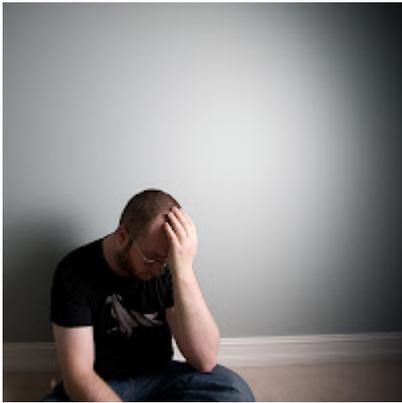


Consecrated, Lord, to Thee



An interesting piece on “When depression leads pastors to suicide” at *The Christian Century* (H/T TitusOneNine):

Being a pastor—a high-profile, high-stress job with nearly impossible expectations for success—can send one down the road to depression, according to pastoral counselors...

When pastors fail to live up to demands imposed by themselves or others, they often “turn their frustration back on themselves,” leading to self-doubt and feelings of failure and hopelessness...

It’s a job that breeds isolation and loneliness—the pastorate’s “greatest occupational hazards,”...

Nearly two out of three depressed people don’t seek treatment, according to studies by the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance. Counselors say even fewer depressed ministers get treated because of career fears, social stigma and spiritual taboo...

For pastors, treatment can come at a high price. “You are committing career suicide if you have to seek treatment,” said Stanford, “particularly if you have to take time off.”...

Nothing particularly surprising there. Depression has certainly been part of my story as a man and as a pastor. There is a balance between unhealthy silence and public bleeding that is sometimes hard to find. And there *is* comfort in the gospel: a riposte against dark emotions with the truth

that no matter what I feel nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing can change the way God feels about me, loves me, accepts me. The life, death and new life of Jesus proves it.

And I am heartened to hear language coming from the new generation of leaders (of the Acts 29 / In the Chute variety particularly) that includes admissions of weakness and an honesty about struggles.

There still needs to be care taken however. Much depression in pastors is amplified by a context of pharisaicism – a perceived understanding that “everyone burdens me with expectation but no one lifts a finger to help me.” It’s a fineline, for instance, between a healthy promotion of masculine holiness in the leaders of the church and the creation of a framework which breeds anxiety rather than encouragement.

Brothers, let us not forget grace.

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