

MODERN-DAY MOSES MENTALITY:
APPLYING MOSES' CALL AND RESPONSES TO GOD AND GOD'S CALL TO MODERN
PEOPLE AND THEIR CONCERNS, DESIRES, AND MOTIVATIONS FOR PASTORAL
MINISTRY AND OTHER CAREERS

BY

ELI E. STEINBRENNER

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY

PROF. BILL J. TACKMIER, ADVISOR

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

MEQUON, WI

FEBRUARY 15, 2024

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ABSTRACT

This paper was written with two main goals. The first goal is to find ways to encourage our young students who are thinking about ministry, and even those who are not, in an efficient way that spotlights God's responses to Moses', who declines and does not want to be called by God. The second goal of this writing is for my own personal encouragement on this same topic. Even after six years of pastoral training, a specialized vicar year experience, and the beginning of my eighth and final year of study, I have been faced with doubts and hesitations of my own. It is difficult to go through such a rigorous program without wondering if the gifts are there or if pastoral ministry is something I can do full-time. I hope to find the answers to my objections which will hopefully put me in a better position to address the doubts and hesitations of others.

INTRODUCTION

The question has been asked, “Have you ever considered going to Martin Luther College (MLC) and studying to be a pastor?” to countless young men as they interact with teachers, pastors, and wonderful lay members who see their potential. I know this question gets brought up often because I have heard it asked multiple times to my classmates and those above and below me in school. I too have been asked this question in various forms over the years until I made it far enough into the program where it no longer felt relevant to ask.

There are many options for young people to consider as they think about what they want to do with their professional lives. While pastoral ministry might be one of those options for them, they are also being encouraged to go other routes by different recruiters or by family members and friends who have found success in a different field. What can the young man possibly do with all of this information? How does someone respond to a question like this?

As with many questions, the contributing factors can be limitless: financial doubts, locational hesitancy, range of gifts, etc. As I heard the question asked more and heard others respond as I have responded, I started noticing themes. Many people would reply with their fear of public speaking, recounting the times when they were forced up in front of a group of people and they froze. They couldn’t do it because they felt as if they lacked the skills to be a public speaker. Others responded jokingly as they wondered who would ever be sane enough to sit in a pew and listen to them talk about serious matters. Others, still, emphasized their hesitation with

the training: It's too much school. They aren't good with the languages. They wouldn't know what to say when they finally made it into the pulpit.

With just that simple question, "Have you ever considered pastoral ministry?" the doors of negativity have opened. The insecurities start to show. Their discouraged hearts come to the forefront. The God-given abilities they possess are placed on the dirt floor due to fear and anxiety. The more I heard these responses, the more I was reminded of a man who lived long before we were born. A man who was born in a time of persecution and oppression and yet in a time when his clan, relatives, and friends were forced into labor. He, through God's grace, was led to be in a position of royalty. The man of whom I speak is Moses.

A strange comparison can be drawn between Moses and the high school student who gets asked the aforementioned question. Moses responds similarly to how the students responded: "Who am I that I should go" (Exod 3:11;ESV) . "What shall I say to them?" (Exod 3:13). "They will not believe me or listen to my voice" (Exod 4:1). and "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue" (Exod 4:10). Moses' concerns are eerily similar to people whom I have heard responding to this question as well as the same responses I offered as I deliberated where to go and what to do with my own life.

Finally, Moses gets to the real root of his hesitancy, "But he said, 'Oh, my Lord, please send someone else'" (Exod 4:13). After he has exhausted all of his other possible excuses, he answers with the curtains hiding his attitude pulled back. Moses doesn't want to go and do that which God has called him to do.

Statement of Concern

The purpose of this paper is to examine the similarities between Moses, his responses, attitudes, and motivation, and compare them to the responses, attitudes, and motivation of the students who contemplate whether or not to pursue pastoral ministry as a career option. The number of candidates at pastoral training schools seem to undershoot the need for pastors in the field, and it has much to do with the fact that fewer people view pastoral ministry as a viable career option for them.¹ I seek to evaluate that problem, and after an investigation of Moses' responses, and various secular career guidance resources, I hope to reach a conclusion as to how this issue can be addressed appropriately and effectively.

1. Questionnaire Response: Evan Chartrand and Joel Thomford.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are two parts to this paper. The first part is a brief look at Moses' call in Exodus, his responses to God, and God's responses to Moses' responses. I will give a brief evaluation of the sources used in covering this portion of my research for the sake of further study. The sources consisted mainly of devotional and exegetical commentaries as well as simple notes that cover this specific area of Scripture.

From Egypt to Sinai

Paul S. Meitner's devotional commentary on Exodus was a great asset for me as I worked through the key points of Moses' call in Exodus. He offered concise commentary and real-time practical application for ministry today. Included in his commentary is a short prayer and selected hymn verses from the Christian Worship Hymnal to add additional devotional thoughts.

One of the great strengths of Meitner's book is the simplicity and easy-to-follow flow of thought. It was not difficult to know where in the story his points were applicable. He also broke down the sections in appropriate places and offered helpful verses from other books of the Bible. His content was not incredibly complex or profound, which made it a powerful tool for locating important verses and thoughts. I would recommend this resource to not only pastors but any individual who is seeking to further their study of Moses as well as those seeking out devotional resources. He offered plenty of encouraging thoughts alongside the commentary portions which

related to the text at hand. I found this book to be incredibly encouraging and served as an aid as I used it to combat my own self-doubts.

Deliver Us

R. Reed Lessing's commentary was another effective resource for me as I evaluated the beginning great story of trust and love in Exodus. Though his format is simple and functions more like a devotional book, it offers valuable insight into the focused text verses. Much like Meitner's commentary, Lessing's was broken down by appropriate verses, leaving room for proper application. As you read through the chapters, you find yourself being edified by light-hearted prose and devotional nuggets that stem from the Scripture. *Deliver Us* offers powerful faith-strengthening comments from Scripture and fairly uses the designated verses to form well-thought-out content. I would recommend this resource for a devotional book. It is an uplifting resource that puts life as a Christian and ministry into a positive perspective.

Exodus Hamilton

Victor Hamilton's exegetical commentary served as the more profound resource for this paper. He presents his arguments well and dove very deeply into the matters he discussed. Each chapter has a group of selected verses that will be covered. Within the chapter itself, he went verse by verse, except when it was more efficient to cover larger sections together due to common themes. At the beginning of each chapter, he offered linguistic and grammatical notes along with his own translation. This resource proved to be helpful due to the amount of

information provided. Not only does he reference Scripture from other parts of the Bible, but he transliterated the Hebrew word he focused on to allow for specific application.

Exodus was incredibly helpful but might be a bit “too much” for people who are not used to this format and reading the exegetical style of commentary. His page economy is really good, but that causes some of his sentences to be difficult to understand without a greater context.

Exodus Stuart

Douglas Stuart’s commentary on Exodus was the second resource consulted for the sake of getting both devotional and exegetical input. It served as a secondary exegetical commentary. It operated the same way as Hamilton’s and gave deep cultural and grammatical information very frequently. He referenced other verses of Scripture that applied well to his point.

There was much that I appreciated concerning the specific verses I covered in this paper, but his interpretation of Moses’ attitude varied from mine and the other commentaries I consulted. Since Moses’ attitude is not explicitly described in Scripture, it leaves room for interpretation, but I did not find myself agreeing with all that he said regarding Moses’ responses.

Evangelical Heritage Version Bible Study Notes

The Evangelical Heritage Version Bible Study Notes (EHV Study Notes) give clarity to tough verses and offer potential translations while even clearing up confusing cultural nuances. It is a handy tool to have available while reading through the Bible because it pulls out important

details that could be easy to pass over. I consulted the EHV Study Notes on many occasions as I read through Exodus to get a summarized packet of valuable information.

Exodus, The People's Bible

The *People's Bible* commentaries have long been a favorite of mine. It is easy to find practical information that pertains to the text. Ernst Wendland's *People's Bible* volume on Exodus operates under the same format as a normal commentary where it takes one chunk of Scripture at a time and offers a clear and efficient walkthrough. It is simple to read and understand, making it a good informant for all groups of people looking to gain insight from the text.

