers are necessary to build healthy churches. Along with our emphasis on church renewal and health, we would encourage every church and minister to renew their emphasis on ministerial health. Our Network will provide increased opportunities to strengthen pastors in making good ethical decisions. Training in ethics will help us make better choices, thus strengthening our families and congregations.



Part 2: Preparing Yourself for Ethical Conflict

A minister must be prepared for the ethical conflicts that arise in the course of the job. This preparation for ministry includes four primary areas:

- Spiritual Preparation
- Emotional Preparation
- Intellectual Preparation
- Physical Preparation

“So Jesus grew both in height and in wisdom, and he was loved by God and by all who knew him.” (Luke 2:52 NLT)

Preparing for Ministry Spiritually

Preparing spiritually first requires one to know God’s Word and to know God by maintaining an active prayer life. Prayer and study of God’s Word are foremost in preparation for ministry. The very nature of the position of “pastor” requires one to be spiritually ahead of the pack in providing spiritual leadership. A pastor is the spiritual role model and standard by which people measure their own spiritual walk. Preparation spiritually is the starting-point and foundation upon which one’s entire ministry is based.

With regard to spiritual preparation, the question is raised, “What do I need to do?” Although we can (and should) prescribe certain activities to help prepare us for the ministry, the best overall description of how we can prepare for ministry is to live a *disciplined life*. Living a disciplined life gives order to ones activities and

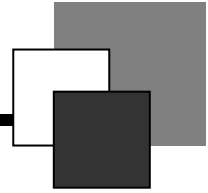
empowers the individual. A disciplined life brings one closer to God. It is oftentimes the harder road to follow but leads to much richer rewards. In our age of instant gratification, living a disciplined life shows an extra measure of spiritual and personal wholeness.

“Work hard so God can approve you. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15 NLT)

Of course one of the fundamental ways that pastors prepare for the ministry is to read and know the Word of God. The Holy Bible stands as the ethical guidebook for handling all ministerial ethics problems and decisions. A pastor’s regular study of the Bible is not only critical for good sermon preparation, but for knowledge, strength, and discernment for day-to-day living and problem solving. However, in order to apply it effectively, one needs to know the scripture thoroughly and read it often. Learning God’s Word does not stop after ministerial training ends. It is a life-long, daily pursuit of knowing God better through reading his Word and hearing Him speak through it. The study of God’s Word should not be limited to an intellectual exercise or obligation, but should be a devotional time that brings one closer to the Lord. Knowledge of the Word of God arms a pastor against the barrage of ethical dilemmas ahead. One should be cautious that reading the Word does not become a mundane or rote activity. It should be done in a disciplined manner with a heart that is open to what God is saying.

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. It is God's way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped for every good thing God wants us to do.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NLT)

“Preach the word of God. Be persistent, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching.” (2 Timothy 4:2 NLT)



While reading the Word is critical for good ministry preparation, it is also important that pastors regularly feed their minds and boost their connection to God and ministry through partaking of other spiritual resources as well. A pastor should be reading Christian books and devotionals, listening to sermons on tape, reading Christian publications, and bringing in Christian resources that will strengthen his or her walk with the Lord.

A minister should maintain a consistent prayer life. A pastor should never be too busy to spend time with the Lord. It is the expected duty of a minister to be praying on behalf of others and for him or herself regularly. While praying, one needs to be real with God - learn to hear Him speak to one's spirit and conscience. Hearing from the Lord and truly connecting with him while in prayer takes time and effort that should not be put on the back burner due to a hectic schedule or professional obligations.

“But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.” (Luke 5:16 NLT)

“I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. As you make your requests, plead for God's mercy upon them, and give thanks. Pray this way for kings and all others who are in authority, so that we can live in peace and quietness, in godliness and dignity. This is good and pleases God our Savior, for he wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:1-4 NLT)

The divine call to ministry is something that every minister remembers as a defining moment in his or her life. This call must never be forgotten as the work of ministry takes on more and more distracting professional responsibilities. A pastor must know why he or she is there. Pastors must understand their responsibility as a spiritual leader and the reason why they chose that profession. The pastor's motivations for being a minister of the Gospel must be pure and spiritually based. It is easy to let the vocational aspects of ministry distract one from the call of God and one's divine mission. The key is to know who you are and why God placed you in your position.

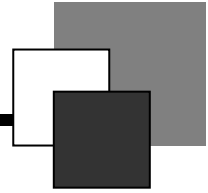
Preparing for Ministry Emotionally

Being a pastor is an emotionally draining job. Counseling needy people, single-handedly overseeing multiple programs, managing church business, and then bringing everything together on Sunday can take every ounce of emotional energy one has. Pastors must know their emotional limits.

Being a pastor is a stressful job. The major part of staying emotionally healthy is to get a handle on stress. High levels of stress come with the territory and one must have some way to manage stress to guard against emotional and physical burnout. This means that one must learn effective time management, take quiet time, and prioritize a busy schedule. A pastor must ask God to give him or her peace in a hectic world and then get priorities straight. Everyone deals with stress differently. It is important that one learns to recognize stress and deal with it in that moment. Stress cannot be ignored. Our lives will not magically become less stressful. We must take control of our stress; otherwise it will control us.

Becoming overstressed can be disastrous to ministry. It is easier to fall back into bad habits or break discipline when under stress. Without some relief, stress will either slowly deteriorate a pastor's effectiveness or it will result in a major meltdown or moral failure. Unfortunately, a pastor's emotional breakdown is not limited to just him or herself, but it affects a huge number of individuals. There are many other stakeholders, such as family, parishioners, staff, and friends, who depend on an emotionally sound individual in the lead. Pastors should take time to recharge and be aware of their emotional gauges that naturally tell him or her that enough is enough.

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light." (Matthew 11:28-30 NLT)



Failure is an inevitable part of life. Oftentimes, God uses failures to help people move forward, change direction, or choose another path. Nothing can be more emotionally draining than dealing with the setbacks and failures that can occur in course of ministry. Setbacks for ministers can be especially difficult because often they can't understand why they fail when they are doing the Lord's will. It is important to understand that God uses the ups and downs of life and ministry to refine a person's character, help them change direction, and to help move His work forward. Setbacks need to be dealt with in a rational, Godly manner that seeks to overcome obstacles rather than being stopped by them. Failure, or the fear of failure, should not be allowed to discourage ministry. A successful minister should recognize that bad things will happen and then move on to do the Lord's work in spite of them.

There is nothing more toxic to one's attitude than negativism. Because they are human, pastors can struggle with negative thoughts, self-doubt, and cynicism. But once negativism and cynicism are allowed to flourish, it is like a cancer that gradually eats away at one's sensitivity to the Lord and to other people. For this reason, certainly all Christians must remain positive. But, being positive is part of a pastor's job description. Negativity is a tool of the enemy to destroy the life and spirit of an individual. Pastors mustn't let the negative attitude of the people around them or the negative situation at hand rub off on their attitude.

A pastor cannot bear the emotional weight of pastoring a congregation and running a church alone. He or she needs a support system in place for help. Whether feeling emotionally strong or weak, pastors should regularly seek emotional support from a trusted group of friends or colleagues. Pastors must have someone with whom they can share frustrations and doubts. Opening oneself and providing an avenue for emotional release is both healthy and healing. Every minister should have a safe environment such as a small group of

trusted friends where he or she can openly discuss both the frustrations and joys of ministry and personal life.

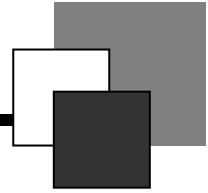
Preparing for Ministry Intellectually

A pastor must be intellectually ready for the job of ministry. There are several bodies of knowledge that a pastor must know. He or she must know...

- The Word of God in order to preach, teach, and defend the faith.
- The Constitution and Bylaws of the NWMN.
- The laws of the land as they relate to the business dealings of the church.
- A broad body of information about leadership, counseling, organizational management, human behavior, and psychology.
- Current events and the culture in which the ministry is located.

Keeping ahead of the curve intellectually requires pastors to constantly be in a cycle of learning and studying. A pastor should stay informed by reading publications to raise his awareness of ministry trends. He or she should keep up to date with happenings in the church by attending conferences, professional development and training programs, fellowship/networking opportunities, and any other venue for meeting with other pastors and growing on an intellectual plane.

Specifically, a pastor must master content that relates to his or ministry. This means that a youth pastor should be part of the NWMN youth pastor network and learn as much as possible about youth and ministry. A counseling pastor should read the latest research on therapy and counseling techniques. A senior pastor should be fully knowledgeable about the latest in leadership and administration and make use of opportunities to network locally and regionally. No matter what specific duties of a pastor are, he or she must have the intellectual ability to be experts in his or her field.



Of course the body of knowledge that a pastor should know is not limited to merely church or religious topics. A pastor should know the culture in order to engage it. He or she should know current events and cultural trends. A pastor should have a wide variety of interests. It can be so easy to set oneself apart from the culture to such an extent that one loses touch. At the same time, a pastor must guard his or her heart and not let an opportunity for cultural connection be an excuse for compromise. This is especially true when it comes to using profanity or questionable language which may be culturally relevant, but can grieve the Holy Spirit and confuse the listener with mixed messages.

“Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.”
(Ephesians 4:29 NLT)

Being intellectually stimulated is good for mental health and strengthens the ability for a pastor to do his or her job. One must never grow intellectually stagnant in ministry. A pastor should always be trying to integrate his or her special knowledge and expertise in their lessons. Intellectual growth provides seed for new ideas and creativity. As a result, better sermons are given, better advice is offered, and bigger ideas are actualized.

