

ABSTRACT

PARADIGM OF POWER AND AUTHORITY IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD: A STUDY OF THE UTILIZATION OF POWER AND AUTHORITY AND CONGREGATIONAL HEALTH

by

Jason Matthew McIntosh

The gospel of Matthew concludes with the words of a triumphant Jesus. He declares himself the recipient of “all authority,” implicitly because of his redeeming work on the cross and subsequent resurrection from the dead (28:18 NIV). The Church, by extension, benefits from Jesus’ accomplishment. He gives the Church, by way of mandate and the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, power and authority to accomplish God’s redemptive purposes for the world.

Jesus both taught and modeled a unique pattern for the utilization of power and authority that stands in stark contrast to the pattern displayed in the world. Jesus issued a “not so with you” principle to his disciples in Mark 10:43, prompting them to reevaluate their perceptions of power and authority. Consequently, the kingdom of God becomes visible only when the Church utilizes power and authority in accordance with Jesus’ teaching and example.

The purpose of this study was to explore how power and authority is utilized by healthy congregations in the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church. The study sought to compare the way power and authority is used by healthy congregations to the paradigm revealed in Jesus. Conclusions were drawn based upon findings.

PARADIGM OF POWER AND AUTHORITY IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD:
A STUDY OF THE UTILIZATION OF POWER AND AUTHORITY AND
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Mentor

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Internal Reader

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Executive Director

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

Introduction

Increasingly the church in America is losing its ability to influence culture to the same degree as it once did historically. The Church “is rapidly declining in attendance and losing its influence in our nation” (Stanley et al. 80). Misuse and negligence of power and authority may be in large part the culprit. Church scandals and fallen church leaders undoubtedly have harmed the American psyche in regard to the authenticity of the Church’s ministry in the world. For the Church, power and authority derive from God’s ultimate authority in Christ, and this power and authority has been given the Church for the expressed purpose of serving the world toward redemptive ends. All too often the Church utilizes power and authority in ways contrary to Jesus’ teachings and therefore diminishes its ability to influence non-Christians to come to faith in Christ. Arguably, using power and authority contrary to Jesus’ teachings diminishes church health. Philip Yancey, in his book *The Jesus I Never Knew*, reflects on the sometimes conflicting dynamics of power and authority utilized by the Church versus the dynamics of power and authority utilized within the kingdom of God:

I first found this insight in the writings of Dostoevsky, who made the Temptation scene the centerpiece of his great novel *The Brothers Karamazov*. The agnostic brother Ivan Karamazov writes a poem called “The Grand Inquisitor” set in sixteenth-century Seville at the height of the Inquisition. In the poem, a disguised Jesus visits the city at a time when heretics are daily being burned at the stake. The Grand Inquisitor, a cardinal, “an old man, almost ninety, tall and erect, with a withered face and sunken eyes,” recognizes Jesus and has him thrown into prison. There, the two visit in a scene intentionally reminiscent of the Temptation in the desert.

The Inquisitor has an accusation to make: by turning down the three temptations, Jesus forfeited the three greatest powers at his disposal,

“miracle, mystery, and authority.” He should have followed Satan’s advice and performed the miracles on demand in order to increase his fame among the people. He should have welcomed the offer of authority and power. Did Jesus not realize that people want more than anything else to worship what is established beyond dispute? “Instead of taking possession of men’s freedom, you increased it, and burdened the spiritual kingdom of mankind with its suffering forever. You desired man’s free love, that he should follow you freely, enticed and taken captive by you.”

By resisting Satan’s temptations to override human freedom, the Inquisitor maintains, Jesus made himself far too easy to reject. He surrendered his greatest advantage: the power to compel belief. Fortunately, continues, the sly Inquisitor, the church recognized the error and corrected it, and has been relying on miracle, mystery, and authority ever since. For this reason, the Inquisitor must execute Jesus one more time, lest he hinder the church’s work. (74)

Yancey references the writing of Dostoevsky in order to illustrate the contrast in approach to the use of power and authority between Jesus and the world. The Church has historically given into the temptation to utilize its power and authority contrary to what Jesus taught and modeled.

Jesus did not use power and authority to force anyone’s will. Instead, he lived and taught that his followers should utilize power and authority to serve others within the Church’s means. The design of power and authority is service rather than self-interest. Over and again Scripture witnesses to Jesus’ commitment to power and authority for service. Accordingly, Jesus refuses to force compliance of will upon his creation and instead teaches that true redemptive obedience is manifested willingly in response to his using power and authority to serve.

The gospel narratives repeatedly illustrate Jesus’ unique understanding and use of power and authority. The New Testament presents a litany of persons who willingly submit themselves to the power and authority of God’s reconciling love in response to Christ’s acts of service, especially to his greatest act of service and manifestation of

power, that is, his death on the cross and his resurrection. Consequently, Jesus' example serves as the pattern for the use of power and authority for the Church.

A reawakening interest on the subject of power is occurring within American culture. In September 2006 the American Political Science Association met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Nearly seven thousand political scientists attended the *Power Reconsidered* conference during Labor Day weekend to debate whether American politics is driven by the "power elite" or by the "organized public," in whom power and authority is inherently "diffuse" (Valelly B6). Corporate America has a seemingly insatiable appetite for books and resources on leadership. Jim Collins, an ex-Stanford University professor and prolific writer, has researched the topic of leadership and the use of power both in corporate and non-profit America. Collins reflects on the perceptions and use of power and authority in the American civil sector in his monologue *Good to Great in the Social Sectors*. The monologue followed his earlier book, *Good to Great*, upon Collin's realization that leadership styles, specifically in regard to the use of power and authority in nonprofit organizations differed from leadership styles in capital gains businesses:

Social sector leaders are not less decisive than business leaders as a general rule, they only appear that way to those who fail to grasp the complex governance and diffuse power structures common to social sectors. Social sector leaders face a complex and diffuse power map (10).

Collins' research found that utilization of power and authority within the social sector is unique when contrasted with the utilization of power and authority in the business world, and he argues that understanding this unique utilization is essential to achieving greatness in social sector organizations.

The utilization of power and authority is a long-standing topic of interest for the Church. British theologian and ecumenical statesman Lesslie Newbigin commented on the prolific theme of power and authority in Scripture:

When we read through the New Testament looking for words which speak of power, authority, rule, dominion, or lordship, we find such words on almost every page. The central phrase of the gospel, the kingdom of God, is obviously about power, authority, rule (200).

The Church is both repulsed and allured by discussions of power and authority.

The Purpose and Hypothesis Stated

The purpose of this study was to explore the way healthy congregations within the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church utilized power and authority. The study hypothesized that healthy congregations utilize power and authority in agreement with the paradigm characterized by Jesus' teaching and example.

The study expected to discover specific ways in which power and authority was being used in healthy North Alabama United Methodist churches. Consequently, the study anticipated that said discovery would produce conclusions of a generalizable nature. Additionally, the study expected to find that a corollary relationship exists between church health and the pattern demonstrated by Jesus in the gospels for the utilization of power and authority.

Research Questions

In order to fulfill the purpose of this study, the following questions were identified:

1. How is power and authority utilized within congregations recognized as healthy?

2. Is this use of power and authority in keeping with the paradigm of power and authority characteristic of the kingdom of God?

Definition of Terms

The following four definitions describe how I applied the meaning of pertinent terms within the context of this dissertation. I realize differences in interpretation are likely and therefore the following definitions provide clarity for understanding these terms throughout the study.

Power and Authority

In the New Testament, the terms “power” and “authority” often are coupled together, and while one term may not be interchangeable with the other, together the two terms convey one meaning. Power and authority are imparted to the Church by Jesus in order to fulfill his redemptive plan for the world. Jesus gave the Church power and authority as a result of his resurrection from the dead. Specifically, the study defined power and authority as the strengths, gifts, resources, and abilities that individuals and congregations possess.

I acknowledge that in the field of biblical studies debate over the meaning of “power” and “authority” may exist. Scripture may present different understandings of power in addition to the definition I provide in the above paragraph. I define power in a utilitarian way of agency. Additionally, I have chosen to consider the terms “power” and “authority” collaboratively based on the significant amount of literature informing this study that also couples the terms. I acknowledge that the terms “power” and “authority” can be distinguished from one another in exegetical study and that each term may convey very distinct meanings.

Paradigm of Power and Authority in the Kingdom of God

The following paradigm is the pattern of power and authority taught and modeled by Jesus in the gospels. This paradigm of power and authority is expressed in the following five ways:

1. Power used to serve rather than force the will of one or a group.
2. Power utilized to empower others.
3. Power used in a collaborative and diffusive fashion.
4. Power used to influence others without coercion.
5. Power utilized to promote freedom of choice to act in accordance with

God's will.

Congregations and Churches

The terms "churches" and "congregations" are used interchangeably throughout this study and refer to clergy, staff, and laity worshipping together and organized under one name. Specifically, "churches" and "congregations" refer to the fifteen United Methodist churches that participated in the study.

Healthy Congregations

Dick Freeman, the North Alabama Conference Director of Congregational Development supplies the following definition for healthy congregations in the North Alabama Conference:

Healthy congregations are growing churches, in organization, and in the number of people who are there. They are increasing in numbers of people. They are experiencing conversion and baptism of adults. They are churches with more people in worship than on the roll. Healthy congregations see an increase in financial giving. They are churches that are adding full-time and part-time staff. Churches must have all of these elements to be considered healthy. (Freeman Interview July 2007)

Table 1.1. Criteria for Healthy Congregations in the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church

Criteria for Health	
Criteria One:	Growth administratively and organizational
Criteria Two:	Increasing attendance
Criteria Three:	Ongoing conversions and baptisms of adults
Criteria Four:	Worship attendance greater than membership
Criteria Five:	Continuing increase in financial giving
Criteria Six:	Adding both full-time and part-time staff
Criteria Seven:	Must possess criteria one through six to be considered healthy

Context of the Study

The context for this study was healthy congregations of the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church. Bishop William Willimon leads the North Alabama Conference. Under his leadership, the Conference has experienced district restructuring and an ambitious push toward church planting.