The sources I consulted to gain a “worldly” perspective on how secular career counselors address the topic of choosing a career varied dramatically. Each author took their own path in achieving ways of inspiring their readers to find purpose, feel satisfied, and achieve stability in life, emotionally and financially. In this brief section of the paper, I will give a short survey of the resources read to establish a framework for where motivation for a non-pastoral career comes from. Many of these books were considered on the basis of consensus for being high-quality and applicable sources of information as listed on multiple online websites.²

2. <https://classrooms.com/the-8-best-books-for-choosing-a-career/#:~:text=The%208%20Best%20Books%20for%20Choosing%20a%20Career,for%20That%3F%20by%20Jo%20Stewart%20...%20More%20items> / <https://teambuilding.com/blog/career-books/> / <https://www.careeraddict.com/career-books>

I Can Get Paid for That?

My list consisted of well-crafted literature that offered large amounts of information as well as short, vastly opinionated, pieces of literature that offered very little to consider other than general perspective. This resource falls under the latter category. Jo Stewart compiled a list of careers that are out of the ordinary so that people may be able to live a more entertaining life. Its main goal is to give people an alternative to the modern understanding of work and profession. Included in the list of professions are “fun” and “exciting” options that are usually not considered when formulating a plan for the future. The list of 99 careers included in this book follows the same formula. There is an optimistic window into what this job entails and all of the wonderful things that happen on said job site. Following the synopsis, there is a “lowdown” note. The lowdown note is essentially what is required for the career. It includes: 1) Education/qualifications, 2) Experience required, 3) Training, and 4) Potential Restrictions. This gives the reader the bare minimum requirements to access this field. Some jobs contain a longer list of prerequisites, but the common theme is simplicity. Many of the careers are designed to give large payouts, with little to no work put in prior to employment as well as during employment. This is a clear representation of how people approach a career nowadays. There is the idea that people should do what they want, get paid for it, and not expect to “WORK” to accomplish or achieve it. Stewart’s book plays into the absurdity to a degree. This is written to give a realistic list, but many of them exhibit a non-practical and non-sustainable reality (Clown

Doctor, Doll Doctor, Professional Reader),³ even though practicality is addressed in the introduction of this book.

I Can Get Paid For That is not a book in which a troubled mind can find solace. If there is doubt in finding a career an individual is passionate about, they will only find temporary fixes at best and a life riddled with disappointment at worst. Reading through this book only causes my concern for pastoral motivation to grow. The main goal of the book seems to contradict work ethic and the sense of duty people have to work essential jobs that aren't optional.

The Power Of Purpose

The purpose of this book is, to no surprise to the readers, to find purpose. Leider begins his introduction with a fitting discourse: “Purpose. Your Aim. Your reason for being. Your reason for getting up in the morning. Every one of us needs a reason to get up in the morning.”⁴ He is giving answers to the very questions found in many wandering minds: Who am I? What was I meant to do with my life? What is the goal of my existence?⁵

As Leider begins elaborating on both sets of the aforementioned questions, he digs into how an individual finds a “calling”. Much of what he says sounds good.⁶ Many people express that their purpose is to bring some good into the world through ways that benefit the doer and the rest of the population, present and future. What he fails to acknowledge is the flexibility of how

3. Jo Stewart, *I Can Get Paid For That?* (Australia: Melbourne: Smith Street Books, 2018), 46-47, 80-81, 162-163.

4. Richard J. Leider, *The Power of Purpose* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, Inc., 1997), 1.

5. Leider, *The Power of Purpose*, 2.

6. Leider, *The Power of Purpose*, 26.

the statements he makes can be subject to interpretation by the individual's subjective view of how "good" represents itself in reality.

The Power of Purpose offers good insight into how one can view the purpose they are searching for in their life, but it can't be the only place to look. There are many things to consider in Leider's book, but the dive into gathering a proper understanding cannot remain with this source alone.

What Color Is Your Parachute?

What Color Is Your Parachute is one of the most commonly consulted resources for those who are looking for guidance in their professional life. In it, there are multiple guides and exercises that help the reader visualize the content on which they are reading.⁷ This helps the reader take personalized notes and write the answers to the questions proposed in this book. It is clear as to why this book is a national favorite. They are constantly updating and revising the content to make sure it remains relevant as times and careers change.⁸ This resource, along with the majority of career searching resources, offers the idea that one should find and enjoy what makes them feel good and fulfills their life mission while still fitting their passions.⁹

The approach taken is extremely methodical and repetitive. I think this is an advantage because people might not read cover-to-cover, but instead search for the section they feel to be the most relevant. Due to the repetitive nature, the key points are recorded in many of the major

7. Richard N. Bolles. *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, (New York City: Ten Speed Press, 2021), 60-1, 80, 111 – 87, 304.

8. Bolles, *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, 2.

9. Bolles, *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, 3.

sections and listed in multiple ways. *What Color Is Your Parachute* is a very reasonable source when searching for guidance because of its constantly updated editions. Not only does it give simple and practical advice, but it also offers light taps of humor and encouragement to help ease the stress one might feel when searching for a career. Richard Bolles and Katharine Brooks have earned their position as “One of the all-time 100 best nonfiction books”¹⁰ by offering quality material to the reader, though caution should still be utilized so as to not fall into the malaise of optimism and assume every career, though fitting their mold, is a good and God-pleasing vocation.

10. As stated on the cover

CONSIDERING THE ISSUE OF MOTIVATION FOR MINISTRY

I believe there are a few reasons as to why it appears as if fewer and fewer young men consider pastoral ministry. I think the three main reasons are: 1) outside influence that draws them away from considering public ministry in the first place by enticing them with unrealistic advice and expectations, 2) the ways our pastors, those training to become pastors, pastor's wives, and all of those involved in current ministry, speak about this profession, and 3) family and friends who encourage them to seek out familiar worldly successful careers instead of ministry. I am not expressing that all people should become called workers and, more specifically, all young men become pastors. I am not advocating that all people drop what they are doing and begin studying for pastoral ministry because they ought to as men of God. I understand that there are clear qualifications for ministry laid out in 1 Tim 3:3-7 and Titus 1:5-9, which significantly explain what is needed to be a called worker. I understand and am proud of all of the other God-pleasing vocations out in the workforce. Without their labors, we could not have a functioning society, but during this time of a pastoral shortage, I think these factors should be addressed in the most caring and effective way possible.

A BRIEF LOOK AT SELECTED VERSES OF EXODUS 3 AND 4

As the topic of motivation for ministry is brought up, Moses' call is something that needs to be considered, not only for uncovering the true attitudes and motivations of people who turn down offers for pastoral ministry, but also for learning from how God speaks to Moses as he shares his concerns, his fears, and his true attitude towards his call given to him by God and where that can be applied to our current situation.

In this section of the paper, there will be a brief exegesis on the selected verses containing God's call, Moses' answers, God's responses to Moses' answers, and various passages that are relevant to our topic in Exodus, chapters three and four.

Exodus 3:7-9

⁷ And the LORD said, "I have certainly seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their outcry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. ⁸ So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite. ⁹ And now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them."¹¹

11. *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 2020), Ex 3:7–9.

It is by no means a rare occurrence to hear people write or speak about God as if he has changed since the times of the Bible. The Old Testament God is not the same God of the New Testament God in the minds of people who only view Scripture through their personal presuppositions. This section of verses is just one of many examples where God's intentions are clear and his attitude towards his beloved children is brought to light. This section is what ushers in our specific text, so it is worth a quick look.

God wants to rescue his people. This is true regarding the bondage of sin, this is true of people being persecuted for their faith, and this is true of people enslaved by other evil people, such as the Egyptians. It is also true that God does not exist without knowing what is going on within his creation. God sees, he hears, and he knows all things. In these verses, we clearly see God's active interest and involvement in the people of Israel as they call out to him. He knows their sufferings (7) and has come specifically to rescue them (8). "YAHWEH employs six first-person singular pronouns in these verses – accenting that the power of redemption rests in Him, not in Moses and certainly not in Israel."¹² God is cluing us into himself being the clear subject and source of salvation. This is the message that God wishes to pass along through Moses for all of the world to know, and specifically for the Israelites living in captivity to know and experience first-hand.

