

Strongly Supported
A
CARE
GUIDE

CARING WELL FOR THOSE
RECOVERING FROM CHURCH
PAIN, LOSS, DISAPPOINTMENT,
OR BETRAYAL OF TRUST





Dear friend,

Our church is facing the heartbreak of our pastor operating in an unhealthy manner and engaging in a misuse of his position and authority. While our pastor had admirable traits, spiritual leaders are given a sacred trust, and the misuse of their position or influence has long-lasting ramifications.

As we all navigate the impact of this injury of trust, *both you and those within your span of care will need strategic help and intentional care.*

The journey ahead may be tender and complex, but God has been gracious to bring this betrayal of trust to light. This is His mercy and He will be faithful to meet us in it.

Care offered and received in this season will help to mitigate the negative impacts on our community, making way for the good, slow grounded work of healing. We will all need good care as we let Jesus accomplish His good purposes in each of us.

In your serving role, we know you will have others looking to you for help. Many will be processing this over the next months, and it is our desire to strongly support you as you bring good care, a listening ear, wisdom, and kindness to those around you. We hope these resources will help

We also strongly encourage you to take time to care for yourself, as well. You are a son or daughter first—and the Father wants to meet you on this road. Your part of this story matters, and He cares for your journey. By allowing Him to tend your heart in this complicated season, you will be able to connect with others out of the overflow of what He's doing in you.

May we each know Him in new and deeper ways as we walk this road together. We are in this with you—we are praying for you—and we are so, so grateful for you.

CUSTOM PACKAGES ALLOW
THIS LETTER TO BE
PERSONALIZED FROM YOUR TEAM

*Thank you,
Your Care Support Team*

Understanding the Impact of What Just Happened

As we begin the good work of care for our hurting community, it is important to understand why the kind of wound we are facing carries such a unique weight and grief for those who are a part of a faith community

When a pastor or spiritual leader brings harm to those under his or her care, it goes against all that we understand the role of a pastor to be—and the impact is far-reaching. As a society, we grant those in unique roles additional power and unearned trust—people like doctors, lawyers, pastors, and counselors. We trust that they will use the power given to them to bring healing and help. When they use it, instead, for their own purposes—or for harm, that is a misuse - or abuse - of power.

This can fall along a wide spectrum. And not **all** hurt and harm that comes our way is abusive. But *sometimes it is*. It matters to **consider** what actually occurred so **that** the proper help and healing can take place. **Right-naming matters**. As author Jack Canfield says, “you can’t heal what you won’t acknowledge.”

Spiritual abuse occurs when someone in a position of religious authority uses the trust and influence intrinsic to their role to control, manipulate, or harm others. This abuse may be intentional or unintentional, but its effects are deeply **damaging**—emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually.

Forms of the Misuse or Abuse of Spiritual Authority

Spiritual abuse can take many forms, including:

- Control & Manipulation
- Coercion
- Boundary Violations
- Isolation
- Erosion of Identity
- Duplicity
- Financial Abuse
- Sexual Harassment & Abuse*
- Hiding or Justifying Harm
- Blame & Shame
- Bullying/Threats
- Spiritual Exceptionalism

**Sexual Harassment & Abuse: engaging in sexually improper behavior or innuendo with either adults or children, betraying the trust of a vulnerable person who looks to a spiritual leader for guidance, leadership, work direction, or support.*

(NOTE: Because of the power differential involved, consent between a victim of clergy sexual abuse and a spiritual leader is not possible, no matter the age of the victim.)

Using This Guide

In the pages that follow, you'll find an intentional care section to help you tend those in your span of care well.

This is designed for you to jot notes to inform your prayers—and trace the specific ways you've reached out over the next few months, as is helpful to you.

Notes may look something like this:

CARE TRACKER

WEEK 1

DAILY → Prep 4 notes every 2 days of any connections below

WEEKLY → Prep for effectiveness and solid ground for prayer and those below. Ask the Lord to strengthen those with prayer and give them their first stepping stone in these steps.

