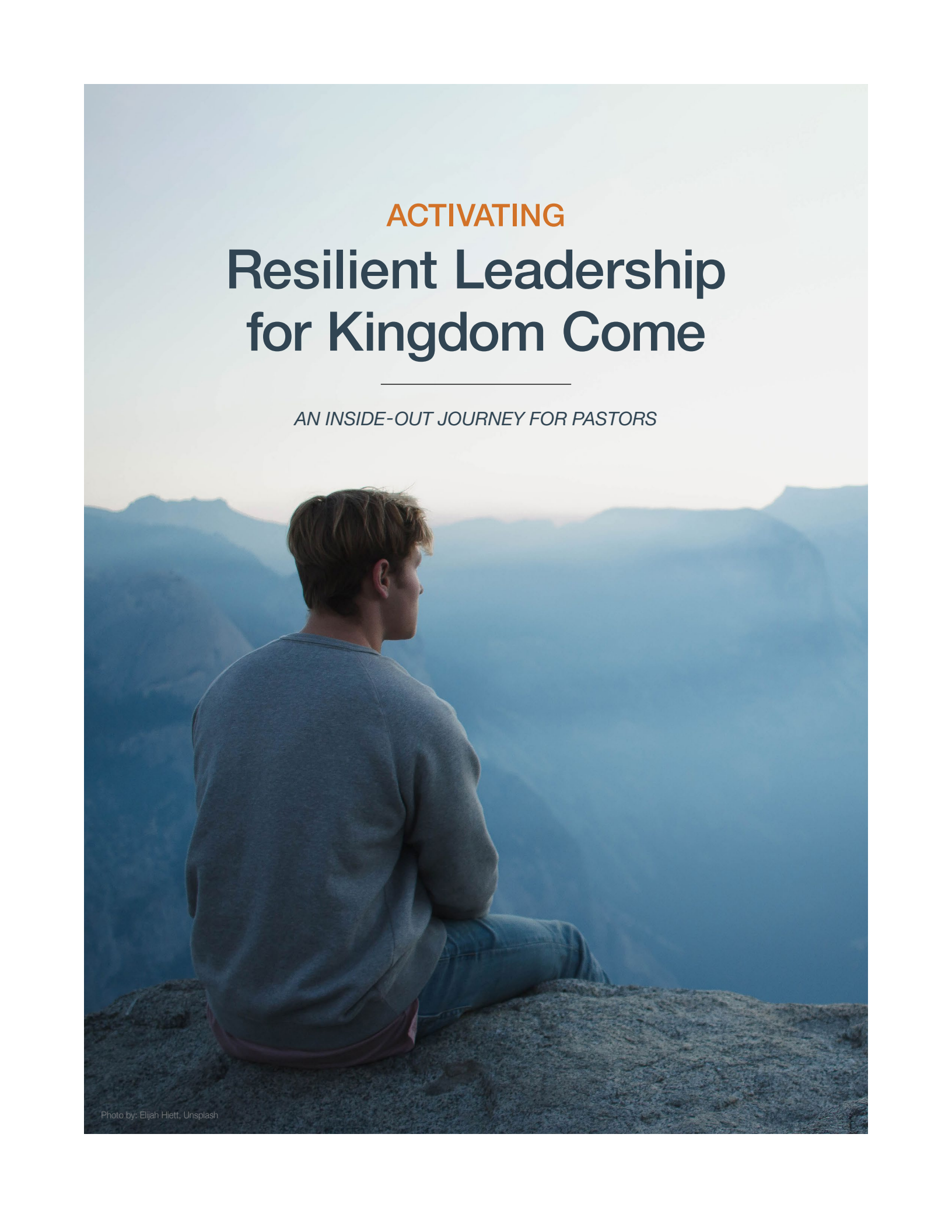


A man with short brown hair, wearing a grey sweatshirt and blue jeans, is sitting on a dark, rocky ledge. He is facing away from the camera, looking out over a vast, hazy mountain range under a soft, orange and blue sky. The mountains are layered, creating a sense of depth. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

ACTIVATING

# Resilient Leadership for Kingdom Come

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*AN INSIDE-OUT JOURNEY FOR PASTORS*

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### Dr. Glenn Packiam

A senior fellow at Barna Group, a visiting fellow at St. John's College at Durham University and an adjunct professor at Denver Seminary, Glenn is also the Lead Pastor of New Life Church Downtown in Colorado Springs, CO. He is the author of *The Resilient Pastor*, speaks regularly at conferences and has appeared on numerous podcasts and radio shows.