12. Reed R. Lessing, *Deliver Us: God's Rescue Story in Exodus*. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2022), 55.

Exodus 3:10

¹⁰ And now come, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.”¹³

We begin with God’s simple call to Moses. God reveals himself to Moses in the same way he was revealed to us, through the Word. God spoke to Moses in a different way than he speaks to you and me, but his Word is the means which he uses to transfer his message and, ultimately, faith and the forgiveness of sins. Here, we see “the infinite God is making himself known to finite creatures through the means of his Word.”¹⁴ God makes it clear as to where he wishes to be found, and yet, there are still those who “find God” in places where God does not wish to be found. There are any number of religions that sprout from a mis-location of God whether that be in nature, in man-made laws and regulations, or false prophets spouting heresy. This is folly and a result of sinful people following their unbelieving hearts in pursuit of a greater understanding.¹⁵

This is not the case in Moses’ instance. God comes specifically to Moses in the form of a burning bush and speaks words that can be understood psychologically by Moses.¹⁶ God sought to be found by Moses at the burning bush and he seeks to be found by us in the pages of Scripture, where we can see and hear him speaking to us through his Word. God could have done all of this on his own, without using Moses, but that is not how God chooses to operate, and he

13. *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 2020), Ex 3:10.

14. Paul S. Meitner, *From Egypt to Sinai* (WI: Northwestern, 2022), 20.

15. Meitner, *From Egypt to Sinai*, 20.

16. Exod 3:2-4:17

rarely does operate so unilaterally. “The Scriptural pattern seems to be God using people to reach people.”¹⁷

Exodus 3:11

¹¹ But Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?”¹⁸

God has just called Moses to do something amazing, something people have been looking forward to. All of this slavery is coming to an end, the mistreatment of his fellow people, family and friends will be over, freedom from harsh labor, and a new page for Israel is to be turned. This is great news! Yet, “this news did not thrill Moses.”¹⁹ Moses starts to answer God’s call, beginning with hesitation. Not only hesitation it seems, but it appears as if Moses is displeased with God’s decision for him. He wants all of these events to transpire, but he doesn’t want to be the means by which God causes them to transpire.

Moses is not outright declining God’s call at this time, but he begins, here, his discourse in which he passes along his lack of desire to serve as God’s designated mouthpiece. It is here we begin to see Moses’ real attitude coming to the foreground, which will be solidified in later verses. This is the first of five excuses Moses offers to God as a way to escape the responsibility

17. Victor Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 58.

18. *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 2020), Ex 3:11.

19. Meitner, *From Egypt to Sinai*, 22.

of this call.²⁰ He is asking the wrong question. He is focused on himself, rather than the mission at hand, and more importantly, on the one sending him on the mission, God.²¹

There could also be traces of Moses' previous attempts²² to save one of his people, which poison his current view of God's call. It takes a lot of separation from previous humiliation, to allow oneself to get past those prior failures. Moses could be recounting these memories as God is speaking to him regarding the mission at hand.²³ It would be hard to forget times when those failures included murder and the escape of punishment from the ruler. Those very real memories are likely in Moses' mind at this moment.

Moses' response has cultivated a few varying perspectives on the true intentions of these words. Moses' question, "Who am I?"²⁴ could have a cultural spin in which the meaning in our context would need to be taken into account. Douglas Stuart suggests that "Moses' question ... is a pro forma question, not an expression of actual lack of self-confidence. At this point at least, he was not trying to get out of the job Yahweh was calling him to perform but was being mannerly according to the dictates of his culture."²⁵ If this is true, it would indicate that Moses was not expressing his dissatisfaction towards God's call, but rather showing respect that God would request such an unworthy man for this important task.

20. Hamilton, *Exodus*, 58.

21. Lessing, *Deliver Us*, 58.

22. Exod 2:11-15.

23. Hamilton, *Exodus*, 58.

24. Exod 3:14

25. Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*. Vol. 2 of *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 118.

There are a few other locations in which this type of structured response appears in the Bible, both involving the man after God's own heart, David.²⁶ In both cases, David is expressing his humility and unworthiness to have been selected, to be the son-in-law of Saul, the king of Israel, and God having established a covenant with David and promised him that his line will not depart from the throne. In these cases, David is clearly demonstrating his humility and offering respect to the one who has chosen him, Saul and God.

Though the wording is similar to Moses' call in Exodus chapter three, the mood presented appears to be different. David did not end up refusing the offer to be Saul's son-in-law nor did he turn down the promise God made to him, but Moses did. He follows the same stream, growing in rejection starting from this initial response. It is possible to interpret "Who am I?" as an expression of humility and gratitude as it stands grammatically, as with David, but it doesn't fit as well in this context, especially keeping the end result in mind. Whether or not Moses is being humble or beginning to offer his displeasure, he has not accepted God's call at this moment and has opted to postpone his answer until later.

Here, also, lies one of the more common responses from young men who deliberate public ministry. Our modern-day youths struggle with the acknowledgment that God calls sinful and flawed people to be his mouthpieces and serve as leaders in the church, so they offer this as a response, "Who am I that God would choose me?" We can ask the same questions we ask of Moses; is this a response spoken out of humility and respect for the call, or the beginning of one's path to turn down the call, as if this is a more polite way of saying, "Stop asking me about this anymore."

26. 1 Sam 18:18 and 2 Sam 7:18.

Exodus 3:12

12 And He said, “Assuredly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain.”²⁷

God responds with something incredibly important, regardless of whether Moses was showing humility or displeasure. God responds with gospel reassurance. “He even gives Moses a sign as a pledge. “On this same mountain,” God promises, “you will worship me!” It was at this very same place that Israel was to receive God’s law as his very own covenant people.”²⁸ God is also speaking in the plural, to not just Moses, but the whole group of people he is leading out of Egypt.

‘And this shall be a sign to *you* [singular], that it is I who have sent *you* [singular]: when *you* [singular] have brought the people out of Egypt, *you* [plural] shall serve God on this mountain.’ The first three uses of *you* in this verse are singular. They refer to Moses. The last *you* is plural. It refers to the Israelites. What’s true of Moses will soon be true for Israel. The entire nation will worship God on Mount Sinai.²⁹

Additionally, God, speaking in this manner, encourages us to take Moses’ previous response as one done for the sake of avoiding the call as opposed to humility. God knows there is fear in Moses’ heart, but “God’s response to fear(fulness) is not to explain it away as illusory, but to replace it with another, more powerful belief: trust in his presence.”³⁰

27. *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 2020), Ex 3:12.

28. E. H. Wendland, *Exodus*. 2nd ed. *The People’s Bible* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern, 2000), 22.

29. Lessing, *Deliver Us*, 58. (ESV), emphasis added by Lessing.

30. Hamilton, *Exodus*, 59.

Ministry is not something that will be a walk in the park, but God promises to be right there alongside those he has called, working in them and through them to accomplish his will. I can imagine that Moses was calling this promise to mind as he confronted Pharaoh and as he was in the thick of it as plagues raged around him. Even though Moses is doubting and beginning to find ways out of his call, God still pours on him gospel comfort and gospel encouragement.

Exodus 3:13

¹³ Then Moses said to God, “Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?”³¹

A call presumes that someone has issued the call. Moses, here, is asking a fair question. He wants to know exactly who is the one issuing this call and how he can verify this to the people who are supposed to follow him. Moses knows he is going to need something, proof or evidence, that would cause people to pick up their lives and risk upsetting the ruler. Who would they possibly gather behind? “What shall I say to them?” is perfectly reasonable. At the same time, however, Moses seems to be asking for his own benefit. “He moves from ‘Who am I?’ in v.11 to ‘Who are you’ in v. 13. I like the way the NIV begins v. 13 with ‘Suppose I go,’ as if Moses has said to God, ‘I’m not saying I’m going; I’m speaking only hypothetically, for argument’s sake.’”³²

31. *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 2020), Ex 3:13.

