



Can't we all
**JUST GET
ALONG**

FAMILY DYNAMICS IN
THE CHURCH

PAUL S. WILLIAMS

CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG

Family Dynamics In The Church

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Can't We All Just Get Along - Family Dynamics in the Church

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Can't We All Just Get Along Family Dynamics in the Church

Few leaders have a broader range of ministry experience than Paul Williams - from mega-churches to those of modest size, from rural congregations to urban parishes, from the coasts to the country. In his latest book, Paul combines all this practical experience and keen insight with thorough research to help others identify and navigate surprising social dynamics in the local church. The first half of the book will make you say, "I've definitely been there before." The last section will leave you asking, "Why didn't someone tell me this before?" If you've ever had the privilege of learning from Paul in person you'll be able to hear his re-assuring voice in these wise words.

Brent Storms, President and CEO
Orchard Group Church Planting

Church life and leadership can be complex and confusing. With his expertise and insights Paul Williams offers explanations and solutions that will help to keep the unity. His writing has inspired me for over 20 years. Paul's stories don't just touch your heart, they change it.

Rick Rusaw, Lead Pastor
LifeBridge Christian Church, Longmont, Colorado

Paul Williams is a gifted wordsmith and storyteller; this however, is not why this book is valuable. Paul takes 3 decades of leadership, consulting, church planting and observing leaders and gives clarity and insight to core issues facing church leaders. If you are in leading in any capacity in a church this is a should read, if you are any part of planting a church this is must read. Find yourself in the pages of this book and improve your ability to lead!

Dave Stone, Lead Pastor
Southeast Christian Church, Louisville, Kentucky

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I also want to thank my family, Jonathan, Jael, and Jana, and their spouses and children. They continue to bring joyful light to this journey. And as always, to Cathy I owe so much. I do not know a finer person on God's green earth.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE	"WHAT HAVE I GOTTEN MYSELF INTO?"	1
CHAPTER TWO	THE CHURCH AS FAMILY - ONE BIG MESSY, MARVELOUS FAMILY	5
CHAPTER THREE	IS EVERY FAMILY CRAZY?	8
CHAPTER FOUR	YES, EVERY FAMILY IS THIS CRAZY!	17
CHAPTER FIVE	UNDERSTANDING YOUR OWN FAMILY AND HOW IT AFFECTS YOUR LEADERSHIP	23
CHAPTER SIX	SIGNS OF AN EMTIONALLY HEALTHY CHURCH.....	28
CHAPTER SEVEN	SO WHAT DO I DO NOW?	30
CHAPTER EIGHT	AND SO IT GOES	33



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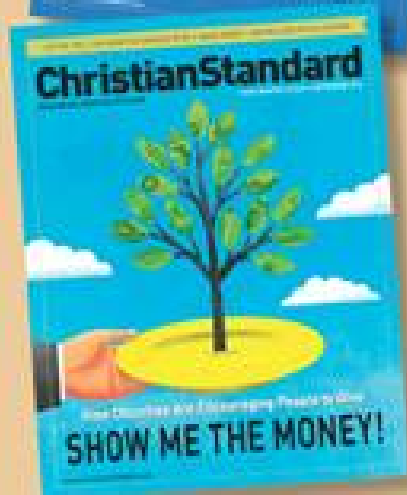
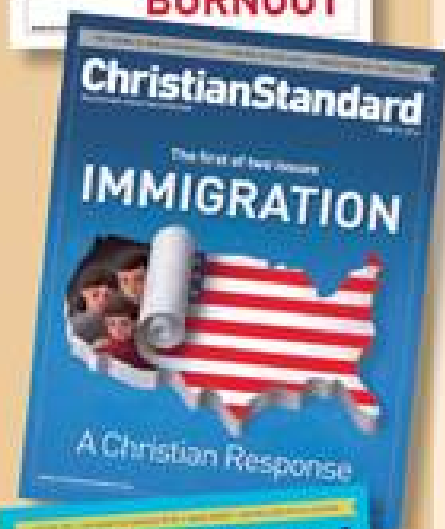
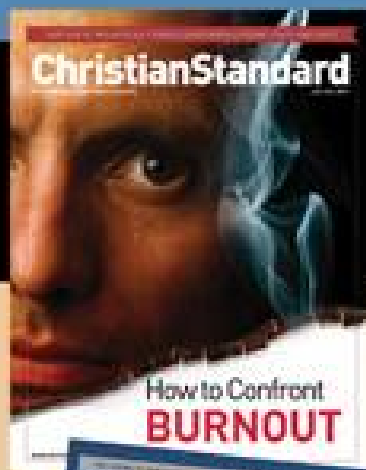
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INTRODUCTION

I grew up in the church and in a minister's family. My father had three ministries during his working years. He stayed long at each church because he was effective and he was loved. Dad knew how to get along with people. He understood how to get church members to work together for agreed upon goals. Not every church leader has a similar experience.

A few decades ago Dr. Charles Ridley identified the personality traits necessary to be effective in church leadership. The five most important factors were identified as being visionary, hard working, relating well to the unchurched, having a cooperative spouse, and getting people to buy into the leader's vision.

That last factor, getting people to buy into the leader's vision, is the most elusive and difficult to develop. It is determined by how well you know yourself and others. It is determined by what is called emotional intelligence.

This book is about increasing your emotional intelligence through better understanding of the family in which you grew up, the families that are in your church, and the ways in which your church functions like one big family. The book is about helping you lead an emotionally healthy church.

The older I become, the more I realize just how important emotional intelligence is to strong leadership. I also know that developing emotional intelligence is highly unlikely unless you understand families. *Can't We All Just Get Along* will help you better understand family dynamics and how they impact your ministry.

Paul S Williams
2013

Chapter One

"What Have I Gotten Myself Into?"

It was the strangest church service I ever attended. I was in a small town in Oklahoma, preaching for a church that financially supported our church planting ministry. The church had been in existence longer than Oklahoma had been a state. There were about 150 people and from what I could tell, virtually all of them came from one of two extended families. The two family patriarchs were not difficult to identify.

Johnny was about 65, a farmer turned oil refinery worker. The barrel-chested church elder had a flattop haircut that only served to enhance his already square head. He was not what you would call a good-looking man.

Johnny was one of two elders who led the processional that deposited the deacons on the front row of the small auditorium. The other elder was Harold, who sold tires at the local Firestone store. Harold was a typical Oklahoma Okie of Scots Irish heritage, tall and thin with a long nose and oblong face. He too appeared to be of retirement age.

When the procession to the front of the auditorium ended, Harold sat down on the inside of the first pew on the east side of the building. Johnny sat on the inside of the first pew on the west side of the building. Behind them, falling into line like loyal soldiers, were all the extended members of each man's family. Johnny's family was on the western half of the auditorium, with lots of square heads and barrel chests, and Harold's family on the east, tall and skinny, with noses made for fox hunting.

When I stood up to preach the animosity each side held for the other was palpable. I wanted to comment on it, but hey, \$250.00 a month to our ministry was \$250.00 a month - no need to jeopardize their generosity.

