



# RESILIENCE:

FINDING WHOLENESS IN MINISTRY  
BY WAY OF THE CROSS

**STUDY:**

Wholeness in Community

*Individual Study Guide*

@2020 by Grand Rapids Theological Seminary of Cornerstone University

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Curriculum Development: The GoodWorks Group, LLC

Videography: Eric Schrotenboer

Video Editing: Owen Longjohn and Joey Hidalgo

Graphic Design: Cornerstone University Marketing and Communications Office



**Grand Rapids**  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

*Cornerstone University*

# Wholeness in Community

## OVERVIEW

The goal of this study is to help pastors and ministry leaders understand the importance of community for pursuing resilience and wellbeing in ministry.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this study, participants will be able to

- + Evaluate the depth and breadth of the community that supports their wellbeing in ministry
- + Identify gaps in their support network
- + Explore Biblical portraits of companionship in ministry
- + Make a plan for pursuing supportive community

### LESSONS

- + Why You Need Community
- + Types of Community
- + Confidants and Allies

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- + Internet access for videos
- + Computer, projector, and/or speakers to show videos

# Why You Need Community

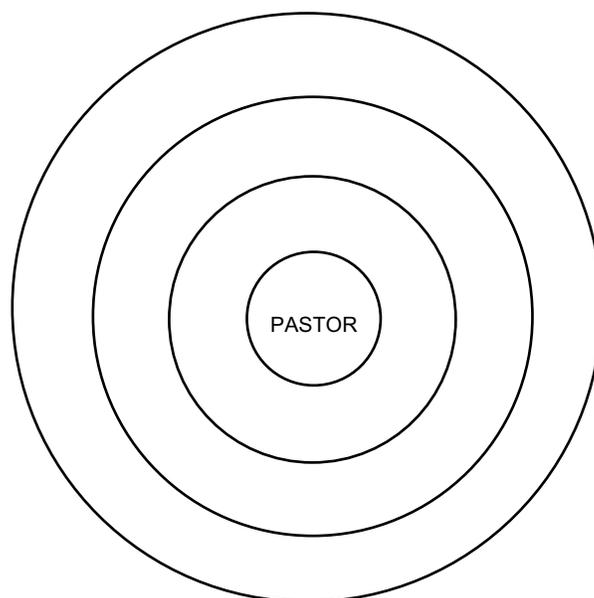
## LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, you will learn why community is important for pastoral wellbeing and what types of community are beneficial.

## SCRIPTURE MEDITATION: PROVERBS 27:17

## ACTIVITY

Use the concentric circles below to identify people and groups who comprise your community. Indicate the closeness and influence of the relationship by its proximity to the center.





# Wholeness in Community

## REFLECTION

Respond to the following questions:

- + What sort of community do you need in order to maintain a sense of wellbeing?
- + What sorts of relationships are beneficial?

## VIDEO

Watch the video, “The Pastor’s Community,” in which Dr. Chuck DeGroat describes the type of community pastors need in order to thrive.

## REFLECTION

Reflect on and apply what Dr. DeGroat said in the video by responding to the following questions.

- + According to Dr. DeGroat, why is community important for pastors?
- + Why do you think it’s difficult for pastors to develop community?
- + What sorts of community does a pastor need?
- + Reflect on your diagram of your community. How many of you included a coach, spiritual director, therapist, and/or trusted friend?



## Wholeness in Community

- + To what extent does your church allow time and space for you to meet with a coach, spiritual director, therapist, and/or trusted friend?
- + To what extent does your church provide resources (health insurance, stipend, time away, etc.) for seeing a coach, spiritual director or therapist? For meeting with trusted friends or clergy colleagues?



# Types of Community

## LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, you will learn about three specific types of community that are beneficial for pastoral wellbeing.

## SCRIPTURE MEDITATION: 2 TIMOTHY 4:9-18

## REFLECTION

Consider the following questions:

- + Do pastors and ministry leaders need special types of community in order to thrive in their work? Why or why not?

## QUOTE FOR CONSIDERATION

In his book, *Flourishing in Ministry: How to Cultivate Clergy Wellbeing*, Dr. Matt Bloom writes,

Our research strongly concurs [with previous research]: strong, positive social relationships are vital for flourishing in ministry. We find that four kinds of social relationships are especially important: significant others (spouses, family, and friends), similar others (pastors, clergy, and other ministry workers), members of the local church a pastor is serving, and denominational leaders....All are necessary, but no single one is sufficient.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bloom, M. (2019). *Flourishing in ministry: How to cultivate clergy wellbeing*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, p. 82. For more on this topic, see Chapter 7 “Social Support.”

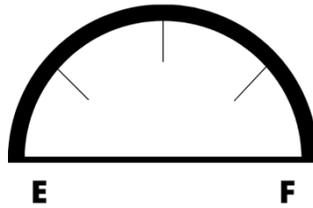


# Wholeness in Community

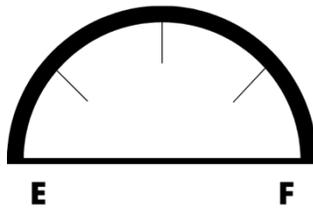
## REFLECTION

Reflect on the level of community you have in each of the four categories Dr. Bloom described—significant others, similar others, members of your local church, denominational/network leaders. Using the gauges below, indicate the level of your community in each group.