Preparing one's self intellectually means that one is always open to learn new things. Being a life-long learner is a part of the job. To this end, professional ministers should make furthering their education a priority. Pastors should continue to educate themselves through taking classes, attending workshops, and attaining advanced degrees. One must not grow stagnant intellectually.

But, intellect does not replace common sense. In addition to pure knowledge, a minister must have a great amount of common sense. It is one thing to have book knowledge but it is another thing to have the common sense (or wisdom) to apply it in real-life situations. Smart people can do dumb things. One can be highly intelligent and scholarly in every regard, but lacking basic common sense.

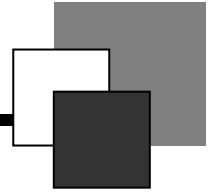
When it comes to the myriad of decisions a pastor must make each day, he or she must use good old-fashioned common sense, experience, and good judgment to do the right thing.

Preparing for Ministry Physically

Ministers must prepare themselves in a physical sense for a job that will both test and tempt their mortal bodies to the limit. In the physical realm, pastors deal with the temptation of sexual sin as well as the physical strain that comes with a stressful job, long hours and little rest. Pastors do not have superhuman abilities and defenses. The fact is they live in physical bodies that have limitations and weaknesses.

With regard to the physical, sexual temptation of sin, pastors need to be extra cautious that they live a holy life. The most important thing a pastor can do physically is to run from temptation. Avoiding sin is no easier for minister of the Gospel. There is nothing inherent in a pastor that makes him or her any less likely to resist sin than anyone else. But the standards of Godly behavior for a pastor are higher. The expectation of moral purity is greater for the pastor than for any parishioner.

If a pastor struggles with any particular sort of sin, then he or she should do everything possible to set up accountability and prevention systems to make it as difficult as possible to indulge in that behavior. If a pastor struggles with sexual sin, he should shun any kind of pornography, install a filter for Internet use, and not allow any sexual influences in his or her life. For this pastor, the key to dealing with the temptation is to analyze his or her environment - develop ethical fail-safe systems and accountably measures. One of the best things a pastor can do to deal with his or her own temptations is to become part of an accountability group. An accountability group is a place where a pastor can meet with a small group of peers or friends to talk about his or her struggles, successes,



temptations, and failures. Within this group there is full disclosure and complete confidence. It is healthy for a pastor to have someone with whom he or she can share openly and honestly.

Many ministerial ethical problems can occur through a lack of awareness of physical proximity – that is who a pastor is with and where. It should be a standard operating procedure for a pastor to never be alone with a person of the opposite sex either in private or public. Pastors should be open and transparent in their behavior. It is good practice to position the pastor’s desk and computer screens with in view of others, counsel in an office with a window in the door, and set up a workspace that is free of distractions.

Being physically prepared for ministry also means keeping in good physical health. A pastor usually works long hours and has work-related activities scheduled every day of the week. It can be a physically exhausting and stressful job. A pastor under stress must stay in good physical shape in order to remain sharp and healthy. It is a fact that one’s physical shape directly influences his or her clarity of thought, mental attitude, and energy. Pastors should have a regular exercise routine and that keeps them in their best physical condition so they can give their best to their ministry. Diet, exercise and regular physical checkups cannot be neglected without serious consequences in the long run.

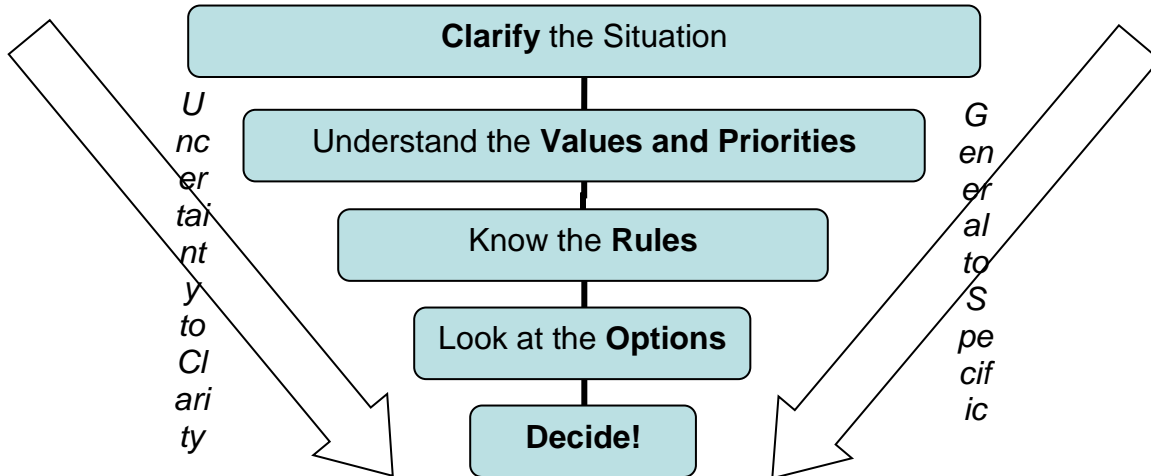
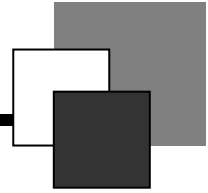
“Physical exercise has some value, but spiritual exercise is much more important, for it promises a reward in both this life and the next. This is true, and everyone should accept it.” (1 Timothy 4:8-9 NLT)

One of the healthiest things a pastor can do is to have hobbies and activities outside of work. In simple terms, a pastor must have a life outside of ministry. This is difficult because ministry is a 24/7 job. It is a commitment to devote one’s entire life and career to the work of the Lord. But in order stay in good physical and emotional health, a pastor must reserve a certain part of life to pure enjoyment and self-satisfaction. It is part of living a balanced life. This means

that a pastor should take a vacation regularly (no less than once per year), take up a hobby, spend time with family, laugh, relax, and do something to relieve the stress of the job. This is a basic human need whatever one's vocation.

An Ethical Action Plan for Ministers

With regard to ministerial ethics, a pastor must have concrete steps in mind for dealing with ethical dilemmas. He or she should not wait for a crisis to occur before formulating a plan of action. As ethical dilemmas develop, one may have only a split second to decide what to do. A preemptive approach to ethics is why this training is developed and why it is important to consider these principles now instead of later. Having a logical set of steps in mind and ready to help in an ethical dilemma, will help the pastor avoid panic and to focus on the problem more effectively. One set of steps to help is called the *Ethical Action Plan for Ministers*. This plan attempts to clarify the facts, solidify one's values and principles, and formulate a workable solution. Of course a key ingredient to this, or any other problem-solving plan, is prayer. At every step of the way, one should ask God for wisdom and guidance. Also, one should seek godly counsel, read the Bible and ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance in the situation.



What should you do?

Clarify the Situation

Get the facts straight: Cut through the conflict, emotion, and adrenalin, to get the facts straight. Oftentimes ethical dilemmas may simply be the result of a misunderstanding or of not getting the facts straight.

Identify the stakeholders: Stakeholders are all the people, groups, entities, and other parties that have a stake in the situation. Pastors should look for third parties that may be indirectly affected. It is easy to be so self focused that one fails to see the whole picture.

Identify rights of all individuals: Find out what agendas are in play, rights, and how the decision of the pastor will affect all of them.

Understand the values and principles at stake

Values: Identify one's personal values with regard to the situation. How do personal values affect understanding of the situation? **Key question:** *Can you identify your personal core values?*

Principles: Identify the Biblical, theological, moral, and ethical principles in play. Key Question: *Can you identify your core theological beliefs that are essential for spiritual formation and understanding truth?*

Purposes: How do God's purposes of worship, discipleship, fellowship, service (ministry), and evangelism apply in this situation?

Key Question: *Do you have a personal life purpose or mission statement?*

Know the rules

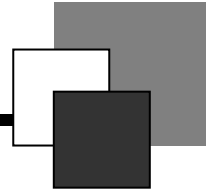
What does the Bible say? Look to God's Word for answers. One should pray and ask God to give specific scriptures. It is important to ask God for wisdom to apply His word and His principles to the ethical situation.

What does the Constitution & Bylaws of the NWMN say? Pastors should be familiar with the Constitution and Bylaws of the NWMN. In particular, Articles VIII, IX, and X of the Bylaws relate to ministry, disapproved doctrines and practices, and discipline.

What does the law of the land say? As a citizen and a minister of the Gospel, you are subject to the laws of your local jurisdiction, your state, and the Federal Government. Knowledge of corporate law, as it relates to non-profits and churches, is important to avoid compromising either your integrity or the integrity of the church you serve.

Look at your options

Consider best and worst case scenarios: It is easy to either assume the absolute worst or optimistically assume the best of the situation. One should look at entire spectrum of options and not ignore the facts,



the counsel of others, and gut instincts. Options should be logical, practical, and viewed without rose-colored glasses.

Identify ethically justifiable options (Plan A, Plan B, Plan C)

Decide

Make a decision based on all available information

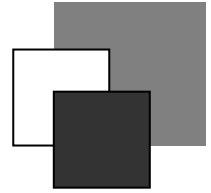
Evaluate the decision and adjust if needed: Pastors need to stand by their decisions, be willing to evaluate a decision and change if necessary. If they are wrong, they must have courage to admit it and change for the better.

Part 3: Getting the Job Done

Getting the job done will focus on various areas of relationship between the pastor and his or her God, family, church, other ministers, denomination, and community. It is absolutely critical to the ethical health of the minister that he or she has a specific set of ethical codes of conduct for each one of these areas. Beyond that, there are specific actions that he or she can take to make sure that the day-to-day behavior of the minister is in line with those codes of conduct.