After the service I spoke with the pastor for a long while. He said the rift was, as far as he could tell, about four decades old. "May as well be the Hatfields and McCoys," he said. I told him I once dated a girl from the infamous McCoy clan, and she told me they had buried the hatchet about a century ago. Not so with Johnny and Harold. The hatches were sharpened and ready, and neither side was about to yield.

I'd like to say that was the only church I ever attended where controlling families were constantly at each other's throats. Truth be told, I've seen a lot of similar situations, often in rural southern congregations. Do not hate me. I grew up in Kentucky and I love the south. But you do have to admit, southern culture has never been known for tackling problems head on. Be nice to everyone's face, then get them when they turn around.

Northeasterners are more direct than southerners, but they have their own set of problems. I knew of one extended Italian family that didn't just control their church, they controlled a whole parcel of churches and even the regional church camp. That didn't work out so well.

Wherever you go churches are a mess. In fact they are so hopelessly dysfunctional I believe any fair minded student of the American church would have to admit the state of the church is one of the main reasons he or she believes in God. Nothing that messed up could ever survive two thousand years without divine assistance!

We should not be surprised. Take a look at Peter in the 17th chapter of Matthew. Jesus is at the top of the mountain with Moses and Elijah. All three have been transfigured. It is obvious this is no ordinary Sunday morning when Peter says, "Hey, how about we build some tabernacles here." You can see Moses and Elijah looking at each other, "Who is this clown?" Jesus says, "This is the guy who is going to preach the first sermon." They say, "All right, I guess we have to assume you know what you are doing!" Then God himself speaks up and tells Peter to be quiet.

Talk about embarrassing. I wouldn't have made a peep for the rest of my days. Not Peter, he continued to make a nuisance of himself. And he wasn't the only one. All the disciples were a wreck. Thomas was fickle. James and John were nicknamed, "The Sons of Thunder." What does that tell you? They were all a mess. Yet somehow, against all odds, they got the job done. Generation after generation, against all odds, it gets done still.

That being said, wouldn't it be nice if we could get a leg up in avoiding the kinds of problems that existed in that little church in Oklahoma? Wouldn't it be great if we could make the Spirit's job a little easier when it comes to straightening out emotional messes in the life of the church?

In my long-term work as a church planting executive I was always focused on return on investment. I did not just want to work hard. I wanted to work smart.

Sometime during my early years as the executive director of the Orchard Group, I ran across a quote from a study that had been done at Stanford University. The quote said, "85 percent of why you get a job is your technical skill, education and intelligence. 85 percent of why you advance in a job is your relational skill and emotional intelligence."

What increases relational skill? What builds emotional intelligence? Psychologist Murray Bowen felt the best way to increase your relational abilities was to understand the nuclear family unit. Time and again he saw that the ways in which we relate to others are established early in life. How we relate to our parents and siblings is how we later relate to the entire world. We see the world as one big giant family, and assume it is like our own family of origin.

Bowen began to intensely study families. How do they operate? What roles do people play? Do they play the same roles in their adult lives? How do they grow and become healthy individuals, standing on their own two feet, appreciating the strengths of their family of origin while leaving its weaknesses behind?

This book will take advantage of the work of Murray Bowen and the Family Systems Theory he created.

Why should church leaders devote so much time to understanding families? Why are families so important in creating a healthy church?

First, how you function in your church will be determined in large measure by how well you have differentiated yourself from your own family of origin. If you still see the world from their lens you will lack the objectivity necessary to be an effective leader. Understanding your own family, and the role you played in that family, is an important part of leading an emotionally healthy church.

Second, like the unfortunate church in Oklahoma, your church is made up of extended families. The bigger the church, the more extended families there are. If you understand how families tend to function, you will better understand the families represented in your congregation.

Third, the church is one of only two institutions (family businesses are the other) that actually functions like a family. God is the father, Jesus is the son, and

the church is the bride of Christ. We are God's daughter-in-law! As anyone who runs a family business can tell you, living with family is one thing. Living and working with family is quite another!

This is a book about keeping the church emotionally healthy. First we will examine how churches operate like big extended families. Second, we will look at how most families tend to function. Third, we will look at how your own family of origin impacts your ministry. Finally, we will look at the signs of an emotionally healthy church.

Chapter Two

The Church As Family - One Big Messy, Marvelous Family

E. O. Wilson is an anthropologist who also happens to be an expert on ants. It turns out ants are a lot like humans. As a scholar focused on sociobiology, Wilson has turned conventional wisdom on its ear. It has always been assumed the most elementary and critically important social unit for the species homo sapiens is the nuclear family. Not so says Dr. Wilson. In reality the most important unifying social unit is the clan or tribe, not the family. Clans and tribes create nations and wage wars. Clans and tribes fill the history books, not individual families.

According to Dr. Wilson, individual family units are a hodgepodge of sickness and health. Borrowing from two terms Kurt Vonnegut used in the book *Cat's Cradle*, the psychiatrist M. Scott Peck said in *A World Waiting To Be Born*, your family may be a *Karass* (a warm and nurturing environment) or a *Grandfaloan* (a meaningless group.) Families are not necessarily efficient or productive. They are just families. Think of your own family. If it is like my family of origin, it is a mess. And now the great news. Churches tend to operate like families.

I had an acquaintance who worked at the highest levels of corporate America and the highest levels of state government. For a short period he was asked to take the helm at a sizeable ministry. When his tenure ended he said, "I'd rather work in government or on Wall Street anytime compared to church-related work. Those people are crazy."

And so they are - all of them - all of us!

Edwin H Friedman, in his book, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue*, said the two hardest places to work in America are the family owned business and the church. Most of us go to work and do not live, play, or worship with those with whom we work shoulder to shoulder day after day. Not so those in a family business. They can never get away from each other. From running a motorcycle shop in New York to running an airline in the Yukon, some of the most popular television reality shows are of families that work

together. What makes them so popular? You can be sure the sparks will fly every single episode. Family businesses are tough.

Muscular patriarchs rule with an iron fist while young siblings vie for the old man's approval. Lost children come back to the family business, but are dismissed as hopeless projects. Dutiful oldest sons do their best to keep things running in an orderly fashion, usually with little thanks and much grief. Family businesses are difficult.

Churches are tougher. Think about it. Churches are made up of families. Granted, most are not made up of two Hatfield/McCoy like families, similar to the ones in Oklahoma. But most churches, even megachurches, are made up of many extended families. There are fathers and mothers and uncles and cousins and second cousins once removed, all attending the same church. In some rural churches it is not uncommon to have an entire congregation made up of Johnsons and Stones and Williams, all extended families that go back generations. But there is an even deeper layer.

Not only are church communities made up of families, the church is one of the only institutions that operates like a big giant family. Nobody suggests that General Motors is one big family. Nobody suspects that Apple is one happy grouping of extended family members, but the church is. As I said in chapter one, the bible even confirms it, with God the father, Jesus the son, and the church as the bride of Christ - God's daughter-in-law.

In many Evangelical churches the leaders of the congregation are the church elders, not the pastor. In new churches planted by the Orchard Group, the ministry with which I am affiliated, we try to establish an eldership by the church's tenth anniversary. We choose seven elders. One is the senior pastor. We do not choose two elders from the same family. We have learned our lessons.