The North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church is bounded by Tennessee at the north, Mississippi at the west, Georgia at the east, and the Alabama-West Florida Conference at the south. The North Alabama Conference is comprised of 840 congregations. This figure is always in flux. The North Alabama Conference started nine new communities of faith in 2007 and discontinued eighteen churches. The average size of a typical North Alabama United Methodist congregation is eighty persons. North Alabama United Methodist churches are categorized by the number of people attending worship: small churches average fewer than one hundred people at their principal weekly worship service, medium churches average between one hundred and 499 people in worship, and large churches average over five hundred people in their principal worship service. Over six hundred of North Alabama United Methodist churches average fewer

than one hundred people at their principal worship service. North Alabama churches are situated across a wide spectrum of economic, educational, racial, urban, and rural contexts. North Alabama United Methodist congregations considered most “in trouble” by conference officials are located both in county-seats and in socio-economically transitioning urban communities alike (Freeman).

Specifically, the context for this study included the top 10 percent of healthy congregations in the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church. Fewer than 120 of the 840 United Methodist congregations in North Alabama are considered healthy by conference officials based upon the definition for healthy congregations listed above. Based upon the above definition provided by the North Alabama Conference congregations listed in Table 1.2 are considered healthy. The utilization of power and authority was researched within the context of these healthy congregations in the North Alabama Conference.

Table 1.2. Top 10% of Healthy Congregations of the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church

Church	Size	Pastor	Location
Liberty Crossings	S	Keith Elder	Birmingham
Riverchase	L	Jim Savage	Birmingham
Asbury	L	Alan Weatherly	Madison
Good Shepherd	M	David Tubbs	Madison
New Life	S	Phil Howell	Grant
Cove	L	John Tanner	Huntsville
ClearBranch	L	Tommy Gray	Trussville
Christ’s Harbor	M	John Kearns	Northport
Tuscaloosa 1 st	L	Ken Dunavent	Tuscaloosa
Friendship	L	Calvin Havens	Athens
Asbury	L	Mark Lacey	Birmingham
Church at Cahaba Bend	M	Lyle Holland	Helena
InnerChange	M	Mike Skelton	McCalla
Guntersville 1 st	L	Robin Scott	Guntersville
Genesis	S	Deborah Moon	Guntersville

Methodology

This was an explorative study that utilized both researcher-designed semi-structured interview protocol and an e-mailed questionnaire. The study sought to understand the utilization of power and authority in healthy congregations. I conducted personal interviews with congregational leaders and sought to discover recurring themes discussed by leaders of healthy congregations through various dialogical approaches. I reviewed and assessed interview findings. I also distributed a researcher-designed questionnaire to a convenience sampling of laity affiliated with each of the healthy congregations participating in the study. I drew conclusions based upon both interviews and responses from the researcher-designed questionnaire.

Population and Subjects

The population for this study consisted of a sample of churches within the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church and designated by the conference as healthy congregations. Specifically, subjects were church pastors, staff, and a convenience sampling of laity affiliated with the healthy congregations listed above. Convenience sampling refers to a “method of choosing items arbitrarily and in an unstructured manner” (“Sampling” (statistics)). Participating laity were included in the study according to this method of sampling.

Variables

Independent, dependent, and intervening variables influenced outcomes in this study. Independent variables included: myself, the participant group (healthy congregations of the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church), the North Alabama Conference, and the Biblical paradigm for power and authority as

outlined by me. Variables upon which the outcome of the study depended related to methodology specific to the researcher-designed questionnaire and the interview protocol implemented during field research. The “health” of participating churches was an additional dependent variable contributing to many of the study outcomes. Intervening variables were less easily identifiable than independent and dependent variables and were related to multiple factors that may have contributed to the categorization of the participant group as “healthy.”

Instrumentation

The study utilized both a researcher-designed questionnaire and protocol methods characteristic of qualitative-interview research. Both methods sought to explore the utilization of power and authority within healthy North Alabama United Methodist congregations. The first method of study utilized a researcher-designed questionnaire. The questions were designed to explore perceptions of the utilization of power and authority by lay persons affiliated with healthy North Alabama United Methodist churches. Questions probed the laity’s understanding regarding the use of power and authority within their respective congregations. Questionnaire content was based upon the five uses of power and authority outlined in the biblical paradigm by me.

The second method of field research employed semi-structured interview protocol. Interviews with pastors and staff members in participant congregations presented recurring themes over the course of study. Interviews were dialogical in nature and were recorded, collected, and observed in order to establish conclusions.

Data Collection

Data was collected utilizing interactive techniques. I distributed researcher-designed questionnaires via e-mail. Participants were afforded twenty-one days from the date of distribution to respond. Specifically, the researcher-designed questionnaire was e-mailed to a representative at each healthy congregation participating in the study. The questionnaire was copied and distributed to a convenience sampling of laity. A representative at each healthy congregation then compiled completed questionnaires. I collected completed questionnaires when I visited participating churches in order to conduct interviews.

I also gathered data by conducting semi-structured interviews utilizing methods characteristic of explorative research design. I interviewed leaders of healthy congregations and collected data on a digital audio-recording device, on paper, and on Microsoft Word.

Delimitations and Generalizability

This study was delimited to include only clergy, staff, and laity representing fifteen healthy congregations in the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church. Freeman, the Director of Congregational Development for the North Alabama Conference, in consultation with the researcher, selected the fifteen churches participating in the study. The fifteen churches were selected because they were considered fifteen of the healthiest churches in the North Alabama Conference according to Freeman's definition of health. Freeman referred to the fifteen churches as the top 10 percent of healthy congregations in North Alabama. The definition for healthy congregations was influenced by Natural Church Development research as interpreted by

North Alabama Conference leadership and specifically by Freeman. Clergy participants in this study lead healthy congregations.

I discovered that the study group utilized their power and authority in very similar and specific ways. Based upon interviews with all fifteen senior pastors, thirty-six staff members representing twelve of the churches, and ninety-three written responses from laypersons representing ten of the churches, I drew generalizable conclusions regarding utilization of power and authority in healthy churches. The findings of this study imply a possible cause and effect relationship between the way power and authority is utilized and church health. As a result, churches attempting to use their power and authority according to the pattern revealed by this study may experience health as defined in this study.

Biblical and Theological Foundations

This study was grounded in a biblical understanding of Jesus' use of and teaching on power and authority. The paradigm Jesus employed stands in stark contrast to the pattern utilized by other individuals in the gospel narrative. The contrast between the two serves to introduce a competing and radically different way of using power and authority, a way characteristic of the kingdom of God.

Power and Authority

Throughout the New Testament the words *power* and *authority* are consistently coupled together. Jesus granted his disciples power and authority over devils, illness, and all manner of evil when he sent them out two-by-two as preparers of the gospel (Matthew 10). Jesus claimed all power and authority when he rose from the dead, and in meeting

with his disciples he gave them the power and authority to carry out the commission he placed upon them (Matthew 28:18).

New Testament writers present the terms power and authority in a partnering relationship:

All the people were amazed and said to each other, “What is this teaching? With **authority and power** [emphasis mine] he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!” (Luke. 4:36 NIV)

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them **power and authority** [emphasis mine] to drive out all demons and cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. (Luke. 9:1-2)

I have given you **authority** to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the **power** [emphasis mine] of the enemy; nothing will harm you. (Luke. 10:19)

and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every **power and authority**. [emphasis mine] (Col. 2:10)

to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, **power and authority**, [emphasis mine] through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Jude 1:25)

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: ‘Now have come the salvation and the **power** and the kingdom of our God, and the **authority** [emphasis mine] of his Christ. (Rev. 12:10)

Power and authority, while not interchangeable terms, were placed in conjunction with one another by New Testament writers in order to convey one concept. New Testament writers understood that the Church’s power and authority was God-given and should be used accordingly to manifest God’s kingdom in this world. Further, they understood the distinctive way Jesus used his own power and authority as the model for the Church.

Toward a Kingdom Paradigm for the Utilization of Power and Authority

This study was rooted in an understanding of power and authority demonstrated by Jesus in the gospels. Specifically, Mark 10:35-45 functioned as the guiding pericope

for understanding the paradigm for the utilization of power and authority in the kingdom of God.

Jesus, arguably the most powerful person to have graced the human stage, utilized his power and authority in ways contrary to worldly patterns of power. He used his power and authority for the expressed purpose of serving others:

Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:42-45)

Jesus taught his disciples that the utilization of power and authority that “they know” differs from the utilization of power and authority characteristic of the kingdom of God (Mark 10:42). Jesus taught his disciples that power and authority should be utilized much differently by all those persons who would follow him.

Jesus’ admonition, “[n]ot so with you,” is striking (Mark 10:43). He offered an opposing paradigm of power from the understanding of power and authority held by his disciples and the rulers of the Gentiles. Essentially, Jesus wanted his followers to know that the utilization of power and authority for service is truly the only appropriate use of power and authority within the Church. Power and authority for service manifests God’s kingdom and is in fact God’s design for power and authority. Time and again, Jesus modeled for his followers this understanding. Jesus healed the sick, fed the hungry, restored life to the dead, blessed children, and ultimately died and was resurrected. Power and authority used contrary to service is not a sign of the kingdom of God.

Jesus' paradigm of power and authority is characterized by five uses that represent a utilization of power and authority uniquely distinctive of the kingdom of God. Jesus modeled and taught that God gives the Church power and authority in order to manifest God's redemptive purposes for the world. Jesus used power and authority to serve humanity, to empower followers to serve and minister, to influence men and women to follow him without coercion, and to prompt men and women to choose freely to act in accordance with God's will. Jesus modeled and taught that power and authority in the kingdom of God is to be used in a collaborative and diffusive fashion.

