

IX

VOLUME X



The Pastor and Suffering

**Relying on God's Power in
Weakness**

A Journal
for Pastors

Church Matters

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Church Matters: The Pastor and Suffering: Relying on God's Power in Weakness

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A grayscale photograph of a man with glasses reading a book. The book's cover is visible, showing the title 'Church Matters' and a quote: 'Christians have long known that evangelism is important.' The man is holding the book open, and the background is slightly blurred.

Church Matters

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Biblical Thinking For

Building Healthy Churches

Editor's Note: Why Do Christians— and Specifically Pastors—Suffer? (Suffering then Glory)

by Taylor Hartley

Every captain worth his salt has encountered a storm at sea. Of course, he doesn't go looking for a storm—but sooner or later it finds him.

Storms are complicated things. They form—if you'll go back with me to sixth grade science class—based on three essential ingredients: warm moisture, unstable air, and lift. As warm, moist air is lifted higher into the sky, it cools and water vapor condenses into droplets, eventually forming a tall cumulonimbus cloud. Updrafts and downdrafts then develop inside the cloud, resulting in gusty winds, thunder, lightning, and rain. But here's the thing: when a squall assaults a captain's bow, he doesn't care about its scientific composition. He cares about his ship and his crew.

Something similar happens when a pastor encounters suffering. Instead of analyzing the causes and cures for his suffering, he instinctively thinks about protecting his family and his church. He (rightly) wants to be an example of what it looks like to trust the Lord in the midst of a storm.

The problem is, depending on the ferocity of his trial, a pastor's courage may melt within him. Suffering can bring him to his wits' end.

This issue of *Church Matters* is for you, pastor, regardless of whether you're walking through suffering right now. If you stay in ministry long enough, suffering will find you. It may be deeply personal: depression, cancer, the death of a loved one, conflict in your marriage, a wayward child. Or your suffering may be directly related to your ministry: a church split, constant criticism of your preaching, or opposition from the surrounding community. Either way, your suffering as a pastor has the added hardship of being public in nature. Your church is listening to what you say and watching how you respond. It's hard enough to be on

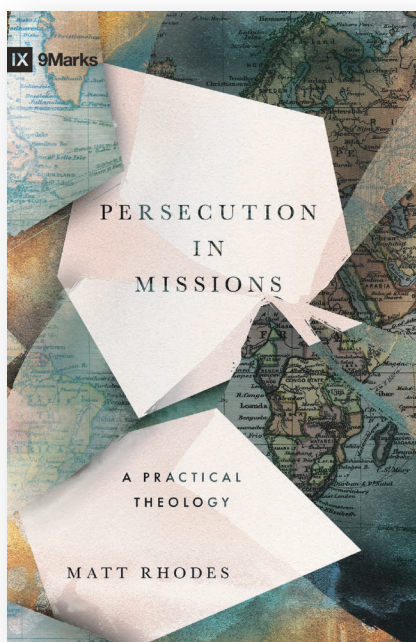
a ship in a storm. It's even harder when everyone else is depending on you to get them home.

In this issue, we offer a little "science," or theology, of suffering, specifically as it relates to pastors. We'll address questions like: *Why do we suffer?* *What purposes does God have in our suffering?* and *How does our suffering relate to our future hope?* Our primary aim, however, will be to encourage you in your suffering and equip you to care well for your fellow elders amid their trials. You will read of brothers who have suffered greatly and yet still testify to God's grace and goodness. I pray their testimonies will encourage you to stay the course, trusting that the Lord who commands the rising of the wind also delivers those who cry out to him (Ps. 107:28–29).

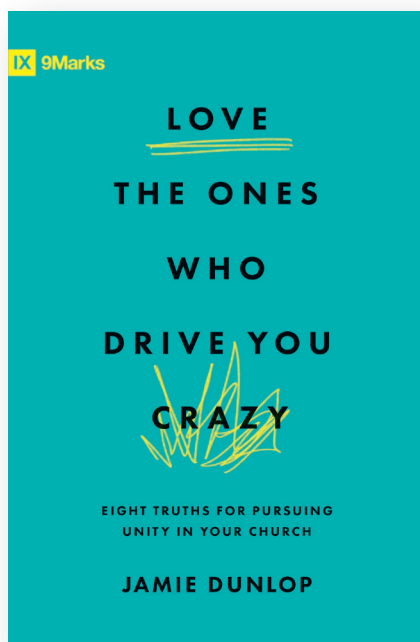


Taylor Hartley is the editorial director of 9Marks and a member of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.

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by Matt Rhodes



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Why these nine? Because the Bible requires them, and, sadly, too many evangelical churches have neglected or assumed them.

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No pastor is immune from suffering.

Whether it's cancer, depression, grief, or persecution, pastors face the same kinds of trials as their people. Not to mention the difficulties that arise from the ministry itself.

But how can pastors strengthen God's people amid their own suffering?

We'll consider questions like this one in this issue of *Church Matters* as we address the difficult topic of pastoral suffering. Pastors who have walked through trials of various kinds offer practical counsel rooted in Scripture. Most importantly, they point us to the God whose power is perfected in weakness. For no pastor who puts his hope in the Lord will be put to shame (Psalm 25:3).

“My call at church was not to soldier on as if nothing was wrong. It was to pastor the church *in my weakness* so that Christ's grace would be magnified.”

Michael Lawrence

9Marks exists to help pastors build healthy churches. We create resources and host events focused on expository preaching, gospel doctrine, conversion and evangelism, church membership, church discipline, discipleship and growth, church leadership, prayer, and missions. Learn more at 9Marks.org.

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