

**MINISTERS' READING HABITS: THE FULL ANALYSIS TOGETHER WITH REFLECTIONS  
BASED ON TWO SURVEYS IN MARCH/APRIL 2017**

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This is a greatly expanded version of a scholarly article I wrote on 'Minister' Reading Habits' published in the *Baptist Quarterly* 49 [1] (January 2018).

**ABSTRACT**

This first study of the reading habits of British ministers is based on a shorter and longer survey of 309 and 175 Baptist ministers respectively. Just over half spend less than 10 hours a week reading, and almost three-quarters less than 13 hours (longer survey). Almost half spend 21-40% of this time reading for their sermon preparation, while another 20% devote 61-80% of this time to such reading (shorter survey). In their sermon preparation 12% consult just one commentary, but 66% consult two or three commentaries (longer survey). Ministers read a wide variety of books relating to ministry in the last year – including books on Biblical studies (82%), prayer and spirituality (66%), theology (66%) and mission/outreach/evangelism (61%) (shorter survey). Overall 39% of ministers devote 20-40 % of their time to general reading (longer survey). In a three-month period 35% of ministers had bought five or more books (shorter survey). Although most ministers favour print books to digital when preparing sermons, they are more open to digital media for their personal ministry development, with around 50% accessing ministry-related/theological websites (shorter survey). Of those who learnt a Biblical language, 55% have given up on Hebrew and 25% on Greek (longer survey). For 62% the NIV is the preferred English version of the Bible (longer survey). 19% have no pattern of personal Bible reading (longer survey). 61% would read more if they had more time (longer survey). 53% have no specific time in the week when they read; 54% have not availed themselves of a reading week in the last three years (shorter survey). 54% receive no financial help to buy books, while 13% receive less than £50 (longer survey). Recommendations include a greater commitment of the denomination to developing Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD) programmes alongside annual reviews, more encouragement on the part of churches to help their ministers with their readings, and guidance from colleges not just on reading skills but on developing strategies for withstanding pressures resulting from social media.

**OUTLINE OF CONTENTS**

1. The question: Do British ministers still read today?
2. Significant findings from the study
3. Encouragements, concerns, and recommendations
4. Interesting findings from the study
5. Deeper analysis of various correlations
6. The research method

## 7. Living out the call: a personal approach

### 1. DO BRITISH MINISTERS STILL READ TODAY?

As General Editor of *Ministry Today UK* I often asked myself, 'Are ministers still reading today?' The question arose in part because I have found it such a struggle to persuade fellow ministers to subscribe to a journal devoted to the practice of ministry. For some reading a 62-page journal three times a year appears to be too much.

I decided to seek an answer to the question by sending out a survey to ministers. In preparation for the task of drawing up a list of questions, in February 2017 I spelled out my concerns in the form of the following paper addressed first to myself:

#### ***Ministers' Reading Habits: Do British Ministers Still Read Today? Preliminary Thoughts***

On the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my ordination I drew up a list of '25 lessons in ministry' – and then later, to mark my retirement from stipendiary ministry I expanded the list to '50 lessons in ministry'. One key lesson common to both lists was this: "A book a week keeps a pastor awake". In other words, if pastors are to keep fresh, they must read.<sup>1</sup>

Rex D. Edwards of Griggs University, Maryland, said much the same thing when he wrote: "Reading is ... essential for spiritual renewal, intellectual growth, and for vitality and freshness in preaching. Preachers who fail to read may even draw down upon their heads the censure once passed upon a parson by a caustic attorney, who, on leaving the church after a sermon, remarked to another worshipper, 'How do you like skimmed milk?'"<sup>2</sup>

Rick Warren, the founding pastor of California's Saddleback Community Church, was of the same opinion.

"If you've ever been to Israel, you know there's a real contrast between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The Sea of Galilee is full of water and full of life. There are trees and vegetation. They still do commercial fishing there. But the Dead Sea is just that – dead. There are no fish in it and no life around it. The Sea of Galilee is at the top of Israel and receives waters from the mountains of Lebanon. They all come into the top of it and then it gives out at the bottom. That water flows down through the Jordan River and enters into the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea takes in but it never gives out. That's why it's stagnant. The point is, there must be a balance in our lives to stay fresh with both input and output. There's got to be an inflow and an outflow. Somebody has said, 'When your output exceeds your income your upkeep will be your downfall'. There must be a balance. Most Christians get too much input and not

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<sup>1</sup> See Paul Beasley-Murray, *Living Out the Call: I Living to God's Glory*, Amazon 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Rex D. Edwards, 'Well read or widely read', *Ministry: International Journal for Pastors* (October 1992) [see [www.ministrymagazine.org](http://www.ministrymagazine.org)].

enough output. They attend Bible study after Bible study. They're always taking in but they're never doing any ministry. The problem we pastors and church leaders face is the opposite. You're always giving out, and if you don't get input, you'll dry up."<sup>3</sup>

Rick Warren believed that reading is vital for leadership: "Leaders are readers. Every leader is a reader. Not all readers are leaders but all leaders are readers. A lot of people read but they're not leaders. If you're going to lead, you've got to be thinking further in advance than the people that you're leading."<sup>4</sup> Warren advanced four reasons for reading:

1. We must read for inspiration and motivation
2. We must read to sharpen our skills
3. We must read to learn from others
4. We must read to stay current in a changing world

Notice too that Warren did not have in mind ministers simply reading Christian books. We need to be in touch with the world in which we live.

Yet are ministers reading? The old joke used to be that you can tell the date of when a minister left college by date of the books on his shelves. I fear that books are seldom bought – and seldom read. But the reality is that I do not know. Hence my desire to conduct a survey of ministers' reading habits.

Although I am not aware of any earlier surveys into the reading habits of British ministers, there have been several American surveys. Thomas Tanner, for instance, began his report on the reading habits of 370 ministers of the American denomination known as 'Christian Churches and Churches of Christ' with this statement:

"For two millennia the Christian clergy has had a fascinating love affair with books and reading. From the Apostle Paul's last request to Timothy to "bring the books" (2 Timothy 4.13) to Saint Thomas Aquinas's warning, *Cave ab homine libri* ('Beware the man of one book'), pastors have had a passion for the printed page. But how fares the love affair today? What is the state of reading among modern ministers? Are there any more Luthers or Wesleys who know and teach the value of reading."<sup>5</sup>

Tanner recorded that the first published study of American ministerial habits by Harold Lancour in 1944 reported that "ministers, on the average, spend 18.5 hours per week on reading", and that the subjects they read, though heavy in religion, fiction and biography, "covered pretty well the intellectual life of our culture".<sup>6</sup> This study, however, predated TV and digital media!

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<sup>3</sup> Rick Warren, *To be a great leader, you absolutely must be a reader* (Internet article, October 23, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> I have subsequently discovered that Harry Truman, the former US President, originated the statement: "Not all readers are leaders but all leaders are readers".

<sup>5</sup> Thomas M. Tanner, 'Bring the Books': Results of a National Survey on Ministerial Reading Habits, *Journal of Religious and Theological Information* 1.2 (1993) 53-76.

<sup>6</sup> Cited by Tanner, 54: see Harold Lancour, 'The Reading Interests and Habits of the Graduates of the Union Theological Seminary', *Library Quarterly* 44 (Jan 1944) 28-35.

Another major study of American ministerial habits recorded by Tanner was by Brewster Porcella who in his 1973 PhD thesis painted a less happy picture, concluding that “the total amount of time devoted to reading was ten hours or less...”. He also observed that reading interests among clergy tended to be rather narrowly focused, depending mostly upon the specialized, functional role chosen by the minister.<sup>7</sup>

Tanner’s own survey, conducted in 1989, including the following findings:

1. Over a six month period ministers read 20.2 books of which 16.2 were ministry related. This was significantly fewer books compared with the average American adult book reader. According to the 1983 Book Industry Study Group report on book reading in America, the mean number of books read during a six-month period by those Americans who read books, 50% of the adult population, was 24.8 books
2. Ministers spend on average of 14.5 hours per week reading
3. In terms of actual reading activity, 5.4 hours (37% of reading time) was sermon preparation; 4.6 hours (32% of reading time) was Bible reading/personal devotions; 2 hours (14% of reading time) was other ministry-related tasks, and 2.5 hours (17% of reading activity) was non-ministry readings

All these surveys of ministerial reading habits were, of course, prior to the digital age. According to a 2013 Barna survey of 600 American pastors into their buying and reading habits, pastors in the USA purchase on average 3.8 books per month – with younger pastors buying more books per year than older pastors. 92% of ministers buy at least one book a month. The most popular topics were spirituality, theology and leadership – but other popular subjects included prayer, history, cultural trends and church practice. About half of the pastors were reading biographies, and one third were reading business books. Interestingly, although half of the pastors used a digital devices such as an e-reader or an iPad, pastors of all generations still prefer hard copies to digital versions.<sup>8</sup>

Clearly with the digital revolution, reading habits are changing. Yet they do not appear to be changing as dramatically as some might feel. I found it interesting that in a survey of general American book-reading, nearly 4 in 10 Americans read print books exclusively; while just 6% read digital only.<sup>9</sup> However, ultimately the issue is not whether people read print books or digital books, but whether they read.

In particular, my concern is to discover whether British ministers read. I wonder whether it is significant that in recent years a number of Christian publishing houses in the UK have gone to the wall, and some of those who have survived have given up on publishing serious books, while others seem to make their money by publishing the religious equivalent of ‘blockbusters’. At this stage I have no hard evidence, but I think there may be some truth in in a 2014 *Christianity Today* cartoon drawn tongue-in-cheek by Erik Johnson, in which, the Bible apart, books do not feature at all.

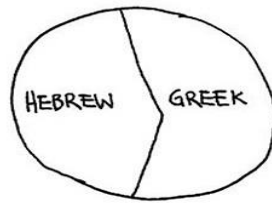
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<sup>7</sup> Brewster Porcella, *The Information Gathering Habits of the Protestant Ministers of Cedar Rapids, Iowa* (An unpublished dissertation PhD dissertation, University of Illinois, 1973)

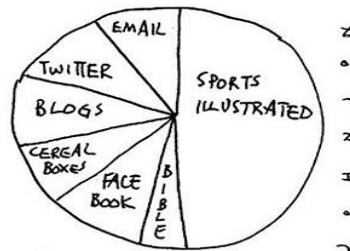
<sup>8</sup> Barna On-Line Research Report, *Reading Habits of Today’s Pastors*, June 3, 2013

<sup>9</sup> See Book Reading 2016, *Pew Research Center*, Sept 1, 2016

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17<sup>th</sup> C. PASTORAL  
READING HABITS



21<sup>st</sup> C. PASTORAL  
READING HABITS

I fear that many ministers today are not reading – the danger of just ‘grazing’ the internet is that we may not really engage with the issues. Is this one reason why Ministry Today UK has struggled to get ministers to subscribe to its journal, *Ministry Today UK*? Are today ministers who read an ‘endangered’ species?

## ***Two surveys to answer the question***

To answer the question, with the help of Rev Peter Thomas and Steve Smith, in March 2017 I sent out two surveys, one shorter and one longer, to 1900+ Baptist ministers, and received in reply 309 responses to the shorter survey and 175 to the longer survey. For details see the final section of this paper.

Although almost all the findings were of interest, some of the findings were more significant in terms of the well-being of ministry. For ease of reference, the responses have been grouped into two sections: 'Significant Findings' and 'Interesting Findings'.

Also the findings have been summarised into two sections entitled 'Encouragements' and 'Concerns'. Thank God, the cartoon drawn by Erik Johnson is a caricature of reality; nonetheless a good number of ministers could do 'much better'. Therefore a number of recommendations have been made which hopefully will result in ministers receiving more help and encouragement to read.

## **Reading alone does not make for effective ministry**

To those ministers who do not read as much as some and who may well feel that through this study the importance of reading has been over-emphasised, let me say that I fully recognise that there is more to effective ministry than reading. Effective ministry is determined by many factors. For instance, ministers who read for hours a week, but never get out into the wider community are unlikely to make a significant difference. Likewise ministers who never miss a reading week, but who are not natural communicators, may not hold a congregation in the same way that some of their more gifted peers. However, there is no doubt that ministers who read are likely to be much more effective than if they had not devoted themselves to the discipline of reading. What is more, we have a God-given duty to give our very best to the Lord who gave his all for us.

Francis Bacon, the English philosopher, famously said "reading maketh a full man".<sup>10</sup> In turn I would say that reading makes a 'complete minister'. Or to quote from one of John Wesley's letters, "It cannot be that ministers should grow in grace unless they give themselves to reading. A reading ministry will always be a knowing ministry".<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Francis Bacon in his essay *Of Studies*.

<sup>11</sup> I have taken the liberty of altering the actual quotation: It cannot be that the people should grow in grace unless they give themselves to reading. A reading people will always be a knowing people."

## 2. SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY

### Most ministers enjoy reading

My initial reflections on the reading habits of ministers was very positive. I was delighted to discover that 31% of the respondents to the shorter survey said they enjoyed reading “quite a lot” – while 53% said that they enjoyed reading “a good deal”. This compares with a general survey of readers, with nearly half of respondents (49%) stating that they enjoyed reading “very much”, and a further 23% stating that they enjoy reading quite a bit”.<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, that still left a good number of ministers who did not enjoy reading: 6% either did not enjoy reading at all or not very much; with a further 10% somewhat ambivalent about reading. For a faith that centres around a book, which itself is a collection of 66 books, this is concerning. Although people have different patterns of learning, nonetheless for ministers not to enjoy reading at all raises questions about their calling to expound God’s Word. Similarly, although some ministers are dyslexic, technological support is available to help with learning and study.

### Some ministers read a good deal

Compared to previous surveys of American ministers, many ministers in this country read relatively little. Certainly, compared to John Wesley’s advice to his ministers to read at least five hours a day, many ministers today read relatively little.<sup>13</sup>

In the longer survey ministers were asked “About how many hours do you spend in an average week reading – including not just print and digital, but also articles, blogs and websites”, the following answers were received:

- 1-3 hours                      12%
- 4-6 hours                     19%
- 7-9 hours                     23%
- 10-12 hours                 20%
- 13-15 hours                 12%
- More than 15 hours       15%

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<sup>12</sup> See *Booktrust Reading Survey 2013*, 14-15, which also points out that the AB Socio-Economic Groups are more positive about reading with a total of 85% stating that they enjoy reading either very much or quite a lot.

<sup>13</sup> John Wesley wrote to young Methodist preachers: “Read the most useful books, and that regularly and constantly. Steadily spend all the morning in this employ, and at least five hours in four-and-twenty” (John Wesley, *Minutes of Several Conversations between The Rev Mr Wesley and Others, from the Year 1744 to 1789*, Question 32). He also told young ministers to “either read or get out of ministry”!