The following texts highlight Jesus' unique utilization of power and authority:

1. in terms of service, Mark 10:43-45 and John 13 (foot washing);
2. in terms of empowerment, Luke 10 (the sending forth of the seventy), Acts 1:8 and 4:33 (bringing of the Holy Spirit);
3. in terms of influence, John 3:1-8. (Nicodemus);
4. in terms of freedom to choose to act, Luke 9:54 (the villages of Samaria), Mark 10:22 ff. (rich young ruler); and,
5. in terms of collaboration, Luke 10 (team service) and Acts 1 (the catholic Church).

In addition, Paul understood his apostolic power and authority to be utilized for the expressed purpose of service. Paul fostered Jesus' paradigm for power and authority in the churches with and to whom he ministered. Paul employed language that reflected his understanding of Jesus' use of power and authority. Paul modeled and taught a pattern of power and authority in which power and authority serves and empowers others. Paul recognized that power and authority was to be given away and shared. In his epistles Paul

continually referred to fellow believers as co-laborers, co-prisoners, and co-slaves in the ministry of the gospel.

This study on the utilization of power and authority within healthy congregations was informed by my examination of Scripture and theological understanding. Consequently, Scripture provided the beginning point for exploring the nature of the relationship between church health and the utilization of power and authority. Jesus' teaching on and use of power and authority supports a corollary relationship between church health and the ways in which power and authority are utilized.

Overview of Study

Chapter 2 reviews selected literature and pertinent research. Biblical foundations for the use of power and authority as taught and modeled by Jesus are considered. Congregational health is examined, and applicable characteristic qualities are defined.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology of this study in greater detail. The problem is reiterated and the reasoning behind the two research questions guiding this study is given. The researcher-designed questionnaire is discussed along with the interview protocol for conducting field research. Data collection, data analysis, variables affecting the study, and ethics also are addressed in the chapter.

Chapter 4 summarizes the findings from the field research. Chapter 5 discusses the findings in light of answering research questions 1 and 2. The chapter offers conclusions regarding the use of power and authority within healthy congregations. Generalizable uses of power are discussed. Questions prompted by the study are considered for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

Power and Authority through Jesus' Eyes

The words “power” and “authority” often carry negative connotations, and in many situations these connotations might prove correct. Humanity has witnessed tyranny after tyranny wrought upon the world through a seemingly endless historical succession of power-hungry leaders bent on forcing their own respective wills upon the culture. The Bible is riddled with many such rulers from Pharaoh and Ahab to Sennacherib (Exod. 3; 1 Kings 16; 2 KINGS 18). Max Weber, a founder of modern sociology, espoused a now classical perception of power. In *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, Weber defines power as “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests” (152). Weber understands power as a person’s ability to force or coerce other people to carry out the will of the powerful individual, even if against the will of the others due to the position or strength of the person wielding power. Indeed, this definition seems a sound, albeit mundane epistemological definition for power.

Nevertheless, before Weber was, Jesus is. Attaching Jesus to a person’s understanding of power and authority results in an alternative concept of power and authority from the concept typically understood within the realm of social science. Martyn Percy makes the following observation regarding commonly held perceptions of power:

The concept of power in social science and theology has no unity of discourse. Part of the problem lies in Peter Moriss’ observation that all too commonly, power is run together with verbs that are deemed to be its associates exploitive, manipulative, competitive. Thus “power” loses its

reality in some sense because the verbs are allowed to project on to a passive noun. (6)

Jesus broke into a world of power-hungry, self-preserving rulers and would-be rulers as evidenced by King Herod, who feared for his crown and subsequently slaughtered the babies of Bethlehem during the time of Jesus' birth (Matt. 2). Jesus offered a radically different paradigm of power and authority to the paradigm Weber described and Herod demonstrated. Jesus did not use power and authority to force persons to do his will but rather to serve others. With such utilization of power and authority, God is able to fulfill mysteriously his redemptive purposes for the world. In Christ, men and women are not forced to capitulate to God's will; instead, they are provoked to willing righteousness with God. The world executes power and authority from a position of strength in order to force other people to do the will of the person or of the group exercising the power; nevertheless, Jesus modeled and taught a different paradigm of power and authority than the paradigm the world utilizes.

New Testament writers contrast Jesus' teachings and actions regarding power and authority with the way other people in the narrative use power and authority. Consequently, New Testament writers draw a clear distinction between two alternative ways of using power and authority. The first use is "the worldly way of exercising power—asserting, striving, compelling. The second way is the way in which Jesus exercised power, in submission to his heavenly Father" (Prior 65). In God's kingdom power and authority exists for and is given for serving others. Accordingly, power and authority in the kingdom of God is not a pejorative. Jesus' utilization of power and authority stands as an anomaly in contrast to the many people who have exercised power

and authority in human history. Napoleon, the world-dominating French Emperor, recognized Jesus' distinctiveness:

I know men and I tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between Him and every other person in the world there is no possible term of comparison. Alexander, Charlemagne, and I have all founded empires. But on what did we rest the creation of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ founded His empire upon love; and at this hour millions of men would die for Him. ("Quote by Napoleon")

Many worldly assumptions exist regarding the nature of power and authority; namely, what power and authority are and how to get and use power and authority. These assumptions are at work in the world, but Jesus offers another way to view power and authority. He proffers a use of power and authority that opposes worldly assumptions. Jesus' message, the message of the kingdom of God, counters worldly ideologies and compels believers to shift paradigmatically their understanding and use of power and authority. Jesus utilized power and authority in the gospels in distinctive ways that often conflicted with the powerful leaders in his society. Jesus' use of power and authority ultimately ushered in the kingdom of God while uniquely challenging the power structures of his day. Gospel writers sharply contrast Jesus' use of power against the ways Jewish religious leaders, governmental leaders, and Satan all utilized power and authority.

Tom Wright, Dean of Lichfield Cathedral in Staffordshire, England, in his examination of Jesus' encounter with Satan in the wilderness, comments on the distinction between the way power and authority is to be utilized and understood in the kingdom of God versus the way power and authority is typically utilized and understood by the world and by Satan. In the wilderness Satan tempted Jesus to use his power and

authority in ways contrary to the characteristic nature of God. Satan entices Jesus to use his power and authority contrary to God's design:

Temptations are often hard to recognize because they are distortions of a true vocation. God had intended that Jesus should be set in authority over the world, to use his God-given power to bring in the kingdom; but not like this, by satisfying his own hunger or performing circus stunts. (Wright 39)

Jesus' wilderness encounter with Satan magnifies the tension between the way power and authority is utilized in God's kingdom and in the world.

Jesus' refusal to utilize his power and authority in the ways in which Satan tempted him does not mean Jesus was void of the power and authority to perform those particular actions, but rather that Jesus recognized there was something inherently contradictory to the nature of God and God's design for power and authority in the way Satan wanted Jesus to utilize his power and authority. Consequently, Jesus demonstrated a proper way of using power and authority according to the will of God:

Jesus is spelling out precisely the same truth about the nature of true power as he has demonstrated with the devil in the wilderness: that it does not consist in grabbing what we can, in manipulating people and events to meet our own desires, or in attempting to force God's hand. Rather it involves giving ourselves away, not snatching at what we might legitimately claim for ourselves. (Prior 56)

Jesus' resistance to yield to the temptations put before him in the wilderness reveals something about the distinctive way God utilizes God's power and authority. Power and authority in the kingdom of God is not used to satiate personal desires for self-aggrandizement; instead, power and authority improve the physical and spiritual condition of others.

At the conclusion of Matthew's gospel, Jesus triumphantly announced to his disciples, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach

all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (28:18-19, KJV). By extension, the Church is granted power and authority through relationship with Christ to “[g]o ye therefore and” work to fulfill God’s redemptive intentions in the world (Matt. 28:18). The word used by Matthew here for power is ἐξουσία, meaning “the power of authority (influence) and right (privilege)” (bible.crosswalk.com/Lexicons/Greek 9-28-06). In contrast to the King James Version of Matthew 28:18, the New International Version translates ἐξουσία not as “power” but as “authority,” revealing the ideological interchangeability of the terms “power” and “authority” by New Testament writers. Jesus gave the Church power and authority. The manner in which the Church uses this power and authority determines the measure of the Church’s ability to influence the world toward God’s redemptive ends.

Interestingly, Luke employs this same word, ἐξουσία, in his telling of Jesus’ forty day fast in the wilderness. As cited above, the devil tempted Jesus to use power for himself; essentially he tempted Jesus to take power and authority. Satan tempted Jesus three times to use his power and authority contrary to God’s will. In particular, the devil sought to entice Jesus to worship him and abandon the nature of God by “taking him up into a high mountain, [and showing] unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power [ἐξουσία] will I give thee” (Luke 4:4-5). Jesus’ encounter with Satan emphasizes the unique pattern for the utilization of ἐξουσία in the kingdom of God. Scripture reveals “when in the Judean desert the devil offered [Jesus] power, he declined the offer. Instead, he gave himself to the ultimate weakness and humiliation of the cross” (Stott 51). Ultimately, as recorded in Matthew, Jesus obtained *all* power and authority, exactly what Satan had offered him, but through a

much different use of the power and authority that he possessed as Incarnation. In short, Jesus' refusal to acquire all ἐξουσία by utilizing power and authority in the ways he was tempted offers believers a model for the manner in which power and authority is to be used by the Church. Writer David Prior says Jesus' experience with temptation in the wilderness has implications for his followers:

How does this temptation, both in its essential content and in the victory of Jesus over its force, affect the lives of his disciples—today? Primarily it forces us to re-examine the power we ourselves have and, more particularly, the way we exercise it (36).

Jesus left the wilderness and proceeded to utilize his power and authority to benefit other people and alleviate their suffering.