32. Hamilton, *Exodus*, 63.

It is true that Moses' time was riddled with the same style of religion we still see remaining today. Pagan religions riddled the lands and extended their reach to Egypt, where the Israelites were living. "Moses therefore wondered Which God am I speaking to? since "the God of your fathers" (a summation of v. 6) might have different meanings to different Israelites."³³ Not only are these people influenced by other nations and their gods, but "Moses also hasn't been back to Egypt for 40 years."³⁴ Who would possibly place all of their trust in someone they have just met or haven't seen since they were a young man, and one who has been raised in the palace like the son of Pharaoh?³⁵

Exodus 3:14

*¹⁴ And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "This is what you shall say to the sons of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"*³⁶

Moses questions what he should say and who is the one issuing this call, and God responds with comfort, yet again. God responds in a noteworthy way, by giving Moses his name, the expression of who he [God] is, and what he is all about. God gives Moses the name that later would cause people to cut it out of their vocabulary for fear of misusing it, and yet he gives it to

33. Stuart, *Exodus*, 120.

34. Wendland, *Exodus*, 23.

35. Exod 2:10.

36. *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 2020), Ex 3:14.

Moses, someone who is in the process of building up to ultimately try to reject God's call, even among all of the comfort and encouragement God had sent his way.

This mentioning of the LORD's name is the first appearance of it in the book of Exodus. Some have suggested that it was a literary device in order for the reader to receive the impression of how paganized the nation of Israel, and Moses himself, had become,³⁷ but it could also be for the sole purpose of drawing out this incredible expression of God's love to someone who doesn't deserve it.

How incredible is this expression of the gospel to Moses? God is giving Moses a look into who God is and how God will be throughout this call. God is revealing to him everything he needs to know about who the LORD is.

I AM – he is the God of absolute independence. He exists apart from any force or power and yet all life and power came through him and by him. I AM – he is the God of absolute constancy. He does not change like shifting shadows. Though humanity is faithless after the fall, after the flood, God keeps his Word. I AM – he is the God of free and faithful grace. He saves not because he has to or because there is something in us that causes him to but because he wants to. This is the God who approached Adam and Eve in their sin with promise of grace. This is the one who called Abraham to follow him. I AM – he is the God of creation and providence. All things come from him and abide through him. But there is one last and important point of I AM – he is personal. He is not a force. He is a personal being who seeks union and communion with persons. No imposter would know this but only a true prophet sent from the presence of the LORD.³⁸

Moses is receiving the full understanding of God. As he stands in hesitation, he is being bombarded by gospel promises. That is the name who he is to say sent him, not a fake god made of wood or clay, but the God who upholds the universe, who cares for each and every one of his children, who will stand by his people, and who will never abandon those he calls to be his servants. Moses will experience what the Lord's name means for himself. There is likely

37. Stuart, *Exodus*, 120-21.

38. Meitner, *From Egypt to Sinai*, 24.

darkness and doubt shrouding his hesitant mind. Because of that God is explaining to him that not only is there a list of things for Moses to rely on and the sure promises he offers, but God is demonstrating that, “‘I am what you will discover Me to be.’ The meaning of God’s name will unfold chapter by chapter, plague by plague, miracle by miracle. New aspects of God’s name play out in this book.”³⁹

Exodus 4:1

*¹ Then Moses said, “What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, ‘The LORD has not appeared to you.’ ”*⁴⁰

Moses, again, is asking a question that bursts from his insecurities and stems from his apprehension to go through with this call. Earlier, Moses was expressing doubt and maybe a hint of humility as well, but here, he is more concerned about results. His mission is to go to a nation of people and to the powerful leader of the land and speak to them, ultimately freeing this huge mass of Israelites. He is clinging tightly to his uncertainty, for who wants to go on a mission that looks like it has a low success rate? Who wants to put their life on the line for something that looks like it is going to fail? The probability of this ending the way it is supposed to is not very high. God even told him that Pharoah would not let this go without desperate measures, so how can he, a mere shepherd, stand against a powerful ruler? How quickly God’s name must have faded in his mind.

39. Lessing, *Deliver Us*, 60.

40. *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 2020), Ex 4:1.

In Moses' mind, "The Lord's guaranteed promise in 3:18 that the Hebrews in Egypt will listen to Moses does not cut it with Moses."⁴¹, nor was the promise of an ever-vigilant God to be at his side constantly. Moses held on to his doubts.

Exodus 4:2-9

² The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" And he said, "A staff." ³ Then He said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it turned into a serpent; and Moses fled from it. ⁴ But the LORD said to Moses, "Reach out with your hand and grasp it by its tail"—so he reached out with his hand and caught it, and it turned into a staff in his hand—⁵ "so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."

⁶ The LORD furthermore said to him, "Now put your hand inside the fold of your robe." So he put his hand inside the fold, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. ⁷ Then He said, "Put your hand inside the fold of your robe again." So he put his hand into the fold again, and when he took it out of the fold, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. ⁸ "So if they will not believe you nor pay attention to the evidence of the first sign, they may believe the evidence of the last sign. ⁹ But if they will not believe even these two signs nor pay attention to what you say, then you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground; and the water which you take from the Nile will turn into blood on the dry ground."⁴²

As if the earlier promises weren't enough for Moses, as if the words from an almighty God weren't enough for a mere flawed murderer, God gives him more. "He doesn't believe dropping the name 'I AM' to Israel's elders will get him very far."⁴³ God does not respond in frustration or rebuke, but the continued theme of compassion. This time God gives him proof he

41. Hamilton, *Exodus*, 70.

42. *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 2020), Ex 4:2–9.

43. Lessing, *Deliver Us*, 61.

can see with his eyes and feel with his own hands. “The LORD meets Moses’ reluctance with not one miracle, not two miracles, but three!”⁴⁴

In giving these signs to/through Moses, God does not guarantee that their observance will erase all skepticism. He simply says in v. 8-9, ‘Should they not believe you, . . . should they not believe either of these signs.’ God does not let Moses know ahead of time about the eventual response of the people. He keeps the results to himself, and leaves Moses hanging in faith.⁴⁵

God has already promised the outcome and guaranteed the results Moses was concerned about, and now Moses has seen with his own eyes, as if the burning bush were not enough for him, the power of God that would accompany him.

Exodus 4:10

¹⁰ Then Moses said to the LORD, “Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.”⁴⁶

Now that God has discredited all of what he has said so far, “Moses could no longer use Pharaoh’s obstinance or the Israelite’s reluctance as excuses to release him from his call. That left only one excuse – Moses himself.”⁴⁷ Moses seems to have forgotten to whom he is speaking since the creator of his mouth is ablaze before him.

44. Meitner, *From Egypt to Sinai*, 26.

45. Hamilton, *Exodus*, 71.

46. *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 2020), Ex 4:10.

47. Meitner, *From Egypt to Sinai*, 26.

Why would Moses bring this point up now? What could have been going through his mind? Victor Hamilton points to four possible explanations for this comment:

“(1) It is simply another excuse, another attempt to evade God’s will for his life; (2) he suffers from some kind of speech defect, either congenital or through injury; (3) it is difficult for Moses to express himself in Hebrew, given his lengthy residence in Egypt and Midian; (4) his apprehension will surely manifest itself when he has to speak in front of people with an embarrassingly quivering voice. Or maybe it is some kind of combination of the four.”⁴⁸

It could be any number of reasons as to why Moses brings this up, but the fact of the matter remains true, he doesn’t want to go.

Exodus 4:11-12

¹¹ But the LORD said to him, “Who has made the human mouth? Or who makes anyone unable to speak or deaf, or able to see or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? ¹² Now then go, and I Myself will be with your mouth, and instruct you in what you are to say.”⁴⁹

Who knew Moses better than the LORD? Who understood Moses’ capabilities better than the Creator of the universe and the one who knit baby Moses in the womb of his mother? Who brought forth his lips, gave his tongue muscle fibers, and granted him vocal cords? “What poppycock in the ears of the LORD!”⁵⁰ is the only proper response to what Moses speaks to God. Of all the excuses he brought forth and offered as a means to get out of his call, this one is by far the worst, and yet God still, even after this blatant disrespect, speaks to him and gives him more

48. Hamilton, *Exodus*, 73.

49. *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 2020), Ex 4:11–12.