In so far as 30 of the 175 ministers were part-timers working more than 50% for the church and a further 13 were working less than 50%, we wondered whether their responses might have brought down the average number of hours spent by the 127 full time ministers. The figures were different – but clearly the part-timers were doing comparatively well.

	<i>Full-time</i>	<i>Part-time over 50%</i>	<i>Part-time under 50%</i>	<i>Part-time</i>
• 1-3 hours	12%	13%	8%	12%
• 4-6 hours	16%	27%	23%	26%
• 7-9 hours	24%	20%	31%	23%
• 10-12 hours	21%	17%	15%	16%
• 13-15 hours	7%	15%	9%	12%
• More than 15 hours	17%	8%	14%	15%

Returning to ministers as a whole, full- and part-timers, the figures may be stated in another way: just over half (54%) of all the ministers in the survey spend fewer than 10 hours a week reading; and almost three-quarters (74%) fewer than 13 hours.

This compares with Tanner's 1989 American survey, where on average ministers spent 14.5 hours reading – let alone the 18.5 hours recorded by Lancour in 1944. True Porcella recorded in his 1973 study that ministers were spending fewer than 10 hours reading, but his survey was limited to the Protestant clergy in one small town.

As far as I am aware, however, none of this research about hours given to reading has anything to say about the speed reading: this could certainly affect the quantity of books read. Nor is there anything about the ability of a minister to 'gut' a book – reading only that which is important, and setting to one side that which is less worthwhile. Perhaps here is an area for further research?

### **Ministers have to balance their reading**

In the longer survey ministers were asked: "Approximately what percentage of areas was spent in different areas of reading?"

	<i>0-20%</i>	<i>21-40%</i>	<i>41-60%</i>	<i>61-80%</i>	<i>81-100%</i>
Personal Bible reading	64%	30%	3%	2%	1%
Reading for sermon prep	27%	49%	20%	4%	--
Other ministry-related rdng	51%	33%	14%	2%	--
General reading	52%	39%	7%	2%	--



Here we see the importance many ministers give to sermon preparation. 49% of ministers give 21-40% of their reading time to reading for sermon preparation, while a further 20% give 41-60% of their time to reading for sermon preparation.

### **Ministers have varied patterns for their personal reading of the Bible**

In response to the question “What scheme(s) are you currently using for your reading of the Bible?”, the following answers were received in the longer survey:

The Lectionary	13%
Printed Bible reading notes	19%
Online Bible notes/devotional thoughts	19%
Reading through a Bible book with a commentary	19%
Reading through a Bible book without a commentary or notes	36%
I don't have a regular pattern of reading	19%

The figures would suggest that a few ministers are using more than one scheme.

The response which causes the greatest concern is that almost one fifth of ministers (19%) have no regular pattern of reading the Bible. This is a travesty of a minister's calling. Ministers need to commit themselves to the daily discipline of a 'rule of life', of which the systematic reading of Scripture is central. In the words of Henri Nouwen: “A spiritual life without discipline is impossible. Discipline is the other side of discipleship”.<sup>14</sup> The words of Paul to Timothy, a young pastor, are as relevant as ever to today's pastors: “Train yourself in godliness” (1 Tim 4.7), or as Peterson puts it in his paraphrase: “Exercise daily in God - no spiritual flabbiness, please! Workouts in the gymnasium are useful, but a disciplined life in God is far more so, making you fit both today and forever.” (The Message). This need for spiritual fitness follows on from Paul's description of a good servant of Christ Jesus as one who is “nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound teaching you have followed” (1 Tim 4.6). In other words, the lives of God's servants need to be rooted in God's Word, for “disciplined meditation on Scripture is indispensable to Christian health, and indeed to growth in godliness”.<sup>15</sup> Only so ministry be exercised with integrity. Or as Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said: “I cannot expound the Scripture for others if I do not let it speak daily to me. I will misuse the Word in my office as a preacher if I do not meditate upon it in prayer”.<sup>16</sup>

Some of the other responses should probably also arouse concern.

- How challenging are the on-line Bible notes or devotional thoughts used by almost a fifth of ministers? What kind of printed Bible reading notes are being used by almost another fifth of ministers? What is the balance between the amount of

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<sup>14</sup> Henri Nouwen, *Making All Things New: An Invitation to the Spiritual Life* (HarperCollins, New York 2009).

<sup>15</sup> John Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus* (IVP, Leicester 1996) 117.

<sup>16</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Meditating on the Word* (Cowley, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1986) 30-31.

Scripture and the amount of comment? Some popular Bible reading schemes amount little more to a verse or two or Scripture followed by a paragraph or more of 'devotional' comment. This is 'thin gruel' for any Christian, let alone for ministers. Ministers need to steep themselves in the Word of God.

- How stretched are those who are reading through a Bible book with a commentary? The reality is that there are commentaries and commentaries. In this respect it was interesting to discover that a third of those using a commentary were using the light-weight ...*For Everyone series*, which are full of personal anecdotes. Half were using the 'mid-range' *Bible Speaks Today* series or the *Tyndale* commentaries.
- How systematic are the slightly over a third of ministers (36%) who read through a Bible book without a commentary or notes? Indeed, how systematic are those ministers (19%) who read through a Bible book with a commentary? It is all too easy to focus simply on one's favourite books or passages of Scripture. There is much to be said for a formal disciplined structure for reading the Scriptures as also for prayer.

Should we be concerned that only 13% of ministers enjoy a rich and balanced diet of Scripture? For this is the great advantage of using a lectionary for personal Bible reading: it provides daily readings from the Old and New Testaments as also from the Psalms. There are a variety of lectionaries on offer. There is the Revised Common Lectionary, on which for instance the Church of England's *Common Worship* lectionary is based. On the other hand, the Order of Baptist Ministry<sup>17</sup> and the Northumbria Community<sup>18</sup> have developed their own lectionary-based Daily Offices.

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<sup>17</sup> The membership of the Order for Baptist Ministry involves a commitment to 'live within the disciplines of this Order, committed to prayer, committed to gather, following the rule of Christ, with hearts set on pilgrimage, makers of peace, pursuers of justice, lovers of mercy, bearing witness to Christ'. This involves not only the use of a daily office, but also meeting in a cell, usually 4-8 times a year, helping members to consider such question as 'In what part of my life and experience is God particularly addressing me at the moment?' and 'What part of my life am I keeping away from God's gaze and word at the moment?' See further [www.orderforministry.co.uk](http://www.orderforministry.co.uk)

<sup>18</sup> Founded by Baptist minister Roy Searle, the Northumbria community is a 'diverse worldwide Christian community, discovering and living a new monastic community'. Like the Baptist Order of Ministry, it has a Daily Office for morning, midday, and evening – with a Celtic 'flavour': see [www.northumbriacommunity.org](http://www.northumbriacommunity.org).

## Very few ministers read the Bible in its original language of Hebrew and Greek

The two questions which were asked in the longer survey relating to how often ministers read the Old and New Testaments in their original languages, received the following response:

	<i>Hebrew</i>	<i>Greek</i>
Never – I never learnt the language	75%	39%
Never – I have not kept up the language	15%	23%
Rarely	5%	23%
Monthly	2%	10%
At least twice a week	0.5%	6%
Daily	0.5%	0%

To set out the responses slightly different, of those who learnt Hebrew and Greek, the percentage of those who did not keep up their languages was high: 55% (which actually only represents 12 people) gave up on Hebrew; and 37% (which represents 40 people) gave up on Greek. Certainly, the practice of reading one's Greek New Testament every day seems to have more or less died out amongst Baptist ministers today.<sup>19</sup>

For a denomination which at one brief stage of its development expected its ministers to go into the pulpit with a Hebrew or Greek text and translate the passage for the day then and there, and which in the last 75 years or so has had some significant Biblical scholars (e.g. Old Testament scholars such as Arthur Anderson, Wheeler Robinson and H.H. Rowley; and New Testament scholars such as George Beasley-Murray and Ralph Martin), should we be sad to see the demise of the Biblical languages among its ministers? The sobering fact is that with most ministers now undergoing 'church-based' training rather than undergoing a full-time 'college-based' course, in future there will be even fewer Baptist ministers able to read the Scriptures in their original languages because most church-based students either do not have or do not choose to pursue the opportunity to study Greek and/or Hebrew.

In the light of these findings, Baptist colleges may well need to reappraise their approach to teaching Hebrew and Greek. A more effective way of encouraging life-long learning needs to be found.

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<sup>19</sup> Gresham Machen, an American Presbyterian theologian in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, who wrote *New Testament Greek for Beginners*, gave his readers the following advice: "Ten minutes a day is of vastly more value than seventy minutes once a week. If the student keeps a 'morning watch', the Greek Testament ought to be given a place in it; at any rate, the Greek Testament should be read devotionally. The Greek Testament is a sacred book, and should be treated as such. If it is treated so, the reading of it will soon become a source of joy and power."

Or is the issue which should be of concern that 75% of ministers have never learnt Hebrews, and 39% have never learnt Greek? The great Reformers would have been astounded.<sup>20</sup> So too past generations of theological students, for whom Greek was mandatory.<sup>21</sup> It is interesting to reflect that this ‘lowering of the bar’ with regard to learning Biblical languages has happened at a time when the academic attainments of students training for ministry are higher than ever – with so many already having a university degree before entering theological college.

### **Over the past year ministers read a widely**

In the shorter survey ministers were asked “In the last year what types of ministry books have you been reading?”. In order of popularity of ‘type’ the answers were as follows:

Biblical studies	82% [of ministers]
Prayer and spirituality	66%
Theology	66%
Mission/outreach/evangelism	61%
Leadership and management	55%
Church history/Christian biography:	41%
Community involvement/justice issues	36%
Pastoral care and counselling	36%
Preaching	32%
Worship	23%
Specialised ministries - children/youth/ Families/chaplaincy	17%
‘Other’	9%

It was not surprising that Biblical studies was the most popular type of book ministers were reading – with the pressure of weekly sermons and sometimes mid-week Bible studies, this would have been expected.

What is perhaps surprising is that for Baptist ministers ‘prayer and spirituality’ ranked second alongside ‘theology’. Yet, as we have seen, strangely, despite this interest in spirituality, the discipline of personal Scripture reading appears not to be strong. Or is the

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<sup>20</sup> Martin Luther wrote: “Let us be sure of this: we will not preserve the gospel without the languages. The languages are the sheath in which this sword of the Spirit [Eph 6.17] is contained; they are the casket in which this jewel is enshrined; they are the vessel in which this wine is held; they are the larder in which this food is stored... If through our neglect we let the languages go (which God forbid!), we shall ... lose the gospel”. John Calvin similarly declared: “We cannot understand the teaching of God unless we know his styles and his languages”.

<sup>21</sup> My father, for instance, who had left school on his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, to gain entrance into Spurgeon’s College had to sit exams in Latin, Greek, English and the Scriptures. As a clerk in the offices of the City of Leicester Gas Company he used a diary for electricians to learn the Greek alphabet.

lack of disciplined reading of the Scriptures an outcome of some forms of contemporary spirituality? Whereas in traditional Catholic spirituality *lectio divina* (meditation on Scripture) has always played a key role, in some modern expressions of spirituality Scripture appears to be down-played. So in the work-book which accompanies *Breathing under Water: Spirituality and the Twelve Steps* by the popular Franciscan author, Richard Rohr, not one of the 100 or more exercises involves reflecting on Scripture.<sup>22</sup> Similarly in *Soulfulness: Deepening the Mindful Life* by Brian Draper, a British evangelical, Scripture has no place in his 'journey into soul'.<sup>23</sup> By contrast Alister McGrath in his book on Reformation spirituality, makes the point that "The sola scriptura principle, so central to the theological method of the reformers, is equally evident in their spirituality. Scripture is the supreme God-authorised and God-given resource for the generation and nourishment of Christian faith".<sup>24</sup>

As might be expected amongst a largely evangelical denomination, the reading of books on 'mission/outreach/evangelism' was relatively high (61%), but it was pleasing to note that with over a third (36%) of ministers having read in the past year books on 'community involvement/justice issues', Baptists have developed a much more holistic approach to mission.

It was good to see that in the past year over half (55%) of ministers have read books in leadership and management, for studies have shown that effective leadership is the key to the health and growth of the church.<sup>25</sup> However, it was a little strange to see the relatively low ranking of pastoral care and counselling (36%), preaching (32%) and worship (23%). The fact that fewer ministers read about worship almost certainly reflects the way in which in so many Baptist churches worship is now the prerogative of worship leaders rather than of the ministers themselves.<sup>26</sup>

### **Male and female preferences for type of book**

We looked to see if there were any differences between the sexes when it came to their reading patterns, but there was no major difference.

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<sup>22</sup> Richard Rohr, *Breathing under Water: Companion Volume* (SPCK, London 2016).

<sup>23</sup> Brian Draper, *Soulfulness: Deepening the Mindful Life* (Hodder & Stoughton, London 2016).

<sup>24</sup> Alister McGrath, *Roots that Refresh: A celebration of Reformation spirituality* (Hodder & Stoughton, London 1991) 34. A good illustration was provided by Sir Edwyn Hoskyns, a distinguished High Church Anglican scholar, who told in one of his Cambridge sermons that "he began burying his head in a lexicon and ended at the throne of God".

<sup>25</sup> See Paul Beasley-Murray, *Living Out the Call: Book Two – Leading God's People* (Amazon, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2016).

<sup>26</sup> There are several similarities with Barna's 2013 account of *Reading Habits of Today's Pastors*: "When asked to identify the types of books they have read recently, pastors identified spirituality, theology, and leadership". By contrast Tanner's survey of the reading habits of American ministers in 1989 is much more dated: "The most popular areas are evangelism (78% read regularly in this area), preaching (74%), and Bible and theology (64%). The least popular areas are church history (28%) and Christian education and administration (both at 38%)": See Tanner, 'Bring the books', 60.

	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>
Biblical studies	13%	17%
Church history/Christian biography	6%	9%
Community involvement/justice issues	9%	7%
Leadership and management	11%	11%
Mission/outreach/evangelism	11%	12%
Pastoral care and counselling	8%	7%
Prayer and spirituality	16%	12%
Preaching	7%	6%
Specialised ministries - children/youth/ Families/chaplaincy	4%	3%
Theology	9%	14%
Worship	6%	4%

The topics of Biblical studies and theology are slightly more popular with male ministers and prayer is slightly more popular with female ministers but other categories show no differentiation by gender – for instance leadership and management books are just as interesting to women as to men.