To this end, each of the areas covered has a specific code of the conduct, a checklist that contains specific actions associated with that code, and scenarios and questions to help the minister apply the information to his or her life.

- **Code of Conduct:** *Adopt this as your personal code of ethical behavior. Learn it. Live it. Make it the standard for your life and ministry.*
- **Checklist:** *This is what you currently do or don't do. Specifically analyze your actions against this checklist. Be specific. Be honest. Be thorough and real. Check the appropriate box. Give yourself the appropriate number of points and add them up at the end.*
- **Scenario:** *Read the scenario. Think about it. Talk about it. Come up with some possible solutions. Extend the scenario to your own experience and work. What similar situations have you seen?*
- **Questions to Think About:** *These questions help get to the heart of the issue. Answer them honestly. Look to what God's Word says. Talk about them with another colleague.*
- **Tips for Success:** *These are real-life, practical tips to help you do your job better in this area.*



Relationship with God

Your relationship with God is the cornerstone and foundation of your moral and ethical life. A pastor should never be too busy or involved in the work of the ministry to let his or her relationship with the Lord slide. It is critical that you remember why you chose this profession in the first place. It certainly wasn't for the money; it was because of Jesus. Your relationship with the Lord should be paramount in your life as a minister of the Gospel.

Code of Conduct

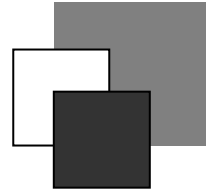
The most important pursuit in my life is knowing God and living in a manner that pleases Him. I will diligently follow the disciplines necessary for spiritual health and growth. I commit myself to live according to God's purposes in my worship, discipleship, fellowship, service and evangelism.

Special Focus: For more on the five purposes of God for your life, consult *The Purpose Driven Life*, by Rick Warren.

Checklist

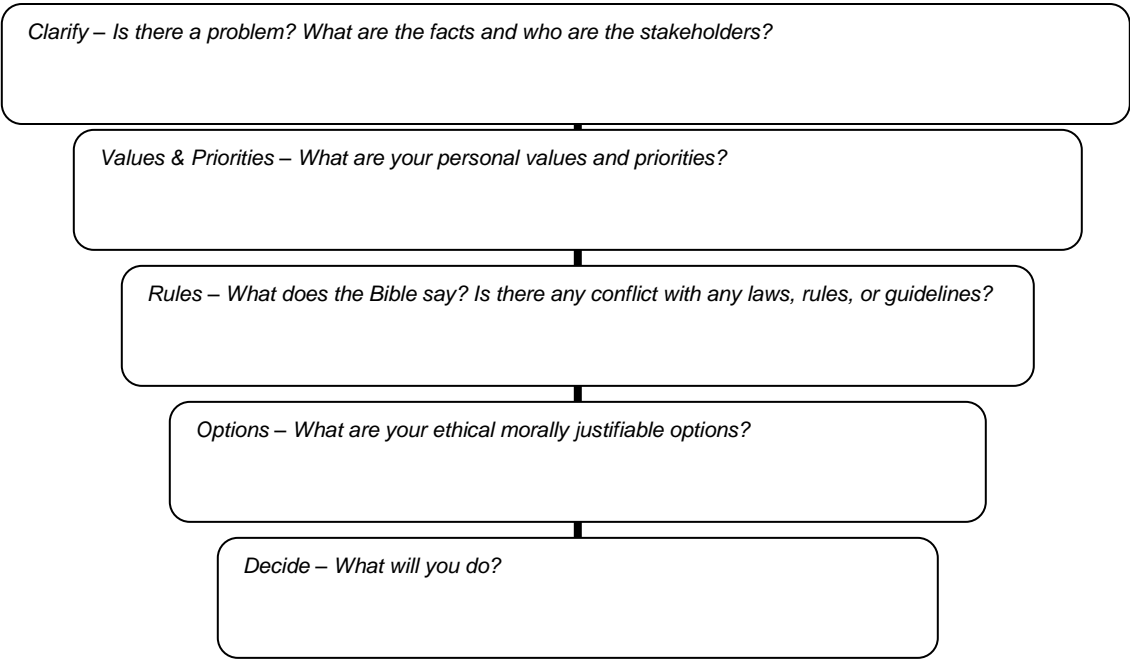
Rarely (1)	Sometimes (2)	Most of the time (3)	Always (4)	
				<i>Am I diligent to spend daily quality time in prayer and study of God's Word?</i>
				<i>Am I seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness in my life?</i>
				<i>Am I growing more sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit?</i>
				<i>Am I living out the purposes God has for my life?</i>
				<i>Am I worshipping God in spirit and truth at every opportunity?</i>
				<i>Am I growing in the grace and knowledge of God, becoming a fully developed follower of Jesus Christ?</i>
				<i>Am I building healthy relationships with God, family and friends?</i>
				<i>Am I serving Christ to the best of my gifts and abilities?</i>
				<i>Am I witnessing to those who don't know Christ?</i>
				Total Score 29-36 Points – Keep up the good work! 21-28 Points – Don't back off. 0-20 Points – Seek help from the NWMN or a mentor.

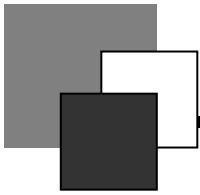
Are you making your personal spiritual formation a priority? Are you growing in your faith, holding your own, or losing ground?



Scenario: Got a Minute?

As a pastor you are on call 24/7. Your schedule typically starts at 6:30AM and ends around mid-night. Not only do you have to deliver the goods on Sunday morning but you've got mounds of administrative work during the week and a needy congregation who has your cell phone number and is not afraid to use it. Add a wife and three small children to the mix and your personal time with the Lord is whittled down to less than fifteen minutes per week.





Questions to Think About

Is it possible to be successful in ministry yet far from God?

What can be done when there simply is not enough time in your busy schedule to nurture your relationship with the Lord?

How many of the items in the above checklist require specific, intentional action and your part and how many are simply done automatically by how you live your life? What are some examples?

How do you know when your spiritual priorities are not right?

Tips for Ministerial Success

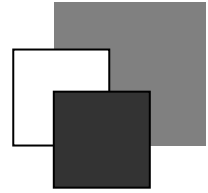
- Give yourself a set time of unrushed, personal prayer and devotion with the Lord each day. This is your time to pray and read God's Word for your own benefit. Consider it an investment in your ministry.
- Always be in some kind of formalized Bible study such as reading the Bible through in a year.
- Take time to simply listen to God. Turn off your phones and media interruptions and listen in quiet meditation.
- Practice spiritual disciplines. Fast regularly. Once a year go on an extended fast for three or more days.
- Practice and use the gifts of the Holy Spirit regularly not just in a crisis or in Holy Spirit emphasized meetings.

Relationship with Myself

Usually the biggest roadblock in carrying out the work of the Lord is not other people or your situation, but yourself. Most ethical failures cannot be blamed on anyone other than you. Although you were created in God's image, you are stuck in a mortal body that seems to fight you at every turn. As a minister, you need to be especially in tune with yourself. You must truly know who you are and be completely genuine and honest in your assessment of yourself. You must hold strong to your value system and take control of your thoughts, actions, and words. Recognize that you never stop growing and learning. Know what God expects from you and what you can do for Him. It may be easy to tell others that "God has a plan for your life" but difficult to internalize it yourself.

Code of Conduct

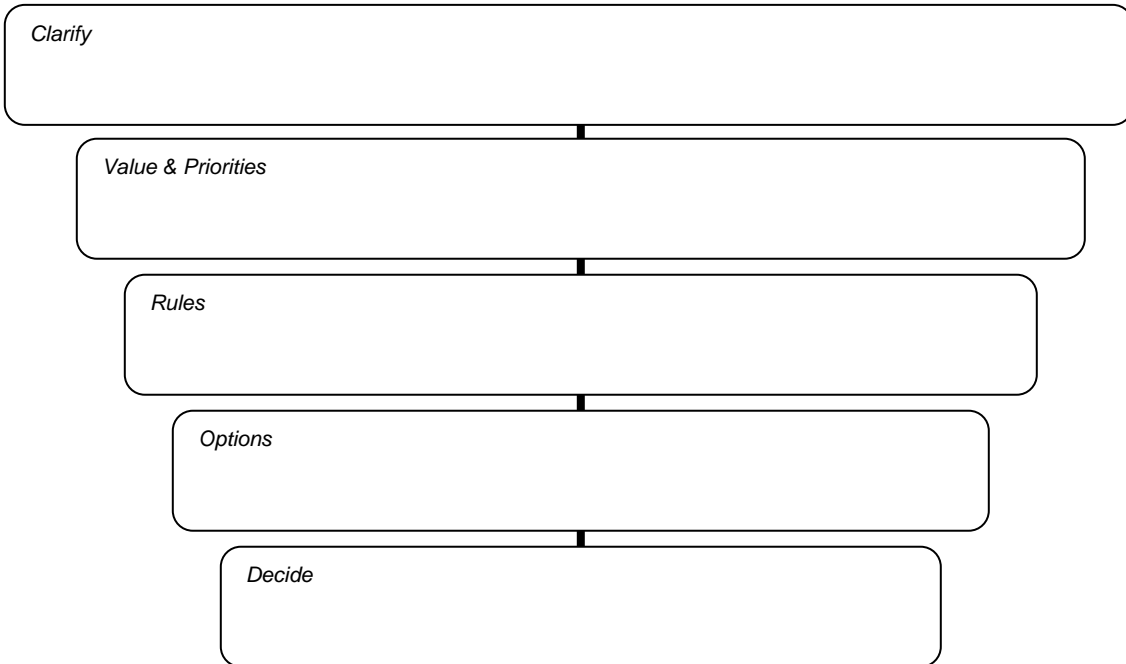
I will be true to my calling and be honest with myself. I will make myself accountable to others and submit to the authorities over me. I will devote myself to the faithful proclamation of God's Word. With God's help, I will never bring reproach upon the Name of Christ or His church because of improper relationships or impure motives. To the best of my ability I will keep myself morally pure, ethically clean, spiritually whole, intellectually stimulated and physically healthy.