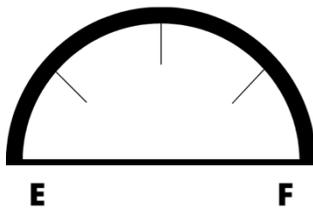
**Significant Others**



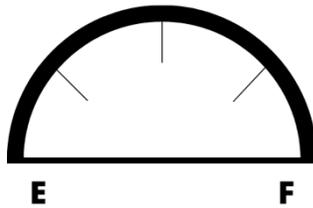
**Similar Others**



**Church**



**Denomination/Network**







# Confidants and Allies

## LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, you will learn about two types of people a pastor needs as part of their community.

## SCRIPTURE MEDITATION: 2 TIMOTHY 3:10-4:8

## ACTIVITY

Using the table below, do the following:

- + Make a list of the people to whom you can tell anything.
- + Make a list of the people whose support you need to lead effectively within your church or ministry.
- + Circle the names of the people who are on both lists.

People to whom I can tell anything	People whose support I need to lead

## REFLECTION

Consider the following questions as you reflect on your lists.

- + Which of your lists is longer? Why do you think that is?
- + What are the benefits of having people who appear on both lists?
- + What are the dangers?

## READING

The people to whom you can tell anything, those are your confidants. The people whose support you need to lead effectively, those are your allies.

Read the article, “Allies and Confidants: Fighting Loneliness and Finding Friendships.”<sup>2</sup> As you read, think about the role of confidants and allies in your life.

## ALLIES AND CONFIDANTS: FIGHTING LONELINESS AND FINDING FRIENDSHIPS

The loneliness of pastoral ministry. That’s what surprised Bob Burns when he and his team were conducting the research for *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving*. Burns is the Spiritual Formation Pastor at Church of the Good Shepherd in Durham, N.C., and one of our speakers at this year’s Talking Points conference. Actually, it wasn’t a surprise, he later qualified. Rather, it merely reinforced something he already knew to be true: Pastors can experience profound loneliness in ministry.

Even though pastors face considerable loneliness in ministry, they need close, personal relationships. According to Burns and his colleagues Donald C. Guthrie and Tasha D. Chapman, close, personal relationships are vital to our spiritual formation. These relationships offer space for accountability and encouragement as we seek to become more like Christ. Unfortunately, pastors

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<sup>2</sup> Herr, M. 2020. “Allies and confidants: Fighting loneliness and finding friendships.” <https://www.cornerstone.edu/blog-post/allies-and-confidants-fighting-loneliness-and-finding-friendships/>.

struggle to develop these sorts of relationships: “Finding and forming intimate friendships, in which ‘iron sharpens iron’ (Proverbs 27:17) is often a frightening and elusive challenge for pastors.”<sup>3</sup>

Burns, Chapman and Guthrie draw on the work of Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky to describe why finding and developing these friendships can be particularly difficult for pastors. In their book *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*, Heifetz and Linsky differentiate between a leader’s allies and confidants. “Allies are people who share many of your values, or at least your strategy, and operate across some organizational or factional boundary. Because they cross a boundary, they cannot always be loyal to you; they have other ties to honor.”<sup>4</sup>

Allies can be a tremendous gift. They can work with you to build support for an idea or a program. They can help you attend to your blind spots.

“Pastors are constantly working with allies,” according to Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie.<sup>5</sup> They can find allies on the elder board or leadership team and even in a children’s Sunday school class. “Yet pastors are always calculating—consciously and unconsciously—whether these allies in the congregation could or should be party to their more personal concerns.” Pastors have to choose whether or not to allow their allies to be their confidants.

Confidants, according to Heifetz and Linsky, are those people to whom you can bare your soul precisely because “they have few, if any, conflicting loyalties.”<sup>6</sup> They are “people you can confide without having your revelations spill back into the work arena.”<sup>7</sup>

When I interviewed Roy Yanke of PIR Ministries, he stated that, for pastors, “sharing too much can become ammunition for an exit, but every pastor needs to find those advocates he or she can share with.” Treating an ally as a confidant has risks—even for ministry families.

In one church in which my husband pastored, I developed a close friendship with a female member of the congregation. She understood me. She listened. She felt safe. And so I treated her as a confidant. But our relationship changed a bit when she became part of the church leadership team. Her position on the leadership team meant that her loyalties had shifted; she was now responsible for oversight of our congregation. I wanted to be able to confide in her still—especially about some of my church-related struggles—but I wondered whether she would relay my grievances and hurts to others.

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<sup>3</sup> Burns, B., Chapman, T. D., and Guthrie, D. C. (2013). *Resilient ministry: What pastors told us about surviving and thriving*. Downers Grove: IVP, p. 42.

<sup>4</sup> Heifetz, R. A. and Linsky, M. *Leadership on the line: Staying alive through the dangers of leading*. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, p. 199.

<sup>5</sup> Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, *Resilient*, p. 42.

<sup>6</sup> Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership*, p. 199.

<sup>7</sup> Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership*, p. 200.

Some pastors can successfully turn to allies for accountability, as Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie share in their book. This was certainly true for my husband and another pastor on staff who formed a deep relationship and continue to spur one another to godliness through mutual accountability. But, as the authors note, this cannot always be the case.

Pastors and ministry leaders, as well as their spouses, need confidants. Burns, Chapman and Guthrie rightly ask, “To whom can pastors go to get pastored?”<sup>8</sup> Perhaps it’s a pastor of another congregation, a spiritual director, or a therapist. Perhaps it’s a good friend from seminary or a cherished professor.

## REFLECTION

Reflect on the article by answering the following questions:

- + Why is it important for you to have confidants? In what ways can they support you in ministry?
- + Why is it important for you to have allies? In what ways can they support you in ministry?
- + What is the danger of having a confidant who is also an ally?

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<sup>8</sup> Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie, *Resilient*, p. 43.