In many older congregations elders have been chosen from the same families for generations. I know of one Midwestern family in which three generations of men have lived into their late 90s. Those three generations were serving as elders at the same time - and the youngest was 48! Guess who yielded when there was a difference of opinion among the three men? The two "younger" elders!

Not only do extended family members serve together as elders, they serve in a church that tends to operate like a democracy. My own heritage is with the Independent Christian Churches and Churches of Christ. Our roots go back to the

early 1800s in Pennsylvania and Kentucky. We are a truly American fellowship, though our deepest roots are Scots-Irish. As Americans, we had the same tendency every other religious group has had. We modeled ourselves after the secular government. The Roman Catholic hierarchy was modeled on the Roman Government. The Christian Church hierarchy is modeled on the American government.

Until recently our churches had three branches of government. There was the legislative branch, made up of elected deacons and elders, the House of Representatives and Senate. There was an executive branch - the ministerial staff, led by the senior minister. And there were the church trustees, the judicial branch. They were not elected, but appointed by the elders and deacons. They took care of the incorporation, by-laws, and such.

And we had the nerve to call ourselves a "people of the Book!" Over the years church trustees have disappeared and the office of deacon no longer exists, but Christian Churches and Churches of Christ still function primarily with a bicameral democracy - with elders and staff sometimes working together and sometimes at odds, screaming and yelling like the British Parliament, only without the wigs.

Running a church is a complicated business. Leaders should be forgiven if they fall into mimicking culture now and again. But no matter how hard we try to keep church governance scripturally grounded, you cannot escape the fact that the church is one messy family.

Chapter Three

Is Every Family Crazy?

How Do Families Function?

A family shapes our thoughts about what is normal and healthy in the world, and sets expectations about how the world will work. One's nuclear family experience creates the roadmap from which he or she navigates through life. If the individual is healthy, as she grows and gains insight into her family of origin the roadmap from which she operates will be adjusted accordingly.

Conflict occurs when various family members shift roadmaps at different times or do not shift them at all. It is not unusual for the person who has grown the most to be the one ostracized. The rest of the members demand a family system that is uniform and unchanging, and the shifting roadmap of one rogue family member is more than the system can bear.

Since churches do operate as families, the same dynamics occur at a magnified level in the local church. Individuals bring not only their own nuclear family dynamics into the church their family shares, the church has its own family dynamics, with members working from differing roadmaps depending on their maturational level and life experience.

New churches are particularly prone to receiving disenchanted members from existing churches. Sometimes they have grown beyond the previous church. Sometimes the church has grown beyond them. Whatever the case, new churches serve as magnets for those disenchanted with the old home church.

New churches also receive a high number of disenchanted members from particular nuclear families. The rest of the family members attend one church, but the ostracized family member makes his or her way into the new church, glad to be rid of the old ball and chain of their nuclear family - or so they think. In reality they subconsciously bring their unresolved conflicts into the new church, trying to recreate old problems in an environment where those problems may well not exist!

There is a phrase commonly used to identify this phenomenon in the new church. The phrase traces back to the 1980s and the Charles Fuller Institute in

Pasadena, California. The term is the clash of the dream. An equally interesting phrase is, beware those who greet the bus! They always have an agenda.

The first phrase acknowledges that new churches have attendees coming for a plethora of reasons. They all bring their nuclear family experience with them and some bring a previous church family experience with them. They have a preconceived idea about what the new church should be, which often clashes with the dream of those leading the new church.

Senior pastors often speak of these individuals as being the people who are initially the most enthusiastic about the new church, but fairly quickly become disenchanted and move on. Hence the term, beware those who greet the bus.

At the Orchard Group it has been our experience that a high percentage of those who are a part of a church in its first year will no longer be a part of the church by the seventh year. If the church is a mother/daughter congregation, it is not unusual to see almost 100 percent of the people return to the mother church within seven years.

The clash of the dream always takes its toll. Many pastors thoroughly and repeatedly lay out the philosophy of their new church from the beginning, trying to anticipate and overcome this problem. But people tend to hear what they want to hear, and besides, many of them are convinced that if they can just get the pastor's ear, he will surely come around to see their perspective on things. I encourage pastors to spend little time with those engaged in a clash of the dream. It has been our experience that new churches are rarely built on the first generation of attendees. They are built on the second generation, those invited to church by those first generation people who have long since moved on.

With all the complexity of families, all the complexity of extended families attending the same church, and with churches themselves behaving like big families, church leaders need all the help they can get.

Murray Bowen, the founder of Family Systems Theory, identified eight different areas in which these family worldview processes are at work. All have an impact on the life of a church and challenge the leadership abilities of its pastoral staff.

1. Differentiation of Self - "Let me step outside the tent, and look back in."

The first family process is what Bowen calls differentiation of self. With that phrase he defines our ability to be objective and separate our feelings and thoughts from the environment that shaped us, our family of origin.

One of the biggest problems for church leaders is when they have not separated from their own families of origin. In fact, this is so common that we have devoted an entire chapter, chapter five, to the importance of differentiating yourself from your family of origin.

Differentiation is the most important element of human emotional, psychological, and spiritual growth. We begin the process in our teen years. Boys and girls differentiate quite differently. Boys use the "flight" syndrome and girls use the "fight" syndrome. Once a boy gets his drivers license, he disappears. Except for food, laundry and sleep, he is physically absent from the household. Girls, on the other hand, stay at home and separate verbally. Teenage girls fight verbally with their parents. They find them stupid, out of date, and reprehensible in most every way. Why do teens separate like this?

Imagine a place that provides your every need, a place where you are always encouraged, a place where you know you are loved no matter what. You would never want to leave that place, right? So teens must find something wrong with their parents to justify striking out on their own in the world. Finding parental flaws is necessary for them to be able to spread their own wings and fly.

This is the reason the friends of teenagers have more impact on their actions than the parents have. Separating from one's parents is a right of passage every single person must go through. It is never a fun time for parents. Wrong-headed decisions are inevitable. You hope your children find great friends and pray they do not make stupid decisions that will impact them for life.

Ideally you will have given them the necessary tools to strike out on their own. You will have provided them with a strong sense of self, an environment of physical and emotional safety, and a place to which they can return at any time, no matter the circumstances. There is a reason the story of the Prodigal Son is one of the most beloved stories in scripture!

Young people trying to differentiate themselves will often leave the church of their youth and strike out on a new spiritual journey. Some do it in their teens.

Others do it in their twenties. Still others do not begin the differentiation process in earnest until they are well into their thirties.

In the northeastern United States, a region dominated by the Roman Catholic Church, this plays out in an interesting way. Lots of Catholic teens come into an Evangelical church and stay through their college years and into early adulthood. But when they marry and begin having children, you see many of them return to the Catholic Church. They have become differentiated and now they can return home with a new understanding.

If the Evangelical pastor does not understand the dynamics of differentiation, he might take their departure personally, while in reality, an age-old process is driving the decision to return home.