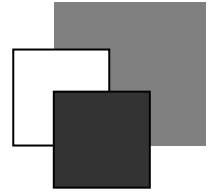


Rarely (1)	Sometimes (2)	Most of the time (3)	Always (4)	Checklist
				<i>Am I diligent to spend daily quality time in prayer and study of God's Word?</i>
				<i>Am I seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness in my life?</i>
				<i>Am I growing more sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit?</i>
				<i>Am I abstaining from alcohol and drugs, which could compromise my witness as a minister and jeopardize my sobriety?</i>
				<i>Am I taking care that my written and verbal communications reflect Christian values?</i>
				<i>Am I guarding my time and make the most effective use of it?</i>
				<i>Am I maintaining priorities consistent with my calling?</i>
				<i>Am I developing habits or character issues that would hinder my walk with the Lord?</i>
				<i>Am I tithing and being a good steward of my finances and all God has given me?</i>
				<i>Am I compromising in any area of my life or failing to "practice what I preach?"</i>
				Total TOTAL: 29-36 Points – Keep up the good work! 21-28 Points – Take more time to nurture this area of your life 0-20 Points – Find a mentor and seek assistance.

Scenario: Online Trouble

As our society becomes more and more sexually depraved, it becomes harder and harder to insulate yourself from it. No only does it seem like an uphill battle keeping your youth group sexually pure, but you struggle as well with staying away from pornography on the Internet. You receive several emails each day (some with graphics and pictures) inviting you to visit porn sites. You know that viewing pornography is simply a mouse click away, and that no one will ever find out. Just because you are a credentialed minister, doesn't mean your sexual desires go away. Although your spirit says, "No!" your flesh says, "Yes!"





Questions to Think About

What moral and ethical lines do you have regarding what media you watch? Are your standards different from the standards you preach to your congregation?

What kinds of sin or attitudes discredit a minister the most? What can you do to combat sin, addictions, and bad habits in your life?

How does your own self-esteem fit into your role as a minister?

How does a minister deal with anger and depression when there seems to be no one else to talk to?

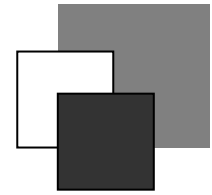
How do you balance who you are and what you want with what God wants for your life?

Tips for Ministerial Success

- Make it a guiding business principle to not to allow yourself to be alone with a member of the opposite sex who is not your spouse (either in public or in private). Counsel in an office with a window and interact with office personnel of the opposite sex in the open during daylight hours.

- Do not engage in flirtatious talk and actions. Don't tell or participate in sexual jokes or humor. Accusations of sexual harassment are very common and must be avoided.
- Be very cautious of your choice of movies, music, and websites. Simply make it your policy not to partake in morally offensive media.
- If you feel tempted by Internet pornography, place the computer in an open public area of your home or office and utilize a web filter that uses a proxy server or other filter that you cannot disable.
- Resolve to be honest in your speech and the impressions you give. Don't exaggerate or stretch the truth in either the little or big things.
- Completely abstain from alcohol or tobacco even if other Christians or friends approve. This is an ethical issue, not just a cultural one. Assemblies of God ministers agree to completely abstain from tobacco, illicit drugs, and the social use of alcohol.
- Make your tithe the very first check you write each month. Consider making a statement to your church board or those over you to disclose your monthly charitable giving for purposes of personal accountability.
- Break bad habits. Beware of personal habits or behaviors that may offend, annoy, or degrade your position as a moral, spiritual, and social leader.
- Keep a personal journal. Record your feelings, actions, prayers and answers to prayer, your goals, ideas, visions, and reflections on life. Journaling is good for your mental and emotional health.

Personal Notes and Thoughts



Relationship with My Family

A minister must have his or her own house in order. This means that when it comes to priorities, his or her family comes first. Your family should never be a casualty in your work for the Lord. The nature of the job requires great personal sacrifice for spouses and children. For most pastors this is easier said than done. The job of a pastor requires long hours, travel, constant relocation, emergency calls, and few weekends off. Although the families of ministers generally understand these issues, they should never be sacrificed because of it. The key to keeping a healthy family while in the ministry is to have boundaries and to be proactive in nurturing your family as well as your flock. You should be able to eat dinner together as a family, take vacations, and see your kid's soccer games just like any other parishioner. You need to take the world off your shoulders sometimes and get a clear perspective on your family priorities.

Code of Conduct

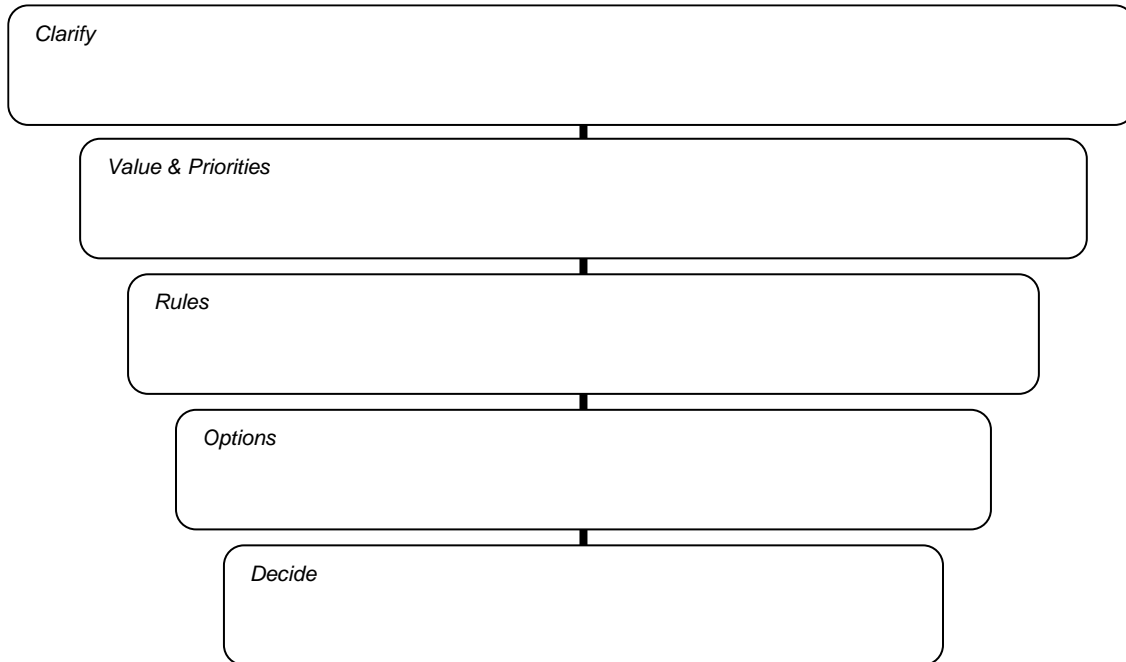
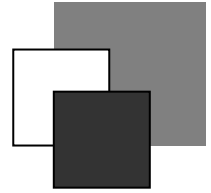
I will make my family's health a priority. I will serve my family, realizing that they are the most important people in my life. I will intentionally give them my best attention and time. I will not use my family as a dumping ground for my frustrations or cause them to think less of people because of what I tell them. To the best of my ability, I will set a good example of marriage and family life for my congregation and community.

Checklist

Rarely (1)	Sometimes (2)	Most of the time (3)	Always (4)	
				<i>Am I spending quality time with my spouse and children?</i>
				<i>Am I sensitive to the needs of my spouse and children?</i>
				<i>Am I building a positive home environment and showing my family the joy of serving Christ and His church?</i>
				<i>Am I living a consistent life by being the same person in and out of the pulpit?</i>
				<i>Am I speaking well of others in front of my family?</i>
				<i>Am I modeling the character of Christ at home?</i>
				Total Score 20-24 Points – You’re doing fine! 15-19 Points – Reevaluate your family priorities. 0-14 Points – Seek a mentor or help from the NWMN.

Scenario: The Unhappy Family

Your career has finally taken off. For the past sixteen years you have moved your family four times from one end of the country to another and gone from an unpaid home missions pastor to a salaried associate. Your family has been through a lot and is showing signs of stress. Over past year your teenage daughter has been diagnosed with an eating disorder. Although your spouse smiles and dutifully plays the part on Sunday morning, not a day goes by without a verbal confrontation in the evening. It’s nice to finally have a regular salary, but with it comes the expectation from your senior pastor and church board that you need to earn it by working as much as possible.



Questions to Think About

How do you know when you've pushed your family too far? What are the limits?

How many hours per week is enough?

In what ways is your family life a model for other Christian families?

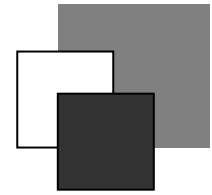
In what ways are you the same or a different person in public (with your congregation) as you are in person with your family?

What can you do to nurture your family life?