### Danielle Strickland

Her aggressive compassion has served people firsthand in countries all over the world. From establishing justice departments and church plants, to launching global anti-trafficking initiatives, to creating new initiatives to mobilize people towards transformational spiritual growth through her work at *Infinitum*.



## Our Contributors



**World Vision and Barna  
invite you to develop  
resilience in your  
leadership that  
leads to hope.**

## Dear Pastor,

*It doesn't take a research study to know that pastors and leaders in the faith world are struggling. Even though the events of the past two years have placed enormous pressures on professionals who were already feeling burned out, ill-equipped and underappreciated, signs of hope and resilience have continued to shine through in these trying times.*

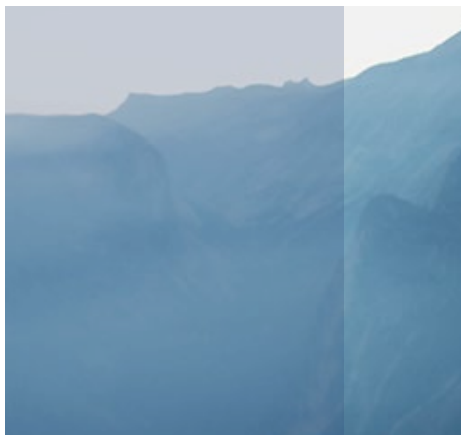
*World Vision engaged the Barna Group to look more closely at the specific pressure points pastors are facing during this unique cultural moment in order to more fully understand how resilience is being cultivated today. World Vision is sharing the results of the data and analysis with you for several reasons:*

- 1. To let you know that, first of all, you are not alone in how you feel and what you're experiencing!***
- 2. To acknowledge and articulate the very real struggles accompanying this season.***
- 3. To draw special and close attention to the unique challenges of pastors among ethnic minority churches.***
- 4. To help equip you for the road ahead.***
- 5. And the good part: to reveal the signs of HOPE for what God is doing, even in the midst of hardship!***

*To get started, you are invited to engage with this Activation Guide as a means to reflect on five "Pressure Points" that emerged in the data as stressors that many pastors are currently carrying. Pressure creates diamonds. Fire refines gold. Choosing to allow the pressure points you're experiencing to create and refine your gift and vocation as a minister is a meaningful way to move forward with resilience.*

*With this in mind, we hope this guide helps activate your team and propel discussions on the topic of resilience. We would like to invite you on an inside-out journey, encouraging reflection and self-evaluation. First, you'll consider internal and personal pressure points and then transition into a contemplation of outward and external pressure points, with helpful insights from leaders Danielle Strickland and Dr. Glenn Packiam anchoring you along the way.*

*As we begin, consider 1 Peter 1:6–7, where it is written: "In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."*



*It's with this spirit of compassion and the grit developed through solidarity that we invite you to consider this data and encourage you to respond healthily to current pressures to ultimately build your resilience as a leader for Kingdom come.*

**David Kinnaman**

CEO, Barna Group

**Amanda Bowman**

Director of Church Mobilization, World Vision

## The Five Pressure Points



### Soul Care Deprivation

In the busyness of pastoring others, taking care of one's spiritual health can often come last. Fifty-six percent of pastors feel like their own spiritual formation too often takes a back seat to their other pastoral responsibilities. In addition, there is a strong relationship between a lack of spiritual formation practices and soul care.



### Increasing Performance Fears

The crushing weight of expectations can perpetuate a cycle of anxiety where pastors feel there's no way to win. Today, about half of pastors agree to struggling with a fear of failure. In addition, some pastors worry that their relevance will decrease with time.



### Crisis of Calling

Current stressors are causing 43 percent of pastors, especially those who are gifted in strategic leadership, to consider leaving their profession. Vocational struggles range from feeling underappreciated in their role to suffering in their mental health, personal life and relationships.



### Accelerated Leadership Challenges

Navigating interpersonal relationships as a pastor is—and always has been—challenging. Layer on top of that a pandemic that prevents regular face-to-face interaction and the results have led to a new set of pressures, like managing opposing viewpoints and maintaining connections. Additionally, finances and administrative tasks continue to plague pastors as challenges in need of much energy and attention.



### Leading in a Complex Culture

The current pace of change—from politics, to mental health to technological spheres—poses a constant challenge for pastors seeking to interpret and lead through these cultural moments with a biblical lens. Younger pastors in particular are more likely to admit that they struggle with carrying the weight of leading today.