50. Meitner, *From Egypt to Sinai*, 26.

comfort, “I myself will be with your mouth.”⁵¹ God could have easily fixed any sort of speech impediment that Moses had been carrying, but instead, he offered to instruct him and to be his mouth for him. It is a wonderful comfort for those who act as God’s mouthpieces today. God uses flawed people to accomplish his will and to spread his message. “God employs Moses – and us – warts and all.”⁵² God doesn’t need to correct our flaws for his message to be effective. He works through broken-down people and demonstrates even more so, that his love is for all. The more broken we are, the more loving God is.⁵³

Exodus 4:13

*¹³ But he said, “Please, Lord, now send the message by whomever You will.”*⁵⁴

Here lies the root of all Moses’ previous responses. “Moses’ earlier objections were a smoke screen. He was never interested in the job.”⁵⁵ There are multiple different translations for this remark which fit the overall meaning more appropriately than the NASB2020 mentioned above, such as “But he said, ‘Please, LORD, send someone else,’”⁵⁶ “But Moses said, ‘Pardon

51. Exod 4:12.

52. Lessing, *Deliver Us*, 62.

53. 2 Cor 4:7-9.

54. *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 2020), Ex 4:13.

55. Lessing, *Deliver Us*, 62.

56. Holy Bible: Evangelical Heritage Version (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern, 2019), Ex 4:13.

your servant, Lord. Please send someone else,”⁵⁷ which better encapsulates the unwillingness that exudes from God’s chosen spokesman. Moses doesn’t want to go. He knows the importance of this call and yet tells God to take his pitch and send it someone else’s way.

It doesn’t sound like Moses is intentionally disrespecting God, quite the contrary. He is offering his rejection in the politest way possible. He is saying, “I don’t want to do it” but worded as neutrally and non-offensively as possible. The same sort of sense might be implied in English by: “With all due respect, sir, you must know someone who’s available to send.”⁵⁸

This is Moses’ last statement of rejection to God’s call, and it has some resemblance to God’s statement earlier, ⁵⁹ “I AM WHO I AM” or as some commentators take it, “I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE.” Moses responds with “Send whom you will send.” ⁶⁰ Moses eventually does take God’s call, though not without the hesitancy we have seen in these last few verses. He will later write about himself and his heightened state of humility.⁶¹ Being humble is one thing, and a God-pleasing thing at that, but that should not overcome our hearts and minds and lead us to formulate ways of escaping God’s calls simply because we believe others to be greater or better suited for the task than we are. We see Moses doing that very thing here. He doesn’t want to go, but he also is stepping behind his humility as he uses it as a means to rid himself of this responsibility.

57. *The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ex 4:13.

58. Stuart, *Exodus*, 136.

59. Exod 3:14.

60. Hamilton, *Exodus*, 76.

61. Num 12:3.

Exodus 4:14-20

¹⁴ Then the anger of the LORD burned against Moses, and He said, “Is there not your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he speaks fluently. And moreover, behold, he is coming out to meet you; when he sees you, he will be overjoyed. ¹⁵ So you are to speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I Myself will be with your mouth and his mouth, and I will instruct you in what you are to do. ¹⁶ He shall speak for you to the people; and he will be as a mouth for you and you will be as God to him. ¹⁷ And you shall take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs.”

¹⁸ Then Moses departed and returned to his father-in-law Jethro, and said to him, “Please, let me go, that I may return to my brothers who are in Egypt, and see if they are still alive.” And Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.” ¹⁹ Now the LORD said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead.” ²⁰ So Moses took his wife and his sons and mounted them on a donkey, and returned to the land of Egypt. Moses also took the staff of God in his hand.⁶²

“For the first time in this dialogue, God gets upset”⁶³ in fact, this is the first time in the Bible when God is said to get angry at any individual.⁶⁴ We have seen response after response from God, exuding nothing but grace, compassion, patience, understanding, and encouragement, until now, when we see God’s patience coming to an end. It was excuse after excuse from Moses, focusing on *his* weaknesses and looking at *his* desire to follow through, while keeping *his* outlook on the situation at hand. Moses had been the first prophet to whom God gave special powers. Moses is to no longer be looking at *his* problems and insecurities, but rather trust in the assurance God has given to him and rely on the words God sent him to deliver to the Israelites and to Pharaoh.⁶⁵

62. *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 2020), Ex 4:14–20.

63. Lessing, *Deliver Us*, 62.

64. Hamilton, *Exodus*, 76.

65. The Wartburg Project, *Holy Bible: Evangelical Heritage Version Study Bible* (Midland, MI: Northwestern; Wartburg Project, 2019), Ex 4:14.

A LOOK AT DIFFERENCES IN CALL

This short section will serve as an acknowledgment of the differences between Moses' call and the call extended to pastors in the 21st century. It is foundational to the discussion that the WELS definition of the term "call" be understood when talking further on this matter and throughout the paper. Moses was called by the LORD directly, which we would speak of as an "immediate" or "direct" call from God. The Almighty King came to call his servants in a very personal and comprehensible way, as with Moses, Isaiah, Paul, and the apostles.⁶⁶ These calls are clearly divine calls because God himself issued the call in his very own words.

The call issued to our current pastors is slightly different. The validity is the same, and the source is the same, but how the call is issued, varies. Whether it is a church, a group of congregants who calls, a school, or a board, the call is issued in the name of the Lord who promises to be present throughout the process.⁶⁷ God is still the one who calls his shepherds.⁶⁸ "He [God] is the one who calls. The church is the body through whom the Lord calls."⁶⁹ The LORD calls us into service and at the same time promises to be with us. Not stopping there, but just as with Moses, he has promised to equip us and has promised that the end is sure.⁷⁰ It is

66. Armin W. Schuetze, *Church-Mission-Ministry, The Family of God from the People's Bible Teachings*. (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern, 1997), 107.

67. Matt 18:20, Isa 58:11

68. Acts 20:28.

69. Schuetze, *Church-Mission-Ministry*, 110.

70. Meitner, *From Egypt to Sinai*, 23.

because of these promises that we can confidently say, “What Jesus did for Israel in the past, He will do for you today.”⁷¹

God calls our current pastors with the same call Moses received concerning validity and authenticity, but different in means and scope. Our pastors are called to serve God’s people, to provide spiritual care to those in need, and to regularly bring the gospel message to the congregants and non-congregants alike, whether through sermons or through a Christ-lived life outside of church. Moses, on the other hand, was called to fulfill these same roles, but also to fulfill the specified task of freeing the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.⁷² Though we are not called directly today, without the use of means, it is important to meditate on God’s Word, the means by which he communicates to us. It is through His Word he guides us and helps us in our decisions.

71. Lessing, *Deliver Us*, vii.

72. Exod 3:7-10.

INFLUENCE FROM MODERN SOURCES

The influence pressed upon our youths comes from a variety of places, especially when it revolves around career planning and motivation. Uncertainty plagues people of all ages as they decide on what they want to do with their lives, which profession to pursue, and what they think they are capable of handling. Some of the influence comes from the internet which often directs the viewer to pursue books written on career motivation, development, and advancement. Upon doing that, I was astonished at the material consumed in these resources. Hidden within the covers of popular and well-respected tomes, were great pieces of advice that could be applied to anyone as good tips to keep in mind through these endeavors. In addition to quality guidance, there was blatant delusion and poor practical advice under the guise of encouragement. Some books contain more beneficial advice than others and some contain mostly subjective inspiration, but both beneficial and harmful volumes are circulating, being picked up by all sorts of wandering students as they are pressured to begin career development. In this section, I will briefly evaluate some of the secular advice for career development and how that might impact young people as they consider training for public ministry.

The Good

For the sake of putting the best construction on the topic as possible, I will begin with what I found to be beneficial advice and realistic expectations. It is also important to note how different pastoral ministry is from the normal mold for careers. It has been difficult to synthesize

professional advice with a profession that often resides in a place vastly contradictory to a typical nine-to-five job. That being said, plenty of what is written still applies.