### **Ministers currently read a range of ministry related books**

In the longer survey ministers were asked to list up to three titles of books they were currently reading. There were a host of replies. The Preacher's words in Eccles 12.12 relating to books in general, is also true of Christian books: "Of making many books there is no end!".<sup>27</sup> Of the 342 books listed, the balance of books proved to be a little different from the question in the shorter survey relating to the types of books read during the past year. An analysis of the book titles shows the following percentages:

Prayer and spirituality	26% of books
Biblical studies:	18%
Leadership and management	17%
Theology	15%
Mission/outreach/evangelism	7%
Pastoral care & counselling	7%
Church history and biography	4%
Preaching	3%
Worship	2%
Community involvement/justice issues	2%
Specialised ministries	0.5%

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<sup>27</sup> An IVP Press Release, *Behind the Books*, dated May 11 2007, quoted Mark Kuyper President of the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association that the number of evangelical titles had declined from about 7,5000 in 2005 to 5,900 in 2006. Clearly the market overall must be much greater!

If we compare the responses to the shorter survey and longer survey, in the longer survey prayer and spirituality moves from equal second to first place; Biblical studies from first place to second place; leadership & management moves from fifth place to third place; and theology moves from equal second to fourth place.

In my judgement as a former college principal who had the task of helping students to choose books they would read for their probationary studies, few of the books fell into the academic category – some were mid-range, while a good number lacked any intellectual rigour.

### **Ministers read a wide variety of commentaries**

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth” (2 Tim 2.15). The Greek word translated “rightly explaining” means to ‘cut a path in a straight direction’ or ‘cut a road across country (that is forested or otherwise difficult to pass through) in a straight direction’, so that travellers may go directly to their destination. In other words, the emphasis is on the word of God reaching its destination.<sup>28</sup> Preaching, to be faithful to “the word of truth”, needs to be clear to the listener. This surely is above all the preacher’s task. It is not just about accuracy in exegesis: it is about understanding on the part of the hearer. The task of the preacher is to unpack and apply God’s Word clearly – and that requires study, thought, and effort. In turn it requires good commentaries to help the preacher in that task.

Some Christian preachers think all that is needed to expound God’s Word is the Spirit’s inspiration. But good commentaries are vital.<sup>29</sup> As C.H. Spurgeon, the great 19<sup>th</sup> century Baptist ‘prince of preachers’, said in one of his *Lectures to My Students*:

“In order to be able to expound the Scripture, and as an aid to your pulpit studies, you will need to be familiar with the commentators: a glorious army, let me tell you, whose acquaintance will be your delight and profit. Of course, you are not such wiseacres as to think or say that you can expound Scripture without assistance from the works of divines and learned men who have laboured before you in the field of exposition. If you are of that opinion, pray remain so, for you are not worth the trouble of conversion, and like a little coterie who think with you, would resent the attempt at an insult to your infallibility. It seems odd, that certain men who talk so

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<sup>28</sup> See W.F. Arndt & E.W. Gingrich, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 4<sup>th</sup> edition 1952) on *orthotomeo*.

<sup>29</sup> By ‘good’ I do not necessarily mean a commentary that simply reflects good scholarship. Unfortunately there are some commentaries written by scholars which seem just to have the needs of the ‘academy’ in mind, rather the needs of ministers needing resources for preaching.

much of what the Holy Spirit reveals to themselves, should think so little of what he has revealed to others.”<sup>30</sup>

In view of the importance of reading commentaries, it seemed right to discover how many commentaries ministers “normally consult preparing one sermon”

None	3%
One	12%
Two	34%
Three	32%
Four	8%
Five or more	11%

Much as it might be ideal for ministers to be using three or more commentaries, it is encouraging that 85% of ministers use more than two commentaries. To have only one commentary available on the Scripture for the day must surely be limiting. As for using no commentary, the words of 2 Peter 1.20 come to mind: “no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation”.

Questions were also asked regarding which British and North American commentary series ministers tend to consult

Apollos Commentary OT/NT	12%	Serious <sup>31</sup>
Bible Speaks Today (IVP)	59%	Mid-range
.. For Everyone OT/NT (SPCK)	38%	Popular
New International Greek Text Commentary	16%	Serious
Tyndale OT/NT (IVP)	37%	Mid-range
Other	59%	
IVP NT Commentary	38%	Mid-range
Interpretation (Westminster Knox)	25%	Mid-range
New International Commentary OT/NT	41%	Serious
OT/NT Library (Westminster Knox)	4%	Serious
Word Biblical Commentary OT/NT	48%	Serious
Other	24%	

It is encouraging that over half of ministers (59%) use the excellent *Bible Speaks Today* series, which is a great commentary for preachers. It is also noteworthy that almost half of ministers (48%) use the Word Biblical Commentary, which devotes one and often more volumes to each book of the Bible, and which although an academic commentary is also concerned for application.

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<sup>30</sup> C.H. Spurgeon, *Commenting & Commentaries: Two Lectures together with a catalogue of Biblical Commentaries and Expositions* (Passmore & Alabaster, London 1876) 2.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Serious’ commentaries are those where the commentator is grappling with the Hebrew or the Greek.



By contrast, it is a cause of concern if ministers only use the more popular commentaries. This does not mean there is not a place for the more popular commentary. Between them John Goldingay and Tom Wright have written a stimulating series of commentaries '*For Everyone*' – they are superb for daily devotional use, but precisely because they are 'for everyone', they inevitably do not deal with all the issues of text and are inadequate for the preacher (especially for a preacher who has been trained and ordained for ministry) if not used with a more substantial commentary.

## **Restrictions ministers face in reading may be more complex than assumed**

### ***Time and other priorities***

In the shorter survey ministers were asked: "What restricts your ministry-related reading?" A variety of reasons are given:

Demands of ministry	46%
Other priorities	25%
Time management	15%
Not a reader	2%
Other	12%

The fact that almost two-thirds of ministers (71%) are restricted from ministry-related reading because of "demands of ministry" and "other priorities" is a significant finding.

Ministers are busy people. Indeed, Robert Banks wrote, "It would probably be true to say that the clergyman or clergywoman is the busy person par excellence in our times; his or her life more than anyone else's exhibits the desperate shortage of time and accelerating pace of life that has become characteristic of our age"<sup>32</sup> – and that was in 1983 long before the advent of emails.

In a survey of 141 of ministers serving in main-line Protestant denominations, the respondents reckoned that they worked 64.3 hours. When one remembers that this is an average, the clearly some must have been working very hard indeed.<sup>33</sup> In terms of

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<sup>32</sup> Robert Banks, *The Tyranny of Time* (Paternoster, Exeter 1983) 33.

<sup>33</sup> Paul Beasley-Murray, *Power for God's Sake: The use and abuse of power in the local church* (Paternoster, Carlisle 1998) 48-49. These figures are just a little higher than those given by Peter Bates in 'Time - Servant or Master', *Ministry* 22 (Spring 1994) 5: "Studies that I have carried out over many years of the use of their time by clergy show that the average priest in parochial ministry 'works' for about 61 hours a week". Speed B. Leas, *Time Management* (Abingdon, Nashville 1978) 22-24 reported on two studies of what an average workweek is for ministers. In one study of 913 clergy of the American Episcopal Church the average clergy workweek was 66.7 hours. Another study by Minister's Life revealed an average workweek of 53.7 hours. Leas put the two together, which average out at ten hours per day. Bearing in mind this is only an average, half the ministers in

activities, the ministers in this survey were asked to list the number of hours they worked on average in each category. The following averages ensued:

	<i>Hours</i>
Sermon preparation/preaching	7.5
Visiting - building and maintaining meaningful relationships	7.5
Administration	6.5
Prayer & meditation	6.2
Worship preparation/leading worship	5.7
Study	5.6
Committees	5.3
Community involvement/social action	4.3
Discipling/nurturing	4.2
Counselling	4.1
Enabling/involving laity in ministry	4.1
Evangelism	3.3

Unfortunately this particular survey did not specifically raise the issue of ‘reading’ – although reading would clearly be involved in sermon preparation, mediation, and study. However, it does show the busy context in which reading needs to take place.

But it is not just the hours which cause the problem. It is the pressure of the demands made upon ministers.<sup>34</sup> Among the many pressures, there is the time pressure of the ‘the endless task’: “the job of the pastor is never finished – there is always more that can be done”.<sup>35</sup> To return to the data provided by the two surveys underlying this study on the reading habits of ministers, time is undoubtedly an issue. This is made clear by the responses to the question: “What would help you to develop your ministry-related reading or research”, evoked similar responses:

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the survey were working well over ten hours per day, six days per week - which puts most other groups of workers in the shade

<sup>34</sup> For instance, in 2000 a survey of 754 Evangelical pastors revealed that two out of every five pastors felt overwhelmed by pastoral care demands, and over.... had considered leaving the ministry see *Pastoral Care Today: Practice, Problems & Priorities in Churches Today* (CWR & Evangelical Alliance 2000). A 2001 survey of Baptist ministers who had left ministry revealed that for 25% stress/burnout was a very significant factor: see Nigel Coles, ‘Ministry Fall-Out: Can we Afford it? Can we prevent it?’, *Ministry Today* 24 (February 2002) 24-26. In 2004 Leslie J. Francis reported on a survey of over 1000 Anglican clergyman in England. Nearly a third felt that they were working too hard (31%) and felt used up at the end of the day in the parish (29%). One in five felt frustrated by their parish ministry (21%); one in six felt that parishioners blamed them for some of their problems (16%); less than half felt they had accomplished many worthwhile things in their ministry (48%) or that they were positively influencing people’s lives in their parish ministry (44%): see Leslie J. Francis, ‘Ministry Burnout: Myth or Reality?’, *Ministry Today* 34 (Summer 2004) 6-12.

<sup>35</sup> See Paul Beasley-Murray, *Pastors under Pressure* (Kingsway, Eastbourne 1989), 126.; also *Living Out The Call* (Amazon, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2016), and in particular ‘Maximising Time’, section 18, of *Book Two: Leading God’s People*

More time	61%
More money for books	12%
Knowing what to read	10%
Other	17%

Here the clear implication is that three-fifths of ministers would read more if they had “more time”. However, to return to the question “what restricts your ministry-related reading?”, it could be argued that the 15% who referred to difficulties of “time management” might have made an even more significant response. Good time management involves setting priorities, which once set give the minister the freedom to say ‘no’ to many of the demands made upon them.<sup>36</sup> Eugene Peterson even maintained that ministers can confuse busyness for laziness: “I indolently let other people decide what I will do instead of resolutely deciding myself. I let people who do not understand the work of the pastor write the agenda for my day’s work because I am too slipshod to write it myself.”<sup>37</sup> Or expressed slightly differently, more ministers would have time to read if they were to distinguish between the ‘important’ and the ‘urgent’.

On reflection the response of the 25% who cited “other priorities” for restricting their reading may also be significant - for the presumption is that there are other tasks which take priority over reading and study. But is that so? Clearly if someone is dying or has just died, then a minister will want to drop everything and be there with the person. However, in the overall pattern of a minister’s life, the spiritual discipline of reading and study is a key priority – in Gordon MacDonald’s phrase, it is “building below the waterline”.<sup>38</sup>

### ***Money and Knowing What to Read***

Although mentioned by only 12% of those responding to the second question, “money” is surely an issue. Significantly Tanner in his 1989 survey also thought that this was an issue, for he noted that “those with a book allowance read significantly more than those without”.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See *Pastors under Pressure* 54-58 where I argued that the ultimate solution for dealing with pressure was for pastors to redefine their role and encourage their members to play their part. “The pastor is not called to be the Jack-of-all-trades; called to fix anything and everything”. The tasks of evangelism, social action, and pastoral care are tasks which can be shared – but the pastor’s prime calling to be a man or woman of God cannot be delegated.

<sup>37</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, ‘The Unbusy Pastor’, *Leadership II* (Summer 1981) 71. See also Paul Beasley-Murray *Living Out the Call* (Amazon, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2016), section 18, of *Book Two: Leading God’s People*

<sup>38</sup> This metaphor is taken from a reflection on the Brooklyn Bridge, which joins Manhattan to Brooklyn. “The Brooklyn Bridge remains a major transportation artery in New York City today because 135 years ago the chief engineer and his construction team did their most patient and daring work where no one could see it: on the foundations of the towers below the water-line. It is one more illustration of an ageless principle in leadership: the work done below the waterline (in a leader’s soul) that determines whether he or she will stand the test of time and challenge...”. See Gordon MacDonald, *Building Below the Waterline* (Hendrickson, Peabody, Massachusetts 2011)1.

<sup>39</sup> Tanner, ‘Bring the Books’, 68.

It was perhaps a little surprising that for 10% “knowing what to read” was an issue. However, in this information age for some there may be just too many books to choose from with the result that they just give up. If only these respondents were to read *Ministry Today UK* – there they would be overwhelmed by all the book reviews and recommendations! On the other hand, the answers to another question in the shorter survey, “What are the major influences in your choice of reading of materials you use in your ministry?” would seem to indicate that reviews are less important than recommendations from “friends” and “Christian leaders” – although the dominant factor in purchasing many books was clearly the need for a sermon series:

Recommendations of friends:	63%
Reviews in the on-line <i>Baptist Times</i>	5%
Reviews in other journals & magazines	34%
Recommendations from Christian leaders	46%
Spring Harvest of other Christian conferences	14%
Facebook	10%
Need: e.g. for a sermon series	73%
Other	23%

### **Many ministers do not set aside specific time in the week for reading relating to ministry**

In terms of “How much time are you able presently to set aside for reading related to your ministry?” (i.e. not general reading such as novels or poetry), the figures in the shorter survey of 309 respondents present a different perspective:

- None 2%
- Irregular – as opportunity arises 53%
- One session – about three hours 24%
- Two sessions – about six hours 18%
- One day a month 5%

Here we discover that only some 42% of ministers are able to devote specific time to reading, and that even then it is no more than 6 hours a week. Is this failure to find time to read linked with the increasing trend for ministers not to have ‘studies’, but to have ‘offices’? This may well be related to the fact that many (most?) ministers today find they are not able to safeguard every morning for study – but feel they need to relate with people at other morning activities such as a toddler group or a church café.

## Most ministers do not avail themselves of a reading week

In the Baptist Union's recommended terms of settlement, in addition to five weeks of holiday (technically 25 days holiday and 5 holiday Sundays) ministers are entitled to a week of study or reading. Bearing in mind that during the working year just over half of ministers are unable to set aside specific time for reading relating to study, one might think that most ministers would be keen to take advantage of the yearly reading week. However, this is not the case.