## Pressure Point #1: Soul Care Deprivation

**“Spiritual leaders in this season who have not established really good foundational spiritual soul care practices... are struggling to keep their head above the water. They’re grasping for hope. Their addictions and numbing mechanisms are in full bloom. And as a result, that’s triggered all kinds of shame and fear and genuine doubt about their capacity as leaders.”**

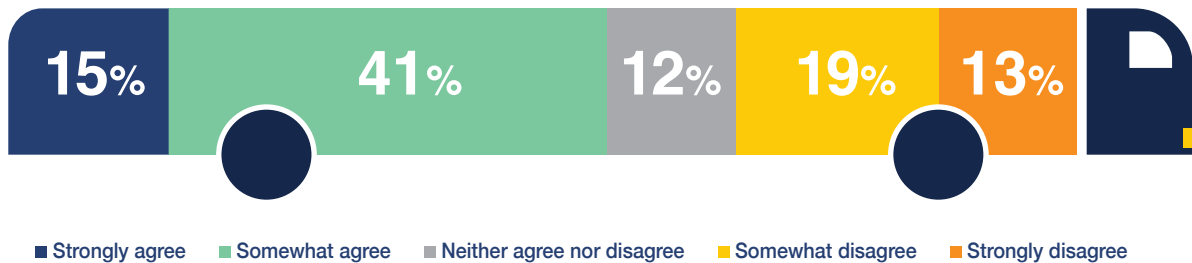
—Danielle Strickland

To hear more from Danielle on this topic, [click here](#).

Pastoral responsibilities require you to be attuned to what other people are searching for, what they really need and how to best guide them toward wholeness. However, as pastors carry the weight of others’ well-being, survey data show that 56 percent agree that their own spiritual needs and care often take a back-seat; ethnic minority leaders (73%) and those under the age of 45 (66%) are more inclined to struggle with this. Holistic self-care is also often sacrificed by pastors. About one in three pastors admits that they do not prioritize their self-care.

While most pastors who admit to neglecting their own spiritual formation do find time to read the Bible (82%) and pray (83%), very few find time for activities like journaling (5%), the practice of silence or solitude (29%) and participating in small groups (31%).

I feel like my own spiritual formation too often takes a back seat to my other pastoral responsibilities.



n=433 U.S. Protestant pastors, July 19–August 2, 2021.

### Reflection / Action:

How would taking more time to feed your own spiritual formation help you better serve others as a minister?

As a team, how can you hold each other accountable in regards to spiritual formation and / or soul care?

**“If you’re experiencing the effects of burnout, or maybe the effect of not having set aside time for your own soul care and spiritual formation, now is the time to draw near to the Lord and receive mercy and help in time of need.”**

—Dr. Glenn Packiam

To hear more from Glenn on this topic, [click here](#).



## Pressure Point #2: Increasing Performance Fears

It's no secret that pastoral work can be overwhelming. While grateful for the gifts God has given you to answer this calling, it can come with heavy burdens and fears. One of those fears is the fear of failing. In fact, 54 percent of pastors surveyed said they feel this fear regularly. Half of pastors also said that when they fail, they blame themselves. These fears do not favor one demographic of leader over another; old and young, mainline and non-mainline and leaders of big and small churches are all equally likely to struggle with a fear of failure.

A second prominent fear is the fear of irrelevance. Two in five pastors worry that their relevance as a pastor will decrease over time (12% strongly, 29% somewhat).

**“Don’t get your identity wrapped up in what you do. Don’t get your identity wrapped up in performance... I have nothing to gain, I have nothing to lose, I have nothing to fear and I have nothing to prove. And I love that prayer because it reminds me that I am already loved by the one who matters most, by God.”**

—Dr. Glenn Packiam

To hear more from Glenn on this topic, [click here](#).



n=433 U.S. Protestant pastors, July 19–August 2, 2021.

### Reflection / Action:

If someone you were counseling had a fear of failure in an area of their life, you would likely guide them to the peace that comes with trusting God and encourage them to set healthy expectations for themselves.

What would change in your day-to-day life—as well as in your job overall—if you extended that same grace to yourself?

**“Fear is the currency of oppression. Whenever fear is dictating what you do or what you don’t do, it will lead to oppressive practices and decisions... Invite something other than fear, more powerful, that can dislodge the fear, even if it’s just for the moment or for the decision. Invite God, who is love, and love casts out all fear into that moment.”**

—Danielle Strickland

To hear more from Danielle on this topic, [click here](#).



## Pressure Point #3: Crisis of Calling

Like any career, there comes a time where you step back and re-evaluate where you are and where you may be going. Forty-three percent of pastors surveyed said that they have recently thought of leaving the profession. Ethnic minority leaders, those under the age of 45 and leaders who consider themselves to be especially gifted in strategic thinking are more likely to be re-evaluating their vocation at this time.

