

# PASTORPEDIA™

*Cutting Edge Conversations for Pastors and Church Leaders*

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## ***What are our job hazards?***

It is true that pastoring a church is not a hard-hat job. It is correct to say that there are not physical dangers that go with the territory. Most of us see no need to “conceal and carry.”

But for sure this calling has its hazards and dangers. Just read the newspaper or check your own heart.

So may we address some of the cautions and warnings that all of us need to avoid the wrecks, to guard our hearts, to protect the body of Christ, which He calls His Church?

One thing for sure all three of us admit: only I can take care of me, with God’s Spirit of course. But one of the ways I can help to do that is to build guardrails and true disciplines into my life, schedule, and heart.

See if you agree.

*“Frail children of dust,”*

*Knute, Jeff, Jim*

## ***Is pride near the top of the list?***

### ***Jeff Bogue***

- Actually, I usually feel more insecure than I do prideful!
- It's funny—I get called cocky a lot but it's mostly just confidence or a bluntness that causes me not to agree with people, so I might become a little inflexible with their ideas. But I don't feel that confidence, bluntness, clarity, and certainty of direction are pride.

### ***Jim Brown***

- Absolutely. Yes, it is near the top as it is with any leadership position in life. It began in heaven with Satan—man's first sin had pride all over it also.
- There is a delicate balance to being able to celebrate the powerful life transformation stories of Jesus without bringing attention to yourself.
- I do believe you can have a humble gratitude in what the Lord is doing.
- If we do not celebrate what God is doing then we can rob Him of praise that He is due. The enemy hates it when Jesus gets attention, so he works overtime in this area.
- Pride also rears its ugly head when we refuse to celebrate what God is doing in other churches. This pride is rooted in jealousy.
- Pride has the ability to turn people against people and divide churches.
- Pride can close pastors' hearts to good ideas from others because they didn't birth the idea.

### ***Knute Larson***

- Yes, or maybe it is first among equals, like backsliding and exaggeration or play-acting! It seems important that we admit that telling people how to live (yes, there are better ways to describe preaching!) and hearing, "That was so good!" are not easy or natural ways to walk humbly with our God.

We all have flinched when someone told our wife, "It must be wonderful to be married to a pastor!" (And we hoped she would not gag.) Any positive pastoring brings many compliments which can be embraced rather than just appreciated.

We would probably all try to redirect any praise to God, where it belongs, but there still is this hazard of foolish pride.

- One pastor lamented to me, "I have to be up or on every week." We both admitted nobody is. So then do we act like we really mean what we say or how strongly we challenge others? And then if we get good at that, do we slide into a make-believe mode that can become a habit? A way of life? Yes, all the bad news about pastors and our own hearts remind us of the dangers. We do need our Lord and as many safeguards as possible.
- And we must not skip to the opposite: feelings of unworthiness. They usually come when church is not going well. And just as we should not suck up the credit after a good spell or decent sermon, we should not take the blame for the bad or poor if we tried.

## ***What else goes with the territory?***

### ***Jeff Bogue***

- Job hazards: Fatigue, losing passion, working for job security, leading from a position of fear instead of vision, cynicism, being callous, family tensions, your faith and love for Christ becoming a job instead of your relationship with Him.

### ***Jim Brown***

- A spirit of entitlement can creep into the heart of pastors if they are not careful. Yet we are not entitled to anything and we should be grateful that we get paid to tell others about Jesus!
- Cynicism can form in one's heart, and it must be guarded against. We must be diligent in believing the best in others instead of the worst in them.
- Overall health can be influenced by the stresses of the job. It is imperative to have a proper exercise, diet, and emotional health plan.

### ***Knute Larson***

- Cynicism is high on my list. We hear a fellow pastor give promises based on verses we thought we understood, or we exaggerate just a little ourselves as we give a sincere challenge.

We may say we are sure God will supply the building fund when we have our secret doubts.

Or how many times have we been lied to, often intentionally?

Or the feeling that a lot of life is a game for some! Phooey!

That breeds cynicism.

- Money issues, women issues, and pride-arrogance issues are usually the stumbling blocks, in reverse order of frequency. Maybe these are issues because people trust us so much, and we can do the same, resulting in lower guardrails—sometimes to our embarrassment or delinquency.
- And let's not forget laziness. Pastoring calls for self-discipline, and often the hours are secret, in the sense that we don't punch in on a clock or with the board chairman. (I hope not, at least.) We can easily fudge on time commitments, take extra days off, or think we deserve a break because we worked hard two weeks ago.

For the most part we set our own deadlines, plan our own hours, and are in charge of when we get up and when we go to bed.

Surely we need accountability, a good master schedule, and the discipline that grace should provoke. Do you have a strong accountability partner or group? Have you made a master schedule so that you attack each week the same way when possible? Do you understand how much the love of God compels us to serve Him in a strong way?

## ***What can we do to protect ourselves?***

### ***Jeff Bogue***

- Rest, balance, try to release things to the Lord, pray for courage, say no to the right things and yes to the right things.
- Be with God—enjoy God! For me that usually looks like working in my yard or being in the woods. Make sure you put this time into your schedule.

### ***Jim Brown***

- Every pastor should have an accountability partner in his life where he can share the highs and lows of ministry. This partner must be asking the hard questions about your spiritual journey.
- We must understand our humanity and not live for man's approval but for God's approval.
- Find your identity in Jesus and not your position or the successes and failures around you.
- Above all, spend time with Jesus on your knees in prayer, and saturate your mind with His Word.
- Find ways to get away, refresh, and refuel weekly and yearly. Way too many pastors lose their families while in ministry because they get consumed only with the work of the church!
- Remind yourself daily that you are nothing without Jesus and He can use a donkey to do His work. 😊 We really are not that special!
- Don't think too highly of yourself!
- Don't take yourself too seriously and make time for fun, laughter, and leisure!

### ***Knute Larson***

- Build good, high guardrails, and never think we can cheat on ourselves. (We can send you a copy of guardrails or boundaries used by a number of churches. And it was approved first by their board.)
- Prepare and preach every week for yourself first. "The three hearts of preaching" are first God's—what did He mean when He had it written? And then ours—do I believe this and embrace it? And then the heart of the listener—will she or he really want to do and believe this?
- Be in a really candid and trusting group with two to five other people of your gender who have honesty and support each other, meet regularly, tag each other out honestly, and ask hard questions. And always pray for each other.
- Know that ultimately only you can keep yourself obedient to God.
- Accept or receive Jesus as your Savior every day. This does not mean repeated faith in God's justification plan, but a strong and conscientious kneeling of our ego to confess that we need our Savior all the time. We will fall without Him. Pride does, after all, lead to a fall, as we all know either by experience or observation. "Take heed," is the warning in the Bible.
- Surely it helps to have your own helpful rituals such as: journaling, accountability goals that someone sees regularly, confession practices—not just for Catholics and Lutherans, or maybe kneeling in surrender sometimes when you pray.

All this is for the safekeeping of your soul and body.

- Our Lord is the one who is “able to keep you from stumbling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with great joy” (Jude 24), but we also are called to work out our salvation (or good health) with fear and trembling,” so that God can work in us (Phil. 2:12, 13). May it be so.

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