In answer to the question, "Over the last three years or so how many reading weeks (or equivalent) have you taken?", the responses of the 300 ministers replying to this question in the shorter survey were as follows:

None:	56%
One:	15%
Two:	10%
Three	20%

This decision not to take advantage of a reading week stands in contrast to one of the ordination questions asked of past generations of Baptist ministers: "Do you promise to be faithful in prayer and in the reading and study of the Holy Scriptures, and to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called".<sup>40</sup> In the most recent Baptist manual, *Gathering for Worship: Patterns and Prayers for the Community of Disciples* that promise is absent in the main ordination promises, although an expanded version appears in the section entitled 'Additional Material: "Will you endeavour to lead a godly life... and will you be diligent in prayer, in reading the Scriptures and in all the studies that will deepen your faith and ministry".<sup>41</sup> If ministers do not feel it important to take an annual reading week then we might well wonder how seriously ministers feel it is to grow and develop in their thinking and understanding of their calling. Or is there a problem with churches not taking seriously the need for a minister to have a reading week?

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<sup>40</sup> Ernest A. Payne & Stephen F. Winward, *Orders and Prayers for Church Worship: A Manual for Ministers* (The Baptist Union of Great Britain & Ireland, London, 4<sup>th</sup> edition 1967) 219.

<sup>41</sup> Christopher J. Ellis and Myra Blyth, editors, *Gathering for Worship: Patterns and Prayers for the Community of Disciples* (Canterbury Press, Norwich 2005) 131.

## Churches can do more to help ministers buy books

In the longer survey we asked: “How much help did you receive from your church last year to buy books/journals?”

Nothing	54%
Under £50	13%
£51-£100	13%
£101-£200	8%
£201-£300	8%
Over £300	4%

It surely is a matter of concern that over half of ministers (54%) receive no help from their church to buy books or journals; and that of those who do receive help 13% received less than £50, and a further 13% received only somewhere between £51-100. It is difficult to believe that churches are wanting to be ‘mean’ to their ministers – but they would certainly appear to be unthinking.

If only churches realised that it is in their own interest to be generous in the help they provide to ministers in purchasing books. Books are not a luxury – without books ministers soon lose their cutting edge. Furthermore, without commentaries, sermons soon become platitudinous and lacking in content. Although some books can be acquired cheaply on the net, the reality is that good commentaries are expensive.

Take commentaries on 1 Corinthians, for instance: Amazon charges £54.99 for Gordon Fee’s 982 pages long magnum opus, and £43.99 for the slightly shorter (922 pages) commentary by Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner. Commentaries on Matthew’s Gospel are no cheaper: £49.99 for John Nolland’s commentary of 1482 pages, and £47.19 for Dick France’s commentary of 1169 pages. Kindle editions are cheaper, but still expensive. Gordon Fee’s commentary on 1 Corinthians costs £30.79, while Ciampa and Rosner’s commentary, even although published in 2010, is not available in an e-form. John Nolland’s commentary on Matthew (published in 2005) is not available electronically – but Dick France’s commentary is and costs £34.79 on Amazon.

Of course, not all commentaries are so expensive. Some more popular commentaries may cost just £15. But if one reckons that many Baptist ministers probably preach on average around five series a year, the costs still mount up.

A cheaper way of buying some commentaries – but not certainly not all – is to buy the Logos Bible soft-ware. But the soft-ware is not cheap. The starter package for devotional students is \$294.99; the gold package for ministry is \$1549.99; the diamond package recommended for senior ministers is \$3449.99, and the collectors’ package is \$10,799.99!

### **3. ENCOURAGEMENTS, CONCERNS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Encouragements**

There is much to encourage

- Most ministers enjoy reading
- Most ministers are reading a wide range of ministry-related books
- Most ministers keep in touch with what is happening in the wider world

Around half of ministers in the two surveys are in my judgment doing well

- 53% saying they enjoy reading “a great deal” [shorter survey].
- 47% read 10 or more hours a week [longer survey]
- 85% normally consult at least 2 or more commentaries in preparing a sermon: a good number of these commentaries fall into the mid-range or serious group of commentaries [shorter survey]
- 45 % availed themselves of one reading week over the last three years [shorter survey].
- 42% specifically set aside at least one session a week to reading [shorter survey]
- 41% subscribe to at least one ministry-related journal or magazine [longer survey]
- 66% have access at least one British on-line ministry related/theological web, and 47% access at least one North American on-line ministry related/theological web-site [longer survey]

Around two in five ministers in the two surveys are in my judgment doing particularly well

- 27% read 13 or more hours a week [longer survey]
- 22% had read more than 11 ministry-related books in the last six-month period – roughly two books a month [longer survey]
- 20% have availed themselves of a reading week every year for the last three years [shorter survey]
- 19% normally consult four or more commentaries in preparing a sermon [shorter survey]
- 18% set aside two specific sessions a week (6 hours) to read [longer survey]

#### **Concerns**

Not all is well, however, with the reading habits of ministers. We should be concerned that:

- 59% do not subscribe to a ministry-related journal or magazine [longer survey]
- 56% have not availed themselves of a reading week in the last three years [shorter survey]
- 53% only read irregularly (as opportunities arises) – and 2% never read [longer survey]

- 44% do not access any on-line ministry related website [longer survey]
- 36% have less than 250 books [longer survey]
- 31% bought two or less books in the last 6 months – and 9% did not buy a book at all [shorter survey]
- 21% read six or fewer hours a week [longer survey]
- 19 % don't have a regular pattern of reading the Bible [longer survey]
- 12% normally use only one commentary for sermon preparation – and 3% don't use any commentary [shorter survey]
- 8% have not read a ministry-related book in the last six months [longer survey]
- 7% have not read a general book in the last six months [longer survey]

We should also be concerned that:

- so many ministers who learnt Hebrew, never or rarely open a Hebrew Testament; and that so many who learnt Greek, never or rarely open a Greek Testament [longer survey]
- 54% of ministers received no help from their church in the last year to buy books – and a further 13% received less than £50 [shorter survey].

## Recommendations

Ultimately, of course, it is in the hands of every minister to take personal responsibility for their own personal growth and development. One way of doing this would be for Baptist ministers to take advantage of the eight-stranded programme for personal continuing ministerial development offered by the College of Baptist Ministers.<sup>42</sup> However, the Baptist associations and churches have also a key role to play in helping and encouraging ministers to read, learn, grow and develop.

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<sup>42</sup> **1. Accountability** – regularly opening our lives to the supportive scrutiny of one or two others, in a formal or informal relationship such as mentoring or peer supervision. **2. Applied Practice** – gaining new insights through reflecting on our experience of ministry and church life, learning through failure as well as success, pioneering new ways of doing mission and ministry, creating courses that help our people grow in their faith, becoming more effective as a preacher, developing new skills in managing change, resolving conflict, building team, and in leading God's people forward. **3. Collegiality** – meeting together with other ministers to strengthen, encourage and support one another, particularly e.g. in local Ministers' Meetings and Association Ministers' Conferences. **4. Learning** – through attending courses, reading books, working for a formal qualification, or simply going on a broadening sabbatical. **5. Ministry/Ministries** – this strand applies particularly to retired, bi-vocational or sector ministers and is a space to indicate aspects of ministry alongside your primary ministry. **6. Practical competencies** - relating to some of the more practical competencies of ministry identified by the Baptist Union of Great Britain, in such areas as IT skills and Safeguarding policies. **7. Review of Ministry** – on a regular (annual or biennial) basis allowing others to help us review our ministries, affirming all that has been positive in the past year, and agreeing the shape of ministry for the coming year. The CBM Guidelines for Review of Ministry involve an external Facilitator. **8. Spirituality** – sustaining and deepening our walk with God. **9. Other** – a ninth catch-all category for other experiences which enrich our ministry, not least involvement with churches and missionaries outside UK and ecumenical and para-church activities.



Perhaps in the first place the Baptist Union of Great Britain and its Associations have a role in speaking to churches about ministers' priorities, and in that context helping churches understand how important it is for their ministers to have time and money to read and study.

Continuing Ministerial Development needs to become an urgent priority in the life of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Despite the *Ignite* report,<sup>43</sup> the reality is that currently most Baptist associations are doing very little in this area – they have other priorities. This needs to change. Ministers need to be helped to continue to grow and develop in their understanding and practice of ministry – and this in turn means that they need to be encouraged to continue to read widely and deeply.

Continuing Ministerial Development, however, is not just an issue for those who lead our Baptist associations. It also needs to be on the agenda of local churches, who have a key role in encouraging their ministers to keep learning. What a difference it could make if deacons were to take an interest in their ministers' reading – not with a view to beating their minister with a stick, but rather with a view to offering help and encouragement.

In this regard, a minister's annual 'review' (or 'appraisal') of ministry can provide a great opportunity for those involved in the process to ask their ministers to give an account of their reading and learning over the past year. What books, for instance, have they enjoyed reading? What insights have they discovered? What has perhaps distracted them from their reading?

The annual review of ministry could also be the context in which churches talk about the annual reading week. How did this year's reading week go? When will the next reading week be taken? What areas of ministry would the minister wish to explore? Churches need to recognise that if ministers are to be able to take a week off for reading, then they cannot be expected to preach on the Sunday – help also needs to be given to ensure that routine pastoral work during the reading week becomes the responsibility of others in the church

Spiritual direction/accompaniment needs to be an essential part of every minister's life. All ministers need to have some form of spiritual accountability, not least about the daily disciplines of prayer and Bible reading. That too should be on the agenda at every minister's annual 'review': not in the sense that ministers have to give an account of their spiritual walk to their deacons, but rather that churches know that their ministers have a 'soul friend' to whom they can turn. Churches need to encourage their ministers to set aside time on a regular basis to see their 'spiritual director' as also to encourage their ministers to go on retreat from time to time.

Churches should be encouraged to give realistic financial help toward books and perhaps software for their ministers. The fact is that ministers are more likely to read when a church

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<sup>43</sup> *Ignite: Investing in Leaders* (Baptist Union of Great Britain, December 2015).

provides the necessary finance. <sup>44</sup> Churches could also be encouraged to pay subscriptions to bodies such as the Baptist Ministers Fellowship and the College of Baptist Ministers, recognising that money they invest in their ministers continuing ministerial development always blesses the church too.

We also wonder too whether Baptist theological colleges need to do more in the area of helping their students with their reading habits. Here we have in mind not just help with reading skills, but also help with time management skills in dealing with emails, Facebook and other pressures arising from the use of social media.

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<sup>44</sup> Because of HMRC rules, churches need to be wise in how the money is given. One possibility is for the books and software to belong to the church as long as the minister is serving the church: however, when a minister leaves and the last instalment of stipend is made, then the church can 'gift' it's now former minister with the books or software concerned!

## 4. INTERESTING FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY

### Women ministers tend to read less than men

Bearing in mind that 78% of respondents to the longer survey were men, and that 22% were female, we wondered whether there would be any difference between men and women in the number of hours they devote to reading. To our surprise, in a society where generally women read more than men, we discovered that women ministers tend to read less than their male counterparts.<sup>45</sup>

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
1-3 hours	12%	11%
4-6 hours	17%	24%
7-9 hours	22%	30%
10-12 hours	20%	19%
13-15 hours	14%	5%
15+ hours	16%	11%

To be fair, a greater percentage of women (54%) over against men (39%) are reading 4 – 9 hours a week; however, by contrast a significantly greater percentage of men (30%) over against women (16%) are reading more than 13 hours per week.

Is there an explanation for why women ministers do not seem to spend as much time reading as much as some of their male colleagues? Could it be, for instance, that women read faster and more efficiently? Or are women more concerned with ‘quality’ rather than ‘quantity’? Or are there other social factors, for instance relating to family, which cause women to read as they do? More research is called for.

### More experienced ministers tend to read the most

Bearing in mind that in the first three or four years of accredited ministry, probationers (‘Newly Accredited Ministers’) are obliged to follow a directed course of reading, we wondered whether the probationer ministers might be reading more than those further on in ministry. We also wondered about the reading habits of the most experienced ministers.

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<sup>45</sup> See Executive Summary of *Booktrust Reading Habits Survey 2013*, 3: “Across all age groups, women are more frequent readers than men and tend to be more positive about books. Men are more likely to admit they find reading boring and can struggle to find things to read that are interesting to them.”

	<i>Under-5 years</i>	<i>Over 5 -years</i>	<i>21+ years</i>
1-3 hours	8%	13%	15%
4-6 hours	20%	16%	14%
7-9 hours	28%	23%	27%
10-12 hours	16%	20%	15%
13-15 hours	20%	11%	6%
15+ hours	8%	18%	23%

Interestingly a significantly greater percentage of probationers (20%) read for 13-15 hours compared to more experienced ministers (11% over 5 years; 6% 21+ years); on the other hand, a significantly greater percentage of more experienced ministers (18% over-5 years; 23% 21+ years) spend more than 15 hours in reading compared to probationers (8%).

It would be interesting to know whether the fact that most longer-serving ministers were probably trained as college-based students makes any difference compared to the fact that most of the more recently trained ministers were trained as church-based students. Were college-based students able to develop patterns of extensive reading which have persisted in ministry? Again, more research is called for.

### **Most ministers favour print books to digital reading**

Over the last few years our lives have been transformed by the digital revolution. First came the desk-top computers – but now we have lap tops, netbooks, tablets, and I-pads. Instead of writing letters, we now almost exclusively send e-mails. In many a church preaching now involves PowerPoint presentations and clips from ‘you-tube’. Perhaps not surprisingly the list of ‘twelve competencies’ which the Baptist Union of Great Britain expects to find in trained ministers includes not just ‘the ability to lead others in public worship and to administer the sacraments’, but also ‘the ability to use basic IT resources and media effectively’. In this context the question arises: What impact has the digital revolution had on ministers reading? To find out, we asked several questions.

In the short survey of 309 ministers we asked, “How often do you use a digital device in your reading?”

Almost always	6%
Most of the time:	10%
About 50/50	35%
Occasionally	40%
Never	9%

Here we see that only 16% use a digital device ‘almost always’ or ‘most of the time’, compared to 49% who only ‘occasionally’ or ‘never’ use a digital device.

We then asked a question relating to the proportion of digital and print books read in the last three months:

Almost all e-books	3%
Mainly e-books	7%
Roughly 50/50:	18%
Mainly print books	29%
Almost all print books	40%

Here only 10% read “almost all” or mainly” e-books, whereas 69% read “mainly” or “almost all” print books. Most ministers clearly favour print books to digital reading. <sup>46</sup>

### **Most ministers particularly favour print books when preparing sermons**

Regarding Bible study and/or sermon preparation a series of questions were asked relating to the frequency of use of print books, digital e-reader, TV/radio, down-loads, and websites, and came up with the following results

	<i>Print books</i>	<i>Digital e-reader</i>	<i>TV/radio</i>	<i>Down-loads</i>	<i>Web-sites</i>
Always:	51%	7%	Less than 1%	9%	15%
Often:	29%	15%	20%	32%	39%
50/50	12%	8%	17%	18%	24%
Rarely	7%	29%	46%	32%	19%
Never	less than 1%	41%	20%	11%	3%

Here 80% always and often use print books in their sermon preparation.