2. Triangulation - "Why are you getting me involved in this?"

Bowen's second area of family systems concern is triangulation, in which a third person is brought into a two-person interaction. In the church, triangulation may be the single biggest cause of dissent. Instead of a conversation remaining between the two members in conflict, one or both may appeal to family members, church members, or church staff to support their respective positions. Those who do so are likely to exacerbate the problem rather than resolve it.

Charismatic leaders may be the most prone to triangulation. These influencers are usually articulate communicators. The shadow side of that ability is a tendency to be manipulative. Many Machiavellian senior pastors are constantly putting out fires they themselves have lit through careless communication and inappropriate involvement in problems best left to the principals involved.

Ultimately, triangulation can occur with any personality type. Dealing successfully with triangulation may be more a matter of personal maturity than of personality.

I knew one pastor who was one of the most gentle and kind individual you would ever want to meet. His wife, on the other hand, was a piece of work. Narcissistic to the core, she managed to get into minor tiffs and major conflicts on a regular basis. Instead of allowing her to resolve her own problems, however, her pastor husband was drawn into the fray.

The pastor had grown up in a home with a strong-willed mother who allowed absolutely no dissent, not exactly a healthy environment for differentiation. Therefore it was no surprise when the pastor married someone with a similar personality. It was familiar. He already knew how to behave. Just do what you are told. Talk about no internal locus of control!

When the pastor's wife demanded his action to resolve a conflict she had initiated, her dutiful husband would spring into action. On too many occasions the pastor found himself speaking to a church member in an attempt to appease his wife. Even more often he spoke to the spouse of that individual, assuming that family operated in the same way his own family operated. Nothing good ever came from his triangulation.

In reality the pastor had no business ever getting involved with the person who was in conflict with his wife. He needed to turn responsibility for resolving the conflict over to her. Unfortunately, that never occurred. As you might expect, the minister moved from church to church, with his wife consistently undermining the good being done by this gentle man.

Many pastors are accustomed to being on the receiving end of triangulation. There is a conflict among two staff members. One comes to the senior pastor to express his or her displeasure. What should the pastor's response be? "Have you talked with the other person about this?" If the answer is no, then the conversation should be ended - respectfully but quickly. Anything else is either a need to control, or a naive savior complex.

Stay away from triangulation. Do not become the third person in a two-person conflict. As a wise therapist once said when I was flirting with a specific opportunity for triangulation, "Stay on your own side of the street!"

3. Emotional Process - "What map are you using?"

Worldviews, or "maps" are passed from one generation to the next. If a grandmother grew up in the Great Depression, she probably learned to be extremely frugal. I heard of one Missouri grandmother who was raising children during the Depression. After she died they found a bag in her basement labeled, "Strings too short to save." What was inside the bag? Yep - strings that were evidently not too short to save! The grandmother passed on her extreme frugality to her daughter, who then attempted to pass it along to her own daughter, though neither had reason to believe they would face the poverty the grandmother had

faced. But they operated from the grandmother's map. This is what is expressed in Bowen's Family Systems Theory as emotional process.

Entire congregations can operate with outdated maps. The church may have come into existence as a result of a church split. If that is the case the church's identity is based on "what we are not." That identity becomes the map from which the church operates. A pastor who is unaware of the church's early map will struggle with the fact the church always seems to be "against something." They have become accustomed to defining themselves by what they oppose. The pastor needs to help the church go through the emotional process of changing maps to define themselves by what they advocate, not what they oppose.

Within the church there will be many people, both volunteers and staff, who are working from the maps they brought with them from their families of origin. There are six specific roles people tend to play, depending on the map from which they are navigating:

a. The enabler is the codependent person who enables the alcoholic spouse and does not force him or her to accept responsibility for themselves. In the large church this is sometimes an executive pastor who enables the increasingly narcissistic senior pastor. I know of one church in which the entire senior leadership team is guilty of enabling the dysfunction of the senior pastor. They endorse his mythical view of the church instead of confronting him with reality. As might be expected, everyone suffers.

b. The scapegoat is the family member who is ostracized for the sins of the family. In my pastoral work I have encountered many individuals who were abused by family members. As they get into their thirties and forties they begin to deal with the shame of the abuse, eventually realizing it was not their fault. Once they have gained strength they often want to confront the abuser. I always warn them that when the extended family is brought together for such a confrontation, the family often does not rally around the victim. They rally around the abuser! Even though they are aware of the abuse and sometimes were even abused themselves, they find it easier to ostracize the victim than to make the painful changes necessary to truly deal with the problem. The truth sets you free, but it often makes you miserable first. These family members would rather turn the victim into a scapegoat than deal with the truth.

I consulted with one large congregation that had been through three worship pastors in eight years. All three had long ministries before these short ministries, which seemed puzzling. Once I delved into the situation I discovered the senior pastor was using the worship pastors as scapegoats for the drop in worship attendance. An anonymous survey of the church staff found the senior pastor rated the quality of his sermons three times as high as the staff rated them. The problem was not worship. The problem was the preaching and the scapegoat-focused preacher.

c. The family hero is another person frequently seen in extended families. This is the person who saves the day when things are going badly. Often it will be the oldest child who parents the younger siblings while dad is on an alcoholic binge. The problem is that the family hero needs a crisis to be able to function. He can only define himself as the savior. In the church environment that individual will actually create problems only he can resolve, preserving his identity as a hero.

One senior pastor had frequent guest speakers in his congregation, but they were rarely excellent communicators. The church leadership finally realized he did not want anyone in the pulpit who was more capable than he was. He wanted to return and hear the people say, "Oh, we are so glad you are back. We missed your preaching so much." His identity was too invested in being the family hero.

d. The lost child is exactly that - a child who strays from the norms established by the family. Sometimes this is the family member whose life tumbles out of control. Their actions can even be a way of saying to the world, "Look at me - things in this family aren't as together as everyone thinks they are!" The lost child can also be someone who is extraordinarily healthy and successfully escapes the family dysfunction. To the remainder of the family, however, the person is "lost" because he or she has rejected the family system.

In the church setting, the lost child is frequently an entire area of ministry, usually one that has never successfully gotten the attention of the senior pastor. Sometimes it is the children's department, sometimes it is the missions department, other times it is ministry to seniors. You usually do not have to be a part of the church for long to successfully identify which area of ministry is the lost child.

e. The rescuer is the family member who will not allow conflict. In his book *The Different Drum*, M. Scott Peck talked about several layers of community. First

he defined pseudo-community, in which everyone pretends to be happy. Next comes chaos, when the denial can't hold any longer and the floodgates open. Like I said earlier, the truth will set you free, but often it makes you miserable first! Chaos is followed by emptiness, when the family or group finds itself groping for a new direction, but unsuccessfully. Finally comes genuine community, when the group begins working together to build a family or organization with healthy relationships and a productive outlook on life.

The rescuer is the person who keeps the family or group in pseudo-community. He or she is so frightened of conflict they will make sure it is avoided at all costs. These individuals are also enablers. They do not realize that conflict is necessary to create a healthier family or church. They are peacekeepers, not peacemakers.