Tips for Ministerial Success

Consider the following *focused* family time a minimum:

- 30 minutes per day talking with spouse – 60 minutes optimum
 - 2-4 hours of family time each day for a least 4 days per week
 - At least 1 day per week off
 - At least 1 week vacation per year – 2 or more weeks optimum
- Go on a “date night” one evening per week with you spouse.
 - Make every effort possible to attend your child’s sports games, school open house, and recitals for anything. Schedule them like any other important business appointment.
 - Pray or conduct a devotional time every day with your family – even with very young children or teens. Be intentional. Don’t let a day go by without praying with and for your family.
 - Be positive and keep a sense of humor. Have fun with your family and be kind of parent that they want to see every night and spend time with.
 - Be real with your family. Let me see you who you really are. Don’t be afraid to admit mistakes and seek forgiveness.
 - Delegate pastoral emergency phone calls to other staff, deacons, or elders one or two nights per week.
 - Don’t take the frustrations and stress from work home with you. If you need time to unwind after a tense day, take it.
 - Remember that your children and spouse watch you. Never speak negative words about others in front of your family members.
 - If a total stranger walked into your home, would he or she be able to tell that your home is a “Christian” home?
 - Remember that rules are important, but when it comes to your children, building relationship is ultimately more important than enforcing rules.



Relationship with My Church

Doing the job of the minister is more than just preaching on Sunday morning. Your duties may include preacher, counselor, board member, corporate president, secretary, office manager, custodian, and an expert in just about everything else. You must not only wear many different hats, but are expected to do so in a Christ-like manner and never make a mistake. From the pulpit to the church office, ethical pitfalls are many.

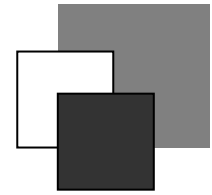
Code of Conduct

I will serve as a faithful shepherd in my area of ministry, providing spiritual care and biblical instruction. I will always speak the truth in love. I will lead as a servant of Christ, sharing the vision God has given me for effective ministry. I will be sensitive to the needs of others and develop the character and compassion of Jesus Christ. I will never lose the urgency to bring people to Him. I will keep confidences confidential and seek to earn the trust of those under my care by being a person of integrity. I will seek to protect the innocent, the infirm, children and the aged. I will report suspected or confirmed cases of abuse, as the law requires. I will be sure all the business of the church is conducted in a legal and orderly manner.

Checklist

Rarely (1)	Sometimes (2)	Most of the time (3)	Always (4)	
				Am I above reproach as it relates to my work ethic, carrying out my responsibilities, and handling of church finances?

			<i>Am I seeking the best for my congregation and caring for their needs?</i>
			<i>Am I following guidelines in the constitution and bylaws, staff manual and policies of the church I serve as they relate to my duties as a minister and my relationships with church boards, officers, members and staff?</i>
			<i>Am I treating both paid and volunteer staff with dignity, appreciation and respect?</i>
			<i>Am I providing a consistent example of servant leadership for those I influence?</i>
			<i>Am I providing vision and leadership or just maintaining systems?</i>
			<i>Am I helping my congregation see how they can fulfill God's purposes?</i>
			<i>Am I misusing the pulpit to promote any personal agenda?</i>
			<i>Am I giving my congregation their money's worth for the salary I am being paid?</i>
			<i>Am I making a positive contribution toward creating a professional and Christian workplace environment?</i>
			<i>Am I giving both paid and volunteer staff public and private recognition for their accomplishments and service?</i>
			<i>Am I coaching and equipping others for the work of the ministry?</i>



				<i>Am I seeking and welcoming objective input to help me improve my level of service and uncover my blind spots?</i>
				<i>Am I building healthy relationships with church boards, teams and volunteers in my area of ministry?</i>
				Total 45-56 Points – You’re doing great, keep going! 34-44 Points – Pull back and rethink how you do things. 0-33 Points – Get some help from a mentor or the NWMN.

There are three areas of concern that require a minister to maintain high ethical standards.

Pulpit Ministry

Speaking from pulpit carries a lot of power and influence over people. What is said publicly can never be retracted so ministers should be very careful what they say from the pulpit and how they use their authority. Although we are not called to be “politically correct,” we are called to understand our culture and present the best Gospel witness possible while being sensitive to others.

“Those who love to talk will experience the consequences, for the tongue can kill or nourish life.” (Proverbs 18:21 NLT) The KJV simply says, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.” The pulpit is no place for off-colored jokes, crude or vulgar language. Really, there is no other place for such things in a minister’s life, either.

We must be attuned to our audience and speak words of life and encouragement. A minister in the 21st century must understand issues of gender and race, and avoid stereotypes of either one. Not only are ministers charged with being responsible in these areas, but also they must be aware of generational issues that can cause division between young and old. A pastor can build bridges or walls with the use of his or her words.

Another issue of integrity in the pulpit has to do with following the admonition of Paul in Ephesians 4:15 that, “We will hold to the truth in love, becoming more and more in every way like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.”

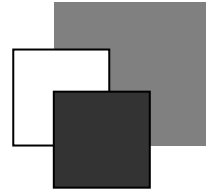
“Holding to the truth” implies integrity in our use of words. Ministers are often tempted to tell stories that may or may not be verifiable. If you cannot quote the source of an illustration or story, you are usually better off not using it. With the advent of the Internet, there is a plethora of “urban legends” which are nothing more than entertaining lies. Ethical pastors will be able to cite their sources and verify the information they share with their congregations, encouraging them to “Hold tightly to the word of life.” (Philippians 2:16)

Although you may not like to follow a manuscript in preaching, it is sometimes helpful to write out what you intend to say, especially if you have any questions or reservations about what you are planning to say. Then ask yourself, “Would I want this printed statement to be published in the local paper and attributed to me?”

Honesty: Everything that is delivered from the pulpit must be true in both fact and intention.

Confidentiality: A minister should never give out confidential information about parishioners or private church matters from the pulpit.

Influence: The pulpit should not be used to promote a personal agenda or for manipulation.



Pulpit Ministry Scenario: Speaking of the Numbers

Your missions emphasis week is drawing to a close and you've pushed hard to meet your goal of \$20,000. You have prayed earnestly and publicly said that God would provide the funds. All the churches in your region have made their goals and you feel tremendous pressure to make it happen. As the last service comes to a close, your head usher hands you a piece of paper that says you've raised, \$16,234. Your congregation waits with baited breath for the result. You are tempted to claim victory now and work on the rest of the money behind the scenes.

Clarify

Value & Priorities

Rules

Options

Decide

Questions to Think About

Do you every have the tendency to stretch the truth a little bit in sermon illustrations? What boundaries do you have?

Do you ask permission to use individual's personal stories from the pulpit?

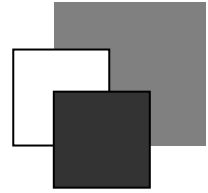
Where is the line between changing people's hearts and minds from the pulpit and manipulating them?

What kinds of behavior coming from the pulpit do you consider to be inappropriate?

Do you have standards for who can and can't speak from the pulpit?

Tips for Ministerial Success

- Never stretch the truth or exaggerate when using sermon illustrations.
- Choose your words carefully. Although you may know everyone in the audience, your off-the-cuff words may offend some listeners.
- Avoid direct partisan politics from the pulpit. Address political or cultural issues from the perspective of moral and Biblical values and Christian principles.
- Ask permission before you use personal stories from others.
- If you use the work of others, ask permission and give credit where credit is due.
- Be sensitive to your audience, especially to families with children present when speaking about sexual or violent content.



Church Office/Employees

The church office should be run just as any other professional workplace. Understand that churches and staff can be legally and criminally liable for unethical or illegal acts.

Legal Compliance: The operations of the church must abide by the laws of the land including employment, copyright, and discrimination laws.

Professionalism: The church office should be a professional business environment where employees and volunteers are treated with honesty and respect.

Confidentiality: Personal information about parishioners and church business affairs must be kept confidential.

Financial Integrity: Financial records must be kept in accordance with sound, generally accepted accounting practices. Church financial transactions should be done with transparency, openness, and full accountability.

Scenario: Harassment or Opinion?

Pastor John has been in the ministry for almost forty years. He makes it no secret that he believes that a woman's place is in the home. Jennifer, his new administrative assistant, is a real go-getter. She has competence and confidence that Pastor John likes. She announces one day that she would rather have a career than a family. Offended and seizing the moment, Pastor John gives her his passionate verbal opinion about what the REAL place for women should be.

Clarify

Value & Priorities

Rules

Options

Decide



Questions to Think About

Are you in compliance with employment laws? How would you find out? Are there any that you don't understand?

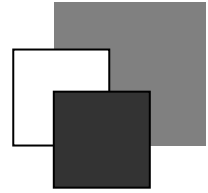
Are you in compliance with copyright laws? Are there any you don't understand?

Are you in compliance with financial and tax laws? What resources do you use to help you in these areas?

Do you understand ministerial tax issues and have good practices for keeping records and filing your returns?

What is your practice about receiving special offerings and reporting and disbursing those offerings?

As a minister, what is your practice of reporting miscellaneous income or honorariums to the IRS?



Do you treat paid staff any different from volunteers? How?

What do you do to make your church office to be a professional workplace environment?

