

A Time for Healing: Overcoming the Perils of Ministry

Jody Seymour, Valley Forge: Judson,
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Jody Seymour's book, *A Time for Healing* is, as the subtitle states, about overcoming the perils of ministry. Really, the author is speaking about woundedness and brokenness as a result of the perils of ministry. In the Introduction, Pastor Seymour states that the seeds for this book came out of feelings regarding calling names of ministers who had "died to ministry" for one reason or another. This was a part of his annual conference of the United Methodist Church. This book is clearly divided into three parts. Part I is labeled Biblical Models and uses key biblical characters to describe several "perils" or concerns which are part of a minister's life and profession. Part II is "Using the Enneagram to Understand Ministerial Leadership Styles." The enneagram is an ancient tool for spiritual discernment and the path of wholeness in each. The third section is titled, "The Renewal Journey" and is a twenty-one-day self guided renewal experience.

Each section can stand alone, but each does compliment the thesis of the author. In Section I, The Humanness of the Minister is represented by Adam and Eve, Ambition in Ministry by Cain and Abel. Jacob and Esau show the need for the blessing and King Saul, the Madness of Ministry. David exemplifies clergy sexual misconduct and Jeremiah, clergy burnout. Women are included by Esther's life under the title, Wounds of Women in Ministry. This section concludes with Simon Peter as an example for ministerial effectiveness. The title for the chapter on ministry effectiveness is, "If You Want To Walk on Water, First Have Breakfast with Jesus."

The second division of the book uses Enneagram charts to describe ministerial leadership styles. Enneagrams are ancient methods aimed at producing spirituality.

The term “enneagram” means “the nine points.” The Sufis and Jesuits have both used them.

The Enneagram became more popular because of its use by the Jesuits for spiritual formation and spiritual direction. In the last few years many books have been written assisting with interpretation. There are also type indicators that are available. In order to find out additional information, I did a “google search” and came up with a wealth of information and would suggest this approach to any who desire more information.

Seymour takes one explanation of the nine points and then develops his own ministerial leadership styles:

Type One	The Perfectionist	The Perfect Preacher
Type Two	The Helper	The Sheltering Servant
Type Three	The Achiever	The Successful Shepherd
Type Four	The Artist	The Feeling Friend of Souls
Type Five	The Observer	The Contemplative Creator
Type Six	The Supporter	The Church
Type Seven	The Optimist	The Cheerful Charismatic
Type Eight	The Leader	The Powerful Prophet
Type Nine	The Mediator	The Peaceful Pastor

By determining where one fits on the chart of the nine-pointed circle, he or she may get an accurate view of their style and learn to adjust by moving toward other points to bring about balance. The book doesn’t show a lot about how this works, but advises the reader where to go for more information through a handy bibliography.

Part III provides a “Twenty One Day Spiritual Renewal Journey for Ministers”. There is a reading from Scripture each day followed by an interactive experience for the learner. The first one was based on Psalm 139:7-16 and the learner was asked to “try to remember the first time you felt like you were a child of God.” The reader is asked to end with five minutes of silence and affirm to God, “I am your child.” Other topics

include: *Come as a Child, Coming Home, The Knowledge of God, The Call to Ministry,* etc.

At the time of printing Jody Seymour was senior minister of First United Methodist Church in Gastonia, North Carolina. After checking on the internet he is now senior pastor of Davidson United Methodist Church in Davidson, North Carolina. He is a graduate of Greensboro College, Duke Divinity School and earned a doctorate in Spiritual Formation at Graduate Theological Foundation. He is a certified Enneagram Instructor. In addition to this book being reviewed he has authored two other books: *Looking for God in all the Wrong Places* and *Finding God Between the Lines*.

The book is more of a trade book with 110 pages. It has potential as a short text or as a supplement to other texts. It certainly fits into the context of the D.Min. approach of praxis or reflective practice. It does have content, but allows for a great deal of personal application. It seems it would fit into a DMin. course offered to focus on personal identity, assessment or development. It could be assigned for extra reading or as a source for projects or dissertations. It would also be an excellent source for a professor's personal notes and lectures on such topics.

Seymour begins with the familiar Biblical characters, moves to the unfamiliar with the topic of enneagrams. It ends with the experiential 21 days for renewal. Another way to observe what he does is illustration, evaluation and application.

The book does contain a bibliography section on enneagrams and notes on each chapter with excellent references to some of the books and articles on the subject of minister and their healing. For example, the author quoted from a particular book that I later bought, *The Psychology of Clergy*, by H. Newton Maloney and Richard Hunt. It is an older work but its approach can be used as a framework for ministers.

Several strengths are evident in this work – there is a chapter on women in ministry based on the Biblical example of Esther and titled, “The Wounds of Women in Ministry.” The book is strong biblically for evangelicals and strong for mainline churches with its denominational focus. It is obvious that the author (pastor) is a person of experience.

The volume gives a great emphasis on proper disclosure of self and self to others. One quote seems to say it well. "Much of the pain in ministry comes from our blindness. If we are the emperor, then we can shed the needed tears that precede redemption and laugh the joyous laugh of freedom, which comes with salvation and healing." (37).

I suggest some possible weaknesses. The book is very practical in nature, but could appear a bit less scholarly. It was published in 1995 so may raise questions about contemporaneity. For some the use of enneagrams might reduce its appeal. The book deals with three distinct parts with each able to stand on its own. There seems to be some lack of transition to keep a single focus clearly in mind.

This was an enjoyable read and ideas were gleaned to use in dealing with the subject of minister difficulties and how to help people in the "perils of ministry" (subtitle). The book does contribute to the literature related to the health of ministers and ministries. I recommend its use in D.Min. programs when applicable.