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When Ministers Need Ministry: Lessons from Elijah's Burnout in 1 Kings 19:1–18 for Prioritising Pastoral Self-Care

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ABSTRACT

Pastoral burnout is prevalent and often overlooked, affecting the well-being of ministers and the health of their congregations. This study examines the critical issue of burnout among pastors through the lens of Elijah's experience in 1 Kings 19:1–18. It examines the importance of pastoral self-care through Elijah's encounter with ministry-related stress, emotional exhaustion, and divine restoration. The study employs descriptive and exegetical analysis to investigate Elijah's journey from despair to renewal and relates it to the realities of contemporary pastoral ministry. The findings reveal that many pastors experience isolation, feelings of inadequacy, emotional fatigue, and overwhelming responsibility, all of which mirror Elijah's crisis. The study further demonstrates that God's response to Elijah was holistic in addressing his physical, emotional, spiritual, and relational needs before recommissioning him for ministry. Consequently, the study recommends structured self-care routines, the development of supportive ministerial networks, healthy boundaries, and a church culture that encourages pastors to prioritise their well-being. Therefore, it advocates a paradigm shift in ministry that recognises pastoral wellness as essential for long-term ministerial effectiveness and the overall health of the church. The study contributes to knowledge by establishing Elijah's experience in 1 Kings 19:1–18 as a biblical paradigm for understanding ministerial burnout and recovery, in that pastoral self-care is not merely a personal practice but a theological necessity for sustaining effective and enduring ministry.

Keywords: *Pastoral Burnout, Self-Care, Elijah, Ministry, Emotional Well-Being, Spiritual Restoration*

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Ministers, by their very calling, are invested in the care and well-being of others. They are seen as the spiritual leaders who guide their congregations through preaching, teaching, counselling, and providing emotional and moral support. Their lives are marked by a continual focus on meeting the spiritual, emotional, and sometimes physical needs of their congregants. Although such selflessness is virtuous and essential to the pastoral role, it often comes at the cost of the pastor's well-being. Ministers become so focused on serving others that they overlook their emotional, physical, and spiritual health, leading to severe consequences such as burnout. One study revealed that, in the United States, burnout results in approximately 120,000 deaths each year.[1] Burnout in ministry is far more common than is recognised. It is a condition of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment, resulting from chronic stress in the demanding and highly personal work of ministry. When ministers experience burnout, the effects are far-reaching, impacting not only their own health but also that of their families and the congregations they serve. A burned-out pastor struggles constantly to provide effective spiritual leadership, leading to a decline in church vitality.

Using the biblical account of Elijah in 1 Kings 19 as a foundational case study, this paper examines the significance of pastoral self-care. Elijah, one of the great prophets of the Old Testament, experienced intense emotional and spiritual exhaustion after his confrontation with the prophets of Baal. His story exemplifies how God ministers to those in need, particularly those in positions of spiritual leadership. In the depths of Elijah's despair, when he had reached the end of his physical, emotional, and spiritual strength, God intervened with holistic care that addressed not only Elijah's spiritual renewal but also his physical and emotional needs. Elijah's experience is a divine model for understanding burnout and recovery. God provided rest, nourishment, emotional support, and a renewed sense of purpose in his lowest moments. This holistic care model, which addresses the physical, emotional, spiritual, and social aspects of well-being, provides valuable lessons for contemporary pastors. Today's ministers, like Elijah, find themselves in a place where they have given all they have, leaving them drained and unable to continue their work effectively. However, just as God ministered to Elijah and restored him, so too do pastors find restoration when they focus on self-care. This paper argues that pastors must prioritise their well-being as an essential component of their ministry. It examines how neglecting self-care leads to burnout and how intentional practices of rest, emotional restoration, spiritual renewal, and reconnection with support can prevent it.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive-exegetical methodology to examine the phenomenon of pastoral burnout through the biblical narrative of Elijah in 1 Kings 19:1–18. The qualitative approach is appropriate because it seeks to explore and interpret the experiences, emotions, and theological significance embedded in the text rather than generate numerical data.[2] The study relies primarily on biblical exegesis, involving a careful examination of the historical, literary, and theological contexts of the passage, with particular attention given to key Hebrew words, phrases, and narrative structures that illuminate Elijah's experience of exhaustion, isolation, fear, and restoration. Through syntactical analysis, the study investigates how the text portrays Elijah's crisis and God's response to it. In addition, the research adopts a descriptive approach by examining contemporary literature on clergy burnout, pastoral stress, self-care, and ministerial well-being in order to establish connections between Elijah's experience and the realities of modern pastoral ministry. The findings from the exegetical analysis are further

[1] Jennifer Moss, "Burnout Is About Your Workplace, Not Your People," *Harvard Business Review*, December 11, 2019, http://hbr.org/2019/12/burnout-is-about-your-workplace-not-your-people.

[2] John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2018), 20–24.

interpreted through theological reflection, allowing biblical insights to be applied to contemporary ministerial challenges. The study is therefore interdisciplinary, drawing from biblical studies, pastoral theology, leadership studies, and psychological perspectives on burnout. This integrated methodology enables the research to develop practical and theological recommendations for pastoral self-care, ministerial resilience, and sustainable leadership in contemporary church contexts.

3.0 THE DEMANDS OF PASTORAL MINISTRY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Ministry, by its very nature, is demanding. Pastors are called upon to counsel, preach, comfort, and be a constant presence for their congregations. As spiritual leaders, they are expected to respond to a wide range of situations, including personal crises, emotional traumas, and the spiritual needs of their parishioners. A pastor has numerous roles, including spiritual guidance and emotional care. In fulfilling these duties, ministers are seen as the go-to figures for wisdom, comfort, and encouragement, at the expense of their own well-being. One of the most challenging aspects that pastors face is the self-imposed and congregation-driven expectation that they must always be available. Parishioners expect their pastor to be present at life events, such as births, weddings, and funerals. Mark Miller-McLemore states, "Our weekend Saturdays are used for weddings or retreats. We attend meetings or visit homes after dinner. Our work, as we say, means we are on call 24/7. When there is a crisis, we are called, no matter our schedule. We return from family vacations to lead funerals. If a member or a transient drops by the office and needs to talk or seeks money for a meal, our schedule is subject to change."[3] They also expect regular counselling, visiting the sick, attending meetings, preparing sermons, and maintaining administrative duties. Mark Miller-Mclemore rightly observes,

> It's tough out there. These cases sound—and are— abusive. But even in the routine of pastoral life, it isn't easy. Giving care to the grieving parents of stillborn infants; burying murder victims, or victims of cancer who die too young, or the saints of the church in maturity; counseling and caring for families as marriages you've performed break down; making tough decisions about how to allocate scarce resources and cutting staff; navigating the thickets of cultures and interlocking family relationships to which you are foreign; trying to guide and shape young people who are pulled away from church; saying "hello" and "goodbye" to good people to whom you have become attached; trying to stay alive spiritually and intellectually; seeking to make a public case for the life of faith in a world that doesn't much care these sap energy and drag down the spirit. Even in normal times, ministry is a wearisome profession.[4]

These responsibilities extend beyond regular working hours, leaving pastors little personal time. As a result, many pastors develop an identity centred around constant support for others, making it challenging to recognise and address their emotional and spiritual needs. In the process of serving others, pastors frequently overlook their well-being. The very nature of ministry encourages self-sacrifice, and many ministers feel a responsibility to prioritise their congregations' needs over their own. However, this outward focus leads to an unhealthy pattern of neglecting personal issues, such as physical health, emotional balance, family relationships, and even spiritual growth. Over time, this neglect can lead to burnout.