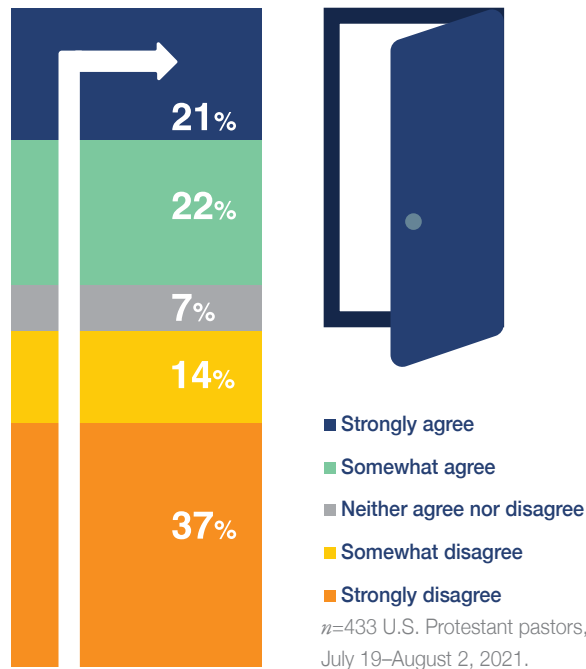
As we expect, some of this re-evaluation has to do with the added pressure of the pandemic, as almost all pastors agree that COVID-19 made their job more difficult (92%). However, it also has a lot to do with pastors' private struggles, like feeling unrewarded in their role and the ministry's negative impact on their family. Many who have thought about leaving also struggle with their wellness, with 52 percent agreeing that they often feel depressed.

**"When you're in a situation of doubt or fear or trauma, or even in this cultural moment, you're never going to really make a really good decision in that space. Even if you end up making the right one, it might not be done the right way. Take the space and time and the community and connectedness that you need to make that decision wisely and together with people you trust."**

—Danielle Strickland

To hear more from Danielle on this topic, [click here](#).

Recently (in the past 1-2 years) I have thought about leaving my profession.



**"The life of faith doesn't include a road map, but what I have found helpful in my own heart is to check my heart and to say, Lord, help me make sure I'm not living out of boredom, out of hurt, out of vanity, or out of impatience."**

—Dr. Glenn Packiam

To hear more from Glenn on this topic, [click here](#).

## Reflection / Action:

Re-evaluation is a natural part of any job as one evolves in their role. If you're a pastor who has spent time wondering if it's time to make a change, what pressures in your life have led you to re-evaluate your vocation?

At your church, what needs to be reignited or improved for your team members to choose to stay in vocational ministry?



## Pressure Point #4: Accelerated Leadership Challenges

Unsurprisingly, 87 percent of pastors believe that preaching is among their strongest gifts. Other tasks required of the profession, such as administration (27%), building teams (15%), resolving

conflict (10%) and mobilizing volunteers (6%), are strengths less common among clergy today that continue to be significant pressure points.

Furthermore, financial stewardship continues to plague pastors as a challenge in need of much energy and attention. One in three pastors (35%) agree they feel constant pressure regarding their church's budget.

Although Barna has found that these kinds of logistical pressures continue to weigh on leaders, one of the most

notable practical leadership challenges in today's culture is interpersonal relationships. In particular, managing opposing viewpoints within the congregation is a pressure point experienced by many pastors—especially ethnic minority leaders (43% strongly agree). Maintaining healthy relationships as a church body may require a lot of pastors in the future, as 44 percent foresee that it will become harder to connect on an in-person basis with their congregation.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

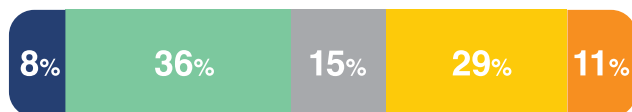
*n*=433 U.S. Protestant pastors,  
July 19–August 2, 2021.



I am challenged in managing distinct and opposite viewpoints with my church's congregation



Everyone expects me to have all the answers



It will become harder to connect on an in-person basis with my congregation

**“Our role as spiritual leaders is to raise questions that might provoke conversation and discussion and prayer and desire rather than have the solutions to all the questions. And if we can practice and build that muscle, it's really going to help us.”**

—Danielle Strickland

To hear more from Danielle on this topic, [click here](#).

**“Can we hold some of our decisions loosely, even while we hold our convictions firmly? What decisions can we change and revise?”**

—Dr. Glenn Packiam

To hear more from Glenn on this topic, [click here](#).