In the course of the gospel narrative, gospel writers relate the story of two disciples who aspired to greatness but understood the utilization of power and authority according to the typical pattern observed in the world. The mother of these two brothers and disciples came to Jesus with a rather forward request. She asked Jesus to consider her two sons for the highest positions of honor in his kingdom, to let her sons sit on Jesus' right and left side when he received all power and authority. While her request proved questionable, it also demonstrated her belief that Jesus would sit on the throne of Israel and become king. She revealed her worldly understanding of power and authority. Jesus did not respond to her request the way she hoped. Upon seeing that the brother's request invited the indignation of his other disciples against James and John, Jesus used the request and the subsequent tussle as an opportunity to teach. Jesus gathered his disciples close and taught them a defining characteristic of the kingdom of God:

When the ten heard about this they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials

exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many. (Mark 10:41-45, NIV)

The preceding text outlines Jesus' understanding of the exercise of power and authority.

Jesus' words "[n]ot so with you" reverberate an intrinsic kingdom principle. Jesus desired his followers understand that power and authority be used in a radically different fashion in the kingdom of God than in the world. Further, he wanted his disciples to recognize that the utilization of power and authority in the kingdom of God stands in stark contrast to the pattern his disciples have observed in the "rulers of the Gentiles" (Mark 10:43).

Power and authority in the kingdom of God is utilized in sacrificial service toward others and is not used to "lord over" other people (Mark 10:43). Alberto de Mingo Kaminouchi, in his published doctoral work *'But It Is Not So Among You': Echoes of Power in Mark 10.32-45*, makes the following observations regarding the lesson Jesus taught his disciples about utilizing power and authority in the Mark passage:

So the pericope that was initiated by the brothers' question ends surprisingly. In a matter of moments, James and John are moved from an attempt to manipulate Jesus in order to satisfy their thirst for power to an act of consent to participate in his suffering mission.

This unexpected turn is a demonstration of Jesus' authority. Jesus accomplishes his will—that is God's will—through his disciples even though they are initially unable to fully understand what he is teaching. Jesus' authority neither forces nor manipulates the brothers' thirst for glory and power, but transforms this thirst into a compliance to share in his suffering mission. (109-10)

The lesson James, John and the other disciples learn in Mark 10 with regards to the utilization of power and authority is a lesson Jesus demonstrated over and again in his dealings with people and ultimately demonstrated by willingly offering himself on the

cross as the ransom for many. Jesus reveals throughout the gospel narrative his intention to offer his life “as a ransom” for redemption of the world (Mark 10:45):

He counters...that he is not a victim. ‘I lay down my life. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again’ (John 10:18). Jesus retained power even as he suffered, even as he died. He was nobody’s victim. (Robinson 10)

Being great in the kingdom of God characteristically means taking on the form of a servant and becoming “slave of all” (Mark 10:44). Jesus’ directive is explicit. The kingdom of God is distinguished by leaders who lead by service rather than self-interest.

Jesus offers as a central teaching his own understanding of power and authority radically opposed to the understanding of power and authority that was prevalent in his society. Gerhard Lohfink, Ordinarius Professor for the New Testament at the University of Tübingen, draws the following conclusions regarding Jesus’ words in Mark’s Gospel:

[T]he text alludes to problems of domination within the church. It is presupposed that authority and power must exist within the church. But this authority must not be domination of the sort that is exercised in the rest of society. Elsewhere rule is exercised all too frequently in the interest of the rulers. In the people of God, on the other hand, authority must derive completely from service. Within the church only one who abstracts from oneself and one’s own interests and lives a life for others can become an authority. (116)

Power and authority stand beside one another as natural companions, the one propping up the other, and in the New Testament the terms *power* and *authority* are coupled together to convey one dynamic meaning. Accordingly, power and authority in the kingdom of God operate conversely to the dynamics of power and authority in the world. Jesus turns the world’s power paradigm upside down. Instead, Jesus claims true power and authority are found in service to others and asserts that power and authority exist for the comfort and blessing of others rather than for decadent self-gratification.

Characteristically, Jesus taught and then modeled. As such Jesus commanded his followers to emulate him. Jesus taught about service and then proceeded to heal the sick and feed the hungry, and finally, Jesus asked his disciples to do the same. He, the positional leader (rabbi), bent low to wash the feet of his disciples and then commanded them to “wash one another’s feet” (John 13:14). Jesus derived authentic authority not from a positional use of power but through the integrity of his character revealed through his unique use of power. He laid down his life and compelled his disciples to emulate him. Jesus was possessed with great power and authority, for even the winds and waves obeyed him, yet his teachings demonstrated how radically antithetical to worldly philosophies of power and authority Jesus’ understanding of power and authority is. He sought utilization of power and authority in terms that the Church often fails to actualize. Power and authority is perverse when utilized for merely self-seeking ends.

In his inaugural address given in January 1989, the President George H. Bush offered the following prayer:

Heavenly Father, write on our hearts these words: *Use power to help people* [original emphasis]. For we are given power not to advance our own purposes, nor to make a great show in the world, nor a name. There is but one just use of power, and it is to serve people. Help us to remember it, Lord. Amen. (qtd. in Hunter 63)

Bush espoused a view of power in keeping with Jesus’ understanding. Jesus understood power and authority as a dynamic to help the hurting and lift up the broken. Interestingly, a measure of his authority developed out of his habit of service. In a somewhat comical discourse, writer James C. Hunter makes a profound statement regarding power and authority. He described his mother as a woman of authority and accounted for her authority in two simple words: “Mom served” (64). Hunter goes on to speak of other

people who gained influence in his life through their habits of service. The idea that influence is granted through using power and authority to serve is no small ideology. Service represents proper usage of power and authority, or at least proper usage of power and authority within God's kingdom. Power and authority used contrary to this purpose can, ironically, usurp a person of his or her influence altogether and compel him or her to magnify his or her use of power and authority by means of disproportionate force and bullying. Writer and preacher Anthony Campolo writes, "[I]f you must resort to [power of force or position] to get people to do what you ask, you lack authority; even though you are obeyed, you will not be regarded as a legitimate ruler" (77). Therefore, Jesus is saying to the Church, "[n]ot so with you" (Mark 10:43). Jesus understood power as an outward focused dynamic designed for the welfare of others. Influence naturally results when power and authority is used according to Jesus' pattern.

Early in the week of Jesus' passion, as told in the Gospel of Mark, a group of Jewish leaders, chief priests, teachers of the law, and elders confronted Jesus in the temple court at Jerusalem. The leaders had reached a breaking point in their dealings with Jesus and intended to unmask Jesus as a charlatan. These leaders could tolerate Jesus' kingdom message and miracles in the wilds of Galilee but could not tolerate Jesus' actions in Jerusalem, the seat of Judaism, especially during the celebration of one of the most holy festivals of the year, Passover. Jesus had ridden into the city on the back of a colt. His arrival offered a visual fulfillment of Zechariah's prophetic message regarding the Messiah. The crowds lauded him and cried out to him for their salvation. He entered the temple and chased away money changers who had made his house of prayer into a den of thieves. He had gone too far, so community leaders approached Jesus with a direct

question: “Who gave you the authority to do these things?” (Mark 11:28). Jesus responded to these austere yet misguided men by telling a parable:

A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed. He had one left to send, a son whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But the tenants said one to another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours. So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others...Then they looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. (Mark 12:1-12)

These learned men immediately would have associated the parable with Isaiah’s song “for the one I love a song about his vineyard” (Isa. 5:1). In this parable, Jesus accused his people of rejecting the authority of God’s rule over them. He compared the people to hired tenants desiring to take the kingdom by force and rule themselves apart from the one who had established them and who in fact was the true authority over them. As such, the people refused God’s authority because of their own self-seeking power agendas. Vying for power and position was not an issue with which only the disciples struggled. The Jewish religious and community leaders were concerned intently with preserving their elite station from which to exercise their power and authority over Israel. Leaders had forgotten in practice if not in word that God had instituted Israel and entered covenant with Israel to establish God’s work to redeem all creation. Jesus’ judgment on Israel is frightfully sobering. Professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary Ben Witherington says, “The implication of the parable is that whoever has

rejected the vineyard owner's son has rejected the vineyard owner. The vineyard owner will reject these tenants and give the vineyard to others, among whom Mark's audience would have seen themselves" (321). Jesus essentially revealed himself as the rejected son of the vineyard owner and announced God's decision to fashion another people through whom to work his redemptive purposes for the world—the Church. Jesus' statements against these leaders stand as words of correction and warning for the Church that, like Israel, was instituted by God for God's purposes.

The Church has a long history both of faithfulness and infidelity to God's authority, and the Church has used power and authority both to serve and to force compliance. The Church is at its best when it utilizes power and authority as Jesus modeled and taught. The Church's influence diminishes when it uses power and authority in any way other than service. The Church's ability to influence the world toward God diminishes when the Church does not use power and authority to foster freedom to act in accordance with the will of God, but instead attempts by use of power to coerce and compel the world into compliance. A study of history reveals "[w]hen the Church tries to embody the rule of God in the forms of earthly power it may achieve power, but it is no longer a sign of the kingdom" (Newbigin 136). Persons such as Tomas de Torquemada and Pope Urban II epitomize the ill-effect that the misuse of power and authority in the Church has upon the Church's ability to influence the world for Christ, while John Wesley and Mother Teresa provide clear evidence of the Church's use of power and authority to serve, and thereby grow the Church's influence.

The Gospel of Luke illustrates that kingdom power and authority and worldly power and authority often oppose each other. Following a discussion between Jesus and

his disciples about an argument regarding who was the greatest among them, the group found itself unwelcome in Samaria while en route to Jerusalem. At the center of the discussion regarding greatness, James and John asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” (Luke 9:54). Jesus soundly rebuked the brothers who still demonstrated a lack of understanding of Jesus’ paradigm of power and authority. Using power and authority to force others’ wills does not redeem the world. Greatness and authority in the kingdom of God are not to be wielded like a hammer in order to force people into a certain preferred course of action. In the Church, power and authority are to be used to serve, and through this distinctive use of power and authority the world is rejoined to God.