Burnout is a chronic state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged stress, especially in professional environments. It results from feeling overwhelmed by workload, unable to meet constant demands, and lacking sufficient resources.[5] Some symptoms include physical exhaustion, cynicism, reduced productivity, and physical issues like headaches or sleep

[3] Mark Miller-McLemore, "Revaluing "Self-Care" As A Practice Of Ministry," *Journal of Religious Leadership*, Vol. 10, No. 1, (Spring 2011): 119.

[4] Miller-McLemore, "Revaluing "Self-Care" As A Practice Of Ministry," 113-4.

[5] Kathryn E. Bouskill, et al., *Burnout: Definition, Prevalence, Risk Factors, Prevention, and Interventions Literature Reviews* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2022), 8-12.

disturbances. Causes include excessive workload, lack of control, unclear job expectations, work-life imbalance, and lack of care.[6] In a pastoral context, burnout results from prolonged stress and exhaustion driven by the relentless demands of ministry. Pastors who constantly pour themselves out for others without taking time for self-care find themselves depleted emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Burnout does not happen overnight; it is the culmination of months or years of sustained pressure, during which the pastor has neglected their well-being in favour of serving others. One critical factor contributing to this neglect is the inherent tension between personal boundaries and the perceived demands of ministry.

Many pastors feel they must be available 24/7, which can lead to poor boundaries around time and personal space. They find it difficult to say "no" to additional responsibilities or to delegate tasks, fearing that doing so might be perceived as a weakness or a lack of commitment. This fear of letting others down, the congregation, church leadership, or God, compounds the problem. A study conducted by René Drumm and Petr Činčala on pastoral stress in the North American Division found that self-care is crucial for the well-being of pastors.[7] However, barriers to self-care can be internal, such as pastoral expectations, or external, from church members or administrators. Pastors struggle to convince themselves that they have done a great job or have done enough. Church members' expectations also create barriers to pastors' ability to care for their needs, as they may expect their family's needs to be secondary to their own. This lack of work-life balance increases stress and creates a vicious cycle of guilt for not meeting congregational or family needs.[8] It leads to a sense of guilt when pastors attempt to prioritise their needs, making it even more difficult to establish healthy boundaries.

Furthermore, the emotional weight of ministry is immense. Pastors deal with the most challenging aspects of life: death, grief, divorce, addiction, and other personal traumas. They provide emotional and spiritual care to individuals in their most vulnerable moments. However, the emotional toll of these encounters on the pastor is unrecognised or unaddressed. The pastor's role as a caregiver creates a perception of them as invulnerable, always ready to offer a word of comfort or support. In reality, pastors, like anyone else, carry their personal burdens, such as struggles, family issues, doubts, and fears, but these go unattended because the focus is always on the congregation's needs. This outward focus also affects the pastor's family. Many pastors struggle to balance the demands of ministry with the needs of their spouses and children. The pressure to be constantly available for the congregation can lead to missed family events, limited quality time, and strained relationships, causing feelings of guilt, resentment, and disconnection within the family as the pastor's emotional energy is consistently directed outward. Reports from George Barna, [9] Lifeway, [10] Schaeffer Institute of Leadership Development, [11] Christianity Today, [12] and Pastoral Care Inc.[13] provide statistics on why

[6] Kathryn E. Bouskill, et al., *Burnout: Definition, Prevalence, Risk Factors, Prevention, and Interventions Literature Reviews*, 8-12.

[7] René Drumm and Petr Činčala, "SDA Pastor Health Qualitative Study Report: What Can and Must Be Done to Save the Health of Adventist Pastors" (unpublished report, North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Department, 2021).

[8] René Drumm, Petr Činčala, and Ivan Williams, "It Takes a Lot of Discipline to Say, 'I'm Going to Walk With God Today': Recognizing and Addressing Barriers to Pastors' Spiritual Wellbeing" (Adventist Human Subject Research Association Conference, Orlando, FL, May 2022).

[9] "Pastors Share Top Reasons They've Considered Quitting Ministry in the Past Year," https://www.barna.com/research/pastors-quitting-ministry/. Accessed September 12, 2024.

[10] "22 Vital Stats for Ministry in 2022," https://research.lifeway.com/2022/01/05/22-vital-stats-for-ministry-in-2022/. Accessed September 12, 2024.

[11] R. J. Krejcir and A. Francis, *Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development* http://www.truespirituality.org/

[12] "More Pastors Are Leaving Ministry Over Church Conflict," https://www.christianitytoday.com/2024/04/pastor-leave-church-conflict-hartford-church-health-survey/. Accessed September 12, 2024.

[13] "Statistics in the Ministry" https://www.pastoralcareinc.com/why-pastoral-care/. Accessed September 12, 2024.

pastors leave the ministry.[14] They report high percentages of clergy facing challenges, such as inadequate training, stress, and family pressures, as well as the number of clergy leaving the ministry each month.

The spiritual consequences of neglecting self-care are equally detrimental. Pastors who constantly minister to others struggle to find time for their own spiritual nourishment. The irony is that the very person responsible for guiding others in their spiritual journeys is themselves spiritually malnourished.[15] Pastors become so preoccupied with sermon preparation, teaching, and counselling that they neglect their relationship with God. Their prayer lives become dry, and their connection to God weakens. This spiritual depletion leads to feelings of emptiness and disillusionment, making it increasingly difficult for the pastor to find joy and fulfilment in their ministry. This phenomenon is further compounded by the "Messiah complex" that many pastors unconsciously adopt. The Messiah complex is the belief that the pastor is indispensable to the church's well-being and that without them, the church or ministry would falter. This mentality leads pastors to take on more responsibilities than they can handle out of fear that if they do not, no one else will. They refuse to delegate tasks or seek help, feeling that they alone provide the necessary leadership or care for their congregation.

