
GROWTH POINTS

With Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D.

Face Your Fears: I

Pastors don't like to admit it, but many harbor fears. This is particularly true of those who serve alone — solo pastors.

There are seven fears that serve to undermine good leadership. Which of the following do you identify in your own life?

Fear of Failure

Not wanting to fail is the most common type of fear among solo pastors. At least it's the most talked about. Solo pastors are lightning rods for criticism. Everything, including failure, is placed at their feet. Such fear keeps solo pastors from attempting to lead a church forward. If they start something new, and it doesn't work, they'll be seen as failures. If the church doesn't show some growth, they'll be seen as failures among their peers.

Fear of success.

This fear is a difficult one to see and assess. Don't all pastors desire success? Well, yes and no. Pastors are prone to dismiss the idea of success, instead inserting the word faithful, like in, "I'm called to be faithful not successful." Yet, faithfulness implies success, i.e., success at being faithful. If God calls pastors to be faithful, and they are faithful, then aren't they successful?

Fear of discovery.

Pastors fear people will find out they're not as strong in prayer, or evangelism, or as deeply spiritual as they may appear. It's the fear of being found out. This fear stops them from disciple-making because they fear getting close to others who will see them for what they really are. Likewise, it keeps them from sharing ministry with others.

Fear of not measuring up.

Solo pastors are by nature susceptible to overcommitment. The churches they serve take advantage of them, sort of run them into the ground, due to this trait. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that pastors put unreasonable expectations upon themselves.

Fear of comparison.

Solo pastors admit to a great fear of being compared to the pastors of larger churches. Any mention of another pastor's preaching ability, or available programs in other churches, or dynamic worship found in other churches brings feelings of disgust or envy.

Fear of not doing enough.

Ministry flows to the pastor like water out of a fire hydrant—fast and forceful. Pastors question whether they've ever done enough? Or if the constant

stream of ministry demands will ever be done. When will enough be enough? Ministry can be a narcotic, an escape from a bad marriage or a painful past.

Fear of loss.

The losses are easy to enumerate, loss of friends, loss of financial supporters, loss of gifted workers, loss of hope, and what may be the most difficult, loss of a dream.

Have you felt some of these fears in your own life, work, or ministry? Most pastors have, and wisdom on how to redeem them is found in Dr. McIntosh's new book. Order today!

Understanding and Overcoming the Challenges of Leading a Church Alone

the solo pastor

GARY L. McINTOSH

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