Tips for Ministerial Success

- Maintain a professional, business-like atmosphere in the office, even between close friends and congregants.
- Be careful of overtime and breaks for paid employees. Although they may want to work longer hours or skip breaks as a ministry to the church, you must abide by the law and pay them overtime or provide comp time and require them take breaks. Pastors may be held liable even if all parties mutually agree to ignore employment laws.
- Avoid all racist, sexist, and bigoted remarks in any context in the office. You must never create a “hostile work environment” or allow discrimination or harassment of any kind.
- If you are able to do so, hire professional help for payroll, taxes, and auditing. The time and hassle saved is well worth the investment.
- Don’t ever mix personal and church funds.
- Use church credit cards for nothing but church business. Provide a complete record of all purchases and the business purpose of the expense. Keep accurate records when seeking reimbursement for business expenses.
- Always have one or two witnesses on hand when counting offerings.
- Set up a system by which you ask or inform another individual if you plan to spend over a certain amount on a particular purchase (i.e. \$500 or \$1000).
- Obey all copyright laws even in the smallest reference to another work. Be especially careful to not copy software or musical scores.

Dealing with Parishioners and Church Board Members

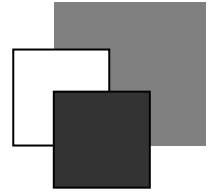
Working with people both as an authority figure and part of a leadership team requires pastors to be fair, honest, and to work with others. It is always best to keep in mind the principle found in 1 Thessalonians 5:22, “Keep away from every kind of evil.” The KJV speaks about avoiding even the “appearance of evil.” If something might appear evil or less than honest to others, it is best to avoid it. Once the trust of a minister is violated, it is almost impossible to earn it back.

Keep in mind the following principles for dealing with church people and business:

Best interest of everyone: The pastor should always do what is in the best interest of the church and the work of God; not him or herself.

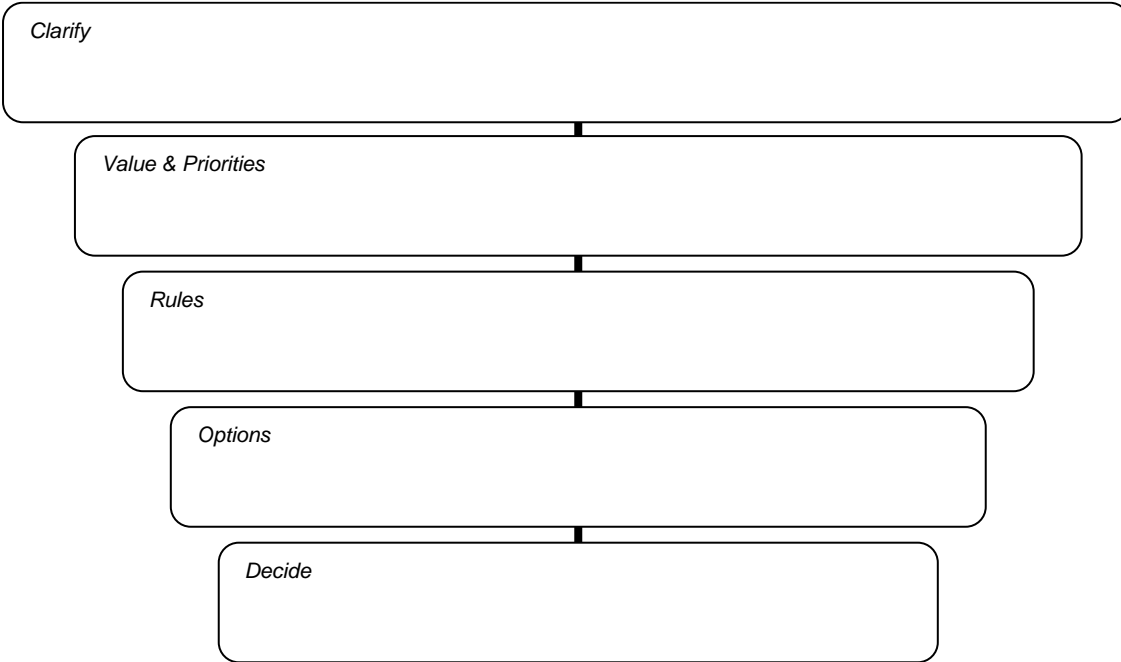
Conflicts of interest: The pastor should remove him or herself from any conflicts of interest in business dealings.

Openness and transparency: There should be no secret agreements or transactions made without appropriate approval of the church board or other necessary parties.



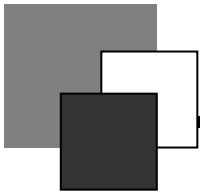
Parishioner and Church Board Scenario: Youth in Crisis

Sixteen-year-old Jennie came to Christ in a Bible camp last summer. Her parents are not Christians but tolerate Jennie coming to church and youth group on Wednesday nights. She asks desperately to see you one day after school. Sobbing hysterically, she tells you that she is seven weeks pregnant. Her parents demand that she have an abortion IMMEDIATELY! In fact, she says she can't go home until she agrees to have one. If that isn't bad enough, she says that the father is a boy in the youth group whose parents are active members of the church.



Questions to Think About

What are the boundaries of confidentiality in pastoral counseling?



When should you report the knowledge of abuse or illegal activities that come from counseling?

Should you do business with parishioners? What are the ethical boundaries?

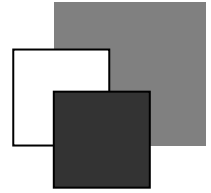
What kinds of church business can you do without board approval?

What can you do if you come into conflict with the church board?

Do you understand the ministry to be a position of sacred trust? In what ways could that trust be violated by your actions?

Tips for Ministerial Success

- Make no secret deals, transactions, or agreements without the knowledge of the church board.
- Learn to take rejection and disagreements your board with humility and maturity. Don't hold grudges or engage in power struggles with your board.
- Don't go it alone. Seek consensus form members of your church leadership team or board when making big decisions.



- Avoid business deals with parishioners. Consider the worse case scenario if a business deal falls through. Be especially careful about investing money (either personal funds or church funds) with parishioners.
- Never use the pulpit to promote any personal agenda or business venture.
- Avoid any conflict of interest in any business dealings.
- Be careful when personally accepting services in gratis from parishioners. Offer to pay for services. Proceed with the same expectations as a paying customer.
- Be careful about investing church money. Never do so without the full authorization of the board or whatever approval mechanism your bylaws call for. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- Don't try to use your influence to control the behavior of others. Allow people to make their own choices and be there to help, counsel, and support.
- Be a team player.
- Pro-actively plan your personal budget for both taxes and retirement.

Personal Notes and Thoughts

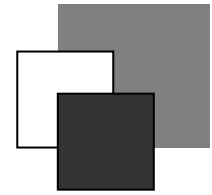
With Other Ministers

Making a difference in the world for Christ is best done when people work together to achieve a common goal. Most pastoral ministry is done by individuals who work alone in leadership positions (or with a very small staff). Often, the church is the exclusive domain of the minister in charge. For some pastors, team interaction may be limited. Even pastors who work in multi-staff churches and have more support must deal with issues of authority, competition, and personality conflict.

Respect for each other is critical for good peer relationships. This respect shows itself in what you say (or don't say) and how you act toward other ministers. Becoming involved in the affairs of another church can cause just as many ethical conflicts as pulling inward and viewing other churches as competitors. Pastors must remain balanced toward other ministers and be honest to their calling and use of God's principles in their ministry.

Recruiting and job transition is another ethically difficult area. The way in which you leave one job and enter another contains a number of potential ethical dilemmas. Inevitably, as a minister you will move from one pulpit to another throughout your career. Nothing can be more damaging to a church than a rocky leadership transition. Pastors looking for a job should do so with openness, honesty, and grace. Likewise, churches seeking a pastoral change should recruit with the highest ethical standard and maintain respect for all individuals involved.

When making pastoral transitions, it is generally accepted that the ethical practice is to sever ties with the former congregation. Unless asked by the new



pastor or leadership to do so, you should not expect to return for funerals, weddings, etc. You should always publicly support both your successors and predecessors.

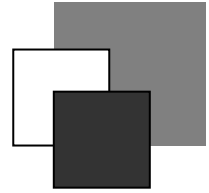
Code of Conduct

I realize the need for a personal network of colleagues and friends to provide fellowship, accountability, support and counsel. I will always treat with respect those who precede and follow me in my ministerial assignments. I will not entertain or spread gossip about another minister or fellow staff member. I will not influence members from other congregations to join mine. I will not interfere in another congregation. I will be cooperative with those within the NWMN and seek to cooperate with other ministries that are faithful to God's Word as I have opportunity. I will seek to learn from others and willingly share my gifts with those who could benefit from my training and experience. If I am serving as a staff pastor on a multi-staffed church, I will always be supportive and loyal to the entire team, especially the senior pastor (and if unable to do so, will graciously resign). If I am serving as a senior pastor, I will always strive to treat staff pastors under my leadership with respect, encouragement, and graciousness. When making ministry transitions, I will do my best to provide an atmosphere that guards the health of the church body and provides a healthy environment for those who follow me.

Checklist

<i>Rarely (1)</i>	<i>Sometimes (2)</i>	<i>Most of the time (3)</i>	<i>Always (4)</i>

				<i>Am I viewing other ministers as competitors or as coworkers?</i>
				<i>Am I being respectful of other ministers in my thoughts and communications?</i>
				<i>Am I answering my correspondence and phone calls from other ministers consistently and in a timely manner?</i>
				<i>Am I harboring resentment toward another minister because of their gifts or ministry opportunities?</i>
				<i>Am I doing my best to be a loyal and faithful member of the ministry team on which I serve?</i>
				<i>Am I building healthy relationships with other ministers and other churches nearby?</i>
				Total: 18-24 Points – You're doing great, keep going! 11-17 Points – Pull back and rethink how you do things. 6-10 Points – Get some help from a mentor or the NWMN



Your Ministerial Colleagues

Scenario: Church Competition

Last year your church started a day care and preschool program to meet an urgent need in your community. The program is housed in leased space right next door to another evangelical congregation. It has been a huge success and now accounts for up to 25% of your church's income. This year the other congregation next door to your preschool decided to open their own program and operate out of their own building. Since they don't have to lease space, they can afford to charge less for the service. Slowly, your church income has dropped and you have developed a sour, competitive resentment against the pastor of the other church.