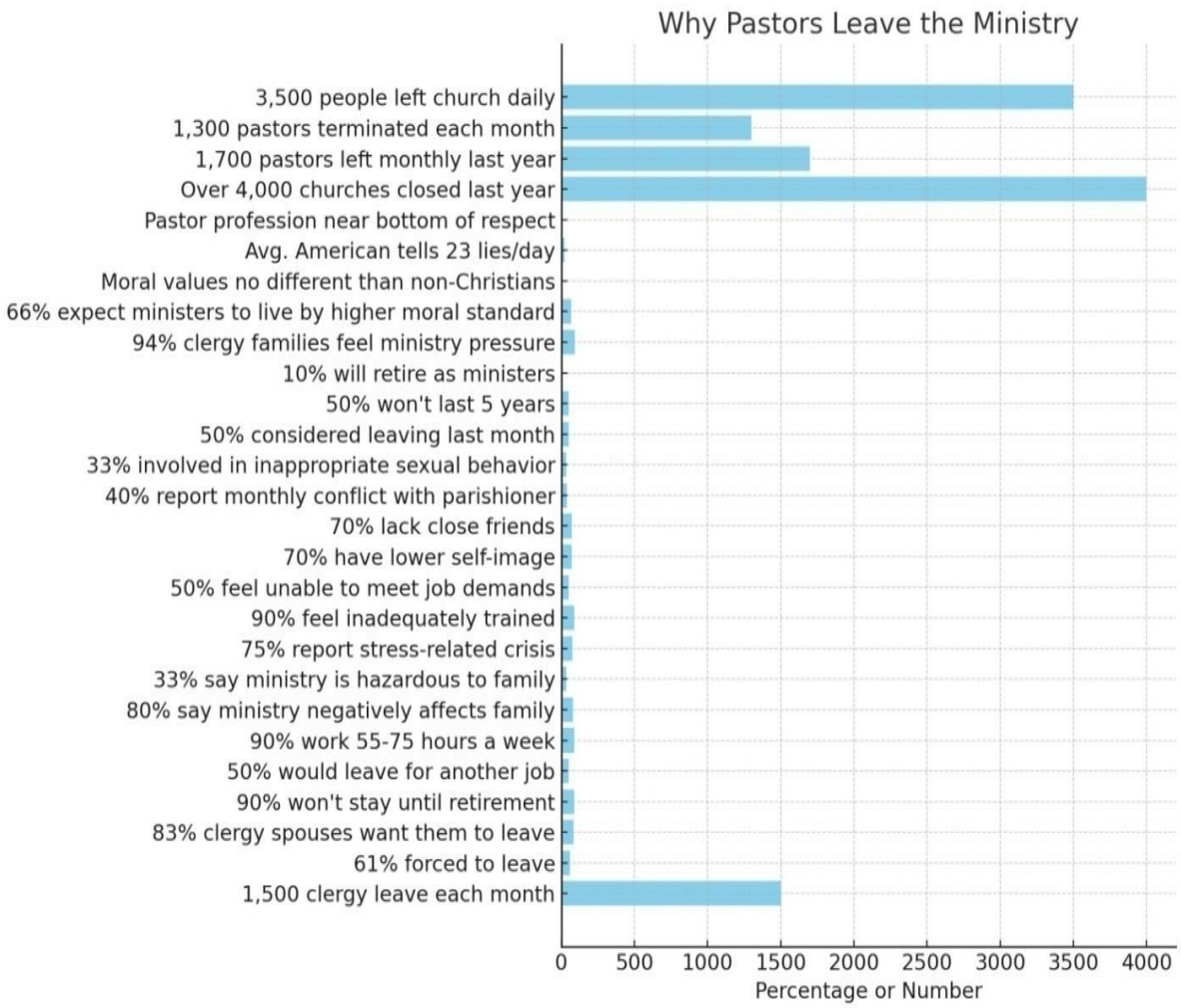
One of the most insidious aspects of the Messiah complex is that the congregation reinforces it. They view their pastor as the ultimate spiritual authority, expecting them to have all the answers and be always available. This creates unrealistic expectations that contribute to the pastor's sense of indispensability. When congregants see their pastor as the primary source of spiritual guidance, they inadvertently discourage the pastor from seeking their support or taking time for self-care. As a result, pastors feel trapped by these expectations, believing that taking time for themselves would be a dereliction of duty. In the context of African Christianity, where churches place a high value on the role of the pastor as a spiritual leader and authority figure, the pressure on pastors is even greater. In many African churches, the pastor is a religious leader and is expected to intervene in all areas of life, including family disputes, conflicts, and even political matters. This expanded role adds a layer of responsibility, making it even more difficult for pastors to establish boundaries and prioritise self-care. According to Mary L. White, "Self-care is defined as the activities of daily living that are needed to maintain quality of life and well-being."[16] These activities include, but are not limited to, following medical care recommendations, self-monitoring, taking medication as prescribed, adhering to a diet and exercise regimen, and smoking cessation.

The cumulative effect of these pressures is that many pastors experience profound isolation. They feel they have no one to turn to for support, either because they fear being judged or because they believe, as a spiritual leader, they should not need help. This isolation deepens the pastor's emotional and spiritual struggles, leading to feelings of despair and hopelessness, much like Elijah's experience in 1 Kings 19. Elijah's story also serves as a redemptive pathway for pastors in similar situations. God's response to Elijah was not one of condemnation or criticism. Instead, God provided Elijah with rest, food, and water to meet his physical needs before anything else. Then, in the stillness of Mount Horeb, God spoke to Elijah in a gentle whisper, bringing spiritual renewal and recommissioning him for the work ahead. This holistic approach to care for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs is a model for how pastors should prioritise self-care and avoid the pitfalls of burnout.

[14] "Statistics in the Ministry" https://www.pastoralcareinc.com/why-pastoral-care/. Accessed September 12, 2024.

[15] Mary L. White, "Spirituality Self-Care Practices as a Mediator between Quality of Life and Depression," *Religions* 7, 54 (2016): 2.

[16] White, "Spirituality Self-Care Practices as a Mediator between Quality of Life and Depression," 1.



Author's construct (on March 15, 2025)

4.0 AN EXEGETICAL EXPOSITION OF 1 KINGS 19:1-18

The Book of 1 Kings is one of the historical books in the Old Testament, primarily focusing on the history of Israel's monarchy. It covers the period from the final days of King David's reign to the rule of Jehoshaphat in Judah and Ahaziah in Israel, spanning approximately 120 years (970–850 BC). The book traces the division of the United Monarchy into two separate kingdoms: the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. It provides detailed accounts of the kings' reigns, successes, and failures, as well as the impact of their leadership on the nation's spiritual condition. The book contains three major themes. The first is covenant faithfulness, which requires Israel and its kings to remain faithful to God's covenant. When they failed, they faced dire consequences. Second, prophetic voices, such as Elijah and Elisha, play roles in confronting Israel's leaders, calling them back to covenant faithfulness, and warning them of impending judgment. Third, the rise of idolatry reflects Israel's repeated fall into idolatry, particularly under the influence of foreign gods such as Baal.[17]

