**Study Guide**

 **Ministry in *A Church Dismantled—A Kingdom Restored: To Tear Down or Build Up?***

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Week 1

Reading: Part I--Pastors in an Iron Cage

Questions:

1. Conrad offers a long-standing thesis of Weber that the rationalization of modernity has created social institutions within which leaders are trapped in an iron cage from which only charisma or the recovery of old ideals can offer deliverance. What do you make of this thesis as it applies to the church and ministry?
2. How is your perspective of the church influenced by the period in which you ministered and the length of your tenure as a pastor? How has your perspective of ministry and the church changed over time and why?
3. What Biblical or historical examples come to mind when you consider the current challenges and opportunities facing the church?
4. What is particularly unique about the church as a voluntary organization that has made it especially vulnerable to dismantling?
5. How do you explain the openness of more “progressive” leaders and churches to the thesis of A Church Dismantled as compared to more “conservative” leaders and churches?
6. What is one question you would like to ask Conrad?

Week 2

Reading: Part II--Pastors in a Pandemic

Questions:

1. Conrad argues that the pandemic was a rich moment in which the church has had the opportunity to reassess its culture, structure and mission. He also believes that the church has largely missed the opportunity—that the rubber band of the “taken for granted reality” pulled most folks back to normal. What have you observed and experienced related to these observations?
2. How did you experience the pandemic as a spiritual leader and as a human being? What has been most difficult for you? What have you learned about your congregation? About spiritual leadership?
3. Many pastors including myself, have announced our resignation from ministry. What was revealed about congregations during the pandemic that has created greater stress on spiritual leaders? How have you managed and negotiated this stress?
4. How have you experienced God over the past two years?

Week 3

Reading: Part III--Pastors in a Polarized Church

Questions:

1. How has the current political and cultural context affected or been revealed in your congregation over the past two years? How have you adjusted your preaching, if at all? What most concerns you about your congregation, two years out from the pandemic’s beginning?
2. Conrad offers a critique of the irrelevance of some contemporary mission efforts. What is your reaction to his critique of the professionalism of God’s mission?
3. How has the pandemic impacted the missional efforts of your congregation?
4. What does an Anabaptist understanding of the Gospel contribute to the church in this season? How do you find yourself expressing this understanding as a spiritual leader? How are your efforts received?
5. How has your perspective of local congregational ministry changed over the past two years?

Week 4

Reading: Participants will choose a remaining chapter to write a one-paragraph response that will be posted on my website at [www.achurchdismantled.com](http://www.achurchdismantled.com) and shared at the last class period.

**Final question: What has been most important to you about our study together?**