Recognising that this could be a generational thing, we turned the question around – “How often do you use a digital device for sermon preparation and/or Bible study?” and related this to age. In so far as there were relatively few ministers, in the under 30 category, we combined the age-bands under 30 and 30-39 with the following results:

	<i>Under 40s</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60+</i>
Always	3%	6%	5%	13%
Often	13%	19%	11%	11%
50/50	8%	6%	12%	6%
Rarely	33%	27%	36%	17%
Never	45%	41%	36%	46%

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<sup>46</sup> A Bible Society on-line survey of 2,294 Christians in April 2013 revealed that 8 out of 10 Christians preferred using a physical book, compared with 7 out of 10 (69%) of the public – but that was 5 years ago!

## Ministers are more open to digital media for reading related to their personal ministry development

Regarding personal ministry development, we asked the same series of questions relating to the frequency of use of print books, digital e-reader, TV/radio, down-loads, and websites, and came up with the following results

	<i>Print books</i>	<i>Digital e-reader</i>	<i>TV/radio</i>	<i>Down-loads</i>	<i>Web-sites</i>
Always	37%	6%	2%	5%	9%
Often	41%	20%	14%	25%	33%
50/50	15%	13%	16%	24%	30%
Rarely	6%	30%	47%	34%	24%
Never	0%	31%	21%	13%	4%

Print books remain dominant: 78% “always” or “often” rely on print books for their ministry development. By contrast – and in descending order – the percentages for those who “always” or “often” reliant on other media are as follows: web-sites 42%; downloads 30%; digital readers 26%; and TV/radio 16%.

To what extent do ministers’ preference for print books reflect the public? In 2013 – five years ago – a survey of 1500 adults reported that 71% of their respondents stated that they never read e-books.<sup>47</sup> Since then sales of e-books increased significantly and Kindle sales soared. However, in 2016 e-book sales slumped by 17% June in the UK to £204 million, while the print sales of consumer titles (fiction, nonfiction and children’s books) rose by almost 9% to £1.55 billion.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, it can now be cheaper to buy the physical copy of a book than a digital download thanks to changes in Amazon’s deal with publishers.<sup>49</sup> Robert Darnton, Director of Harvard’s University Library, has pointed out that books have many practical advantages. Portable and accessible, they require no power supply. They have proved their durability, while today's advanced tools for storing data will be tomorrow's dinosaurs. A new technology does not always replace an older one.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Booktrust Reading Habits Survey 2013, 8.

<sup>48</sup> *The Times*, 7 June 2017.

<sup>49</sup> *The Guardian*, 17 March 2014: ‘Paperback fighters: sales of physical books now outperform digital sales’.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Darnton, *The Case for Books, Past, Present and Future* (Public Affairs, New York 2009).

## Most ministers favour the New International Version of the Bible

In the longer survey we were Interested to discover what Bible versions ministers are using, and so asked two questions.

First, “What is your preferred English version of the Bible?”; and secondly, “What is your ‘second choice’ English version?” The following responses were received:

	First choice	Second choice
AV/NKJV	5%	8%
NIV (TNIV/RNIV)	62%	22%
RSV/NRSV	16%	20%
GNB	0%	6%
REB	0%	1%
Other	16%	42%

The ‘other’ responses were a very mixed group: ‘other’ in the first question included the New Living Translation (8%) and the English Standard Version (5%); while in the second question ‘other’ included The Message (8%) and the New Living Translation (6%).

Bearing in mind that Baptists are by and large on the evangelical wing of the church, it was not surprising that the NIV and its related editions were by far and away the most popular version. By contrast the NRSV/RSV, regarded by scholars as the most accurate of the English versions and often the set English text in university settings, was chosen by only one fifth of ministers. Significantly the REB (Revised English Bible), the only modern British version of the Bible, has almost dropped out of use. It was also noticeable that very few Baptists ministers seem to appreciate the Good News Bible’s dynamic equivalent paraphrase into contemporary language.<sup>51</sup>

Interestingly a 2008 Bible Society survey revealed that among ‘church leaders’ of all denominations, the NIV followed by the NRSV were also the favourite Bible versions: 37% for the NIV (compared to 62% in our survey) and 17% (compared to 16% in our survey). Among ‘non-church leaders’ the favourite was the NIV (26%) followed by the Jerusalem Bible (12%), read mainly by Roman Catholics.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> For the advantages of the NRSV see David Holgate & Rachel Starr, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (SCM, London 2006) 68-69.

<sup>52</sup> Research by the market research consultancy ComRes for the Bible Society, 2008, available online.

## Most ministers keep in touch with issues beyond the church

Karl Barth was once asked, “What do you do to prepare your Sunday sermon?”. He answered: “I take my Bible in one hand and the daily newspaper in the other”. Similarly, because he wanted to speak relevantly to the ordinary unchurched person, Bill Hybels, the senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, Chicago, told how in addition to reading a daily paper, watching the television and listening the radio, he reads *Time Newsweek*, *US News & World Report*, *Forbes*, and usually *Business Week*.<sup>53</sup>

How do British ministers relate their preaching to the wider world? How aware are they of issues beyond the church? In the longer survey ministers were asked: “Which of the following do you read?”

Daily paper – printed	21%
Daily paper – digital	26%
BBC or equivalent website	78%
News & analysis magazine: e.g. Economist	14%
Personal interest or hobby magazine	29%
Popular magazine – general interest	4%
Other	7%
NONE read	6%

Although it is encouraging that 80% look at the BBC web-site or its equivalent, to what extent that represents in-depth awareness is questionable. Similarly, although almost half (47%) say they read a daily paper, we do not know the degree to which those newspapers represent the serious end of the market. Ministers need to understand the issues of the day. What is more, they also need to know what how the ordinary people around them are responding to the issues of the day – indeed, on that basis we could argue that ministers should read not just a serious paper, but also a popular tabloid paper too! To connect with the world on our door, we need to know what the world on our door is reading, watching and thinking. Just as Ezekiel sat down among his contemporaries and experienced something of their pain (Ezekiel 3.15), so too ministers need to make time to hear what other people are thinking and saying.

## Many ministers spend time reading non-ministry related books

When Jesus said, “I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10.10) was he just talking about life in God’s church? Rightly understood, the Christian faith is life-giving, rather than life-taking; it is about transforming the whole of life. Made in the image of the Creator God, we are called to live a fully world-affirming life. This surely entails that our reading reflects something of the wider world in which we live.

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<sup>53</sup> Bill Hybels, ‘Speaking to the Secularised Mind’, 36 in *Mastering Contemporary Preaching* (British edition: IVP, Leicester 1991) by Bill Hybels, Stuart Briscoe & Haddon Robinson.



In this regard three questions in the longer survey looked at ministers' general reading.

One question related to "how many ministry related books have you read in the last six months?"

None	8%
1-5 books	51%
6-10 books	19%
11-15 books	8%
16-20 books	6%
More than 20 books	8%

A second question asked: "What kind of non-ministry related books have you read in the last six months?"

None	7%
Biography/history	47%
Business/self-improvement	13%
Novels/thrillers	70%
Poetry	14%
Hobbies/science/technology	32%
Other	13%

A third question asked, "approximately what percentage of these [reading] hours was spent in reading non-ministry related books?"

0-20%	52%
21-40%	39%
41-60%	7%
61-80%	2%

It is encouraging that just under half (48%) in the shorter survey spent more than 20% of their time reading non-ministry related books. This compares with the average of 17% of time spent reading non-ministry related books (on average 2.5 hours a week) by American ministers in Tanner's survey.<sup>54</sup>

### **Books deemed most significant**

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<sup>54</sup> Tanner, 60.

In the larger survey, ministers were asked “In the last three years what have been the most significant books you have read”, and to list up to three titles. Amongst the responses, five key authors emerged:

1. By far the most popular author was Tom Wright - his books *Jesus and the Victory of God*, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, and *Surprised by Hope*, received a good number of commendations
2. Eugene Peterson was the second most popular author; his autobiography *The Pastor* is particularly appreciated.
3. Richard Rohr, the American Franciscan spiritual writer came equal third; his book *Falling Upwards* was listed by a number.
4. Timothy Keller, pastor of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, received the same number of listings – and especially his books *Prayer* and *Preaching*.
5. A number of books of Walter Brueggemann, emeritus Old Testament professor Columbia Theological Seminary, were also highly ranked – but no one book.

It was extraordinarily difficult to analyse all the book recommendations. One thing, however, was clear was that only a small minority of books were academic in orientation; and probably less than five respondents mentioned a book that could be regarded as ‘heavy weight’. This is not to decry the wide range of academic ability of people who God has called into ministry. Yet although not all ministers have degrees, all accredited Baptist ministers have undergone rigorous theological training and should therefore be able to differentiate between books that are worthwhile, on the one hand, and books with little substance, on the other hand. So for instance, books such as *Fruitfulness on the Frontline* by Mark Greene, *Courageous Leadership* by Bill Hybels, and *The Wounded Healer* by Henri Nouwen, all listed by respondents to the survey, may not be academic books, but nonetheless offer great insights into ministry and need to be read by every minister.

## **Ministers do not just look to commentaries to help with their sermons**

### ***Sermon outlines***

On a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (always) ministers were asked: “How often do you read printed/digital sermon outlines to help you in your preparation?”

1 (Never)	38%
2	32%
3	17%
4	7%
5 (Always)	6%

To what extent using somebody else’s sermon outline connects with the Biblical idea of the ‘prophet’ as one “to whom the word of the Lord came” (Jeremiah 1.2) is questionable. Preaching preparation involves listening to Scripture, to the voices of culture, and to the

needs of the congregation. Printed or digital sermon outlines may provide a structure with some good illustrations, but inevitably they lack relevancy – for they are outlines prepared with the generality of church life in mind, and not with the needs of the particular church in which the sermon is due to be preached.

### ***Lectionary Notes***

On a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (always), ministers were asked: “How often do you use Lectionary notes on the readings for the day to help you with your preparation?”

1 (Never)	65%
2	20%
3	9%
4	2%
5 (Always)	4%

In so far as most Baptist ministers do not use the Lectionary, the number of those using Lectionary Notes is almost certainly much lower than in the more liturgical churches. With people like Tom Wright having written several such guides to preaching for ministers using the Lectionary, the quality of these Lectionary notes is almost certainly substantially higher than general sermon outlines – especially those found on the web. But again more research is called for to demonstrate that this is so.

### ***The internet***

Another question asked was “How many hours do you tend to spend on-line researching for a sermon?”

NONE	10%
Less than 1 hour	32%
1-2 hours	31%
2-3 hours	13%
3-4 hours	8%
More than 4 hours	6%

Googling the internet for a quotation or illustration may explain in part the almost one third of ministers (32%) who spend “less than one hour” on-line “researching”. The quality of theological material on the internet, however, tends to be limited, with the result that it raises questions on how just over a quarter of ministers (27%) spend two or more hours on the internet “researching” for a sermon. Here too may be an area for further research.

## **Ministers look not just to books for their ministry-related reading**

A series of questions were asked relating to other ministry-related reading. In every case the significant response comes at the beginning of the responses – ‘NONE’. Unless they are reading the latest books, a large proportion of ministers do not seem to be keeping up with developments in ministry. This is concerning. The fact is that in a fast-changing world ministers need to be continually learning, if they are to remain relevant.

### ***Journals/magazines***

In answer to “What ministry related journals/magazines do you subscribe to?”, the following responses were received:

NONE	59%
<i>Baptist Ministers Journal</i>	26%
<i>Expository Times</i>	1%
<i>Ministry Today UK</i>	6%
Scholarly journal	3%
<i>Theology</i>	2%
Other	22%

‘Other’ included BMS magazines, *Church Times*, *Faith and Thought*, *Practical Theology*, and *Reviews in Religion & Theology*.

### ***On-line ministry related mailings***

In response to “How many on-line ministry related mailings do you receive?”, the following answers were given:

NONE	29%
One	14%
Two	24%
Three	14%
Four	3%
Five or more	16%

### ***On-line ministry related/theological websites***

In response to “What British on-line ministry related/theological web-sites do you access?”, the following answers we given:

NONE	44%
Christian Today	11%
College of Baptist Ministers	2%
Evangelical Alliance	22%
Ministry Today UK	4%
Theos	7%
Other	12%

‘Other’ included Baptist Union of GB, Bible Hub, BMS World Mission, Church Pastoral Aid Society, David Pawson, and Journal of Missional Practice

We also asked the question: “What North American ministry related/theological websites do you access?” and received the following responses:

NONE	53%
Alban Weekly & Duke	1%
Hybels & Willowcreek Assoc	10%
Christianity Today & CT Pastors	17%
Church Leaders	10%
Leadership	11%
Other	21%

On reflection, we might have had a question relating to web-sites elsewhere. For instance, there is much to learn from our Australian and New Zealand ‘cousins’, whose culture is in many ways much closer to ours compared to North America.

### ***Christian/Ministry blogs***

18% indicate they follow at least one blog, of whom 11% named more than one. At least some others occasionally read blog articles (e.g. from links on Twitter, Facebook or other blogs) but not “follow” any. 60 different blogs were named of which around one third are from beyond the UK. The following blogs were named by more than one person: Steve Holmes (UK Baptist); Tim Challies (Canadian Evangelical); Andy Goodliff (UK Baptist); Ian Paul (UK Anglican); Archbishop Cranmer (UK Anglican); Jim Gordon (UK Baptist) Ben Myers (Australian); Nick Baines (UK Anglican).

### **Ministers are buying books – but some could buy more**

In the shorter survey the question was asked: “roughly how many books you use in the course of ministry have you bought in the last three months or so?”

None	9%
1-2 books	31%
3-4 books	25%
5 or more	35%

This response surprised us, because anecdotal evidence had suggested that ministers were buying very few books. Perhaps we should have asked a few further questions such as 5-6 books; 7-8 books, 9-10 books, 11 books or more!

It was encouraging to discover that over a third (35%) had bought five more books in a three-month time frame – this suggests that in a year over a third of ministers buy more than 20 books. On the other hand, just under one in ten ministers bought no books; while almost another third of ministers bought just one or two books in that three-month period. British Baptist ministers are clearly buying fewer books than Americans responding to the 2013 Barna survey of American ministers.

### **Most ministers borrow books**

Books, of course, can be expensive – and this is particularly so when it comes to buying commentaries, which are normally part of the staple diet of any minister engaging in expository preaching. An alternative to buying books is borrowing books. In the longer survey the question was asked: “How many ministry-related books have you borrowed (from friends or a library) or have used in a library during the last year?”:

None	40%
A few	39%
Around 5 – 15 books	13%
More than 15 books	8%

Significantly more had borrowed books (60% in total) than had not (40%). Just over a fifth (21%) had borrowed more than 5 books.