The passage in 1 Kings 19:1-18 follows a dramatic confrontation between the prophet Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18). In this event, Elijah called down fire from heaven to demonstrate the power of the true God of Israel, which led to the defeat and execution of the false prophets of Baal. This moment represented a spiritual high point for Elijah and a demonstration of God's authority over Israel's idolatry. However, 1 Kings 19 begins with Jezebel, the queen of Israel and a fervent supporter of Baal worship, vowing to kill Elijah in retaliation for his actions against her prophets (1 Kings 19:1-2).[18] Fearing for his life, Elijah flees into the wilderness, exhausted and despairing. He reaches a point of emotional and spiritual exhaustion, asking God to take his life (19:4). God ministers to Elijah during his exhaustion, first addressing his physical needs, by providing food and rest. Then, God reveals Himself to Elijah not in dramatic displays of power, but in a "still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12), renewing Elijah's sense of purpose. God commissions him to continue his prophetic mission by anointing new kings and appointing Elisha as his successor, indicating that the mission is not Elijah's alone to bear (19:15-16). God also reassures Elijah that he is not alone, as 7,000 faithful Israelites remain who have not bowed to Baal (19:18). This passage reveals God's compassion for Elijah's frailty and exhaustion while also calling Elijah back to his mission with renewed strength and perspective.

4.1 Syntactical Analysis

Syntactical analysis explains the structure and arrangement of words and phrases in the text, focusing on how they work together to convey meaning. To understand their relationships and functions, it examines sentence components such as subjects, verbs, objects, clauses, and phrases. This is crucial in biblical exegesis, as it helps to interpret and clarify complex sentences, revealing how language is used to express ideas and intentions.

4.1.1 The Anatomy of Burnout (1 Kings 19:1-4)

Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18 represents one of the most memorable moments in the Old Testament. The name "Elijah" (אֵלִיָּהוּ), meaning "Yahweh is my God," underscores his role as a champion of monotheistic worship of Yahweh against the idolatry of Baal. His mission culminates in the fire from heaven (אֵשׁ יְהוָה) that consumes the sacrifice, demonstrating the supremacy of Yahweh (1 Kings 18:38). This act solidifies Elijah's authority as a prophet. However, the aftermath of this event quickly reveals Elijah's

[17] Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings: The New American Commentary* Vol. 8 (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 1995), Kindle Edition 45-46.

[18] Umaru, "The Vulnerability of Power and God's Restoration in the Protagonist of 1 Kings 19 for Building a Viable and Sustainable Christian Ministry," 110.

vulnerability.[19] The text introduces Jezebel's threat in 1 Kings 19:2, where she sends a messenger to Elijah: "*So may the gods do to me and more also if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow*." The Hebrew phrase "כִּי־כָעֵת מָחָר" explains the immediacy of the threat, placing Elijah in a heightened state of fear. The verb "to kill" מִיתָה is implied as Jezebel's intent.[20] Her words strike Elijah's core, prompting a sudden emotional collapse in him.

In verse 3, the phrase "וַיִּרָא," translated as "he was afraid," reveals the psychological trigger for Elijah's retreat. The verb ירא denotes both fear and reverence, but in this context, it is the dread that overtakes Elijah's heart. Elijah's fear is not merely physical but psychological; he fears failure, defeat, and the perceived end of his mission. According to R.D. Nelson, "The narrative shows deep psychological insight in describing the generalised depression that sometimes results from stress, in this case the stress of fear coupled with the stress brought on by victorious success . . . Depressed persons cannot usually be talked out of their gloom."[21] The text says Elijah "went for his life" יֵלֶךְ אֶל־נַפְשׁוֹ, meaning he fled to save his life. The word נֶפֶשׁ signifies life, soul, or being. Elijah's retreat represents more than a physical flight; it is a withdrawal of his very self, an existential crisis that mirrors the internal struggle of burnout. Once Elijah reaches the wilderness, he expresses his deep despair in his prayer: "*It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life*." The phrase "רַב עַתָּה" is a cry of exhaustion, meaning "It is too much" or "I have had enough." Elijah's plea shows emotional and spiritual fatigue. In his prayer, Elijah declares, "I am no better than my fathers" (1 Kings 19:4). The word for "fathers," אֲבֹתָי, refers to his ancestors, suggesting that Elijah feels he has failed in his prophetic mission. Despite external successes, this comparison leads to a deep-seated sense of inadequacy that internalises a feeling of not measuring up.

4.1.2 *God's Initial Response (1 Kings 19:5-8)*

Verses 5-8 show an aspect of God's response to Elijah's crisis. Elijah is resting under a broom tree when he falls asleep; the angel of the Lord touches him and instructs him to eat (1 Kings 19:5). This moment conveys God's initial focus on Elijah's immediate physical needs rather than his spiritual or emotional state. The phrase "angel of the Lord" (**מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה**) in this context denotes a divine messenger sent to minister to Elijah, signifying God's direct involvement in his recovery. The angel provides Elijah with a meal of bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water (1 Kings 19:6). The words for "bread" (לֶחֶם) and "water" (מַיִם) indicate the simplicity and sufficiency of the sustenance given. Dan Epp-Tiessen says, "The story suggests a way forward, eat and drink of God's life-giving sustenance, return to the bedrock of faith, listen for God's still small voice. That may be the way to find new energy, new vision, and a new sense of purpose." [22] Providing these necessities shows that God's provision includes physical nourishment as essential. Elijah's need for rest is further increased when the angel touches him a second time and instructs him to eat again, for the journey ahead will be extended (1 Kings 19:7). Jezebel sends a messenger of death. However, Yahweh sends a messenger of life who serves Elijah food and water, two essentials for survival in the harsh wilderness. [23] The phrase "the journey is too great for you" כִּי־רָב מִמֶּךָּ implies that Elijah's forthcoming task

[19] Umaru, "The Vulnerability of Power and God's Restoration in the Protagonist of 1 Kings 19 for Building a Viable and Sustainable Christian Ministry," 112-4.

[20] Robert B. Coote, "Yahweh Recalls Elijah," in *Traditions in Transformation: Turning Points in Biblical Faith*, ed. Baruch Halpern and Jon D. Levenson (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 116; Richard D. Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, Interpretation (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1987), 126.

[21] R.D. Nelson, *First and Second Kings, Interpretation* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1987), 126–127.

[22] Dan Epp-Tiessen, "1 Kings 19: The Renewal of Elijah," in *Old Testament Scholarship: In Honor of Allen Guenther*, Douglas B. Miller, ed. *Direction: A Mennonite Brethren Forum* Vol. 35 no. 1 (2006): 37.

[23] Alan J. Hauser, "Yahweh Versus Death: The Real Struggle in 1 Kings 17-19," in *From Carmel to Horeb: Elijah in Crisis*, ed. Alan J. Hauser, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 85 (Sheffield, England: Almond, 1990), 64.

requires strength that he currently lacks. This acknowledgement of his physical limitations shows that even the most spiritually minded individuals need physical restoration to continue their work. God's response teaches a crucial lesson about integrating physical and spiritual well-being, explaining that physical health is not separate from spiritual health but is, in fact, integral to it.