A recurring theme that shows itself in multiple ways is the encouragement to find a job that fits well with an individual's life goals, passions, and gifts.⁷³ A career, job, profession, or whatever the desired term for long-term work is preferred, is a place where large amounts of time and effort are invested. Working for a company that opposes what you believe and having to show up and support that cause every day would not be an ideal situation. At the same time, it is important to find something that you like to do on a regular basis. Someone can show up to work, hate their job, and do it anyway, but given that there are other options available, finding a career that you don't hate is good; finding a job you are passionate about is even better.

Since the job market has seemingly endless positions, each requiring something unique for success, it is important to evaluate which gifts you can bring to the table.⁷⁴ It can be hard for someone to figure out what their strengths and useful abilities are, so these books offer ways of bringing them to the forefront for examination.⁷⁵

The vast amount of information, concerning careers, that can be found in literature and on the internet is insurmountable. Books can be found pertaining to the specific field they are looking into as well as summaries of similar careers. This is a great place to start but should never be the only location for gathering information. The encouragement from these resources is often to find someone who is currently working in that field and speak with them about

73. Bolles, *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, 3 and Leider, *The Power of Purpose*, 26.

74. Leider, *The Power of Purpose*, 26.

75. Bolles *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, 60-61, 80, 111-112.

expectations and up-to-date realities.⁷⁶ While this advice is insightful and good, the result yielded can be less than desirable.

If young men were to consult a pastor about what it is like serving the LORD in this role, what sort of information would they receive? It is both a blessing and a curse for people to reach out to pastors working in the field. On the one hand, it provides an amazing opportunity for the pastor to share loving encouragement and support for the young man who has begun consideration for this role. He can speak well of pastoral ministry and provide a soothing light to doubts and hesitations. On the other hand, one short conversation can cause people to turn away from pastoral pursuit and never look back. If the pastor speaks ill of his career, how likely will the young man find himself enrolling in a pastoral training school? It is sad to say, but the tendency to joke about difficulty in pastoral ministry seems all too common. It doesn't stop with the pastor himself, but the pastor's wife and kids also. Anyone who has an experience with what it takes to be a pastor has credibility and that negative perspective is often shared all too easily.

The sample size of the discussion should never be limited to one person. Since every individual sees their profession in a very personalized light, it should never be assumed that the person you are speaking with sees the way you would and defines the job the way you would.⁷⁷ This is a great answer for those pastors who complain about ministry when asked, so the inquirer receives a more even response. Create an adequate pool of informants who you trust to give you a non-biased explanation of what it is like living the life of a pastor, or whatever profession is under review.

76. Bolles, *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, 93-94.

77. Bolles, *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, 93-94.

The Not Good

Now that the useful material has been covered, I find it to be an appropriate time to lay out what I found to be deceiving and harmful counsel to those who are deliberating pastoral ministry training. The vast majority of this type of advice relies on subjectivity and personal perspectives rather than practical guidance.

“Trust your gut”⁷⁸ would be an example of a shaky suggestion. This is proposed for someone who is deliberating between professional fields and cannot decide. I think trusting one’s gut at a moment like this can lead to regret down the road. It doesn’t make sense for someone to begin down the road, what could be a long journey to reach a goal, only to find out their internal instincts were incorrect. It seems as if these books were written to counter this very advice, to formulate a plan based on sure facts and gather a proper pool of information rather than following a brief feeling that could fade after reality sets in. No temporary feeling should be utilized in a big decision like this without a greater discussion involving more concrete advice.

Another piece of advice that offers little to no value, is that someone should “See all the possibilities of the world”⁷⁹ and do something unorthodox and different from the normal way of working. The idea is that there are careers that allow for more flexibility in schedule and in subject matter that would give the employee a more interesting life, allowing them to work the way they want to and overcome the stigma that has limited them thus far.⁸⁰ This is incredibly misleading because the person in charge of dictating what a career will do is not the one issuing the “help wanted” poster. This advice fails to acknowledge that not all careers are equal and that

78. Bolles, *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, 84.

79. Stewart, *I Can Get Paid For That?*, 7.

80. “This book aims to blow the cobwebs out of the neural pathways that have led you to believe that you can’t dedicate your life to working the way you want.” Stewart, *I Can Get Paid For That?*, 6.

some careers are not able to sustain life, nor should they be. It is a fair statement for people to explore various options as they consider, but some options should be cut from the process due to absurdity and lack of practicality and sustainability.

Ultimately, the subjective understanding of “finding a career that makes you happy”⁸¹ is the most common encouragement. There is no profession in existence that only contains enjoyable duties. Every career, both practical and absurd, has enjoyable aspects and unpleasant aspects. For someone to encourage a young person to only pursue what makes them happy, is withholding valuable experience which they would find helpful. This advice doesn’t mix well with pastoral ministry either. I am not saying that ministry is not enjoyable. It is the greatest joy to bring God’s Word to people who desperately need it, but there are parts of ministry that people find intimidating or unenjoyable.⁸²

81. Bolles, *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, 3, 94.

82. Public speaking, long hours, pressure to know the answers to any given question, etc. .

ACKNOWLEDGING THE GOD-PLEASING NATURE OF OTHER CAREERS

When we work and use the abilities God has given us, we honor God through our service.⁸³

Throughout this discussion regarding motivation for ministry, it can appear as if that is the only proper profession and God-pleasing profession. That is not the case. Though pastoral ministry is a career established by God and deserving of special respect,⁸⁴ God looks with favor on those who work diligently and use their gifts to serve in any workplace.

As we look to the Patriarchs,⁸⁵ they can be seen living their lives as fathers and shepherds and doing the jobs that were before them. They led their family and all their workers and flocks, using the gifts that were given to them. Familial professions are also God-pleasing and should be mentioned here as well. It is indeed, good and right for people to find jobs and work in the visible workforce,⁸⁶ but familial roles are often forgotten about. Serving as a father and especially as a mother is a noble profession that doesn't receive the credit due to it. God is just as glorified and happy with those women who serve as mothers⁸⁷ as he is with the young men who study for

83. Col 3:17, Gen 2:15

84. Eph 4:11.

85. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

86. 1 Thess. 4:11

87. 1 Tim 2:15

and serve as pastors in the visible church. God is pleased to have his children working faithfully in all good vocations.⁸⁸

88. The argument could be made about whether God is pleased with “all” vocations. The absurd counter would be a suggestion of an ungodly profession like prostitution, doctor at an abortion clinic, or internet scammer and thief. An ungodly profession could be defined as a career in which the individual goes into the profession for the sake of doing evil.

STUDENT RESPONSES

I sent a questionnaire to the recruiters at three of our WELS pastoral training schools, LPS (Luther Preparatory School, high school), MLS (Michigan Lutheran Seminary, high school), and MLC (Martin Luther College, college), to gather real-time data concerning what students say about pastoral ministry. The recruiters at these institutions are on the frontline when it comes to students deliberating pursuing pastoral training and hear all sorts of comments and reasons as to why they want to continue or change paths and do something else. The questionnaire is included in the appendix.

I want to point out the different perspectives in time these schools offer. LPS and MLS are both high schools and MLC is a college. This is an important piece of information because many, if not all, of the students at MLC have considered pastoral ministry enough to attend, whereas LPS and MLS students might not have considered pastoral training because they have not needed to yet.

The summary of student responses recounted by the recruiters, when asked about whether they have considered pastoral ministry as an option for their full-time career, was what I had been familiar with and more. Many of the students' concerns had risen to the forefront as they expressed their doubts about what their future would hold if they continued down the path to train for pastoral ministry.⁸⁹

89. Questionnaire Response: Evan Chartrand, Joel Thomford, and Cameron Schroeder.

Young people are incredibly perceptive about their future and understand that if they pursue pastoral ministry, sacrifices come along with that decision. Students are very concerned about not having a say in where they live or struggling to make ends meet while paying off large student loans on a small salary when they reach the end of training.⁹⁰ They fear that all their time will be dedicated to work⁹¹ and they will have no free time left to spend with their family or doing their hobbies.⁹² Sometimes, the students just cannot imagine themselves being a pastor because they think the position is only fitting for people who are extroverted and outgoing and not for shy quiet people.⁹³ These thoughts can come from what they see and hear from their pastors or what their parents and relatives tell them about ministry.⁹⁴

Not only are the students concerned about the result of the training, living the life of a pastor and all of its difficulties, but the road to get there. They are discouraged by how long the training program takes,⁹⁵ they know how difficult the language studies can be,⁹⁶ and they think they lack the ability to speak publicly or do not want to speak in front of audiences, especially their peers.⁹⁷ All of these reasons dissuade young men from even considering public ministry or abandoning their training to pursue other careers that don't require the aforementioned parts.