Days before Jesus’ crucifixion, Judas arrived in Gethsemane with a rabble of temple guards to offer Jesus a kiss of betrayal. Luke records the following:

When Jesus’ followers saw what was going to happen, they said, “Lord should we strike with our swords?” And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. But Jesus answered, “No more of this!” And he touched the man’s ear and healed him. (22:49-51)

The reconciliation of the world to God is not obtained by the power of force. Tony Campolo says when the power of force “increases, authority decreases with authority there is no need to control people, because they want to follow you” (76-77). Jesus demanded that his disciples cease their physical retaliation against the soldiers who had come to arrest him and Peter re-sheathed his sword in obedience. Then Jesus proceeded to demonstrate once more the proper use of power and authority in the kingdom of God. He served another. He healed the ear of the soldier that Peter had severed with his sword.

Jesus ultimately is given all power and authority because he offered the ultimate service to humanity. Specifically, he ransomed his life in exchange for the lives of all

men and women who profess hope in him. He died to ransom humanity and atone for all human sin. Jesus' death reveals the fullness of the pattern for utilizing power and authority in the kingdom of God:

Jesus comes not as a glorious one, but as a humble Son of Man, one who comes to serve rather than be served. His example of leadership is diametrically opposed to the examples set by secular authorities. But in fact, Jesus comes not merely to offer just any sort of service but rather to offer the greatest service of all to humankind—to give his life $\lambda\upsilon\tau\rho\omega\ \alpha\nu\tau\iota\ \pi\omicron\lambda\lambda\omega\nu$. (Witherington 288)

Crowned with all power and authority, Jesus anticipated his paradigm of power and authority to be exercised by the Church in the world. In expectation of the Church exercising power and authority according to the paradigm Jesus embodied, Jesus empowered his followers and promoted a collaborative mission. He taught, modeled, and sent forth his disciples to emulate him and instruct other people in his teachings.

Empowerment and the fostering of collaborative mission are dominant themes of Jesus' pattern for utilizing power and authority in the gospels. In Luke 10:1-20, Luke records that Jesus sent out seventy disciples in pairs to announce the good news of the kingdom of God and empowered them to work redemptive miracles. This mission offers a marked example of a collaborative utilization of power and authority. In the Gospel of John, the beloved disciple records, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12). Jesus ultimately gave his power and authority away in order to equip his followers to share in God's salvific work of reconciling the world to himself.

Paradigm of Power and Authority in the Kingdom of God

Porter J. Crow, one-time executive vice president of Palm Beach Atlantic College, discusses Jesus' unique utilization of power and authority in his article "Power,

Leadership, and the Jesus Model.” Crow proposes that Jesus used his power and authority in six ways in order to persuade people to follow him, essentially noting Jesus modeled a pattern for utilizing power and authority:

How do you see power? So if you are going to use your power, going to be a leader, then you have to think out these philosophical processes of image structure. Here are six ways of getting people to follow you; and you’ll notice you can use Jesus as a pattern throughout, The Jesus Model. (Crow 253-254)

Crow suggests that Jesus taught and modeled a pattern for utilizing power and authority that, when followed by the Church, made the Church highly effective and firmly established the Church as the dominant influence on Western civilization. Crow’s The Jesus Model offers a commentary on the distinctive pattern for utilizing power and authority in the gospels. Study of Jesus’ unique leadership style and particularly study of his teachings on and use of power and authority reveals that Jesus utilized his power and authority according to a very specific pattern. Jesus challenged the common perceptions and assumptions regarding power and authority in his day and continues to do so in our time through two mediums: the Word and the Church. Power and authority in the kingdom of God as Jesus both taught and modeled manifests in the following five ways:

1. To serve others, not for self-glorification,
2. To empower,
3. To influence, not to coerce,
4. To promote the freedom to act in accordance with God’s will, not to impose God’s will, and
5. To promote collaboration.

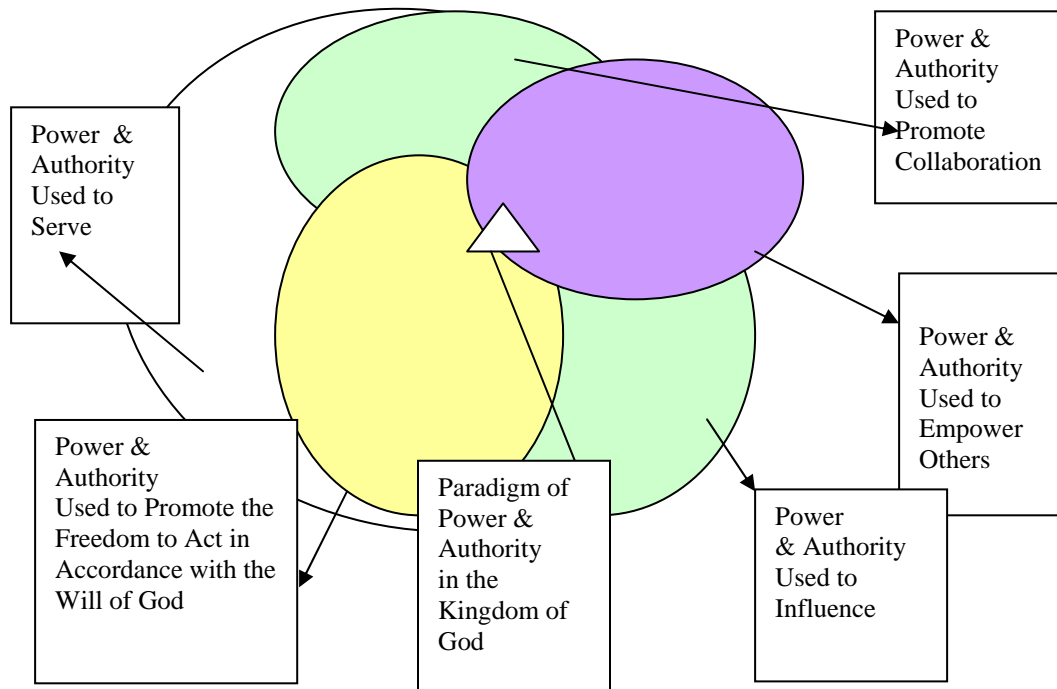


Figure 2.1. Paradigm of power and authority in the kingdom of God

When the Church utilizes power and authority in these unique terms, God's kingdom becomes visible and his redemptive intentions are evidenced. When the Church utilizes power and authority contrary to Jesus' utilization of power and authority, the Church obscures the kingdom of God and stifles God's redemptive work.

Power and Authority to Serve

The diagram on the previous page depicts an overlap in the ways power and authority is used according to the pattern set forth by Jesus in the gospels. A sense of interconnectedness exists in the ways Jesus utilized his power and authority, and it is in this interconnectedness the primary exercise of power and authority in the kingdom of God can be identified. *To serve others* is the preeminent utilization of power and authority as taught and modeled by Jesus. *To serve others* functions as the background

for the other four uses of power and authority within Jesus' paradigm. Jesus taught his disciples that he came to serve rather than be served. He taught them that the individual who desires to be greatest must become slave to all (Mark 10:42-45). These commandments teach "subversive practices of power. With their renunciation of domination and their willingness to become 'servants' and 'slaves of all', these leaders should promote a community of discipleship that stands as an alternative to the structures of power of their world" (de Mingo Kaminouchi 139). Though word and action, Jesus taught his followers to use power and authority to serve others. Jesus spent much of his ministry caring for the physical needs of others, seeking to alleviate and free others from physical and demonic oppression, and helping to improve the overall physical and spiritual well-being others. As noted earlier, Jesus utilized his power and authority in order to accomplish the greatest of all acts of service to humanity. He, "who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death" (Phil. 2:6-8). As a result Paul observes that Jesus consequently was granted paramount power and authority upon his resurrection from the dead. As Jesus' body in the world, the Church is exhorted to have the same mind that was in Christ—to use its power and authority to serve others.

As the Church attempts to regain its influence in American culture a "whole new type of leadership is asked for in the church of tomorrow, a leadership that is not modeled on the power games of the world, but on the servant-leader Jesus" (Nouwen 63). Jesus modeled and taught that power has been given the Church to serve others and not for self-

glorification. Healthy leadership in the kingdom of God determines to serve others with the attitude of Christ.

C. Peter Wagner, one-time professor of church growth at Fuller Theological Seminary, makes the following comment regarding the “[n]ot so with you” principle found in Mark 10:43:

Leaders in the secular world find ways and means of manipulating people for their own ends. They are tyrants. This is lordship, not leadership, and Jesus says, “It shall not be so among you.”

Sociologically, churches are voluntary associations. Spiritually, churches are the family of God. Neither allows for a coercive type of leadership authority. Pastors who do not understand this find themselves in trouble. They need to remember they are servants. Pastor Paul Yonggi Cho, one of the strongest Christian leaders I know, says “In our church we have authority with love. But if the pastor tries to exert his authority merely on strength of his position or on human maneuvering, the people will rebel and he will be in trouble.” (114-15)

The Church is at its best when it uses its divinely granted power to serve in the world as Jesus served. Congregational health must then inherently reflect Jesus’ paradigm. When congregational leaders choose to utilize power and authority for self-seeking gains, personal promotion, popularity, approval, or any other self-interest, those leaders’ effectiveness and the health of their congregations can only be stunted by the leader’s search for self-glorification. As “a source of power,” spiritual authority is “never exercised for one’s own benefit, but for those under it” (Clinton 102). The Church is vested with power and authority, and congregational leaders are uniquely responsible for the economy of that power and authority. Jesus’ model for the utilization of power and authority is contrary to the model that worldly powers and authorities typically demonstrate. Jesus challenges his followers to rethink utilizing power and authority for

the benefit of others rather than for selfish ends. Implicitly Jesus' paradigm is essential to God's redemptive plan for the world.