4.1.3 *Spiritual Care and Reorientation (1 Kings 19:9-13)*

After Elijah's immediate physical needs are met, God leads him to a more intimate experience of divine presence through spiritual retreats and quiet times. Elijah's journey to Mount Horeb (also known as Mount Sinai) represents more than a physical relocation; instead, he retreats into a space where he seeks God away from the distractions and pressures of his prophetic mission (1 Kings 19:8). This journey shows the importance of creating space for spiritual encounters amidst a busy and demanding ministry. Upon reaching Mount Horeb, Elijah witnesses a series of dramatic natural phenomena: a strong wind, an earthquake, and a fire (1 Kings 19:11-12).[24] Each of these phenomena appears elsewhere in the Bible: Wind רוּחַ, is associated with the Spirit of God (Genesis 1:2; Acts 2:2). Earthquake רָעַשׁ is frequently a sign of divine presence or judgment (Exodus 19:18; Psalm 18:7). Fire אֵשׁ, represents God's purifying and revealing presence (Exod. 3:2; 1 Kgs 18:38). However, God is not in any of these manifestations. Instead, the divine presence is found in a "still small voice*"* *קוֹל דְּמָמָה דַקָּה*, translated as a "gentle whisper" or "silent sound."[25] The term דְּמָמָה refers to quietness or calmness, suggesting the subtle and intimate nature of God's communication. God chooses to speak in a still, small voice through quiet, personal communion rather than through dramatic signs. The phrase "still small voice" indicates the importance of stillness and quiet in experiencing God's presence. This quiet voice contrasts with the dramatic and noisy external phenomena, as spiritual encounters are found in moments of calm rather than in the chaos of life.

4.1.4 *God's Healing Process (1 Kings 19:14-18)*

Once Elijah has been physically restored and spiritually reconnected with God, he is ready to continue his mission. In verses 15-18, God renews His commitment to Elijah, assigning him specific tasks and responsibilities. However, in this recommissioning, God clarifies that Elijah is not alone. He is to anoint Elisha as his successor, thereby sharing the burden of ministry. This moment of recommissioning shows that God's healing process involves personal restoration and a redefined mission.[26] Elijah's work is not finished, but it will now be carried out with the help of others. He is reminded that he is not the only one serving God; others share in the work, and he does not have to carry the burden alone.

After Elijah's physical and spiritual renewal, God gives him a clear directive to continue his prophetic mission, but with added responsibilities (1 Kings 19:15-16). The recommissioning includes several specific tasks: Hazael is anointed as king over Aram, Jehu as king over Israel, and Elisha, son of Shaphat, is to be anointed as Elijah's successor. This task is particularly significant, as it indicates a transfer of prophetic authority and leadership. The word for "anoint," *מָשַׁח*, denotes a formal installation into a divinely appointed role, which conveys the gravity and divine sanction of these tasks. Elisha's inclusion in this commission shows the importance of succession planning and the distribution of leadership responsibilities. In addition to these tasks, God reassures Elijah that he is not alone in his ministry. In verse 18, God reveals to Elijah that he has preserved a remnant of 7,000 in Israel who have not bowed to Baal. This reassurance is crucial for Elijah, who had felt isolated and

[24] House, *1, 2 Kings: The New American Commentary.* Kindle Edition 276.

[25] J. Lust, "A Gentle Breeze or a Roaring Thunderous Sound?" *VT* 25, 1 (1975): 110–15.

[26] B. Coote, "Yahweh Recalls Elijah," in *Traditions in Transformation: Turning Points in Biblical Faith,* ed. B. Halpern and J. D. Levenson (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1981) 119

alone in his struggles. The reference to the remnant is a reminder that God's work is not dependent on a single individual, affirming that God has prepared others to support and continue His work.

5.0 INFERENCES AND APPLICATION FOR PRIORITISING PASTORAL SELF-CARE

Based on the exegetical analysis of Elijah's story in 1 Kings 19, several vital inferences are drawn and applied to prioritise pastoral self-care and ministry.

5.1 Physical health is foundational for effective ministry

Elijah's crisis in 1 Kings 19 offers a valuable lesson on meeting physical needs as a foundation for effective ministry. The story unfolds with Elijah, a revered prophet who has just emerged victorious on Mount Carmel, only to find himself in utter despair. Following his triumph, Elijah faces a grave threat from Queen Jezebel and retreats into the wilderness, overwhelmed by fear and exhaustion. In his desolation, he expresses a desire to die, revealing the depth of his burnout. At this critical juncture, Martyn Lloyd-Jones believes that God's response to Elijah immediately addresses his physical needs, rather than offering spiritual counsel or reprimand; a good meal and sleep may be the first step toward recovery.[27] An angel of the Lord awakens Elijah and provides him with food and water. After eating, Elijah is encouraged to rest, and he does so, only to be awakened again for further nourishment. This divine intervention is a fundamental principle: before effectively tackling spiritual or emotional crises, one must attend to basic physical needs.

This narrative is a crucial inference for contemporary pastoral care: physical health is not a peripheral concern but a foundational element for effective ministry. Just as Elijah's physical restoration was imperative for his continued prophetic work, so must pastors today recognise that neglecting their physical well-being severely impacts their ability to serve effectively. Just as God prioritised Elijah's physical needs before his spiritual crisis, pastors should recognise that neglecting physical well-being leads to burnout. Miller-McLemore puts it better: "You have to take care of yourself if you want to take care of others. You have to fill your cup before you can pour it out. You have to keep your boundaries. And, you must pay attention to your self-care."[28] Adequate rest, nutrition, and exercise are crucial for maintaining the energy and vitality required for ministry. In ministry, pastors find themselves at the epicentre of demands from their congregations. The weight of spiritual leadership, the constant need to provide counsel, and administrative responsibilities create an environment in which personal needs, especially physical health, are deprioritised. Elijah's example demonstrates the dire consequences of such neglect.

According to Petr Činčala and René Drumm, "The Old and New Testaments both provide admonitions about self-care. Being worn out is not good. Having no leisure time away is not good. Burning out is not good. In contrast, loving yourself and caring for yourself is not only good but also vitally connected to obeying God's call."[29] Just as Elijah was given rest by God, so too must pastors prioritise their own rest. Chronic sleep deprivation leads to decreased cognitive function and heightened stress levels.

Činčala and Drumm suggest, "An adequate amount of sleep is a biological necessity for our physical and mental well-being. Most adults need seven to nine hours of quality sleep each night. Furthermore, to function at optimal levels, you need to rest, repair, and recover from daily stress on the mind and body, and a good night's sleep will do just that."[30] Rest is a

[27] D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression* (Bromley: Marshall Pickering, 1965), pp. 18–19.

[28] Miller-McLemore, "Revaluing "Self-Care" As A Practice of Ministry," 115.