Many books do not need to be read more than once, and therefore there is much to be said for using the facilities of a library or borrowing from a friend. On the other hand, it makes little sense borrowing reference books to which frequent access may be needed; it also makes little sense borrowing commentaries on individual books of the Bible which may well form the basis of many a series of sermons or Bible studies.

### **Ministers have libraries of various sizes**

Ministers need books – and therefore inevitably ministers have libraries. No doubt compared to many of their members, most ministers have a substantial library. Interestingly a 2013 survey of 1500 English adults revealed that the overall average number of books in their homes was 203!<sup>55</sup>

The longer survey began with the question: “Approximately how big is your personal library of books you use as a minister?” – as distinct from other more general books a minister may buy. The following answers were received:

Fewer than 100 books	8%
101-250 books	28%
251-500 books	19%
501-750 books	21%
751-1000 books	10%
More than 1000 books	21%

Less than 250 books - let alone less than 100 books - seems a small library.<sup>56</sup> It would be interesting to know the size of some of the larger libraries – bearing in mind, of course, that libraries contain both digital and print books.

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<sup>55</sup> *Booktrust Reading Habits Survey 2013*, 11, also showed that one-in-ten have ten or fewer books in the home, including 3% who have no books at all. The analysis by demographics shows that book ownership varies according to socio-economic group: The ABs own on average 376 books, compared with 156 for DEs. The over 60s own an average of over 300 books compared to 18-29 year olds who own an average of 137. Females tend to own more books on average than males (229 compared with 181).

<sup>56</sup> It would be interesting to know whether the size of a minister’s library is connected with their socio-economic roots. A comedian once said, “you can tell whether someone is working class by whether their telly is bigger than the bookshelf”.

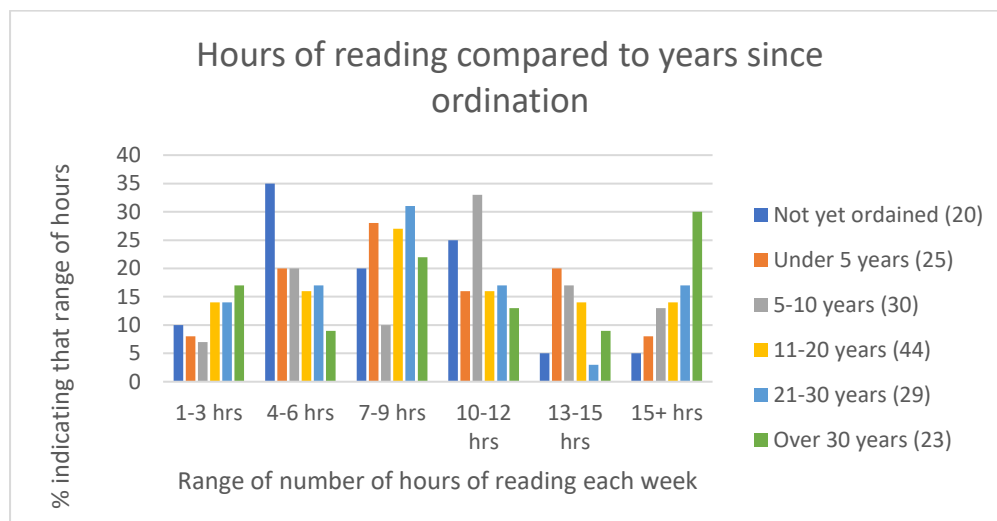




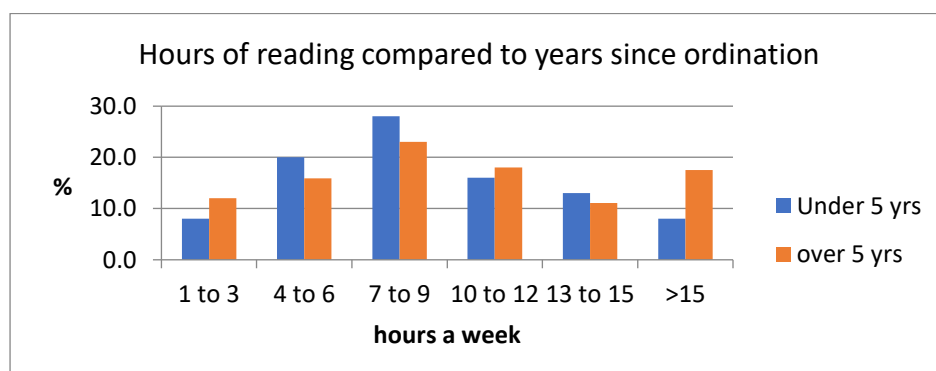
## 5. DEEPER ANALYSIS OF VARIOUS CORRELATIONS

### Hours of reading compared to years since ordination

As might be expected, respondents who are not yet ordained generally read less than ordained ministers. They may be lay pastors or part-time ministers. The proportion of ministers reading for more than 15 hours a week increases with years in the ministry.

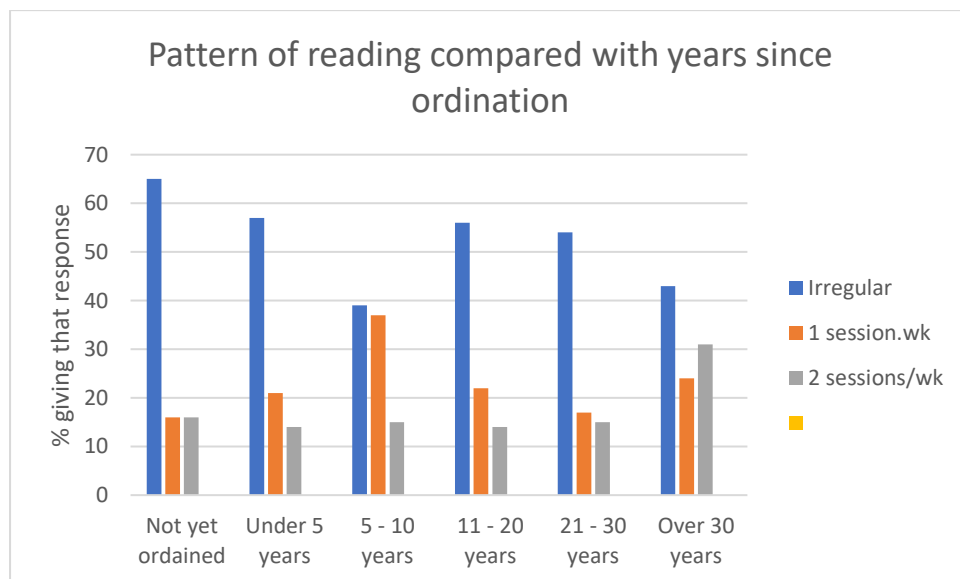


Ministers in the first five years since ordination will generally be engaged in the Newly Accredited Ministers (NAMs) processes overseen by their Association. From this process, we might expect them to be reading more than ministers of greater experience. However this is not observed. Leaving out those who are not yet ordained, and grouping all ministers who have been ordained for 5 years or more, indicates that those in the first five years of ministry are generally reading less than more experienced ministers.



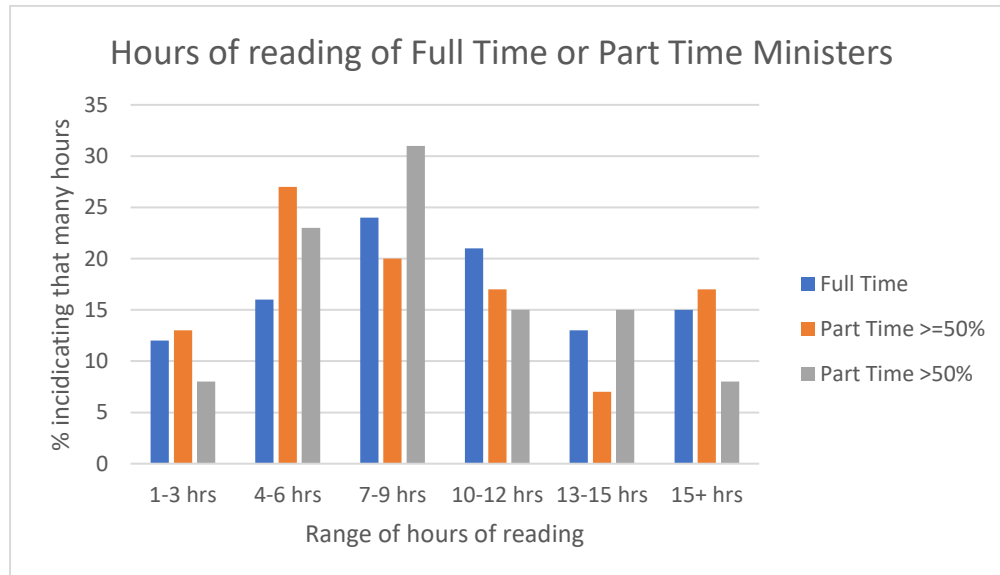
## Patterns of reading compared with years since ordination

More than half of all ministers have only an irregular pattern of reading. Non-ordained ministers read less than any other grouping. Ministers who have been ordained for between 5 and 10 years and for more than 30 years read significantly more than other groupings. Only 15% of each grouping read for 2 sessions a week with the exception that 30% of ministers ordained for more than 30 years do so. Although they are mostly engaged in the NAMs process, there is no evidence that ministers in the first five years since ordination show patterns of greater reading than ministers in years 10-30, and they read less than ministers in the 5-10 and 30+ groupings. any other group apart from non-ordained ministers.



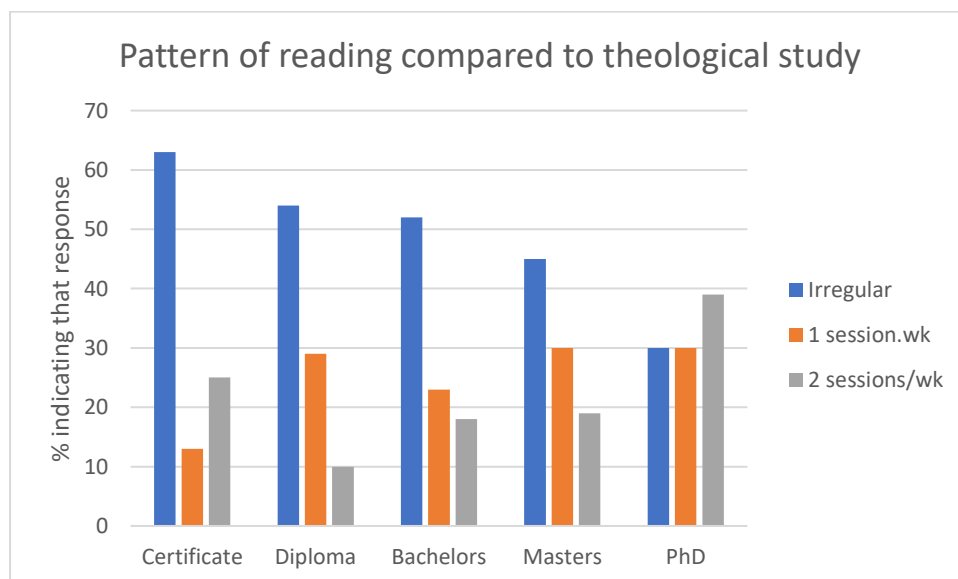
## Hours of reading for Full Time and Part Time ministers

Those in ministry part time do tend to read less than those in full time ministry, with those serving for less than 50% of their time reading less than those serving for 50% or more. However the effect is less pronounced than might be expected.



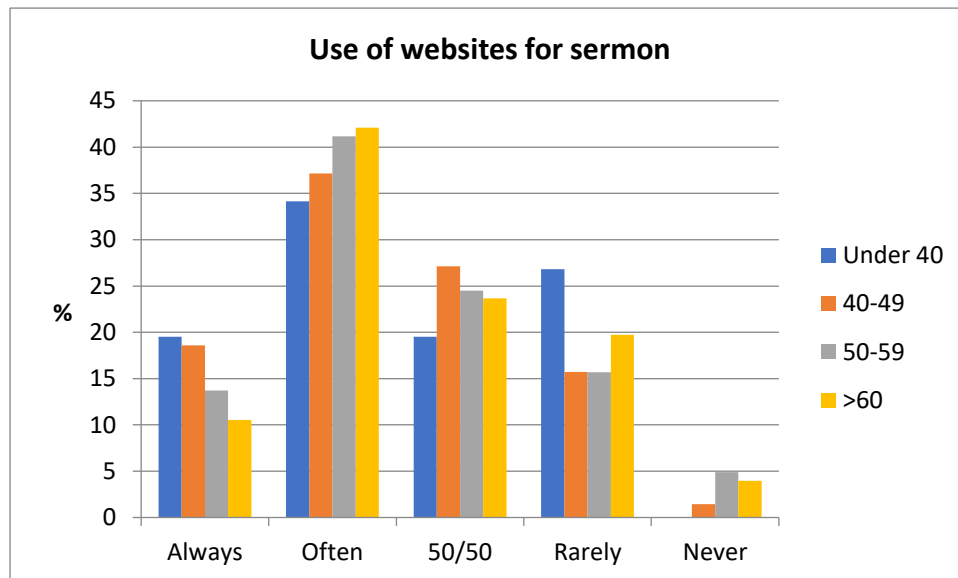
## Patterns of reading compared to different levels of theological study.

It is entirely predictable but still worth reporting the clear correlation that the higher the level of theological study a minister has completed, the more reading and the more structured reading they are likely to engage in.



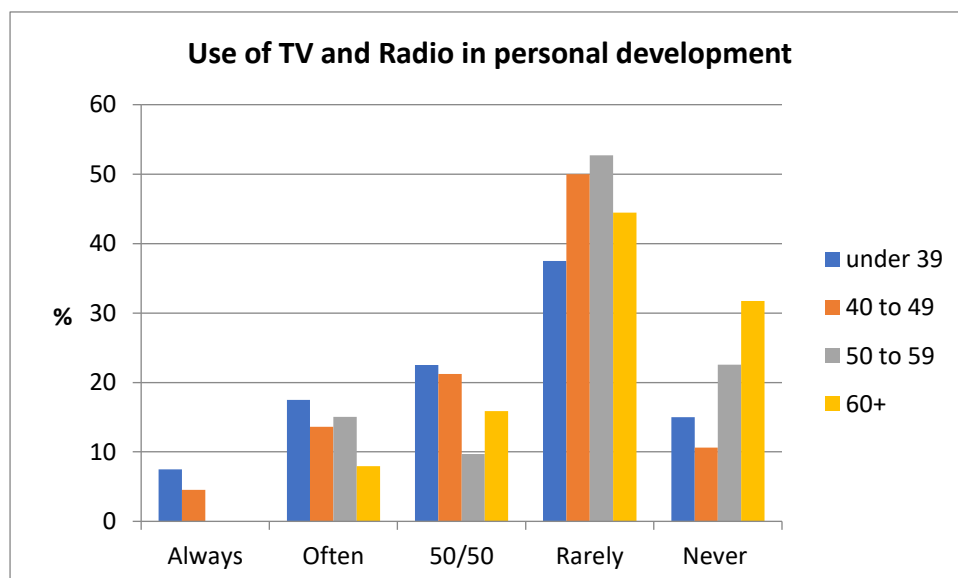
### Use of websites in preparing sermons

Younger ministers are more likely to use websites in preparing sermons than older ministers – perhaps not surprising since websites were not available to assist sermon preparation 10+ years ago.