Power and Authority to Empower

Jesus consistently sought to empower his followers. He "had power and he gave it away, which may finally be the most powerful and faithful exercise of power" (Robinson 10). Congregational leaders who utilize their power and authority to build, encourage, and train others contribute to the overall health of their congregations. Jesus empowered his disciples to teach his commandments, perform redemptive miracles, and make disciples. Jesus empowered his disciples through supernatural means (the offering of the Holy Spirit), but also through tangible, practical, and replicable means. He modeled kingdom behavior for his disciples, taught the behavior to his disciples, and then sent them to do the same. He used his power and authority to empower. Wayne Cordeiro, pastor of New Hope Christian Fellowship Oahu in Honolulu, writes "One of our tests for whether a ministry is operating at peak effectiveness is whether it unleashes people to use the gifts they've received from the Holy Spirit" (Lewis & Cordeiro 174). The health of a congregation may be connected directly to the manner in which congregational leaders utilize power and authority in order to promote and equip their congregations. As such, an empowered church possesses the direction and motivation to exercise its gifts both as a collective body and as individuals within the body.

Christian Schwarz, author of *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches*, makes the following assertion based upon the findings of Natural Church Development (NCD) studies that involves more than 45,000 churches in seventy countries: "Leaders of growing churches concentrate on empowering

other Christians for ministry. They invert the pyramid of authority so that the leader assists Christians to attain the spiritual potential God has for them” (24). Healthy congregations result when leaders utilize power and authority to empower others and resist the temptation to hoard power and authority and handle people. Contrary to Jesus’ paradigm are leaders who refuse to invest in the growth of others.

Donald Capps, the William Harte Felmeth Professor of Pastoral Psychology at Princeton Theological Seminary, describes Jesus as a master power tactician who artfully employed process tactics resulting in his accumulation of power. Capps contends that Jesus obtained power by seizing upon the sociological and contextual opportunities of his day; in fact, Capps credits Jesus as the original utilizer of the power tactic in which the socially disenfranchised overtly differentiate themselves from the social establishment. Further, Capps asserts that Jesus miscalculated his final power tactic, the surrender tactic. As a result, Jesus was crucified; therefore, he did not obtain the power and authority his celebrity promised.

While orthodox Christianity would assert Capps’ analysis of Jesus’ power as mistaken, Capps’ interest in and discussion of Jesus’ use of power supports Jesus’ unique paradigm of power and authority:

If the kingdom of the heavenly Father is about power and process, not place, then Jesus’ power tactics exemplified the way of life that Jesus both envisioned and actualized. After all, the kingdom is about the empowerment of those who, by necessity or choice, are outside or alien.
(185)

Jesus taught and modeled a paradigm of power and authority seeking to empower people. Leaders of healthy congregations understand and implement this component of Jesus’ paradigm of power and authority.

Power and Authority to Influence

John C. Maxwell, a contemporary teacher of leadership, makes the following two statements with regard to leadership: “Leadership is influence” (*Developing* 48), and “If a leader doesn’t have leverage—or influence—then he is ineffective” (*Leadership 101* 28). Maxwell asserts a direct corollary between effectiveness and an essential dynamic of leadership; namely, the ability to influence others. Leadership that uses power and authority to influence rather than to coerce promotes greater congregational health.

Donald Brennan, president and CEO of the Daughters of Charity National Health System, makes the following statement regarding to the utilization of power and authority to influence others:

Servant-leadership is the power to influence rather than the power to control. We realize that when we choose to influence people rather than control them, it at first might seem like weakness, but it really calls forth an inner strength. It is effective in facing the challenges that are so critical today. (qtd. in Spears 307)

When congregational leaders utilize positional force to control situations or individuals in the church, these leaders divorce themselves from Jesus’ paradigm. Instead, these leaders usurp themselves of the power and authority to influence and lessen their effectiveness. Such leaders adversely affect the health of the congregations they lead. Leaders who use power and authority to control rather than to influence may have to rely increasingly on coercion to lead at the expense of continually waning influence. The value “of coercive power is inverse to its use” (Greenleaf 85). Consequently, congregational health diminishes under coercive leadership.

Power and Authority to Promote the Freedom to Act in Accordance with the Will of God

Jaroslav Pelikan, deceased Titus Street professor of Ecclesiastical History at Yale University, asserted that Jesus neither wanted to compel people nor “drive” them by commandments (114). Jesus invited men and women to follow him both literally and spiritually. He did not impose his will but instead used his power to promote freedom for followers and potential followers to act in accordance with God’s will. Time and again the gospel writers present Jesus utilizing his power and authority to invite women and men to turn to God and receive God’s healing, forgiveness, and love. Jesus did not impose himself; rather, he invited people to follow him and to order their lives according to God’s will. Writer Martin Hengel writes, “The ‘reign of God,’ the ‘nearness of God’s love,’ challenged the hearer to a clear decision. It aimed at genuine repentance by the individual, which at the same time meant that it opposed repressive group pressure” (21). Jesus desired men and women to follow him, but he always gave people the freedom to say no. He utilized his power and authority to foster an environment in which individuals were not compelled to believe in him or follow him but instead were dignified with the freedom to act or not to act in accordance with God’s will. Jesus’ will never powered people, but instead empowered people, after having been made privy to the gospel, to make a choice regarding their respective relationships with Jesus. Biblical examples of this component of Jesus’ paradigm of power and authority include the following:

1. the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18-23)
2. the woman at Sychar (John 4)
3. Peter (John 21:18-19)
4. Zaccheus (Luke 19)
5. Matthew (Matt. 2:14).

This list of persons, whom Jesus empowered to choose to act in accordance with God's will, is not exhaustive.

Jesus' utilization of power and authority prompted men and women to make a choice and offered them a future filled with hope. Such use of power and authority denoted:

a quality intrinsic in [his] person, something that other people acknowledge[d] on the basis of their own recognition of [his] ...person and... words, not because they...[were] required to recognize it by some external or institutional constraint. Jesus taught as one who had this kind of authority (Matt 7:29). He said, 'Follow me,' and people often did. (Goldingay 85)

In the Gospels Jesus clarifies that following him is a choice. Jesus' encounter with the rich lawyer recorded in Luke 18 illustrates that not every person was prepared to make this choice.

Harold Myra and Marshall Shelley, authors of *The Leadership Secrets of Billy Graham*, assert the "most central characteristic of authentic leadership is the relinquishing of the impulse to dominate others" (132). Domination severely limits congregational health and quenches the passion of followers. Jesus did not use power and authority to dominate others and impose his will. Redemption of creation is achieved through the mutual will of God and creation. Power and authority utilized for the coercion of Creation's redemption is not in keeping with either God's will or God's character. Such redemption would be illusory. Using power and authority to dominate and coerce diminishes congregational health. Instead, "[l]eadership as interpersonal influence is an advancement on leadership as personal dominance: it provides a new source of leadership to replace one that is less and less workable" (Wilcox and Rush

157). Leaders of healthy congregations promote a culture of choice inviting men and women to act willingly in accordance with God's will.

Power and Authority to Promote Collaboration

The mission and ministry of the Church is not an individual endeavor. Christ prayed for the Church to be one unified body motivated by God's redemptive will. The Church's work in the world is a collaborative work. Individual believers possess gifts unique to their respective callings and personalities. Collectively, the body of Christ is an amalgam of spiritual and natural gifts working together. The Church can powerfully affect the world toward God's redemptive purposes. Leaders of healthy congregations understand that power and authority in the kingdom of God is intended to be diffused throughout the body of Christ. Such leaders enlist the gifts of laity and are able to more powerfully impact the world for Christ through the collaborative efforts of the Church.

Withheld power granted to only a few devalues the many gifts present in the body of Christ and quenches the impact that the body of Christ can make in the world. Leaders of healthy congregations celebrate and utilize the many gifts represented in the Church. Henri J. M. Nouwen says "...true ministry must be mutual [or in the] exercising of power over others [it] begins to show authoritarian and dictatorial traits" (62). Congregations that effectively carry out the Church's mission in the world are led by persons who are pro-active in giving power and authority away. These leaders recognize that laity possess diverse gifts and seek to enable implementation of these gifts. The pattern of God's design for power and authority is visible in God's eclectic arrangement of gifts in the Church. God has given power and authority away to the Church in the form of gifts and graces and has designed this sharing of power and authority in such a way that God's

mission can only be fulfilled through the collaboration of gifts. Christ intended for the work of the kingdom of God to be shared by and lived out in community. Jesus understood that “[s]haring power and service is healing in itself, acknowledging as it does the presence of numerous valued leaders” (Spears 192). Jesus fostered a sense of community among his followers and commissioned them collectively to go and make disciples.

The New Testament presents a Church led by apostolic leaders who exercised power and authority to form a Christian community collaborating in God’s redemptive mission to the world. Congregational leaders utilizing their power and authority to promote united collaborative work lead their congregations toward health. The “best churches are team ministries” (Lewis and Cordeiro 147). Jesus taught and modeled that the proper use of power and authority enlists and values the gifts of all believers.

A Changed Paradigm

Jesus provides the impetus for a new way of understanding the world. Following Jesus’ ascension into heaven, his commissioned followers continued to confront and shake worldly paradigms with Jesus’ teachings. The power and authority Jesus conferred upon his followers at the feast of Pentecost propelled their endeavor to reconcile the world to God. At the Mount of Olives, Jesus told his followers they would “receive power when the Holy Spirit” came upon them (Acts 1:8). In due course the Church received power and authority to serve in capacities fulfilling God’s redemptive purposes for the world.

Jesus’ resurrection was and is worldview-shattering. The early Church began immediately to practice living out of the paradigm Jesus embodied. Empowered by

Christ, the Church embarked upon ministry to the world. Acts 6 presents the Church busily doing ministry—specifically “ministry of the word” and “daily ministrations” to widows (Acts 6:1, 4, KJV). Luke employs the word *Διακονία* in Acts 6. *Διακονία* may be translated as either “service” or “ministry.”