Clarify

Value & Priorities

Rules

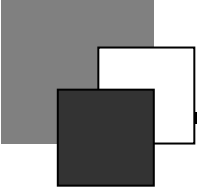
Options

Decide

Questions to Think About

How do you resolve the issue of competition between churches?

What can you do when you see problems occurring in a neighboring church?



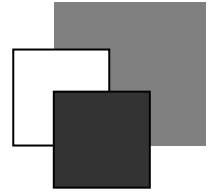
What can pastor do to reach out to pastors of other neighboring churches (both inside and outside the denomination)?

What should you do when members of a nearby Assemblies of God (or other church) begin to attend your church?

What should your practice be about paying honorariums to missionaries and guest ministers who fill your pulpit?

Tips for Ministerial Success

- Build relationships – don't be a loner. Schedule regular times to talk and meet with other ministers. Form a cohort fellowship group and meet once a month for coffee or a meal together.
- Join with the local ministerial association and participate in community projects as much as possible.
- Don't allow yourself to criticize other ministers in private or public - even avoid critical comments told in jest.
- If you have or see problem with another minister, go directly to him or her and address it. If approaching the other party does not achieve results, seek the advice of your presbyter or the executive presbyter for your region. When in conflict with others, pray for wisdom and guidance.
- Handle disagreements with respect, honesty, and a humble spirit.

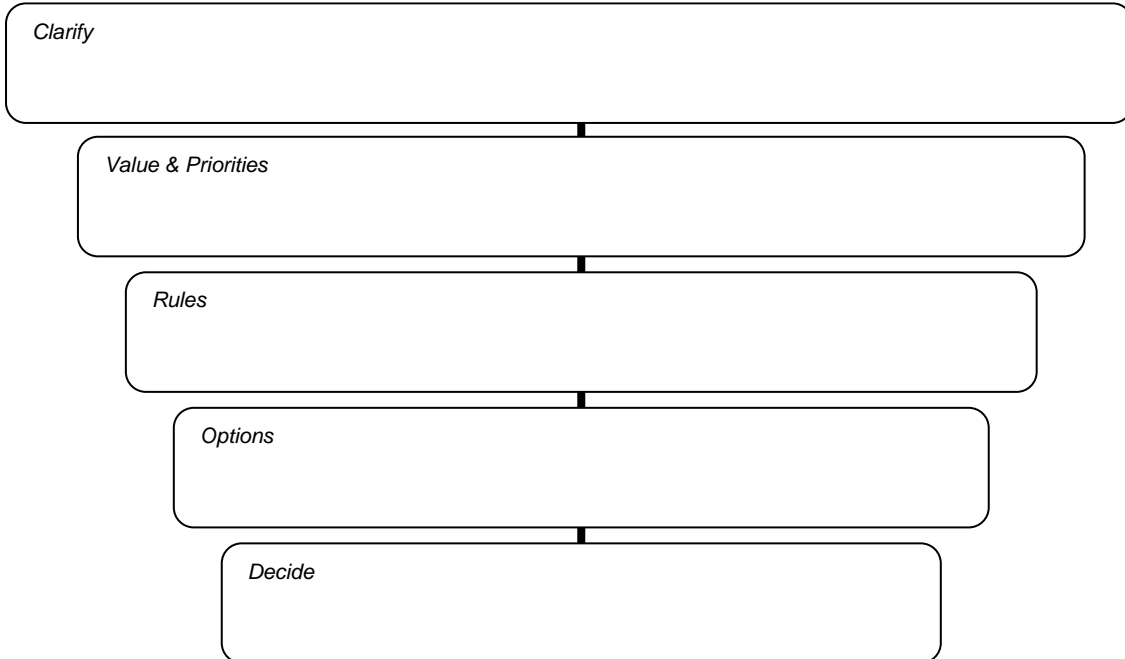


- Stay focused on your calling and Gods work and avoid becoming focused on money or material success outside that calling.
- Don't compare your ministry to that of others. Remember that God call you to do your work. You are an individual with your unique contribution.

Recruiting/Seeking Employment

Scenario: Ethical Recruiting

You've just lost the best associate pastor you've had. He left big shoes to fill and the congregation has high expectations. You know of the ideal candidate who works for a large church in a neighboring community. You consider him the cream of the crop. You've heard him say casually in passing that he'd like to move to your town someday. You're going to see him at a denominational function in two days. You would rather not rock the boat by informing his senior pastor of your intentions.



Questions to Think About

How can you ethically and honorably recruit pastors from other churches?

If you quietly want to leave your current position, how should you best handle it?

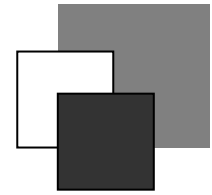
What is your responsibility to inform your church, board, and other staff pastors about your intentions to seek a position elsewhere?

Would considerations or problems be there with seeking a position with another denomination?

Tips for Ministerial Success

- Inform your senior pastor if you intend to seek a position at another church.
- Avoid misrepresenting yourself or exaggerating accomplishments.
- Leave with your house in order - set up your successor success.
- If recruiting a staff pastor from another church, inform that senior pastor of your intentions.
- Involve everyone in the negotiation process.
- When stepping into a new pulpit, always show respect and honor to your predecessor.
- At every step of the transition process, hold no grudges or ill will toward others.

Personal Notes and Thoughts



With the NWMN

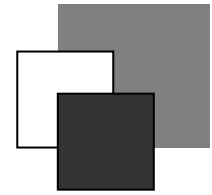
Being an Assemblies of God minister has both benefits and responsibilities. You benefit by being a part of an organization that supports you, trains you, and holds you accountable. As the regional authority of the Assemblies of God, the NWMN is on your team and wants you to be successful in your ministry. Besides being your partner in ministry, the NWMN requires certain responsibilities from you as a member. As a NWMN minister you have to know and play by the rules (the Constitution and Bylaws), behave in a manner that is consistent with the Fellowship, and to cooperate and contribute in the way that supports the NWMN in its mission.

Code of Conduct

I am an Assemblies of God minister. Among other things, I have received a credential, training, support, accountability and a place of ministry because of my association with the Assemblies of God. I will voluntarily cooperate with The NWMN and the General Council of the Assemblies of God. As I have opportunity, I will be supportive of and an active participant in my denomination at the local, sectional, district and national levels. I will seek to support our leadership and promote and support our ministries and mission throughout the world.

Checklist

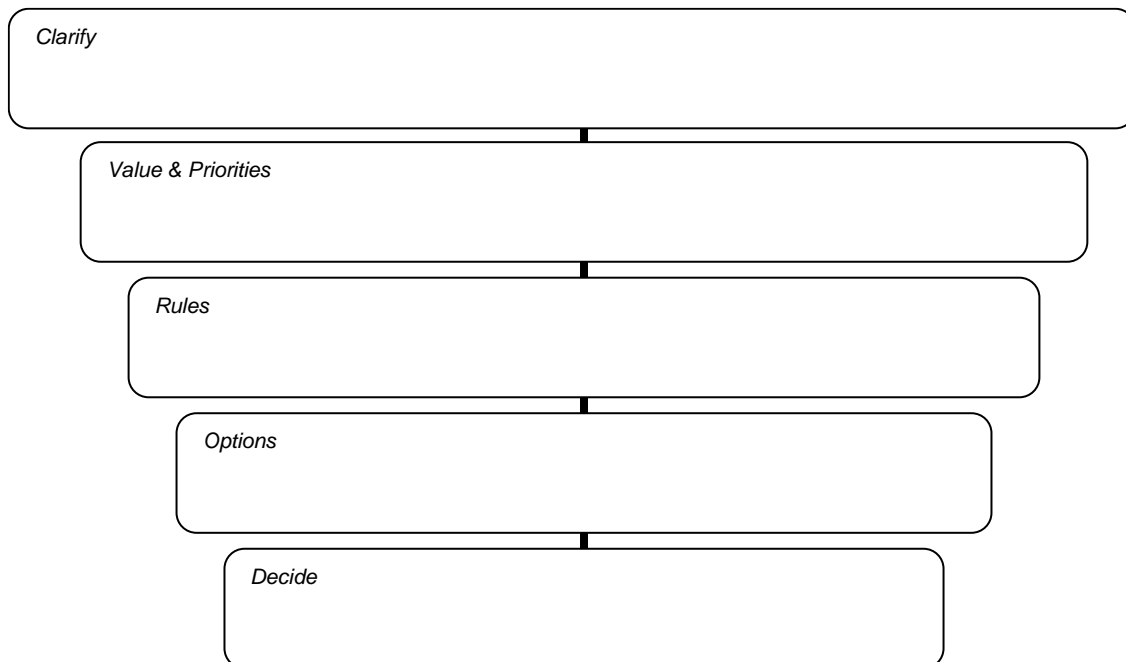
Rarely (1)	Sometimes (2)	Most of the time (3)	Always (4)	
				<i>Am I familiar with the Constitution and Bylaws of the General Council and NWMN? Am I making a conscious effort to follow them as I have pledged to do as a credentialed minister?</i>
				<i>Am I willing to participate in ministerial ethics training and initiatives that are offered?</i>
				<i>Am I fully cooperating with the leadership of the NWMN and General Council as I have pledged to do (voluntary cooperative fellowship)?</i>
				<i>Am I proactively finding ways to affirm and support the ministries of the Assemblies of God and NWMN?</i>
				<i>Am I maintaining a positive attitude and conversation about my denomination?</i>
				<i>Am I willing to accept the authority of those over me?</i>
				<i>Am I tithing and fulfilling my financial obligations to the NWMN and the General Council?</i>
				<i>As I have opportunity, do I participate in NWMN events that would be beneficial to my local church or me?</i>



				<i>Am I an active participant in local activities on a sectional level?</i>
				<i>Am I familiar with the Constitution and Bylaws of the General Council and NWMN? Am I making a conscious effort to follow them as I have pledged to do as a credentialed minister?</i>
				Total 29-36 Points – You and the NWMN together on the issues. 21-28 Points – Consider what you need to do to be on the page as your denomination. 0-20 Points – Ask how the NWMN can help you.