[29] Petr Činčala and René Drumm, "The Biblical Imperative for Pastoral Self-Care," *Ministry International Journal For Pastors*, (2024): 7. *MIN2022-11.pdf (ministrymagazine.org)

[30] Činčala and Drumm, "The Biblical Imperative for Pastoral Self-Care," 8.

priority that helps pastors maintain mental clarity and emotional stability, which are essential for effective ministry. God's provision of food for Elijah shows the importance of proper nutrition. A balanced diet is crucial for maintaining energy levels and overall health. According to Činčala and Drumm, "Your food is your fuel; hence, eating a healthy, balanced diet is essential for maintaining vibrant health and can help you feel more energised. Just as a car runs best with the type of gas the manufacturer recommends, your body needs the right food to perform at its best."

Pastors who neglect their nutritional needs often experience fatigue, decreased concentration, and a weakened immune system, which can undermine their ability to perform their ministerial duties effectively. Although not explicitly mentioned in the narrative, the principle of maintaining physical health extends to regular exercise. "Getting the body moving will increase your circulation; boost your energy, mood, and cognition; reduce stress; and improve performance. Suffice it to say, regular exercise and sustained productivity are closely linked. Get moving!"[31] Physical activity helps reduce stress, improve mood, and enhance overall well-being. For pastors, incorporating exercise into their routines is a way to manage the physical demands of ministry and to lead a healthier lifestyle.

Through Elijah's experience, pastors are reminded that their effectiveness in ministry is intrinsically linked to their physical health. Neglecting this aspect of self-care leads to burnout, impacting their ability to lead, preach, and care for their congregations effectively. The message is clear: self-care is not a sign of weakness but a necessary practice for sustaining effectiveness in ministry. Just as Elijah's restoration addressed his physical exhaustion before fully engaging with his spiritual mission, pastors must recognise that their ability to fulfil their calling depends on a balanced approach to health. Simon A. Kolawole opines that "man is both physical and spiritual, both personal and corporate. Thus, a balanced life is a life that relates well with the physical and spiritual dimensions of life, in one's own person and in relation to others. In a sense, an authentic life inheres in a balanced life.[32] This means creating a schedule that allows for adequate sleep, planning balanced meals, and finding time for physical activity amidst the busy demands of ministry. It also involves recognising the signs of physical exhaustion and taking proactive steps to address them rather than waiting until burnout becomes a crisis.

5.2 Awareness of burnout symptoms for maintaining personal well-being in ministry.

Elijah's experience of emotional and spiritual exhaustion, as described in 1 Kings 19, illustrates how even the most dedicated servants of God suffer from burnout. His situation shows that burnout is not limited to those who are less committed, but is a natural and severe challenge faced by pastors and leaders at all levels of leadership. Recognising burnout is essential for preserving personal well-being and effective ministry.[33] Elijah's journey to the wilderness, his plea for death, and his withdrawal into isolation is symptomatic of burnout. Despite his immense spiritual achievements, Elijah's vulnerability to burnout shows that spiritual leaders are not exempt from the weariness and pressures of ministry. Recognising signs of burnout, such as fatigue, emotional numbness, and irritability, is crucial before it becomes overwhelming. Pastors need to be proactive in managing their mental and emotional health.

One of the earliest signs of burnout is chronic fatigue, characterised by tiredness that persists even after adequate rest, and a struggle with low energy levels. This exhaustion stems from the constant demands of ministry and a lack of personal time for rest and recovery. Emotional numbness or detachment from one's feelings is another indicator of burnout. Pastors experiencing this symptom feel disconnected from their ministry, congregation, or personal

[31] Činčala and Drumm, "The Biblical Imperative for Pastoral Self-Care," 8.

[32] Simon A. Kolawole, *Being a Minister of Maximum Impact* (Ogbomoso: Grace Publication, 2019), 100.

[33] John W. Olley, *The Message of Kings: God is Present* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2016), Kindle Version 224-227.

emotional state. Increased irritability and frustration, manifesting in interpersonal conflicts or heightened sensitivity, are common signs of burnout. Pastors become easily agitated over minor issues, which reflect underlying stress and emotional strain.[34] Several scholars have conducted research and examined ways to mitigate clergy burnout. Positive attitudes toward prayer, increasing self-compassion, emotional intelligence-based professional development programs, and higher levels of Differentiation of Self were among the recommendations.[35]

Clear boundaries between ministry responsibilities and personal life are essential for preventing burnout. Pastors should clearly delineate their work hours, personal time, and family time to avoid blurring these boundaries, which can lead to overwork and exhaustion. According to B. Doolittle, "clergy are called to serve the larger community and their individual congregations. Clergy may pour themselves out for their congregations and should establish healthy boundaries and time management skills to stave off burnout." [36] Identifying and developing coping mechanisms for managing stress is essential. This includes hobbies, exercise routines, or spiritual practices that help alleviate stress and maintain emotional balance. As a matter of fact, according to Činčala and Drumm, "When it comes to relieving stress, more giggles are just what the doctor ordered. As a matter of fact, 'a merry heart doeth good like a medicine" (Prov. 17:22, KJV).

Furthermore, when you start to laugh, it mentally lightens your load. It also induces physical changes in your body, soothes tension, relieves pain, and improves your mood." [37] Striving for a balanced approach to work and personal life should aim to cultivate a lifestyle that integrates work, family, and personal time harmoniously, creating an environment where open communication about stress and burnout is encouraged to help prevent isolation. Regularly reevaluating ministry priorities and adjusting expectations helps manage workload and prevent burnout. [38] Pastors should focus on activities that align with their core mission and delegate or reduce less critical tasks.

5.3 Setting boundaries between ministry and personal life for maintaining balance.

Elijah's withdrawal into isolation reveals the impact of an unbalanced approach to ministry. Elijah's retreat into the wilderness was a physical manifestation of his need for emotional and spiritual distance from the intense demands of his prophetic ministry. This retreat was a physical escape and a symbolic separation from the overwhelming pressures he faced. His withdrawal points to the importance of establishing boundaries to protect his well-being and avoid the pitfalls of burnout. [39] This experience demonstrates that pastors must establish and maintain clear boundaries between their professional and personal lives. Pastors should establish and adhere to specific work hours to prevent the ministry from encroaching on personal time. Činčala and Drumm believe that pastors should "Learn to say no." They further explain, "For those of us who grew up

[34] J. Visker, T. Rider and A. Humphers-Ginther, "Ministry-related burnout and stress coping mechanisms among Assemblies of God-ordained clergy in Minnesota," *Journal of Religion and Health*, 56, 3 (2016): 951–953. DOI 10.1007/s10943-016-0295-7

[35] L. Barnard and J. Curry, "The Relationship of Clergy Burnout to Self-Compassion and Other Personality Dimensions," *Pastoral Psychology*, 61, 2 (2011): 149–163.; R.S. Beebe, "Predicting Burnout, Conflict Management Style, and Turnover Among Clergy," *Journal of Career Assessment*, 15,2 (2007): 257–275.; L. Francis, N. Emslie, and V.J. Pyne, "The Effect Of Emotional Intelligence On Work-Related Psychological Health Among Anglican Clergy in Wales," *Journal of Religion and Health*, 58, 5 (2019): 1631–1647.; D.W. Turton and L.J. Francis, "The Relationship Between Attitude Toward Prayer and Professional Burnout among Anglican Parochial Clergy in England: Are praying clergy healthier clergy?" *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 10, 1 (2007): 61–74.