Jesus has given the Church power and authority for the redemptive purpose of service. As the Church grew, the apostles sought to practice Jesus’ “[n]ot so with you” principle (Mark 10:43). The responsibility to order the Church by this principle belonged to them as Jesus’ first disciples. Newbegin states, “There will indeed be occasions when the Church acting corporately through its appointed leaders will have to remind those who hold power that they are responsible for all their actions to the one who sits at the right hand of God” (139). Peter writes to the Church, “each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others” (I Pet. 4:10, NIV). In this verse Peter uses a variation of the word *διακονία*. In verse 10, the NIV translates *διακονεο* as “to serve.” Peter understood Jesus’ paradigm of power and authority and sought to operationalize this paradigm both in the world and within the growing Church.

The early Church practiced holding all possessions in common. Scripture infers this practice was not enforced but manifested in a voluntary manner. The Cretan convert Barnabas came and laid the liquidation of his possessions at Peter’s feet. Barnabas gave the sum of his possessions to be used for service (Acts 4). Selling assets for the common good of the Christian community as Barnabas did was not mandatory. Motivated by a desire for self-glorification, Ananias and Sapphira used their power and authority to promote their standing in the Church. As a result, they fell into sin because they utilized their power to gain personal glory rather than serve with sincerity. In Acts 4, Luke

records that the early Church “shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify” (Acts 4:32-3). For Luke a connection exists between use of power and authority and serving others. Collaborative use of power and authority is essential to carry out the ministry of the Church.

Organizationally, the early Church operated as a flat-structure; specifically, the early Church operated without a hierarchical stratum. Thomas J. Savage asserts that hierarchical structures “do not faithfully reflect the collaborative character of the scriptural religious community. Power is shared because the gifts of God are shared and given to be exercised in ministry on behalf of the community and the community’s common mission in the world” (110-12). The first Christian community’s character embodied Jesus’ “[n]ot so with you” paradigm (Mark 10:43). The apostles had been given power and authority to minister in the world, but the world responded to the Church’s influence because the apostles used their power and authority for service. Luke records, “The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon’s Colonnade. No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people” (Acts 5:12-13). Luke emphasized that the way the early Church used its power and authority was regarded well by the local community. Luke recognized that the Church’s influence derived from its distinctive use of power and authority—for example, the service of miraculous signs and wonders.

Exercising Power and Authority

In his article “Empowering Leaders” Jeffrey DeYoe defines “[a]uthority [as] power invoked for advocacy and justice work. It is most definitely a sacred power, and

church leaders still have much to learn about claiming it and using it wisely” (42). Such authority promotes congregational health. A person’s use of power and authority directly affects his or her ability to influence others and lead. This ability is not based upon a person’s positional use of power and authority, but upon what Rodney Napier and Matti Gershenfeld describe as referent and/or expert power (230-33). Proper use of power and authority affects a congregation’s ability to “be successful. Influence is the ability to get others, below, above, and laterally, to respond in desired ways without coercion.

Influence may be less glamorous than unadulterated control over others, but it can power up an organization if properly applied” (Bradford and Cohen 184-85).

According to Napier and Gershenfeld the type of power and authority Jesus taught and modeled is referent. In Scripture Jesus manipulates no one, rather his followers accept his influence voluntarily. Thusly, power and authority in the kingdom is exercised from a place of influence based upon God’s character and his character reflected by the Church.

Table 2.1. Kinds of Power According to Napier and Gershenfeld

Types of Power	Definitions
Referent power	“[T]he kind of influence we do not think of as power. These people have referent power over us; we identify with them in certain areas, and they influence us without our feeling manipulated. The powerful person has power because we accept his or her influence and do it voluntarily” (231).
Legitimate power	“[O]ne person through his or her position is given the right to make certain decisions for others. [T]he recipients of influence see it as legitimate that the powerful person has a right to make decisions for them” (232).
Expert power	“[A] person may become expert in an area. Expert power may also exist independent of position” (232).
Reward power	“Usually, reward power is situational—that is, determined by position. [T]he recipients of the reward feel controlled. It means compliance” (232).
Coercive power	“[I]n a coercive situation the individual usually first attempts to escape the punishment. Coercive power invokes not only coercion but also no possibility of escaping the powerful person’s influence” (233).

Indeed, the Church has been imbued with great power and authority by Jesus Christ. Nearly two thousand years after Jesus' resurrection, the Church still grapples with properly exercising its power and authority. Too often the Church, as well as its individual members, sees the consequences of misuse of power and authority. Not only does misuse of power and authority usurp varying degrees of the Church's influence, but also misuse of power and authority obscures the true nature and countenance of God's kingdom. The kingdom of God is not ordered like earthly kingdoms; in fact, the culture of the kingdom of God is absurd to the cultures of the world.

One of the most profound and surprising characteristics of the kingdom of God is Jesus' teaching that power and authority should be utilized to fulfill God's redemptive intentions but should not be used to elevate those persons in power and authority for the sake of self-glorification. Power and authority should not be used for grasping at power, for selfish gain, for attaining self-seeking ends, or for forcing compliance. In the kingdom of God, God wills power and authority to be used to serve, empower, influence, and promote the freedom to act in accordance with God's will, all in a collaborative and diffusive fashion. The aforementioned uses of power and authority reflect the paradigm of power and authority characteristic in God's kingdom. Jesus modeled this use of power and authority by continually and consistently utilizing power and authority for the sake of healing, helping, restoring, and blessing. As such, Jesus' life on earth was characterized by a commitment to power and authority that serves. Further, Jesus taught both directly and in parables regarding the use of power and authority. Further still, he taught his followers to keep and teach his instructions as a sign of their love for him. All too often,

the Church fails to exercise power and authority in ways consistent with Jesus' teachings and example.

Paul on Power and Authority

Arguably one of the most influential apostles in the formation of the early Church, Paul sought to embody the life and commandments of Jesus, including Jesus' pattern for the use of power and authority. A close examination of Paul in Acts and in his epistles reveals much:

More than anyone, the apostle Paul realized that Christ's weakness was the model for the way God's people, and especially pastoral leaders, should work in the world. In 2 Cor 13:4 he stresses, "For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God." Because of this model of serving in weakness, Paul can exult in 2 Cor 4:7 that we have the treasure of the Gospel in the clay pots of ourselves, so that the extraordinary power may be God's and not ours. [H]e can "boast all the more gladly" of his weakness so that Christ's power tabernacles in him. (Dawn 5)

The early Church sought to practice Jesus' example of power and authority as it wrestled with a multiplicity of theological and organizational issues. The early Church's approach regarding issues of power and authority is implicit to the way the Church ordered itself. While Paul showed keen awareness of his unique apostolic power, he also sought to teach and model Jesus' instruction "[n]ot so with you" (Mark 10:43). Paul understood deeply that the source of the Church's power and authority belonged exclusively to Christ, and "[u]nlike leaders of cults, Peter and Paul derived their power to lead not from their ability to charm and control others, but from their readiness to be charmed and controlled by God" (Hamm 2). Consequently, the Church shares in Christ's power and authority through collaborative works of service that fulfill God's redemptive purposes for the world. Brian J. Dodd, director of *Share Jesus!*, a church-based evangelistic ministry,

asserts that Paul practiced service out of a “partnership theology.” Dodd points out many instances in which Paul used the Greek prefix *syn*, meaning “with” or “co” in relationship to those persons with whom he ministered in the name of Christ:

Paul calls his partners in the missionary work “coworkers,” “coprisoners,” “coslaves,” “cosoldiers,” and “colaborers.”

- coworker (*synergos*, Rom 16:3, 7, 9, 21; 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25; 4:3; Col 4:7, 10, 11, 14; Philem 1, 24)
- coprisoner (*synaichmalotos*, literally “fellow prisoner of war,” Col 4:10; Philem 23)
- coslave (*syndoulos*, Col 1:7; 4:7)
- cosoldier (*systratiotes*, Phil 2:25; Philem 2)
- colaborers (*synathleo*, Phil 4:2-3). (114)

In letter after letter Paul wrote greetings from or to fellow laborers, fellow servants, and fellow prisoners in Christ, mentioning them by name: Priscilla, Aquila, Urbanus, Epaphroditus, and others. These persons did not possess the same degree of apostolic power and authority as Paul, a fact of which Paul was keenly aware (1 Cor. 9:1-12). Paul fully possessed apostolic power and authority, “nothing less than the *euangelion*, ‘gospel,’ that he has been called to preach, embody in his life, and hand over to his communities” (Banks 183). Still, even Paul’s language defers to Jesus’ paradigm of power and authority. Paul, perhaps like one of the hired tenants Jesus mentioned in his parable of the vineyard, saw himself as a coworker for the gospel in the kingdom of God. Paul clearly fostered a spirit of collaborative service within the Church.

Paul maintained that using power and authority for service rather than for self-interest represented a central theme of Jesus’ teachings. In 2 Corinthians 11:9, Paul reminded the church at Corinth, “I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so.” Paul communicated that his role, authority, and power as an apostle was not to be used for personal gain. In 2 Corinthians, Paul addressed a

problem regarding false apostles facing the church at Corinth. As such, Paul associated the falseness of these apostles with their desire to utilize power and authority for worldly gain, much like Ananias and Sapphira did in the Book of Acts. Paul says “[n]ot so with you” (Mark 10:43). Power and authority that serves brings about redemption of the world. Power and authority used to manipulate other people for gain is worldly and contrary Jesus’ teachings.