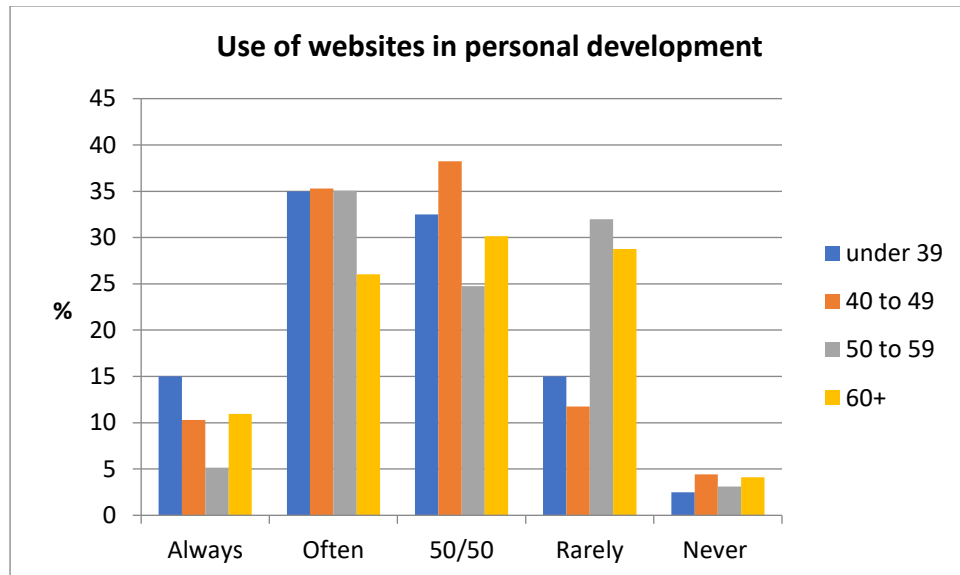
### Use of TV and Radio in personal development

Younger ministers are significantly more likely than older ministers to use TV and radio in their personal development. In particular, a small number of ministers under 50, but none older, say they always use TV and radio.



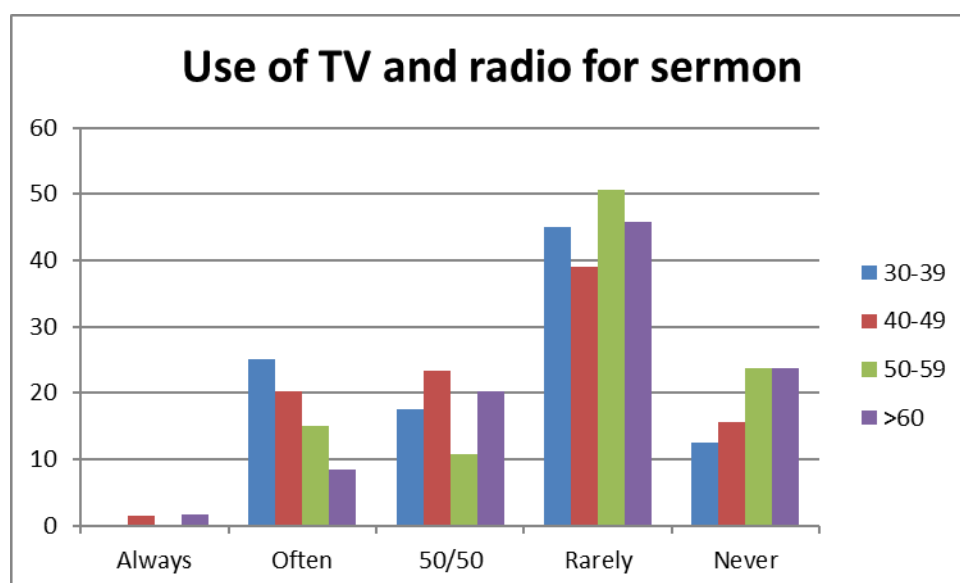
### Use of websites in personal development

Younger ministers are slightly more likely than older ministers to use websites for their personal development.

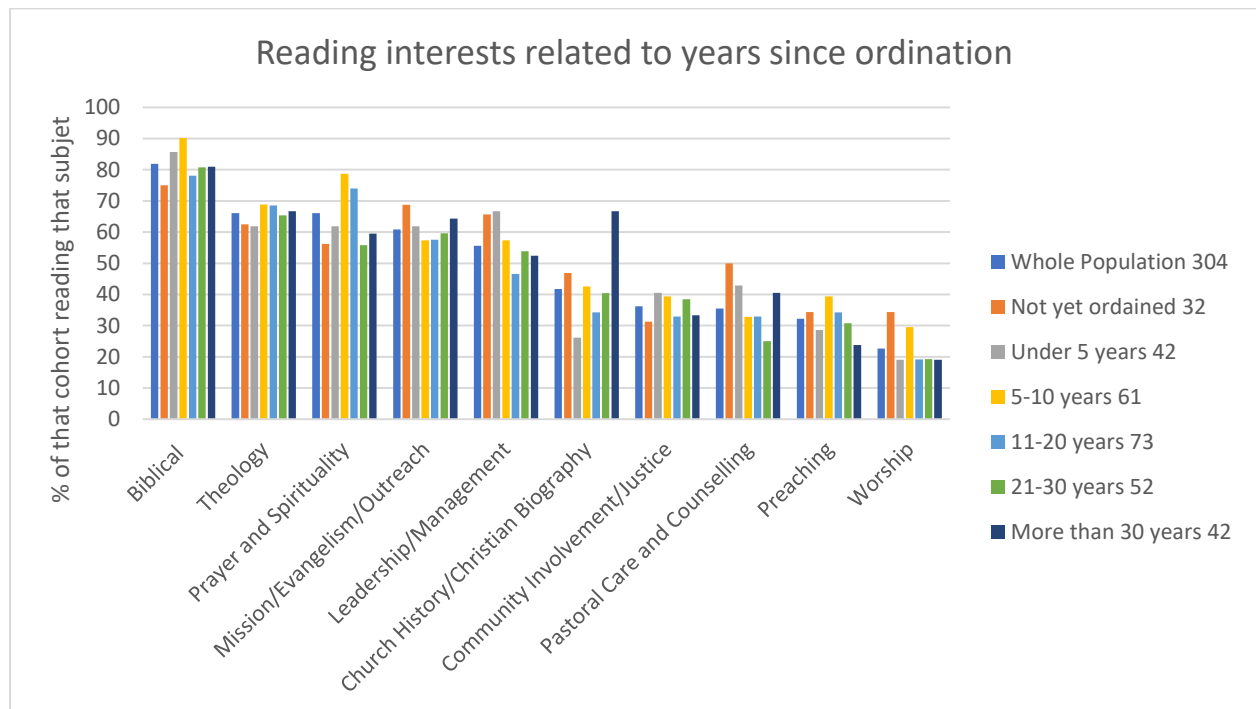


### Use of TV and radio for sermon preparation

Younger ministers tend to make more use than older ministers of TV and radio in their sermon preparation. However, the question did not specify whether this relates to general programming (news, documentary, films, soap operas etc.) or Christian programming (God Channel, Premier Radio etc.).



## Reading interests related to years since ordination – from the Short Survey



In general, the interests ministers which pursue in their reading do not appear to be particularly related to the number of years since their ordination. 304 out of the 309 respondents answered this question, so not many observations carry any statistical significance. The following do.

Ministers who are not ordained show greater interest than most in Mission/Evangelism/Outreach, in Leadership/Management, in Pastoral Care and Counselling, and in Worship but less interest than most in Biblical Studies and in Prayer and Spirituality. This could imply that it would be beneficial to encourage lay-ministers to read more in those areas.

Ministers in their first 5 years show conspicuously less interest than most in Church History and Christian Biography but otherwise their interests are unremarkable. Might this offer insights for the reading lists Colleges give to Newly Accredited Ministers?

Ministers of 5-10 years standing show a greater interest than most in Biblical Studies, in Prayer and Spirituality, in Preaching and in Worship.

Those in ministry for 11-20 years have particular interest in Prayer and Spirituality but are otherwise typical. The reading interests of ministers of 21-30 years standing are entirely typical.

Ministers ordained for more than 30 years show a strikingly greater interest in Church History and Christian Biography than other ministers.

Theology and Community Involvement/Justice Issues show no statistically significant variations.

### **The following correlations show nothing of statistical significance**

Age and use of digital devices for general reading  
Age and use of downloads for sermon preparation  
Age and use of printed books for sermon preparation  
Use of printed books, use of downloads, for personal development  
Age and use of e-reader for personal development  
Use of printed books for sermons  
Age and use of digital devices for sermon preparation  
Ministers' choices of reading topic by age (as distinct from years related since ordination) shows no statistically significant results.

### **Areas for further research**

First and foremost, asking similar questions of ministers in other denominations would be of great interest.

Secondly, as a result of analysing the data in this study, a number of questions suggest themselves:

- What proportion of ministers have taken speed reading courses? How do such courses affect the number of books read?
- What level of Bible-reading notes and commentaries do ministers use for their personal Bible reading? How systematic in their Bible reading are ministers who do not use Bible reading notes or commentaries?
- What are some of the 'other priorities' which hinder ministers from reading?
- What proportion of ministers work from a church office as distinct from a study at home? What, if any, difference does this make to their reading?
- What proportion of ministers take sabbaticals on a regular basis?
- Why do so many ministers not avail themselves of reading weeks?
- Why do women not read more than their male colleagues?
- Does college-based training help develop patterns of extensive reading?
- What exactly do ministers look at when they are 'researching' for a sermon online?
- To what extent are ministers aware of web-sites beyond the UK and North America?

It would be good to know more about the general reading habits of ministers, both in terms of type of book and of type of newspaper.

## 6. THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Having set down my preliminary thoughts, I put my mind to drawing up a list of detailed questions. I consulted with individual ministers and groups of ministers, and the list of questions became ever longer. But then came a moment of truth: for in the course of a pub-lunch my friend Steve Smith, formerly head of the geography department of Chelmsford's King Edward VI Grammar School, began to pour cold water on my approach. From his experience of helping students engage in data collection projects, Steve made it clear that the more detailed the questionnaire, the less likely ministers would be to reply to the questionnaire. Something much shorter was called for. Furthermore, to aid the analysis, Steve indicated a simple online survey was essential. At that point I realised the need for more technical help and so I invited Peter Thomas, minister of North Springfield Baptist Church, Chelmsford, to join us – many years ago, before becoming a minister, Peter had taught computing (ICT) at Watford Grammar School and had maintained an interest in computers ever since.

In the end, with Peter's technical help, we were able to devise two surveys using Google Forms. The great advantage of Google Forms is that it is free! The shorter survey consisted of just 14 questions together with a few optional questions relating to such matters as age, gender, and experience of ministry – with little difficulty this survey could be completed in under 10 minutes. The longer survey was more detailed – and needed more time to complete.

Once the two surveys had been constructed, I wrote to the team leaders of all thirteen associations in membership with the Baptist Union of Great Britain (despite the title, this does not include ministers in Scotland) and to my delight all the team leaders agreed to send out the following letter to ministers in their charge:

### **The letter to ministers seeking their help**

With the blessing of your Association, I am writing to ask you a real favour: please would you give me no more than ten minutes of your time and fill in the short online survey to be found at <http://readingsurveyb1.paulbeasleymurray.com>

I am concerned that ministers are under increasing pressure and find time for personal study/reflection is becoming a problem for many. This survey will provide an overview of the situation in which many ministers find themselves and from this help to develop strategies to further support ministers in their work.

If you would be prepared to help us further there is a Supplementary [Longer] Survey which will take you no more than 15 minutes to complete and can also be found online at <http://readingsurveyb2.paulbeasleymurray.com>



Everybody who completes that survey will be offered a complimentary pdf copy of the latest edition of the journal, *Ministry Today UK*: this features articles on 'What makes churches grow?'; '15 books for all age-worship'; 'Building visions'; 'Adolescence popular culture and the church'; and 'The challenge of Christian grand-parenting' – together with a host of book reviews.

You may feel that you have a little to contribute, but if everybody were to fill in the survey, it would make a terrific difference to my research. Please note that at every stage the survey is entirely anonymous (for instance, my website has been set up in such a way that there is no possibility of my discovering who takes up the offer of a complimentary offer of *Ministry Today UK*), in the hope that this will encourage complete honesty on the part of all respondents.

Thank you in advance for your help.

*NB Since both surveys are now closed, the survey addresses are now obsolete!*

### **The responses to the two surveys**

According to the Baptist Union's *2013 Directory* there are in total 1965 'pastors' of Baptist churches in membership with the Baptist Union of Great Britain.<sup>57</sup> However, we knew right from the start that we could not hope for most ministers co-operating with the survey: not only did we recognise that I had no official standing, but also most pastors would understandably feel that they had more important things to do. So it is a matter of great delight that in the end we had a good response.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Unfortunately the 2013 edition of the Baptist Union *Directory* is the last publicly available directory – this means that there could be a slight discrepancy between the numbers in the 2013 edition, which represents returns made by churches in September 2012, and the actual numbers of 'pastors' in March 2017. For the record I should also state that I did not send out the survey to pastors of 'Un-associated English churches'.

<sup>58</sup> Some might wonder why I chose to send the survey just to Baptist ministers. The truth is that initially I contemplated sending out two related surveys to Baptist ministers in the Eastern Baptist Association and to Anglican ministers in the Diocese of Chelmsford. However, once I realised that I was able to have access to so many Baptist ministers, I realised that any survey I did of Anglicans would not carry the same weight. Ideally what is now needed is a comparable Anglican survey covering several dioceses. It would be very interesting to discover what differences there might be.