In too many churches the senior pastor has an inordinate amount of control over who the elders are. He will often stack the eldership with rescuers, who are quick to put the lid on when the pot boils over. Not only are they unwilling to confront the pastor, they are willing to let the church to suffer necessary conflict, the kind that leads to productive solutions.

f. The mascot is the family member who always seems to need rescuing. Enablers and rescuers keep mascots in business. This is the adult family member who cannot hold a job, is still living at home, and borrows money from everyone in the family. Mascots are often created. The enabler or rescuer needs someone to keep feeding his or her own pathology, and a perfectly capable family member begins to be subtly or not so subtly told they do not have the skills necessary to make their own way in the world. Therefore they will need the ongoing ministrations of the enabler and rescuer. Until the mascot gets out of the family system and makes a go of it in the world, he or she has no chance of breaking out of the mascot role.

In the church world you can usually spot the mascot on staff. Even the most strong-willed senior pastor will keep a mascot he or she wants to have around. Sometimes it is the person who always praises and never criticizes the senior pastor. Everyone around is amazed, but the mascot is secure in his or her position, as long as that person does not challenge the senior pastor.

Emotional processes not only show up in individuals, they can be seen in entire congregations. New churches are often populated by young families who

are still primarily identified by their desire to be different from their families of origin. As they search for differentiation they may prematurely adopt new beliefs or practices that a church of more seasoned members would successfully avoid. The senior pastor must avoid being drawn into the subconscious agenda of these young families, and assure that the decisions made by the leaders of the church are well thought out.

New churches also appeal to the unchurched, many of whom bring with them the prevailing worldview of the culture of which they are a part. In postmodern times, that is often reflected in church members who replace the concept of truth with the phrase, "What's true for you is not necessarily true for me." In that environment a senior pastor will be challenged to help the congregants develop a Christian perspective of truth, while remembering that in today's world people are converted to community before they are converted to Christ.

All churches will have emotional processes through which they have to work. Edwin Friedman said, "Every church has background radiation from the big bang of the congregation's creation." Identifying the source of that background radiation and dealing with it thoroughly is critical to the ongoing health of the church.

Chapter Four

Yes, Every Family Is This Crazy!

More Understanding Of How Families Function

As you look through Bowen's description of family processes, you begin to see your own family dysfunction. I once heard a therapist say that anyone from a dysfunctional family should be in therapy. When asked how many families were not dysfunctional, he said, "Maybe one percent. And that's on a good day!"

Every family has unresolved issues. Understanding the areas of potential conflict is the first step in avoiding that conflict. In the last chapter we looked at the first three areas of concern expressed by Bowen. The last five have equal relevance to the life of the 21st century congregation.

4. Multi-Generational Transmission Process - "This map might be old, but it still works."

Most churches have their own myths about who they are and how they will function. One church might say, "We are a neighborhood church, and that is all we will ever be." This is a result of the multi-generational transmission process, Bowen's fourth area of family concern. Older congregations have generations of issues that all build on top of one another. Helping a church see itself in a new light is a difficult proposition. It is one of the reasons C. Peter Wagner was fond of saying, "It is easier to give birth than it is to raise the dead!" Strong-willed leaders rarely have the patience for this type of environment, one of the reasons they so often are drawn to the new church environment instead of the traditional church.

There is a church in the northeastern United States that is a healthy community with good growth. They have had a succession of capable pastors and strong volunteer leadership. Yet the church has never grown beyond 200 in average attendance. Why?

The founding pastor of the congregation was absolutely convinced that large churches were evil. He regularly preached, "If it's big, then they must be compromising the truth." Though the church was started some 60 years ago, to this day that pastor's DNA permeates the congregation. There are now three generations who believe big is bad. I do not expect them to grow beyond 200 anytime soon.

While I am talking about big church and small church prejudices, it might be worth noting that for most of the history of America, churches were by today's standards relatively small. They looked like extended families, with all the attendant pluses and minuses of your messy family and mine.

Over the past thirty years, however, churches have begun to look more like businesses than extended families. The senior pastor is seen as the business owner or manager, the one who hires people to do the work, while "customers" come every Sunday to partake of the "goods." Many megachurches take on the personalities of large corporations, with the senior pastor a chief executive officer and the executive pastor as chief operating officer. In fact, often the person in the executive pastor position is someone whose background is in business, not in ministry.

With a new focus on the missional church, however, we are beginning to see a return to the church as "family," not because big is bad, but because trends come and go. While the megachurch is not going away anytime soon, we are now in a time when small is seen as good again.

5. Family Projection Process - "He'll never amount to anything."

All families are guilty of family projection process, the fifth area of Bowen's Family Systems Theory. A leader suddenly unhappy with a pastor's performance is often a leader projecting onto the church his or her own family experience. It is difficult for young senior pastors to identify family projection process, both in themselves and in church members. Most new church senior pastors are in their thirties. The tendency in one's younger years is to be self-referential. "If things go well it is because I made it happen. If things go poorly it is my fault." Such an approach makes it difficult to identify a problem that is external to one's circumstances. When a person who has been very supportive suddenly becomes an adversary, it is often due to family projection process, not to anything that has or has not happened within the church.

Family projection process can handicap a family member for a lifetime. Suppose a child gets an 88 on an IQ test. The family then assumes the child has marginally normal intelligence. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, that child will be told by teachers, parents and administrators that he or she is "just an average student." On the other hand, if the child is constantly encouraged, they

may well grow far beyond what anyone expected. An IQ of 88 in the first grade turns into an IQ of 115 in the 12th grade.

It is the family projection process that creates mascots, rescuers and the lost child. The same thing happens in the church. On more than one occasion I have known associate pastors who were told by their senior pastor that they were not senior pastor material. Sometimes the senior pastor has been right - the person did not have the giftedness to lead a church, particularly a large church. But on other occasions the senior pastor has made the mistake of thinking his was the only style of leadership that worked.

The pastor projects his understanding of leadership onto the associate pastor and finds him lacking, when in reality the associate has all the gifts critical to church leadership. He would just be a different kind of senior pastor than the one with whom he currently serves.

Pastors need to be careful about projecting their own experience onto others. It is difficult for young pastors to identify their own family projection process. They are not seasoned enough to have any level of objectivity about their own predispositions to judgment.

6. Sibling Position - "Wait, who is the firstborn here?"

The sixth area of family concern is sibling position. A lot has been written on sibling position that has been difficult to scientifically confirm. One of the main reasons is because of the difference in sizes of families. Over half of US presidents have been first-born children, but in a two-child family exactly half of the children are first-born! The size of a family makes a huge difference in the personalities of the children. A first-born from a two-child family will be quite different from the first-born of a 10-child family. Add in the fact that family size tends to be impacted by culture, ethnicity, religion, education and a plethora of other factors, and you see why it is so difficult to make generalities about personality and sibling position.

That being said, a number of recent studies have been completed that do take family size and culture into account. The only absolute and clear finding is related to whom we choose as friends and spouses. Oldest children tend to prefer oldest children. Middle children tend to prefer middle children. Youngest children tend to prefer youngest children. Only children tend to prefer only children.

While the studies comparing sibling position to personality type are somewhat iffy, there are some tentative conclusions that can be drawn. Oldest children have a greater likelihood of being conscientious, reliable, serious, goal-oriented, well prepared, and conservative. They are more likely to maintain a consistent commitment to established cultural norms than their siblings. In the church they tend to be staunch defenders of the traditional faith and critical of those who initiate change. They will also be hard workers and tireless leaders. They may be the pastor's biggest critic and strongest supporter, all at the same time.