[36] B. Doolittle, "The Impact Of Behaviors Upon Burnout Among Parish-Based Clergy," *Journal of Religion and Health*, 49,1 (2010): 88–95.

[37] Činčala and Drumm, "The Biblical Imperative for Pastoral Self-Care," 9.

[38] Scott Dunbar, Thomas Frederick, Yvonne Thai and John Gill, "Calling, Caring, And Connecting: Burnout In Christian Ministry," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* (2020): 1.

[39] Dunbar, et al., "Calling, Caring, And Connecting: Burnout In Christian Ministry," 3-4.

thinking that we needed to say yes, saying no becomes difficult. Realise that no is a complete sentence. "No." You do not need to explain, apologise, or feel guilty. You have every right to make decisions about what you will not do."[40] A clear separation between work and personal life enables pastors to rest, recharge, and engage in activities unrelated to their ministry responsibilities.

Therefore, pastors should dedicate time to personal activities and interests that contribute to overall well-being. This time should be protected and prioritised by allowing pastors to disconnect from ministry tasks and focus on their needs and interests. While pastoral care is crucial, setting limits on availability for congregants prevents burnout. Establishing specific meeting, call, and counselling hours helps pastors make time for personal rest and rejuvenation. According to Rick Warren, "Always clarify the purpose for every program in your church. Kill any program that doesn't fulfil a purpose. Replace a program when you find one that does a better job than the one you're using. Programs must always be the servants of your purposes." [41] Implementing clear protocols for emergencies helps manage the ministry's demands. Pastors should clearly communicate their availability outside office hours and provide alternative support options for urgent situations. Regularly scheduled breaks within the ministry schedule enable pastors to step away from their responsibilities and prevent continuous strain. To maintain a balanced workload, incorporate short breaks throughout the day and more extended rest periods throughout the week. Allocate dedicated time for family and personal activities. According to Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby,

> Tragically, many people who are great leaders in public for whatever reason leave their problem-solving ability, people skills, and team-building instincts at the front door when they return home to their families… it should be stated there is no greater leadership position you can hold than being a parent. Whether you see yourself as a leader or not, if you are a parent, you owe it to your children to learn to lead as effectively as possible.[42]

Engaging in family life and personal hobbies helps maintain a healthy work-life balance and strengthens relationships outside of ministry. Pastors need to be vigilant about recognising when boundaries are being compromised. Signs of boundary violations include overwork, lack of personal time, and increased stress levels. Regularly reassess and adjust boundaries as needed to ensure they remain effective and relevant. Flexibility and adaptability in boundary-setting help address evolving needs and challenges.

A comprehensive self-care plan should address all three aspects: physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Elijah's experience in 1 Kings 19 shows the importance of a well-rounded approach to self-care that encompasses all aspects of well-being. God's provision for Elijah's physical needs, His encouragement of spiritual renewal, and the reassignment of responsibilities illustrate the necessity of comprehensive physical, emotional, and spiritual health. His journey from burnout to restoration offers a valuable insight into the components of a comprehensive self-care plan. After experiencing a dramatic physical and emotional crisis, Elijah receives physical nourishment and rest, engages in spiritual renewal at Mount Horeb, and is given new responsibilities to share the workload. [43] For pastors, developing a comprehensive self-care plan that incorporates these dimensions is crucial for maintaining effectiveness and preventing burnout. The holistic approach to self-care demonstrated in Elijah's story suggests that pastors should develop and adhere to a personalised self-care plan that includes physical health (exercise, nutrition, rest), emotional well-being (counselling, social support), and spiritual growth (prayer, retreats).

[40] Činčala and Drumm, "The Biblical Imperative for Pastoral Self-Care," 8.

[41] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven* Church (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1995), 142.

[42] Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership,* rev., & exp. (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), Kindle Edition 19.

[43] Olley, *The Message of Kings: God is Present*, Kindle Version 224-227.

Regularly reviewing and adjusting this plan helps the ministry be effective. Pastors should prioritise scheduling periodic retreats to remove daily ministry demands and focus on spiritual renewal, which should include dedicated time for meditation and reconnection with one's spiritual purpose. These disciplines help strengthen faith and provide a foundation for spiritual health. Develop a structured schedule that balances ministry responsibilities with dedicated time for family, rest, and personal activities. The plans should be adaptable to changing circumstances, ministry demands, and personal needs so that the plan remains relevant and practical.

5.4 Support systems are crucial for overcoming the ministry's demands.

God's provision of an angel to minister to Elijah during his crisis illustrates the importance of a support system. Just as Elijah received divine assistance through an angel, pastors today need a support network to help them manage the ministry's challenges and overwhelming demands. Studies worldwide routinely find that "positive, caring, nurturing relationships are among the most important conditions for well-being… the need to be loved, accepted, and cared for is regarded by researchers as a fundamental human need."[44] Building a support system involving mentors, peers, and counsellors provides the necessary perspective, encouragement, and practical support to sustain ministry effectiveness. Elijah's experience with burnout and subsequent care highlighted the importance of support systems. After fleeing from Jezebel, Elijah was physically exhausted and emotionally depleted. The angel's intervention was a miraculous and practical means of providing support to Elijah at that critical moment. This divine provision illustrates a principle that applies equally to modern pastoral care: no one should face the challenges of ministry alone. Joseph Ayo Aroyehun states, "Again, because of the nature of the fallen world in which we live, we are all vulnerable to the elements and different conditions from which we need others."[45] Just as God provided an angel to minister to Elijah, pastors should build a support network through mentors, peers, and counsellors: these relationships offer perspectives, encouragement and practical help that make it easier to manage ministry demands and personal challenges.

Pastors should actively seek out and cultivate relationships with mentors, peers, and counsellors. Studies also indicate that pastors with strong relationships are more likely to be mentally healthy.[46] Mentors provide guidance, wisdom, and experience drawn from their ministry journeys. They have valuable insights into managing the pressures of ministry and serve as sounding boards for personal and professional challenges. Engaging with a mentor helps pastors gain perspective on their ministry challenges and personal growth. [47] Mentors' practical advice, encouragement, and accountability are crucial for sustaining the effectiveness of ministry. Činčala and Drumm believe that "Pastoral self-care is not rocket science. It is one's values and philosophy. Often it is caught rather than taught. But it can be a matter of life and death, in a major way. Consider finding a pastor to act as your mentor and model, and to keep you accountable. Start taking care of yourself, for it is, in the end, the best way to fulfil your ministerial responsibilities."[48] Another support system is peer relationships, which involve fellow pastors or ministry leaders who share similar experiences and understand the unique challenges of ministry. Aroyehun believes that "it is better not to work or live one's life all alone. It's better not to minister all alone. It's

[44] Matt Bloom, *Flourishing in Ministry: How to Cultivate Clergy Wellbeing* (Langham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 81.