***To the shorter survey 307 ministers responded:***

77% were men; 23% were women

All age groups were represented:

- under 30: 3%
- 30-39 11%
- 40-49 24%
- 50-59 35%
- 60 and over 27%

Years in ministry since ordination

- Not yet ordained 11%
- Under 5 years 14%
- 5-10 years 17%
- 11-20 years 24%
- 21-30 years 20%
- More than 30 years 14%

Ethnicity

- White British 91%
- Other 9% (a very varied group)

***To the longer survey 175 ministers responded***

78% were men; 22% were women

Age groups

- Under 30: 1%
- 30-39 12%
- 40-49 27%
- 50-59 38%
- 60 and over 23%

Years in ministry since ordination

- Under 5 years 12%
- 5-10 years 14%
- 11-20 years 26%
- 21-30 years 17%
- More than 30 years 14%

### ***Limitations of the study – comments by Peter Thomas***

There are very close to 2000 Baptist Ministers. In analysing the responses we chose the industry standard confidence level of 95%. The Shorter Survey achieved 307 responses for which the consequent margin of error (confidence interval) is +/- 5%. The Longer Survey achieved 175 responses which produces a consequent margin of error of +/- 7%. Attention is only drawn to comparisons where they are statistically significant at those levels, except where appropriately qualified.

At the same time, we also recognise the inherent limitations of any opt-in survey. We cannot be sure that the responses accurately reflect the whole population because those who responded are not necessarily a random sample. For example, those who read more might reasonably be expected to be more likely to choose to respond to a survey about reading. Pressures of ministry or pressures of time, which might lead some ministers to read less, may also have discouraged some from responding. Those who respond to a survey which is online might reasonably be expected to be those who are more comfortable with digital media, who in turn might be expected to read more through digital devices.

## **7. LIVING OUT THE CALL: A PERSONAL APPROACH**

From a survey of the reading habits of Baptist ministers in general, let me end by reflecting on what I have learnt after 43 years of stipendiary ministry, 34 of which were spent as pastor of two local churches.

### **1. Make God the priority**

In the first instance God has called pastors to be men and women of God. The ordination ritual which I developed as Principal of Spurgeon's College included the following statement and question:

"First and foremost X is called to be a man/woman of God. If a pastor is to lead the flock, he/she first needs to be led.

Remembering the words of Jesus, 'Abide in me... for apart from me you can do nothing', will you seek first and foremost to be God's man/woman, giving of yourself daily to prayer and to the reading of the Scriptures?"

Making God the priority involves the disciplined use of time on a daily, weekly, annual basis. It involves the disciplined setting aside of time in the diary. This means that there are times when we have to say 'no' to people – we are not free; we have another appointment – with God.

In practical terms this means making time for God at the beginning of the day. "The prayer of the morning" wrote Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "will determine the day. Wasted time, which we are ashamed of, temptations that beset us, weakness and listlessness in our work, disorder and indiscipline in our thinking and our relations with other people, very frequently have their cause in the neglect of the morning prayer."<sup>59</sup>

My own custom was and still is to begin the day by using the daily 'Anglican' lectionary: sometimes I read the set 'offices' of the day, with its two readings from the Old and New Testaments, but normally I stay with the three shorter passages set for 'Holy Communion' which always include part of a Psalm. The lectionary gives me a balanced diet, yet does not over-face me in terms of the amount. As I read, whenever a phrase or a verse jumps out at me, I mark my Bible – and then, for a shorter or longer period, I seek to chew over what God may be saying to me. I always use the NRSV as my primary English version – but will often refer to the Good News Bible. I often consult my Greek New Testament too – and sometimes will delve into a commentary to understand the text better. Only after reading the Scriptures for the day, do I then turn to prayer.

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<sup>59</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (English Translation: SCM, London 1954) 53.

When is the beginning of the day? Again, the time will vary from minister to minister. Working from a church office, for me the beginning of the day tended to be just gone eight o'clock – the church was quiet, the telephone had yet to ring – it was a great time.

The day not only began with God, it also continued with God – not least in the sense that the Lectionary readings accompanied me throughout the day. In the course of most visits I made, I included a reading from and a comment on one of the readings for the day. Likewise I began many meetings (e.g. church meetings, leadership team meetings, ministry team meetings) with a reading from and a comment on one of the readings for the day.

## **2. Define your role**

Every church is different – and the personality and gifting of every pastor is different – with the result that the precise role of every pastor will be different. Toward the end of my period as senior pastor of a large Baptist church, with the agreement of my deacons I defined my role as:-

1. Leading the church - not managing the church. I love to spark with fellow leaders and to cast the vision, but I need to be freed of running the church.
2. Expounding God's Word on a Sunday – but not organising the small group programme.
3. Welcoming newcomers – but not overseeing their integration into church life. I love to visit newcomers – but then pass them on!
4. Pastoring God's people – but not engaged in routine pastoral care. I want to be alongside families as they go through the life-cycle of birth, marriage and death, but otherwise want to leave pastoral care to others.
5. Growing leaders - not attending meetings. I want the focus in the week to be on developing and supporting my staff in their ministry.
6. Reflecting on ministry issues, writing for and encouraging fellow ministers.

I appreciate that compared to many ministers in smaller churches my role was unusual: in a smaller church ministry might well not only include all the things included in my job specification, but also all the things excluded. But this is not the issue. The issue is that ministers need to define the role that is specific to them – as distinct from other tasks which can be undertaken by other members of the church. In my case, defining my role gave me freedom, but also accountability. I was freed from trying to do everything in the church – and at the same time was very clear as to the responsibilities that were mine.

## **3. Shape your week**

Again, there is no one shape of the week for every pastor, for every church is different. Nor for that matter is any one week the same for any pastor – for however planned the diary

might be, every week is an adventure into the unknown and as a result the diary often had to change radically.

Nonetheless, as a general rule, I was always based in my office in the morning. Unless there was a crisis, visiting was always reserved for the afternoon and the evening. I did my best to ensure that on the whole mornings were for study. The one regular exception was Monday morning when we had our team meeting – so Monday afternoons tended to be the time for study. It was then that I often began the commentary work for preaching the following Sunday.

Tuesday was almost sacrosanct. Unless a particular pressing reason arose, it was ‘sermon day’: a day of intense focus and concentration as I delved into the Scriptures, seeking that word that God would have me to bring to his people. It was probably the day I felt my freshest. I was not surprised to discover that more than half of executives in the USA say Tuesday is their most productive day.

Thursday was ‘deadline day’: everything had to be ready for Sunday. It was then that I gave my sermon to my worship co-ordinator for her to create a PowerPoint presentation. It was then that the choice of the songs and hymns were confirmed.

Friday was also sacrosanct – it was my free day!

#### **4. Adopt a strategy for reading**

On the whole, ministers will only find time to read, if they make time – and that takes effort. Indeed, Martyn Lloyd Jones, the former great Welsh preacher of Westminster Chapel, commented that: “one literally has to fight for one’s life in this sense”<sup>60</sup>

According to John Stott, the former Rector of All Soul’s, Langham Place, an hour a day is an “absolute minimum for time for study which even the busiest pastors should be able to manage”. He went on:

“Many will achieve more. But the minimum would amount to this: every day at least one hour; every week one morning, afternoon or evening; every month a full day; every year a week. Set out like this, it sounds very little, Indeed, it is too little. Yet everybody who tries it is surprised to discover how much reading can be done within such a disciplined framework. It totals up to nearly six hundred hours in the course of a year”.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Preaching and the Preachers* (Hodder & Stoughton, London 1971) 67.

<sup>61</sup> John R.W. Stott, *I Believe in Preaching* (Hodder & Stoughton, London 1982) 204.

John Piper, who for more than 30 years was the pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minnesota, suggested that if pastors could not block out an hour, then they could set aside 20 minutes early in the morning, 20 minutes after lunch, and 20 minutes before they went to bed: “Think what you could read! Thirty-six medium-sized books!”<sup>62</sup>

My own strategy has been a mixture of Stott and Piper. Monday afternoons tended to be devoted to reading commentaries, with more time spent on Tuesday mornings. Wednesdays and Thursdays I sought to read for at least an hour a day in my church office – but would often squeeze in more time at home before going out in the evening. Fridays afternoons were normally spent reviewing books for *Ministry Today UK* (a quick reader, I would manage to ‘gut’ around some 180 books a year in that way). The church gave me four weeks a year for ‘wider ministry’, some of which was always devoted to reading and study in preparation for the lectures I was to give or the books I was to write.

I always enjoyed reading the articles in *Ministry Today UK*, the only cross-denominational UK journal devoted to the practice of ministry. As a life member of the Baptist Ministers’ Fellowship, for almost 50 years I have received the *Baptist Ministers Journal* (previously *The Fraternal*). I also receive *Future First; Providing Facts for Forward Planning*, a newsletter edited by the indefatigable Peter Brierley.

As a long-time member of the ‘Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas’ and of the Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical Research I continue to receive *New Testament Studies* and the *Tyndale Bulletin* – two worthy scholarly journals, which have limited relevance to pastoral ministry. Much more relevant are the 28-page long Grove Booklets of Cambridge – I have greatly benefitted from their various series on such subjects as Evangelism, Leadership, Pastoral and Worship matters.

For life beyond the church, for many years I have taken *The Times* – I read the *Daily Mail* at the dentist’s, and the *Daily Mirror*, *The Sun*, and *The Star* at the car wash! As a couple we subscribe to a variety of other general – and are both news ‘junkies’.

For relaxation I confess to being an avid reader of ‘thrillers’ – on a recent cruise we took away with us one whole suitcase packed with books!

## **5. Master the internet**

My policy is to master the internet, not in the sense of mastering internet skills, but rather in not allowing the internet to master me. Without due care, checking emails, looking at Facebook and surfing the net can become addictive and take up all too much time.

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<sup>62</sup> John Piper, Brothers, *We Are Not Professionals* (B & H Publishing Group, Nashville, Tennessee, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2013) 81.

## ***Emails***

Advice on checking emails varies. One pastor, for instance, checks emails three times a day: at 7.15 am, then at 12 noon, and finally at 3 pm: unless there is an emergency, he waits until his afternoon slot to deal with them all at one go – he sets himself in the afternoon a 45 minute time-limit to process the emails, leaving those he has not dealt with until the following day. If there is an email that is going to take more time than usual, then he puts it in a folder marked Friday, when he devotes an extra hour to longer emails.<sup>63</sup> Another pastor checks twice a day: once at the beginning of the day for 10-15 minutes, and then once at the end of the day; on the basis that batch emailing means he can be fully engaged with messages when he is in email mode, but then has freedom from emails for the rest of the day.<sup>64</sup>

I normally check emails twice – or at the most – three times a day. However, I do not check emails before I have begun the day in reading Scripture and prayer – God must come first. On days when I am writing a sermon, I may check my emails – but do not answer them until the sermon is written.

## ***Social media***

With almost 2 billion active users of Facebook online, for a pastor not to engage with Facebook seems to make as much sense as a pastor refusing to use a computer – it is all part of modern life. According to *Christianity Today*, “Social media gives each pastor the equivalent of their own TV station, radio station, and printing press. This is one area of our culture pastors cannot afford to sit out?”.<sup>65</sup> But is that really so? That same article notes that “logging into Facebook every week or two, or tweeting once a month is pointless” - what is required is consistent engagement on almost a daily basis. But is that not just one more pressure upon busy pastors? I accept that for many such an engagement may be a genuine tool for ministry – but I question whether this is so for all.

I leave my wife to follow our family on *Facebook* – however, she is just a ‘stalker’, and is not a contributor. On the advice of my youth minister, I myself never engaged with Facebook – rather I left it to other younger members to run the church’s *Facebook* account. As a result I have missed out on all kinds of ministry-related conversations, but as far as I was concerned I had other priorities – as also other opportunities to engage with my peers. In turn I have had more time to read and study, more time to think and strategise, and more time to get out of my office and visit people in their homes.

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<sup>63</sup> Dave Murray, *Church Leaders*, 19 Jan 2017.

<sup>64</sup> Jack King, *Anglican Pastor*, 22 Sept 2016.

<sup>65</sup> See Marty Duren, ‘Five mistakes pastors make on social media’, *Christianity Today* November 2015.



The nearest I have got to using social media is posting a weekly blog entitled on my website: [www.paulbeasleymurray.com](http://www.paulbeasleymurray.com). Entitled *Church Matters*, it defines the parameters of my blog, and at the same time reflects my conviction that church really does matter.

### ***Browsing the internet***

Monitoring the use of online activity for the first six months of 2015 revealed that the 'definitive' time people in the UK spend online is 2 hours 51 minutes a day, with mobiles and tablets accounting for over half (56%) of that time.<sup>66</sup> It is a form of leisure activity.

As this study on the reading habits of ministers has shown, ministers spend a good deal of time online too. For myself, I never browse the internet without a specific purpose in mind. I sign up to mailings I am interested in – but ensure that I am not overwhelmed by mailings. The mailing which I particularly enjoy is the *Alban Weekly* from the Duke Divinity School.

## **6. Focus on the important – and not on the urgent**

Herodotus once claimed that the most bitter sorrow is to aspire to do much and then to achieve nothing. In fact, the most bitter sorrow is to aspire to do much, and to do it, and then to discover that it was not worth doing.

Leadership is not about going in any direction. It is about going in the right direction, in the direction that God wants for our lives. Hence the need for ministers to make time every day to reflect prayerfully on the past, review the present, and seek God's will for the future.

As a young pastor I was struck by the distinction Charles Hummel made between the important and the urgent:

“The important task rarely must be done today, or even this week... But the urgent tasks call for instant action... endless pressure every hour and day... The momentary appeal of these tasks seems irresistible and important and they devour our energy. But in the light of time's perspective that deceptive prominence fades; with a sense of loss we recall the important tasks pushed aside. We realise we've become slaves to the tyranny of the urgent.”<sup>67</sup>

As a result I have learnt to say 'no' and devote myself to the priorities God would have for me. What a difference that makes to the stresses and strains of ministry! But saying 'no' is not easy when ministers today are so instantly available to others: not only is there the

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<sup>66</sup> This research was conducted by the Internet Advertising Bureau UK and the UK Online Measurement Company, who published their findings on 2 September 2015: see [iabuk.net/press/archive/definitive-time-people-spend-online-2hrs-51-mins-a-day](http://iabuk.net/press/archive/definitive-time-people-spend-online-2hrs-51-mins-a-day).

<sup>67</sup> Charles Hummel, 'The Tyranny of the Urgent', *Christian Arena* (March 1985) pp2ff.

landline, there is the mobile; not only is there the desktop computer, there is the laptop and the tablet; not only is there the occasional letter, there are emails every hour of the day; and there is Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and all the other forms of social media. Just to survive, let alone to read, ministers need to adopt strategies to protect themselves – I wonder, is that taught at college today?