Middle children will often be the socially flexible, open-minded, free-spirited, inventive and agreeable. They are consensus builders and peacemakers. Note that there is a difference between peacemakers and peacekeepers. Peacekeepers want to avoid conflict at all costs. Peacemakers are willing to engage in conflict if it will bring about genuine peace.

Middle children with a high emotional intelligence will be good peacemakers. Middle children with a low emotional intelligence will have a tendency to be peacekeepers. In the church world, middle children are likely to be loyal to their superiors, easy to work with, and relationally savvy. Though they want their own identity, most will be reticent about grabbing the brass ring. They are more likely to remain in a support position than they are to take a lead spot.

Youngest children are often charming, persuasive, sentimental and insecure. They like attention and seek respect. They are more likely to be risk-takers and trailblazers than other types. In the church planting world, youngest children are drawn to the entrepreneurial challenge of "parachute drop" church plants, in which everything is built from scratch. They enjoy the social challenge of that endeavor and appreciate the reward of receiving the attention and respect of those with whom they work. As volunteers, youngest children are those who are more likely to initiate new ministries or approach old ministries in new ways. They also may be the most critical opponents of keeping the status quo.

7. Emotional Cutoff - My name is not Williams, it is Unwilliams."

The seventh area mentioned by Bowen is emotional cutoff, in which family members separate themselves from all involvement with the family. Ironically those individuals find themselves actually being controlled by the family in their

extreme attempt to be different from their family of origin. Their primary identity is based on what they are not.

New churches that result from a contentious split often exhibit the signs of emotional cutoff. Their identity as a church is tied up in being different from the church of which they once were a part, rather than finding their own positive identity. It is a widely held assumption that church plants that result from splits do not have a good track record for growth or longevity. That is because emotional cutoff is not a legitimate reason for the birth of a new church.

New churches and megachurches seem to get a disproportionate share of those returning from emotional cutoff. These individuals have rejected their families of origin and all the trappings related to them, including their churches. Once they marry and have their own children, however, they find themselves wanting to assure their own children receive some kind of religious instruction, so they return to church. They will choose a church filled with others their own age, and a church that bills itself either publicly or subconsciously as "not your parent's church." On the whole, those returning from a period of emotional cutoff are not nearly as disruptive to the life of a church as those in the midst of emotional cutoff.

Those in the midst of emotional cutoff will have a tendency to be angry with any representation of authority, whatever the source. Their anger at their own families of origin is transferred over to the authority figures in the church, the staff, the elders or other volunteer leaders. Trying to reason with them yields few results, primarily because their issues are not reasonable in the first place, but emotionally based. In time they either work through their issues of emotional cutoff and return to the church of their family of origin, or they give up their unreasonable anger toward all authority, including the authority figures in the church of which they are currently a part.

8. Societal Emotional Processes - "Your people are not usually leaders, are they?"

Societal emotional processes are Bowen's last area of concern. As societies we develop expectations as to how certain classes of people, races, or genders are to function. Anyone who functions outside our expectations will be considered deviant. The church has always had problems in this area.

The main responsibility of the church is to further the reconciliation of all things to the creator. Often that means the church should be taking the lead in areas of injustice or inequality. For instance, in an age in which the planet has been exploited without regard to the needs of future generations, one would expect the church to be taking the lead in caring for our environment. The reality is the church has barely spoken in this area. The same could be said of a number of other subjects over the centuries, from slavery to equal rights for women.

Societal emotional processes have assigned the church a place in culture and that place is the maintenance of the status quo, the preservation of existing social structures, and the non-governmental enforcement of rules. Never mind that none of those things echo the teaching of Jesus, they do echo the expectations of popular culture. The church is not seen as a major change agent.

There was a time when this was not the case. As recently as the 19th century the Evangelical church was the provider of most social services in the United States, the strongest advocate for the poor, and a significant voice in the fight to end slavery. Today's church, however, seems to have narrowed its focus to the salvation of the individual soul. While there are hopeful signs, it remains to be seen if the church will be able to change how it is viewed by the broader American culture.

Chapter Five

Understanding Your Own Family And How It Affects Your Leadership

My father is a pastor. My only sibling, a brother, is a pastor. My father is the youngest of six children. From childhood his mother, a stalwart church member, informed him he was going to be a minister. His older sister would regularly announce that in church youth meetings. My father, being a compliant child, never questioned the decision others made for him. Fortunately, it turned out that my father was, indeed, a very good pastor. He was in full-time ministry for 43 years. He still teaches Sunday School and preaches on occasion, though he is now 89 years of age!

My maternal grandparents had three daughters. All three married ministers. There were nine grandchildren, seven of whom were either ministers or married to ministers. As of this date, five great-grandchildren are in ministry. And every single person in ministry, from both sides of the family, is still in the same religious fellowship. In fact, our family history in that fellowship goes back through at least five generations.

To make things even more complicated, my wife grew up in a minister's home. She has three siblings, all of whom married ministers. Among their children, there are another seven who are serving in some kind of ministry.

You can be sure my wife and I are a walking treasure trove of family issues that have been difficult to separate from the church. How could it be otherwise? Fortunately we have both had great mentors and therapists who have kept us on the straight and narrow. Not only has it protected our sanity, it has been wonderfully empowering in our service to Christ and the church.

You too have family issues that impact your ability to minister well. Dealing with those issues is probably the most important step in growing an emotionally healthy church.

When it comes to dealing with your own family of origin, the most important element is the first of Bowen's Family Systems Theory - differentiation of self.

Murray defines differentiation as our ability to be objective and separate our feelings and thoughts from the environment that shaped us, our family of origin.

We begin the process of differentiation in our teen years, but most of us do not fully complete the process until late middle age. Often the undifferentiated person who presents the biggest problem to the church is the senior pastor himself.

When confronted, a senior pastor with a dominant personality and a strong will might say, "I'm the man in charge. Who are you to challenge me?" He cannot see himself except as a part of the family system, and its king at that. He is still operating from the map he used as a child. Watching a strong-willed father rule the roost, he looked forward to the day when he would do the same. As long as he uses a map that says, "strong leaders should never be questioned," he is going to create havoc wherever he goes. The pastor needs a new map - one that casts leadership in a different light.

A leader with a high awareness of his or her own issues related to their family of origin and who is working from a roadmap reflective of that self-discovery, will avoid a lot of problems in the church.

When considering differentiation of self, pastors with a dominant personality, those with a high Dominance on the DiSC test (There is a brief description of the DiSC test at the end of the book) may have a difficult time differentiating their personal lives from their ministries. If a person finds his or her primary identity through the position he or she holds in the church, it is not a good sign. They will not separate their own lives from the churches they serve.

Many church pastors are inclined to see their ministry position as more than a job. Sometimes they have wise supervisors who teach, "This is your job - it is not your life." More often, however, elder or management team oversight is sporadic and superficial, and the senior pastor becomes far too vested in his or her position and success in that position.