[45] Joseph Ayo Aroyehun, *Becoming a Matured Leader: Spiritual Nuggets for Transforming Leaders* (Lagos: Kingdom Life Builder, 2013), 148.

[46] Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell and Jason Byassee, *Faithful and Fractured: Responding to the Clergy Health Crisis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 128.

[47] Ivan Williams, Petr Činčala, and René Drumm, *Mending Ministers on Their Wellness Journey* (Lincoln, NE: AdventSource, 2022), 107.

[48] Činčala and Drumm, "The Biblical Imperative for Pastoral Self-Care," 8.

better to have someone alongside us in the battle."[49] Connecting with peers helps pastors feel less isolated and provides a platform for sharing experiences and solutions.

5.5 Spiritual disciplines for personal well-being and ministry effectiveness.

Elijah's experience at Mount Horeb, where he encountered God in a "still small voice," shows the impact of spiritual disciplines on personal well-being and ministry effectiveness. The story is that, amidst the hustle of ministry and the pressures of leadership, the intentional practice of spiritual disciplines such as meditation, silence, and personal prayer plays a critical role in sustaining spiritual health and effectiveness in ministry. After Elijah's dramatic victory on Mount Carmel and subsequent emotional and physical exhaustion, his journey to Mount Horeb becomes a moment for spiritual renewal. The various natural phenomena, wind, earthquake, and fire, demonstrate the grandeur of God's power, yet God's voice comes in the subtlety of a whisper. This encounter illustrates a key lesson: while dramatic experiences are compelling, true spiritual renewal occurs in quiet and intimate connection with God. Elijah's encounter with God through quiet and personal communion highlights the importance of spiritual disciplines, such as meditation, silence, and prayer, in spiritual health.

Meditation involves focused contemplation on God's Word, nature, and promises. It allows individuals to absorb spiritual truths in their relationship with God. Regular meditation helps deepen one's understanding of Scripture and strengthens one's connection with God. It encourages personal insight and spiritual growth, which is vital for a fulfilling ministry. Silence is the practice of being still and quiet, both externally and internally. It provides a space free from distractions where individuals listen to God's voice on their spiritual journey. Engaging in periods of silence helps to clear mental clutter and enhances one's ability to hear and respond to God's guidance. It leads to greater clarity, peace, and spiritual insight.

Also, personal prayer is a private, intimate conversation with God that includes adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. It is a fundamental practice for nurturing a close relationship with God. A consistent personal prayer life provides spiritual nourishment and emotional support. Quiet time refers to setting aside intentional periods for communion with God, separate from ministry responsibilities and daily activities. Establishing regular quiet times helps pastors recharge spiritually and emotionally. It provides an opportunity for personal renewal and prevents burnout by ensuring that ministry activities do not overshadow personal spiritual growth.

5.6 Shared leadership and delegation are essential for sustainable ministry.

After Elijah's intense period of prophetic activity and subsequent emotional and physical exhaustion, God's approach to his recovery involves not only his immediate needs but also redefining his role within the broader context of ministry. Following Elijah's encounter with God in the still, small voice, he is instructed to return to his prophetic duties with renewed purpose. In 1 Kings 19:15-18, God provides Elijah with specific instructions, including anointing new leaders, particularly Elisha, who will succeed him. Elijah's commissioning of Elisha is not merely a strategic move but an acknowledgement of the limitations inherent in singular leadership. God states the importance of shared leadership by appointing Elisha as his successor. This act of delegation helps distribute the workload and ensures continuity in the prophetic mission. God's provision of a partner for Elijah in Elisha shows the importance of not trying to handle ministry alone. Pastors who delegate responsibilities and develop leaders prevent burnout and create a more balanced, effective ministry environment.

Just as Elijah was instructed to anoint Elisha, pastors today must recognise the benefits of sharing responsibilities within their ministries. The weight of pastoral duties is overwhelming, and attempting to handle all aspects of ministry alone leads to exhaustion and burnout.

[49] Aroyehun, *Becoming a Matured Leader,* 147.

Delegating tasks to trusted individuals or teams enables pastors to focus on their core areas of responsibility, such as preaching, pastoral care, and spiritual leadership. Shared leadership creates a more manageable workload and allows tasks to be completed effectively without placing undue pressure on any individual.[50] Shared leadership brings together individuals with different skills, experiences, and perspectives. This diversity enriches the ministry by bringing together diverse strengths and insights. For example, a team approach to ministry might include individuals with expertise in administration, counselling, outreach, and teaching, resulting in a more well-rounded and effective ministry. Aroyehun further argues that

> The abilities of one compliment and make up for the needs and weaknesses of the other, and vice versa. We gain perspective by having somebody at our side. We gain objectivity. We gain courage in threatening situations. Having others near tempers our dogmatism and softens our intolerance. We gain another opinion. We gain what, in today's technical world, is called "input.[51]

There is significant potential for creative solutions and new approaches to ministry challenges when multiple leaders are involved.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Ministry is a demanding vocation, but it should not lead to the complete neglect of one's well-being. Elijah's story in 1 Kings 19 shows how God cares for His servants in times of burnout. God restored Elijah to his prophetic mission through His holistic approach to physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. For pastors today, the lessons from Elijah's experience are clear: self-care is not optional but essential for sustaining ministry. Pastors sometimes neglect their physical well-being in the name of ministry, as late nights, long hours, missed meals and constant stress become everyday experiences. Many pastors view these sacrifices as necessary for advancing the kingdom of God. However, just as God ministered to Elijah's physical needs first, pastors must recognise the importance of their physical health. Their capacity to minister effectively diminishes without proper rest, nourishment, and care. Fatigue and poor health inevitably lead to a decline in spiritual and emotional vitality. In a world where the demands on pastors are ever-increasing, it is critical to prioritise personal well-being. Pastors must learn to recognise the signs of burnout, establish healthy boundaries, seek out support, and develop practical self-care strategies. They can then continue to serve with passion and effectiveness, knowing that their well-being is just as important to God as the well-being of the people they serve. The pastor's health directly impacts the church's health, and by following the example of Elijah's restoration, pastors find the strength to thrive in their calling. Churches also play a role in encouraging pastors to prioritise their well-being. Churches should encourage pastors to take time off, arrange sabbaticals, and provide financial and emotional support for health-related needs to prevent burnout. Therefore, prioritising physical care helps pastors maintain the stamina to serve their congregations effectively.

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[51] Aroyehun, *Becoming a Matured Leader,* 146-7

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