90. Questionnaire response: Evan Chartrand, Cameron Schroeder, and Joel Thomford.

91. Questionnaire Response: Evan Chartrand and Cameron Schroeder.

92. Questionnaire Response: Joel Thomford.

93. Questionnaire Response: Cameron Schroeder and Joel Thomford.

94. Questionnaire response: Evan Chartrand, Cameron Schroeder, and Joel Thomford.

95. Questionnaire Response: Evan Chartrand.

96. Questionnaire Response: Evan Chartrand and Cameron Schroeder.

97. Questionnaire Response: Cameron Schroeder and Joel Thomford.

The saddest responses are the ones that revolve around bad pastoral experiences.⁹⁸ For a young man to disregard the idea of pastoral ministry because of what their pastor told them or how he described his work is heartbreaking. The young people in our congregations look up to their pastor, and for him to speak poorly of his profession and the brothers⁹⁹ he serves with, can cause serious damage to their view of ministry as a whole and the shepherds God has appointed to serve him.

98. Questionnaire Response: Evan Chartrand.

99. The term pastors use in place of “coworkers” to reference their fellow pastors.

ENCOURAGEMENT FROM OUR TRAINING SCHOOL RECRUITERS

The concerns that race through these young men's minds can remain there unless addressed by someone knowledgeable and whom they respect. This "someone" leads them to their own "aha moment,"¹⁰⁰ seeing their misconceptions. The recruiters serving at our pastoral training schools are personally involved in similar situations to this regularly. There are multiple ways of confronting these issues and addressing the concerns these students have, but the common thread that connects each of their methods is a love for God shown by their caring interactions with struggling pastoral candidates.

There is no "surefire" way of clearing the problems from besieged minds. There are, however, good practices to follow that often yield positive results.¹⁰¹ A wonderful way to begin is to ask God for guidance in prayer and to be embedded in the Word.¹⁰² It demonstrates to the young man that God is the one in control and further validates that called workers rely on God just as much in their ministry as they did when they struggled along the way to get there, if not more. After a prayer for guidance and wisdom, listening to their concerns speaks more to them than an elaborate speech, guessing as to what they might be concerned about. Listening is incredibly important because there might be a very specific instance in which they went through

100. Questionnaire Response: Evan Chartrand.

101. Results being the willingness to consider ministry and not guaranteeing that the young men will go on to become pastors without further problems.

102. Questionnaire Response: Cameron Schroeder.

a bad experience and are willing to express their frustration over how they were treated.¹⁰³ People are bombarded with opinions all day, through social media, class lectures, and political outlets, but offering an ear to hear the problems they carry, helps them build trust as well as enhance their view of God's called shepherds, which might have been the root of their refusal to consider pastoral ministry in the first place.

In addition to hearing their specific concerns and addressing them appropriately, it is important to direct their attention to the eternal impact of the work of a pastor. Pastor Evan Chartrand wrote, "Most students want to do a job that helps people, but that help is for this life only. Ministry helps people for eternity."¹⁰⁴ Following some of the advice offered by secular career motivation resources, finding a job that aligns with their desire to help is important, ministry offers the opportunity to help on a scale immeasurable by earthly standards. Many of the students are caring individuals who enjoy being of assistance and helping people in times of need. It can help them view ministry from a new perspective if they think about pastoral ministry as a career that emulates God's love for God's people rather than the list of duties pastors often do, such as preaching, teaching, and studying in the original languages of the Bible. Ministry is not just academic, but practical life training.¹⁰⁵

The students realize the heavy emphasis on academic training to become a pastor, which leads them to wonder if they have what it takes to make it through the languages and to be able to stand in front of a congregation and deliver a sermon that they prepared. It is an honest question that needs to be asked. The focus has been on their abilities, their talents, and their gifts,

103. Questionnaire Response: Evan Chartrand.

104. Questionnaire Response: Evan Chartrand.

105. Questionnaire Response: Joel Thomford.

but shifting the focus from them to God, helps ease their troubled heart. It is important to remind them that the pressure is not on them to be successful because God does the work. Let them ask, “How can God use the gifts I possess?” rather than saying with Moses, “I have never been eloquent in speech” and “Who would listen to me?”¹⁰⁶

One of the most effective ways to encourage young people to consider pastoral ministry and to address their concerns is by utilizing a specific group of personnel, the WLS (Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary) students.¹⁰⁷ Many of the WLS students have gone through the same deliberation and can offer a fresh perspective on the difficulties of the training. A lot of the younger students can feel disconnected from the pastors around them because of the age gap and maturity difference, but WLS students are closer to them in age and can offer a less intimidating presence.

106. Exod 4:1, Exod 4:10.

107. Questionnaire Response: Joel Thomford.

STUDENT – MOSES SYNTHESIS

Moses responded to God’s call with a progression of comments and questions ultimately leading up to the outcome of refusal. He questioned his quality of self,¹⁰⁸ he asked God’s name,¹⁰⁹ he wondered what to say,¹¹⁰ he contemplated the end result of his work if he were to go,¹¹¹ and recounted his lack of public speaking ability¹¹² until he finally asked God to send someone else.¹¹³ The majority of students follow a similar trend, with a slight variation of elaboration. The students also question their quality of self before wondering if they can handle the task at hand with the rigorous training and long semesters. Their concerns will grow over their lack of public speaking ability, which lies in their inexperience, before expressing their apprehensions about the sacrifices a pastor makes regarding finances, time, and living location. All along the way, they wonder what they will say once they finally make it into the pulpit. Our youths are not all that different from Moses. There are trepidations on the table and sometimes excuses are given to avoid having to execute their fears in real time training and ministry.

How does God speak with Moses? How should we speak to those who are contemplating ministry or have completely shut out the possibility of being a pastor? God speaks to Moses with

108. Exod 3:11, “Who am I?”

109. Exod 3:13, “What is his [God’s] name?”

110. Exod 3:13, “What shall I say?”

111. Exod 4:1, “What if they don’t believe me?”

112. Exod 4:10, “I have never been eloquent... for my mouth and tongue are slow and clumsy.”

113. Exod 4:13, “Send someone else.”

the assurance of the gospel. He does not put the pressure on Moses but rather continues holding the pressure and responsibility for himself, as he still does today. The success of ministry is always placed on God's shoulders. God does not tell Moses to pull himself up by his bootstraps and get in the game, but he gives signs and wonders to encourage him and tells him his name to comfort his anxieties. It can be easy to forget that we are talking with real people who are willing to even consider giving their lives into the service of the gospel ministry.

POTENTIAL WAYS TO APPROACH THIS ISSUE

It is difficult to speak on the matter of why people are not considering pastoral ministry without sounding like it is the only God-pleasing profession or sounding demanding and pressuring the next generation to take up the mantle and continue with persuasive language. Our approach needs to emulate the route God took in dealing with Moses, being gospel centered. Approaching the matter “evangelocentricly” is a broad statement to its core and sounds good, but what does that mean? We want to convey the gospel in our conversations, but we want to have an authentic plan with tangible steps.

The recruiters of our pastoral training schools mentioned the use of WLS students to be used as recruitment for students to see what pastoral training looks like. It is a noble idea with many upsides. Not only will the Seminary students have the chance to express their joy over pastoral studies, but the students will start to learn the names of people they will most likely see in future years. It can be an opportunity to form simple bonds as they share stories and align passions for work, which entails caring for God’s people.