Scenario: Feeling Left Out in the Cold

As a seasoned minister, you don't feel like you've gotten the "service" you deserve from the network office or the presbyter in your area. You've struggled through personal problems alone and have struggled through countless crises in your ministry without as much as a phone call from anyone or a word of support. You've always been there for everyone else but you feel like no one is there for you. Your feelings of isolation have developed into a subtle resentment toward the "system."





Questions to Think About

When was the last time you read the Constitution and Bylaws of the NWMN?
Why is it important that you know what's in it?

What opportunities are there to get involved?

What practical steps can you take when you feel like the system has failed you?

Do you have problems accepting criticism or discipline from authorities?

Tips For Ministerial Success

- Communicate regularly with the NWMN.
- Ask yourself how you can serve the NWMN rather what the NWMN can do for you.
- Avoid putting a material value on membership in the NWMN and the Assemblies of God. See it as your partner for success in your ministry.
- Pray for your denomination and the authorities over you.
- Take the initiative to become a participant in sectional and network wide activities.
- Understand how our fellowship works.
- Be aware and sensitive to what God is doing through the denomination and how He is using it for His purpose.

With My Community

Spreading the Gospel and doing the work of the Lord requires churches to make a positive impact on their community. Sometimes the community does not willingly accept what the church is doing and conflict results. Church leaders walk the fine line between fighting to change the system for God's kingdom and having to work within the system at the same time. The Pastor should show wisdom, honesty, and spiritual discernment when working within a community for change. Although the Bible is clear regarding honoring governing authorities (Romans 13:1 and Titus 3:1), the practical application of this can be tricky and not so clear-cut.

Code of Conduct

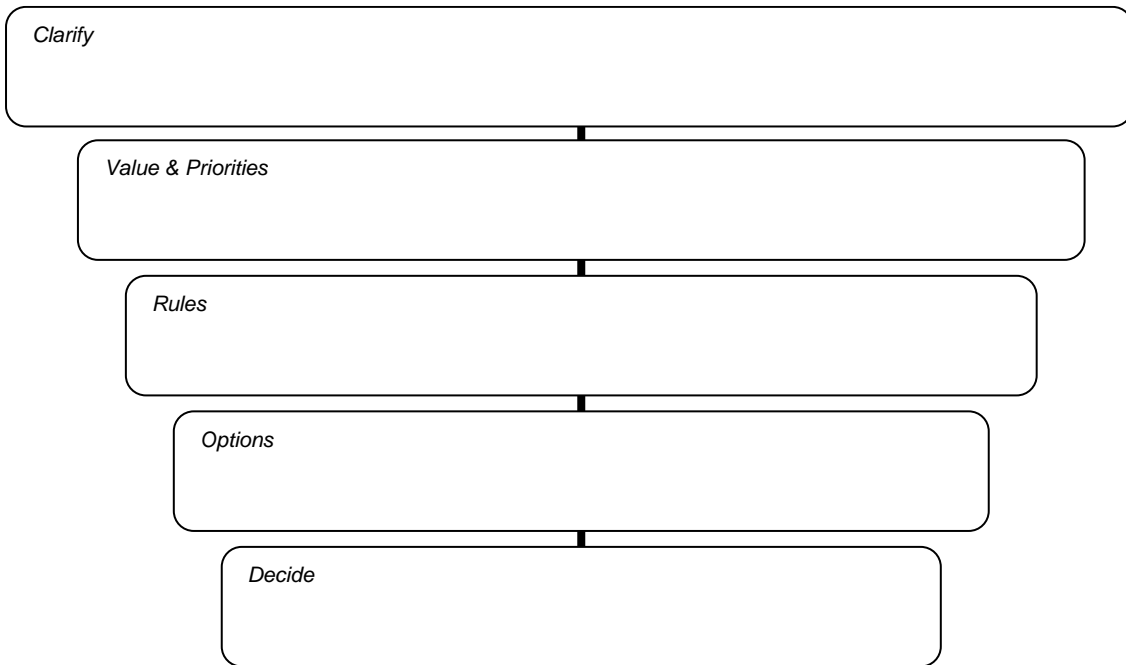
As a Christian leader, I will live as a faithful representative of Jesus Christ, acting as salt and light to those around me. I will live a life above reproach, protecting the reputation of the church and the Christ I serve. As a member of a local community, I will be involved in those activities where my influence as a representative of Christ can help bring redemption to society, reconciliation to those who oppose each other, and enrichment to the church and social structure. As a good citizen, I will be supportive of my government (unless doing so violates clear biblical standards), seek to obey the laws of the land, and encourage others to do so.

Checklist

Rarely (1)	Sometimes (2)	Most of the time (3)	Always (4)	
				<i>Am I an active participant in community events and have I adopted this community as my own?</i>
				<i>Am I careful to maintain good credit and a good name in my community?</i>
				<i>Am I a member of community organizations that help build a positive environment?</i>
				<i>Am I an ambassador for Christ in my local community?</i>
				<i>Am I supporting political and social causes that will uphold biblical values in my community?</i>
				<i>Am I an active participant in community events and have I adopted this community as my own?</i>
				<p>Total 20-24 Points – You and the community are on the same page. 15-19 Points – Keep going. Try to connect more with your community. 0-14 Points – Find a mentor or ask the NWMN for help.</p>

Scenario: Backdoor Building Permit

You perceive that politicians on the city council seem to have a bias against church building projects. The permitting process on your last remodel took over two years. You are delighted to find out that the owners of two homes adjacent to the church are willing to sell. The downside, of course, is getting any sort of cooperation from the city council and planning office to turn the homes into usable public space. A savvy contractor in your congregation says that he can remodel the inside of the houses and put in paths and parking right away. With some careful tip-toeing into the gray areas of zoning codes you can probably use the space immediately for Sunday school rooms and wait for the permits later.



Questions to Think About

In what ways does the church come in to conflict with the state and local government?

How should churches approach loopholes or gaps in the system by which it can benefit?

In what circumstance would civil disobedience be appropriate?

Should a pastor ever cooperate or collaborate with a leader of a non-Christian faith?

How should the church respond when its actions cause anger within a community?

What are the boundaries of church and politics? Should pastors be involved?

Should the church take legal action to get what it wants?

Tips for Ministerial Success

- Pray earnestly for your community and its leaders – even those with whom you philosophically and politically disagree.
- Avoid becoming isolated. Arrange meetings with the local politicians. Attend city council meetings. Become visible to your political leaders – you may need their help someday.

- Take care of your reputation within the community.
- Listen to concerns from the community even if it comes from nonbelievers.
- Be sensitive to the community standards in place.
- Design ministries to benefit the entire community; both the believers and nonbelievers alike.
- Encourage members to become involved in the community by serving on boards, committees, and other volunteer work.
- Engage in a positive public relations campaign that brings attention to your work and creates a good image.
- Become a member of local business and community clubs (i.e. Rotary, Kiwanis, Red Cross, YMCA, Boy & Girls Clubs, Scouting etc.).
- Play by the rules. Obey the laws of the land.
- If you chose to fight the system, be prepared for a rough ride.

Personal Notes and Thoughts

Getting Help

There will be a time in the career of every pastor when he or she says, “Help!” This is when being part of a fellowship is beneficial. The NWMN is here to help. It has the resources and infrastructure to assist pastors when they need it. Whether it’s a family or marriage in crisis or a real estate transaction, the NWMN provides support and assistance. In seeking help, a pastor must understand a few principles:

- The individual pastor must be knowledgeable and aware of the services NWMN provides.
- The individual pastor must be connected to other NWMN pastors in his or her local area.
- Understand that the resources of NWMN may be limited in providing services to a large number of members spread over a large area.
- The NWMN can provide support but the real, hard work of seeing a problem through lies with the individual.
- The NWMN and other pastors can’t know there is a crisis if no one tells them. Pastors who need help should let others know.

In getting help, consider the following resources:

- The NWMN executive officers, ministry team leaders and staff
- Local NWMN presbyter
- Regional NWMN executive presbyter
- Colleagues and other ministers in your local area
- Church Board, elders, or trustees in your local church
- God’s Word

- Trusted brothers and sisters in Christ – spouses, relatives, and close friends
- Christian legal counsel or advisors

In the space below, write down the name of who you can contact if you need help and his or her phone number.

Contact at the NWMN:

Name _____ Phone: _____

Local NWMN Presbyter:

Name _____ Phone: _____

Trusted pastor in your local area:

Name _____ Phone: _____

Church Elder, Deacon, Board Member, or Trustee:

Name _____ Phone: _____

Close friend in Christ (if not above):

Name _____ Phone: _____

Other trusted individual:

Name _____ Phone: _____