

A RESOURCE TO PROMOTE LONGEVITY IN THE CAREERS OF YOUNG MINISTERS

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The project's goal was to identify the prominent motivators that foster the premature exit of young ministers from career ministry and then to create a seminar that could minimize the effect of these motivators. A survey of ministry graduates between 1995 and 2005 from Southeastern University revealed that the graduates experienced a significant gap between their ministry expectations and the realities they found after beginning their ministry careers. However, those who were no longer in ministry experienced a greater gap between expectations and realities than those still involved in ministry. The assumption of the project is that a reduction of this gap should reduce premature ministry exits and thereby aid in increasing career longevity.

Survey findings were aligned with a general literature review that addressed key issues inherent to ministry and their impact on premature ministry exits. The seminar, *Increasing Longevity in Career Ministry*, was presented to senior level ministry students at Southeastern University. Its purpose was to empower these students to proactively address issues that promote premature ministry exits by: (1) lessening the expectation-reality gap through the discussion of motivators known to promote premature ministry exits, (2) presenting proactive means by which to lessen the effect of key motivators of premature exits, and (3) promoting a determination to seek out or personally establish a peer support system in order to honestly deal with these issues as they arise in ministry. Although long range effectiveness of the seminar is not presently measurable, pretest and posttest evaluations of the participants revealed an increased awareness of ministry realities, an increased determination to proactively address the issues presented, and an increased determination to establish peer support systems.