There needs to be an understanding among the Seminary students before they go out and form bonds with young men in schools and churches around their area. Because it is easy for these young men to look up to the Seminary student, the veteran student must be cautious about what he says and how he portrays certain aspects of pastoral training. This is not an invitation to lie to people for the sake of buffing the numbers, but an acknowledgment that young students will not have the same context in their minds as seminarians do. It can be hard for a young person to understand a joke that involves long hours of studying only to fail the test in the end

due to difficulty. That joke might land perfectly in the right setting, but a young person, right at the door of training, might see it as a journey too difficult to attempt. The same can be said about how the student speaks about his experiences. Much like pastors, Seminary students can ruin the possibility of someone wanting to pursue public ministry by the way they talk about the profession. It can be easy for people to complain to form bonds and connections, but at the same time, they are causing collateral damage to the young person's perspective on ministry.

Though the Seminary students offer a different setting and perspective to the younger generation, there are vastly more people who can and should be involved in this growing recruitment process. "It takes a village to recruit future pastors"¹¹⁴ Every person in the young student's life can offer encouragement that will impact him differently. The encouragement received from a mother is different than that received from the Seminary student, which is different, still, from the pastor who taught him in confirmation class. It needs to be a team effort on the part of those involved in their lives. Again, this is not to say we should begin pressuring people to pursue pastoral ministry. If clear walls and objections are established, respect them, but that still leaves the door open for encouragement.

In order to expect Seminary students, brothers, sisters, parents, teachers, and members of our churches to know how to properly speak about pastoral training as a possibility and encourage them in this way, they themselves need to be told and taught. If family members are speaking poorly of the ministry, even accidentally, that needs to be addressed before we can begin encouraging the young prospect.¹¹⁵ Even before that, the parents need to prioritize their

114. Questionnaire Response: Evan Chartrand.

115. I don't wish to give off the impression that the student is only a number and should be treated as a salesperson treats their clients, but it is difficult to come up with a term that properly describes the current situation. When I use the term prospect, I am referring to a young man who is contemplating or is willing to think about whether or not he wants to be a pastor and begin pastoral training.

faith at home, openly in front of and with their children.¹¹⁶ Families need to be in the Word to fully grasp the importance of pastoral ministry and the work of the church at large. Not only will this serve as a way to strengthen their faiths, and encourage the youth, but also it will give our church-going families a higher respect for the role of a pastor. As times have gone away from the high reverence towards a pastor and replaced it with a more casual “buddy” relationship, the respect that was once there seems to have diminished to some extent.

Another great way of encouraging the prospects to consider pastoral ministry is to bring them to our campuses. There is not something special about the grounds of the Seminary in a way that would lead people to think this ground is holy and spiritual in and of itself, but we want people to see what happens on these grounds and in these chairs. The singing that goes on in the chapel at the Seminary is vastly different than what you hear on a typical Sunday in church. I think it provides young men with a sense of relief when they come to the Seminary. It is an opportunity for them to gaze through the window of time, and picture themselves studying here.

While we encourage young people who are considering pastoral ministry, we should also find ways to address those who have begun their training and how we can maintain steady numbers as they progress. One of the potential answers to that could be something that resembles a mentorship-style program. The WELS has a mentorship program that begins once a Seminary student graduates and receives his first call. They are linked up with an experienced pastor who can offer specialized and personal advice and encouragement when needed. I wonder if this strategy would work with students as they begin, or even consider, pastoral training. A senior at the Seminary can sometimes come off as intimidating for a Senior at MLC, but what if that relationship was cultured earlier? I think it would be a beneficial idea for a junior at the

116. Questionnaire Response: Joel Thomford.

Seminary to get in contact with or be assigned a freshman at MLC and grow with them over the four years at the Seminary. Not only will that make it more comfortable for the high school or college students while they are at the Seminary visiting, but they can receive constant encouragement from someone who is in the same boat¹¹⁷ as them, just further down the road.

I suspect we could formulate the program as follows. We could link together a junior¹¹⁸ at the Seminary with a freshman at MLC and provide brotherly fellowship opportunities for the two school bodies to meet and converse. This would mean more trips to be made between MLC and WLS, but I feel as if the mileage would be well worth the cost. In addition to the college students being able to meet with their Seminary mentor in person, they can share regular chats, emails, or phone calls to ask for advice. I think this could be an extremely beneficial program for maintaining students at MLC, aiding in their preparation for coming to the Seminary. They would be able to grow for four years together as the next generation of pastors is being prepared.

In addition to the WLS-MLC mentorship, the extension could be sent from MLC-LPS/MLS or any other area Lutheran high school. The program would work similar to the WLS-MLC mentorship program. A freshman at MLC could be given a few freshmen in high school to meet with and encourage personally. Just like the WLS-MLC mentorship, they would be able to grow alongside each other and foster tangible bonds and relationships.

From personal experience, I have noted the difficulty of being able to connect with classes above and below my current standing. There are fellowship opportunities, but they are more awkward due to the lack of previous relationships being established. I rarely have the chance to meet students who are more than three years above and below because of the difficulty

117. Or similar situations.

118. First-year student at the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

with scheduling. I imagine it was simpler before the amalgamation of Northwestern and Dr. Martin Luther College because Northwestern housed both high school students and college students, which gave the opportunity to know your fellow brothers in pastoral training. I think we should try to grow an environment where the “class structure” is not as divisive and allows for more relationships to be formed.

CONCLUSION

God's kingdom will continue to grow. In that growth, new churches are formed, and more people gather together to hear the Word of God proclaimed and taught. Who will be the one teaching and preaching? God has called His workers to work in the harvest field and serve in this way, being pastors. God called Moses in the Old Testament and was answered with excuses and explanations as to why he could not do what God asked until he requested that God look elsewhere to find his man. God was patient with Moses until he finally crossed the line and angered God. Up until then, God showered Moses with gospel and assurance. There was a lot of work left to be done, and yet God demonstrated his love and care by addressing all of Moses' issues first.

There is a lot of work to be done today. Congregations are calling frequently, some pastors are receiving calls faster than they can deliberate, and new churches are being formed looking for someone to lead them. We need pastors to fill those roles and serve the LORD by leading his people. Ultimately, God will provide the workers to work in his field, but that doesn't mean we should sit back and not address these problems ourselves too. Of course, we trust in God to grow His Kingdom and provide workers, but he also asks us to be good stewards of the gifts he has given to us.

We need to be proactive in our planning because God has given us the gifts and abilities to lead and serve, but how can we use them? Primarily, we need to follow God's footsteps in his dealing with Moses by prioritizing the gospel comfort and assurance. God's Word should always be our first answer. In addition to using God's powerful Word to encourage, formulating real

plans like mentorships and strategic recruitment campaigns, can place God's Word in a setting where it applies more appropriately to our need for more pastoral candidates. This discussion is in its early stages. I pray this conversation continues until we find, through God's guidance, a proper solution.

APPENDIX

Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research. My name is Eli Steinbrenner, a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. I am conducting this study as part of my senior thesis project (TH3300) on the topic of Moses and Motivation for ministry. This project is in partial fulfillment of my MDiv degree. You have been invited to participate in this research because I believe that you can provide valuable information on the topic. I will be asking you questions about your experience with career motivation, both for pastoral ministry and other professional career options. There is a Microsoft Word questionnaire with a few questions that would be beneficial for me and my research.

Your involvement in this research will be shared in the body of the thesis paper.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you may choose not to answer any or all questions.

If you wish to remain anonymous, please indicate so above the name blank provided below by placing an "X" in the text box. I will use the information but will keep the source anonymous.

“By signing this consent form, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information, and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study under the conditions described.”

I wish to remain anonymous.

Name : _____ Date: _____

Questionnaire Sent to Recruiters

Name:

What are some of the typical responses from students when asked if they have ever considered pastoral ministry?

What are the most common reasons they give as to why it doesn't interest them?

Do you think students come up with other excuses as to avoid saying they simply lack the desire to be a pastor? Please explain.

Are there any common reasons students find other career options more enticing? If so, what are they?

Have you found any encouragement that causes them to consider pursuing pastoral training as an option?

What advice, if any, do you offer students struggling with this question?

How might you address an individual who has not even begun consideration for ministry because of negative views on this profession?

Do you have any potential ideas of how we can address this growing issue of men not wanting to pursue pastoral training?

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