One Midwest megachurch pastor had worked hard to build two large congregations during his 45-year ministry career, but it was difficult for him to let go of even the tiniest of details. A member called the church to ask about borrowing tables for a wedding reception and was told by the receptionist, "I'll transfer you to the person who takes care of that." And who was the person? You guessed it - the senior pastor!

When he was asked to step down the pastor went into a tailspin. His entire sense of self-worth had always been tied up in his job. He worked 24/7, year after year, building up distraction after distraction so he never had to look deeply into his soul to see who he really was. He had no sense of interiority, and had never differentiated himself from his family of origin or from his job. When he was no longer in the pulpit, he was as lost as a college freshman. For the first time in his life he had to look himself in the eye and admit that apart from his job, he did not have a clue who he was.

As you might expect, this individual was the son of a hard-charging pastor. His father had never differentiated himself from his role, and neither could the son. Fortunately, the grandson, also a pastor, headed into therapy early in his ministry and broke the family chain. While he is driven like his father and grandfather, he knows he needs to understand his calling as his job, not his life. I know the young pastor's wife. In his case I have no doubt she will keep him well grounded.

Other senior pastors, those with a charismatic personality (high Influencing on the DiSC test), might see the church as an extension of themselves. Success in that environment is likely to be centered on the personality of the senior pastor. The church does not develop an infrastructure to sustain long-term growth. It is entirely focused on the weekend worship experience and the leadership provided by the charismatic pastor. In those situations it is difficult for any success to extend past the reign of the charismatic founding pastor.

Through a study of 50 new churches in the early 90s, we discovered that very charismatic senior pastors had congregations with a strong growth curve for the first ten years, but growth trailed off after that. We concluded that ten years of bells, whistles, great stories and a charismatic personality was about all a church could take before it began to unravel internally. Staff tenure dropped. Congregants left, decrying the lack of depth in preaching. In one such church I remember a sweet octogenarian who said, "If I hear that story one more time, I'm just going to die. And I don't mean to be disrespectful, but he is always the hero of his stories." With that, I knew we had a church that had reached "charisma saturation."

Not every charismatic pastor stops his or her church from developing the programs, teaching pastors, and systems to maintain a solid trajectory of growth.

But the ones who find their sense of self-worth in the steady stream of affirmation their church provides are usually so intent on getting their "fix" they are unwilling to do the hard work of strategic planning and development. They are particularly incapable of stepping out of the limelight.

These charismatic pastors are also guilty of finding their sense of self-worth from their jobs. As undifferentiated as the dominant leader, they march along completely unaware they are not developing a church, they are developing a following. When they fall it is usually hard and swift. Far too often the fall is preceded by moral failure. Ever seeking external affirmation, the temptation to stray is just too attractive. If the pastor had an internal locus of control, a sense of self that comes from within instead of from without, the pastor would have the strength to not only withstand temptation, but also the strength to build a church that will be healthy long after he or she is gone.

Many laid-back pastors (high Steadiness and high Conscientiousness individuals on the DiSC test) have never had an internal locus of control. Often middle children, they have always "just gotten along" with the rest of their family of origin, learning early in life that it is better to blend in than it is to create a scene. You can spot these individuals when it is time to go to lunch. They are the ones who no opinion about where to eat. Whatever you decide will be fine with them.

When these individuals enter ministry without any degree of differentiation they will immediately look to transfer their pastoral authority to someone else. In my tradition it is often the elders.

At the Orchard Group we once planted a church in which the senior pastor was convinced the elders should function by consensus. The church grew to about 150 before they created their first eldership, but it wasn't long before things spun out of control. One strong-willed elder was holding the rest hostage. He was the only one who was opposed to capital campaigns, on principle supposedly. He was the only one who was opposed to advertising. He knew he had the elders and their laid-back pastor by the tail, and he swung them round and round with his refusal to yield to consensus.

Unfortunately, laid-back pastors will generally lead from consensus. Consensus leadership creates less imaginative environments because groups of equals tend to stifle imagination. The bigger problem is that when a church is led

by consensus, the group can be controlled by those at the extremes. One or two leaders know they can gum up the works simply by holding out. Their passive-aggressive behavior is capable of stopping the church in its tracks unless they are confronted. For an undifferentiated laid-back pastor, that is hard to do.

A differentiated pastor will lead by neither a strong hand nor consensus. He or she will lead from a balanced perspective, leading from the middle, between dictatorship and democracy.

The differentiated pastor takes clear and non-reactive positions. The pastor works from the perspective that he or she has been called to do a job, not from the position that his or her life depends on being successful in this particular instance. The differentiated leader also stays in touch with his staff and volunteer leaders, as well as dealing with the sabotage that is inevitable in a family-like environment.

Chapter Six

Signs Of An Emotionally Healthy Church

Edwin Friedman works from a family systems approach to identify the signs of an emotionally healthy church.

1. First, the church will be balanced between separateness and togetherness. It has differentiated itself. It can say, "We are a part of the Southern Baptist Convention, but we are an independent church." That kind of balance is rare in a new church. It is more likely in a healthy growing church with a strong leadership.

2. Second, the church will show a connectedness across generations. Just 50 years ago most churches were made up of multiple generations of people. Grandpa attended church with his granddaughter. In the megachurch age that is less likely. Many megachurches are generation specific. The first generation of megachurches was populated primarily by Baby Boomers. Newer churches tend to be focused on the Millennial Generation. It is rare to find a new church or megachurch that has successfully attracted multiple generations. This is one area of church stability that is not likely to change in the near future.

3. A healthy new church will have volunteer leaders and professional leaders who show little enmeshment or fusion. They know their issues, both personally and in the congregational environment. They might say, "We are all crazy around here. Most of the time we recognize it."

4. The church will also create a grace-filled environment appropriate in an age in which people are often converted to community before they are converted to Christ. There will be respect and support for those with different values and feelings, and the congregation will be aware of both the inside and outside influences on the family. The church will therefore have little distance or emotional cutoff.

5. Healthy new churches will also avoid triangulation at all levels. Any two people will not feel the need to pull a third into a conversation. If triangulation is resisted at the staff and volunteer leadership levels, it will be modeled to the entire congregation. Nevertheless, when people are involved there will always be attempts at triangulation. The key is to confront it, and avoid being drawn into it.

6. In a healthy church family there will be room for people to experience pain without the leaders of the church rushing in to save them. They will recognize that faith has seasons, or stages. Some people are in the stage in which they need rules, regulations, and tight boundaries. Others may be in a place of questioning, where they need room to move back and forth across the threshold of faith. They need to be given room to be restless. Still others have a mature faith that is far beyond focusing tightly on rules and regulations. All have to live under one roof. Leaders who are sensitive to this will ride the fine line between rigidity and chaos.

7. Healthy churches will believe in their church family and see its positives. They might say, "Of course we are messed up. But on our better days we manage to reflect the image of Jesus, at least a little bit." As a congregation, the church leaders will understand what they are good at, and also understand where their weaknesses lie. They will maintain a healthy level of objectivity about the church in which they serve.

