



BOOK DETAILS



*People-Pleasing Pastors:
Avoiding the Pitfalls of Approval-
Motivated Leadership*

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People-Pleasing Epidemic Runs Rampant Among Well-Meaning Pastors

Though it's a well-known axiom that you can't make everyone happy all of the time, it sure is tempting to try. Especially if you're a pastor who reports to an elder board, desires to shepherd congregants faithfully and hopes to care for family members well. A little conflict avoidance here, a little lack of good boundaries there . . . what's the harm?

While wanting to make people happy is generally a good thing, if leaders frequently seek validation from others because of an emotionally immature self, a host of issues can spring up. In an effort to keep all parties content or at least mollified, the people-pleasing pastor can begin to suffer from a lack of confidence, lose his vision for the church, cause the very church division she is trying to avoid, or even burn out and quit the ministry. Over time, the cost of constant people-pleasing can be quite high.

In *People-Pleasing Pastors*, pastor Charles Stone draws on over thirty years of ministry experience as well as extensive research to provide essential practices that will empower pastors to break free from debilitating people-pleasing patterns and embrace their true God-given calling with vitality, joy and effectiveness.

"I wish I'd known twenty-five years ago what I've written about in this book," notes Stone in the introduction. "I could have avoided a lot of heartache in our family and in the churches I served."

Though well-aware of his own need for this type of book, Stone didn't want to rely simply on anecdotes. So he decided to commission LifeWay Research to survey nearly 2,300 pastors, including men and women, young and old, with varying levels of education, from North, Central and South America. "Seventy-nine percent of pastors in a survey of about 1,000 and 91 percent in a survey of more than 1,200 admitted to people-pleasing tendencies to some degree in their ministries," Stone documents.

So what is to be done? As with any undesirable behavior, the first step is to admit that there's a problem. Avoiding ministry "fires" can result in a chronic state of anxiety. Poorly managed anxiety — or negative emotions in general — lie at the root of people pleasing.

Fortunately, pastors can address this anxiety more effectively and strengthen themselves against unhealthy approval-seeking by delving into the past, learning new habits and embracing particular biblical convictions. Stone offers an acronym to remember the solution: be PRESENT.

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Charles Stone is lead pastor of West Park Church in London, Ontario, Canada and the founder of StoneWell

Ministries, where he coaches pastors and church leaders, applying neuroscience insight to spiritual leadership. A frequent conference speaker and consultant, he has over three decades of experience in pastoral ministry as a senior pastor, teaching pastor and church planter. He is also the author of *5 Ministry Killers and How to Defeat Them*.

By undertaking the following steps, pastors can gain unprecedented freedom from unhelpful relational patterns:

- Probe your past (examine family of origin and church history)
- Revisit your values (assess and clarify your core convictions)
- Expose your triangles (map your relational triangles, both healthy and unhealthy)
- Search for your gaps (discover which people pleasing pattern(s) you fall into)
- Engage your critics (maintain a calm, connected presence with those ministry detractors/irritating people you often try to please)
- Nurture your soul (practice Christ-centered mindfulness)
- Tame your reactivity (apply simple neuroscience insights to stay cool under pressure)

In the final section of the book, Stone offers leaders two specific tools: a seven-day personal development plan and an eight-week team development plan for use with staff, leadership teams, boards and/or volunteers.

Throughout *People-Pleasing Pastors*, one can find advice from well-known ministry leaders such as Ron Edmonson (pastor and popular leadership blogger), Dave Ferguson (lead pastor of Community Christian Church and creator of New Thing Network), and Ben Arment (pastor and STORY conference founder). Stone also weaves in insights from Scripture, neuroscience and family systems theory, offering a truly unique synthesis.

If people-pleasing is an epidemic, then this book is the antidote. As Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research, notes in the forward: “*People-Pleasing Pastors* acknowledges a real problem, and helps equip those in ministry to resist the temptation of seeking the approval of people above all else.”

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