Primary Connect

Soft Connects

CONNECTS

AS NEEDED →

NAME Callie

Notes: disappointed; wanting clarity on what happened

NAME Jeff

Notes: worried about Callie; trouble trusting I'ship

NAME Zach

Notes: hopeful for future; may be avoiding grief

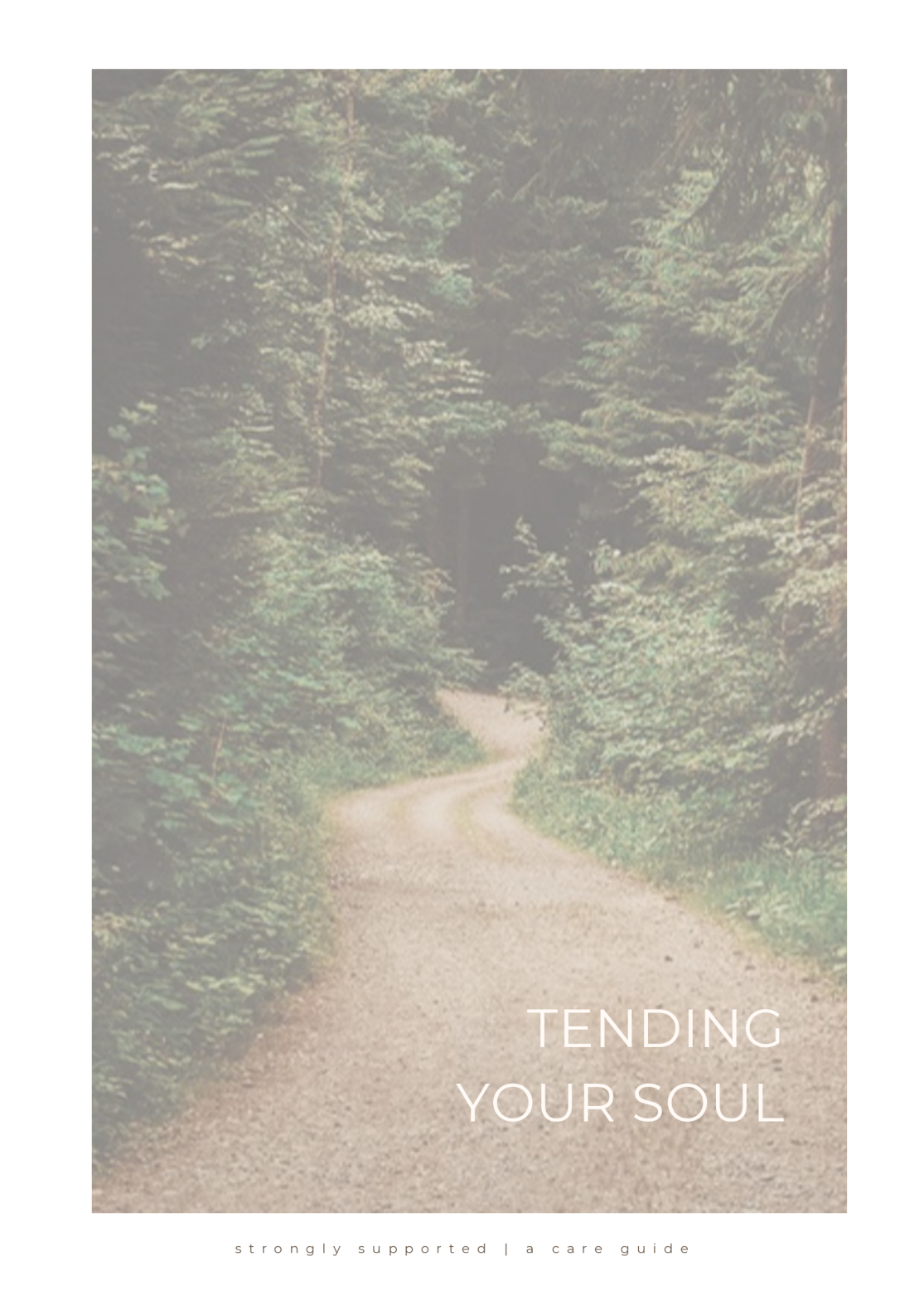
NAME Allie

Notes: lots of tears; grateful for staff; history of church hurt - stirred up

NAME Don

Notes: seems to be processing authentically; eager to serve/pray/worship on Sunday

This is a helpful tool to be sure you're bringing kindness and connection to those in your sphere—and to give yourself a visual representation of the journey.

A photograph of a dirt path winding through a dense forest. The path is light brown and leads from the bottom center towards the middle of the frame, where it splits into two paths. The forest is lush with green trees and foliage, creating a sense of depth and tranquility. The lighting is soft, suggesting a shaded forest environment.

TENDING YOUR SOUL

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Consider any ways you may need to slow down so that you can walk gently with yourself and others in this season. Where do you need to forego productivity or control in order to allow room to process and heal?

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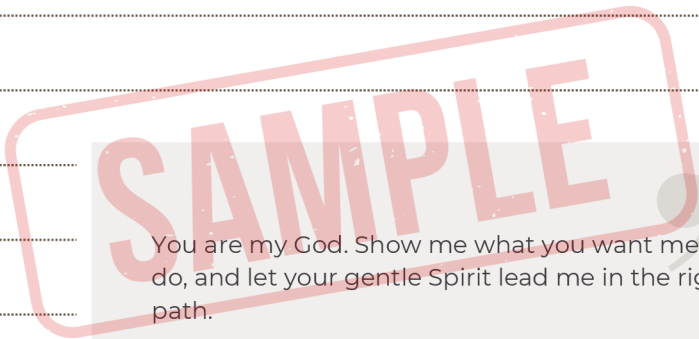
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You are my God. Show me what you want me to do, and let your gentle Spirit lead me in the right path.

- Psalm 143:10 cev

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