8. Finally, from the work of Friedman and Bowen it is obvious that a healthy congregation will have members who utilize each other for genuine feedback, not as crutches. In a church where the leaders are well differentiated, genuine feedback is far more likely than in a church where too many enmeshments have occurred. The lack of genuine feedback has been the downfall of many a charismatic church pastor. Every leadership team needs to have the strength to be honest and open with those in the highest positions of influence.

Chapter Seven

So What Do I Do Now?

You might say, "Wow, you have painted a pretty unflattering picture of the church." I admit that I have. As I said at the beginning, the fact the church has managed to survive for 2,000 years is a testimony to its divine origin and guidance.

"So, what do I do now?" you ask. Here are some practical suggestions.

1. Consider going into therapy. There is no better way to deal with your own issues related to your family of origin than by beginning a course of psychotherapy. Often the biggest family-related problems in ministry are the problems you bring with you. We tend to equate God with father and church with mother. If you had a strict and unforgiving father, you may see God similarly. If you had a harsh and judgmental mother, you may see the church similarly. Dealing with your own background can increase your energy and effectiveness in ministry. Freed from conflicts related to the past, you can objectively deal with the family-oriented issues you encounter in your ministry.

What kind of psychotherapist should you choose? It is my opinion that whether or not the therapist is a Christian is not always important. There are good Christian psychotherapists. There are bad Christian psychotherapists. There are good and bad non-Christian therapists. It just needs to be a good, well-educated therapist who respects your particular faith tradition.

Should the therapist practice psychodynamic therapy or cognitive therapy or behavioral therapy? Therapists who prefer a psychodynamic approach will be the most likely to help you delve into your family of origin. Cognitive therapists may do the same. Behavioral therapists are less likely to focus on your background, and instead place the emphasis on current behaviors. Many therapists are more eclectic and use a little of each approach.

How do I know if I have found a good therapist? If you walk out after the first meeting thinking, "Well, I guess that person might work," you've got the wrong therapist. You should walk away from the first session with a confidence that you have found someone who "gets" you.

2. Read more about churches and families. For a good in-depth overview of family issues and the church that goes beyond this ebook, I would recommend

reading Edwin H. Friedman's book, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue*. There is no book on the topic that provides better practical help. Another good book is M. Scott Peck's *A World Waiting To Be Born: Civility Rediscovered*. While the entire book is helpful, the chapters on family are especially relevant to ministry.

If you are interested in knowing more about Family Systems Theory, you might want to begin with the seminal book on the subject, Murray Bowen's *Family Therapy and Clinical Practice* or the book he co-authored with Michael Kerr, *Family Evaluation*. There are also a number of books that delve more deeply into the 8 factors defined by Bowen in Family Systems Theory.

3. To navigate all the issues related to church and family, it is important to have close advisors who will keep you grounded. These will usually be people from outside your own church. It might be your psychotherapist. It might be your spiritual director. It might be a denominational executive, or a mentor in ministry. More than likely, it will be a combination of most or all of those individuals. When it comes to dealing with families and the church we need all the help we can get.

4. Make sure you have a number of close friendships outside the church. For over 25 years two of my best friends have been physicians. In 1979 we adopted an infant from Calcutta who was quite ill at the time of her arrival. (She is in her 30s now, a happily married wife and mother.) For several months we had to take her to the doctor almost every day. Through the process we developed close friendships with both physicians and their families.

One doctor became my running partner. We ran together every other day for 25 years. I could talk with him about anything and know he could be trusted to keep it in confidence, as well as provide an outsider's perspective on whatever issue I might be facing. I was a part of a reading group with the other doctor. The group was led by his Roman Catholic Monsignor, a man who guided us all into a deeper understanding of the spiritual disciplines. Though not of my own faith background, that doctor brought great spiritual insight into many of the issues I faced in my ministry.

Find friends like those I described, mature trustworthy people who know you and have the ability to look objectively at the ministry environment in which you serve.

5. If you are in a new church, be very careful when establishing the first volunteer leadership team or eldership for your church. Do not place other staff members on the team. They may attend meetings to give reports, but do not put them in decision-making capacities. It is best if the senior pastor is the only person on the leadership team.

Do not place more than one member from any one extended family on a leadership team. That will assure that extended family problems do not find their way into church management.

There is a reason for the term "elder." Folks in their 40s and 50s are far more likely to be self-aware and at least somewhat differentiated from their families of origin than those who are in their 20s or 30s. Choose leaders with wisdom and a strong emotional or relational intelligence.

6. In your new church leadership structure, consider adopting some form of Policy Governance. In Policy Governance the staff will focus on the means of the congregation while the elders will focus on the ends of the congregation. The process will help develop healthy boundaries between staff-related issues and board-related issues. You can find the basics of Policy Governance at www.carvergovernance.com.

7. Take your relationship building and people management cues from Jesus. The stories of the gospels are the best primer that exists in helping you deal with family issues in your church. And there is no better instruction than what is available in the story of the Prodigal Son. In that story we discover we all are broken. There is no good son and no bad son. Both sons are not deserving of the father's love, but he chooses to love them anyway. It is what he does. It is who he is. Love, mercy and grace will go a very long way in solving a multitude of family problems in the local church.

Chapter Eight

And So It Goes

The Orchard Group has planted churches for over 65 years. For many decades the churches we planted were small and struggling. For the last 15 years our churches have grown quickly and thrived. People ask what changed? My standard answer is to say that when you stick around long enough (I have been with the ministry for more than 30 years) God starts to feel sorry for you! In reality, we cannot pinpoint exactly what brought about our growth.

However, we are sure of one thing that has contributed to our turnaround. For 15 years we simply have not hired a senior pastor unless we were convinced he or she was an excellent leader with the skills, wisdom and maturity to lead a great church.

Of all the ways in which a church behaves like a family, the most critical indication of health is differentiation of self at the highest levels of leadership. The differentiated leader will stay in touch with his or her professional and lay leaders, and be willing to hear bad news without retaliation. He or she will take clearly and non-reactively defined positions, and will understand there are many who will sabotage the growth of a church. Sometimes the sabotage will be intentional. Sometimes it will be unintentional. But it will always take a high emotional intelligence to defuse the problem.

The differentiated leader will know their ministry is their job, not their life. They will be balanced, committed to God, self, family, and church. They will focus on their strengths and hire to their weaknesses. They will not forget that their weaknesses are their weaknesses, not yielding to the temptation to claim the successes of others as their own.

The differentiated leader will take sabbatical days, with a simple perspective of prayer. He or she will trust his or her instincts, but also be willing to change one's mind. They will work in a way that brings psychological wholeness and spiritual holiness together. When they lose their way, they will get help, and not give up until they get the right kind of help.

The differentiated leader is a person who will trust his or her feelings, a person who knows thoughts are a dime a dozen, but feelings are where the real

payoff lies. The differentiated leader is a person who knows his or her feelings are valid. They are having them for a reason, and the reason is important. They will not look for the right answer. They will look for the heart's answer, knowing the heart has its reason that reason does not know.

And finally, the differentiated leader will know that faith without doubt is no faith at all. Faith without doubt is certainty, and certainty is a myth. The differentiated leader will embrace their doubts, embrace the mystery, and trust the journey.