### Reflection / Action:

Which accelerated leadership challenges make your team feel like they're under pressure as leaders? It might be the impact of the pandemic, administrative tasks or your relationships with congregants.

When it comes to the areas where you don't feel gifted, if unable to delegate those roles, how can you make peace with feeling like you don't excel in these areas while simultaneously make intentional progress to grow in them?



## Pressure Point #5: Leading in a Complex Culture

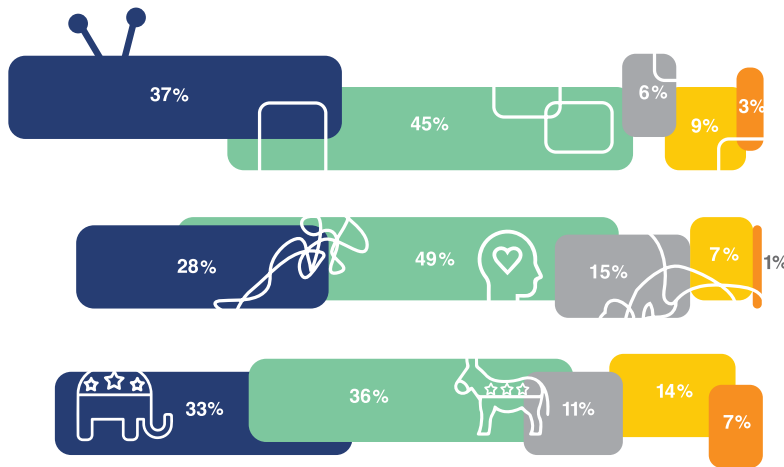
The world is changing. In the minds of many leaders, the “pivot to digital” becoming a permanent, new reality seems nearly inevitable; four in five pastors (82%) say they are investing more to grow their online church capabilities, preparing for the demands of a post-COVID world.

Politics and mental health are also forecasted to be two major pressure points impacting the Church in the near future. Seventy-seven percent of pastors agree that they should plan to address mental health with their congregation in the near future, and 69 percent admit to being concerned that political division is going to negatively impact their church. Younger leaders are significantly more likely to believe that mental health conversations in the Church are on the rise and that political division is a cause for concern.

**“Meditation is a way for us to slow our breath down and to not live in a constant state of reactivity and to say, okay, Lord, help me see the places where we can act and move today.”**

—Dr. Glenn Packiam

To hear more from Glenn on this topic, [click here](#).



■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree  
 ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree

n=433 U.S. Protestant pastors, July 19–August 2, 2021.

**A lot of this cultural moment is watching our boats get battered by the storm, whatever your system, structure or the way that you’ve done church [and] ministry. But to lose your fixation on that loss and start reframing and refocusing your attention and ministry on the people you are with right now, right here—this is what God’s calling us to in this moment. And I really pray that you’ll have a moment with God where He’ll reframe, refocus and remission you for this time and this season that we’re in right now.”**

—Danielle Strickland

To hear more from Danielle on this topic, [click here](#).

Given the new technology needed in a post-COVID world, we are investing more to grow our online worship / online church activities and ministries

The mental health of my congregation will become a more important issue the church should address

The current political division in our country will have a negative impact on my church

### Reflection / Action:

As you move forward into many unknowns in both the world and your profession, how can your team take an honest look at the issues of the day and share that honesty with your congregation?

Knowing that not everyone in your church will agree with you on topics like mental health and politics, what will it look like to resiliently lead your people through this cultural moment?



**You carry a message of hope and love, bringing these truths to so many who may otherwise never hear them.**

## Conclusion

The hurt in the world is heavy—there's no way around that. Often, the pressures that come with your calling are beyond what many know or see. Coupling these pressures with the continued advancement of technology and shifting of culture can make the work of being a pastor increasingly difficult.

Even in the middle of the heaviness, however, glimmers of light seep through the cracks—signs of hope and reward in your ministry. Even under pressure, you persevere. These pressures and challenges act as a refining fire.

The impact you're making showcases just how important your profession is and how fortunate people are to have you in their lives. You carry a message of hope and love, bringing these truths to so many who may otherwise never hear them. Your steadfast heart to serve in the Church and your community is making a positive impact on those around you.

Because of the work you do, the people in your congregation are continually equipped to face their own challenges head on. You have set a great example for them. It's not easy to serve and lead while facing your own fears, insecurities and areas of lack. However, serving in the midst of these changes and challenges will help produce lasting results in your congregation and community.

Well done. Be encouraged to allow pressure to activate resilience in you for Kingdom come.

This resource is provided by World Vision, grounded in new research by Barna Group.