Paul understood power and authority that serves as a sign of God’s kingdom establishing the Church’s influence in the world. Paul continually exhorted the church everywhere to “serve one another” and “have equal concern for each other” (Gal. 5:13; 1 Cor. 12:25). Paul’s leadership style, born out of his understanding of Jesus’ “[n]ot so with you” principle, resembles Collins’ discussion in his monologue *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*. Collins relates his research findings to highly effective leadership within the nonprofit American arena. He discovered a distinct difference between leadership styles needed to make non-profit organizations highly successful and leadership styles needed to make highly successful businesses. Collins asserts the business sector in America operates from an executive leadership paradigm while social sector leadership must operate from a different paradigm in order to achieve success. Instead, Collins found that the most effective leaders in the social sector lead from a legislative framework. Legislative leaders must rely “upon persuasion, political currency, and shared interests to create the conditions for the right decisions to happen” (11). Collins discovered that power and authority must be diffused within social sector organizations. In support of this discovery, Collins quotes Frances Hesselbein, CEO of the Girl Scouts of the USA, as an example of this kind of effective legislative leadership. Frances

Hesselbein was one of the nonprofit leaders Collins interviewed while researching for his monologue:

When asked how she got all this done without concentrated executive power, she said, “Oh, you always have power, if you just know where to find it. There is the power of inclusion, the power of language, and the power of shared interests, and the power of coalition. Power is all around you to draw upon.” (10)

Paul understood Jesus’ paradigm of power and authority. He understood that the Church’s “authority stems from God the Father as revealed in his Son Jesus Christ” (Banks 186). Further, Paul recognized that the call to greatness in the kingdom of God required a consistent habit of leadership through serving the body of Christ and the world. For example, Paul’s deliberate word usage such as *co* and *fellow* in his epistles reveal his understanding that power and authority within the Church must be diffused in order to manifest the kingdom. Jesus intended for the work of the Church to be collaborative in nature, after all “Christ belongs to all those who have a humble attitude and not to those who set themselves above the flock” (Moltmann 93). Paul understood that in God’s kingdom a person is not to place himself or herself above flock. Instead, the kingdom of God is characterized by service with and to Christ’s body. Paul wrote the following words to the church at Corinth:

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body...But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body...Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is part of it. (1 Cor. 12:12-13, 24-27)

Paul wrote these words to a church experiencing problems of social elitism and conflict.

As writer and professor Ben Witherington noted below some Corinthian church members were utilizing power and authority according to a worldly paradigm:

In order to understand the force of Paul's language [here] one needs to understand the pecking order of power and dignity in a Roman colony. Some Corinthians no doubt saw themselves in a very individualistic light as sufficient to themselves. Paul is disputing such notions. God has deliberately made the members of Christ's body interdependent so that all would have concern for others. (259-61)

Paul insisted that these worldly valuations of greatness be examined in light of what Jesus both taught and modeled regarding power and authority. Paul is appealing to Jesus' "[n]ot so with you" principle (Mark 10:43). When power and authority is utilized within the Church as it is within the world such usage of power and authority veils the kingdom of God. Power and authority has been given the Church so the Church might serve the world toward redemptive ends.

Paul reminded the church at Corinth that each believer was part of the body of Christ and that each person was of equal value within the whole body. Paul recognized a contrary truth to a worldly perception of power and authority; namely, God uses weakness to demonstrate God's strength. Paul advocated the equality of all believers in the sight of God's reconciliatory work through Jesus. He especially exhorted the strong among the Church to serve the weak both in conscience and deed (Rom. 14). Paul knew "God's power operates best in human weakness. Weakness is the arena in which God can most effectively manifest his power" (Dodd 38). The church at Corinth consisted of a mix of individuals vying for worldly greatness and power. As such, the situation threatened to divide the church due to members' unwillingness to use their power and authority to serve. Paul championed physically and spiritually weaker persons in the church and indicted stronger church members through his illustration of the body of Christ. Paul challenged the church to reject worldly paradigms of power and authority by reminding the church of Christ's selfless use of power and authority. Each member of the

body should understand his or her gifts as the means through which power and authority is properly exercised. Paul sought to foster a culture of fellowship empowering each member to serve under God's sovereign authority.

Paul reiterated Jesus' paradigm of power and authority to the church at Philippi with the following words:

Each of you should look not only to your own interest, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death. (Phil. 2:5-8)

Paul's exhortation to Philippian believers recasts Jesus' words to his disciples years earlier when he admonished "[n]ot so with you" (Mark 10:43). Paul understood that "Christ did not consider 'equality with God' to consist of being 'grasping' or 'selfish.' Rather, he rejected this popular view of kingly power and authority by pouring himself out for the sake of others" (Fee 94). According to Paul, Jesus equated equality with God to mean assuming the role of a servant. Jesus' actions convey the character of God. God utilized his power and authority to condescend to the human crisis, "[h]ence the secret of Jesus' authority is his obedience and total submission to the Father" (Cantalamessa 8). Jesus offered himself as a servant obedient to death to reconcile his fallen creation. Paul reminded the church of Jesus' attitude and called the church to follow Jesus' example. Essentially, Paul exhorted the church to imitate Christ, who thought of other people and did not grasp power and authority but instead humbled himself to serve.

The specific issues with which the church at Philippi dealt are unclear. Paul's commendation implies that something was amiss regarding the Philippians' attitude

toward service. Paul appealed to the authority of Christ's example in order to correct the spiritual and community issues facing the fledgling church. Paul understood that power and authority "is exercised through the service of others in word and deed, not through their domination, and Jesus is the example par excellence of the way this takes place" (Banks 186). Possessed of all power and authority, Jesus made himself nothing and took on the nature of a servant. Jesus utilized his power and authority to serve humanity. Even though he was equal with God, Jesus humbled himself to perform the ultimate act of service—offering his own life for the redemption of the world. Therefore, the "life of Jesus is only manifested through the church if its form is like 'the death of Jesus'" (Moltmann 93). Jesus' death was the ultimate act of service and the ultimate use of his power and authority. The Church reflects Jesus' life when the Church willingly uses power and authority the way Jesus taught and modeled.

Paul commended the Church to remember the nature of Christ with regards to personal discipleship, but also that the Church might practice Jesus' example of serving one another and the world. He says "this is what it means for Christ to be 'equal with God'—to pour himself out for the sake of others and to do so by taking the role of a slave. Here is the very heart of Pauline theology" (Fee 96-97). The message was repeated in Philippi: power and authority exists for service rather than for self-interest. Paul asserted that Jesus' attitude toward power, authority, and service presented culturally formative implications for the community of believers.

Implications: A Paradigm of Power and Authority for the Church

The Church has been given a share in God's power and authority in order to function as God's unique ambassador of reconciliation and redemption to a world

estranged from God by sin. God gives power and authority for the expressed purpose of serving other people by offering the good news of God's salvific work in Christ Jesus. He expresses his power and authority in a variety of ways such as offering instruction in God's word, performing physical acts that alleviate suffering, praying, and seeking personal obedience to God. Essentially, through its acts of service "the church has the 'form of a slave'" (Moltmann 93). Further, the Church assumes the very form of God as presented in the person of Jesus. Mysteriously, the Church is the body of Christ in the world and is instructed to imitate him and conform to the mind of Christ. Jesus' mindset regarding the use and distribution of power and authority reveals the nature of God to the world. When the Church uses power and authority to serve others in Christ like physical and spiritual ways the kingdom of God manifests and expresses God's redemptive work.

In order to manifest God's redemptive will, the Church must seek to embody the paradigm of power and authority Jesus taught and modeled. Unfortunately, "we see the same power-hunger in the church: in top-level ecclesiastical power struggles, in denominational disputes, in local churches driven by market forces and others in which the clergy hold all the power and refuse to share it with the lay people" (Dodd 36). Church leaders who exercise power and authority according to a worldly paradigm may get results; they may even assure compliance based on their positional authority, but when leaders and churches fail to utilize power and authority in the ways Jesus instructed and modeled they hide the kingdom of God. Further, when God's intended purposes for power and authority are neglected by church leaders agendas of self-interest persist. In short "[w]ithout a biblical theology of the spiritual power of the corporate, modern church people are at the mercy of a shallow individualism that is cultural and not

scriptural” (Mead 60). Churches and leaders who live into Jesus’ paradigm of power and authority understand that God has granted them power and authority through Christ for the purpose of serving others toward redemptive ends. These churches and leaders understand that ultimate power and authority rests in Christ and derives from him; therefore, power and authority is not viewed as a self-aggrandizing construct to be grasped but instead as a gift with which to exercise the humility of Christ’s service to the world. Church leaders who utilize Jesus’ paradigm of power and authority for service realize the manifest presence of God’s redemptive work in their midst and in their greater community. Such leaders lead as Paul did. They see themselves as coworkers in Christ’s body with those whom they serve and order their communities of faith to reflect a kingdom understanding of power and authority. Finally, churches that use power and authority to serve have greater influence in their communities.

Theological Conclusions

Jesus provided his followers with a principle for understanding his radically different paradigm for power and authority. He told them “[n]ot so with you” (Mark 10:43). Specifically, the Church should not exercise power and authority in the same manner as worldly rulers and leaders. Jesus wanted his followers to know God’s redemptive plan for creation did not involve forcing human wills into submission to God’s will. Instead, the redemption of the world is only possible when men and women righteously and willingly respond to God’s great love as demonstrated through the unique use of power and authority exemplified in Christ.

The early Church sought to live into Jesus’ paradigm of power and authority. Accordingly, church members held all things in common and focused using their power

and authority for service. While Paul possessed positional apostolic power, he promulgated an attitude of mutual servitude among all believers as evidenced by his use of collaborative language and his indictments of social valuations among believers. He knew Christians could only achieve true greatness through service. Further, Paul understood that Jesus modeled and taught that power and authority should be used to serve others toward redemptive ends rather than to serve toward selfish ends.

Congregational Health and the Utilization of Power

In *The Present Future*, Reggie McNeal makes the following claims with regard to measuring health of congregations:

Effective congregations keep score and they play to win (105). Church culture will need to begin keeping score on things different from what we measure now. These may include how many ministry initiatives we are establishing in the streets, how many conversations we are having with pre-Christians, how many volunteers we are releasing into local and global mission projects aimed at community transformation, how many congregations are starting to reach different populations, how many congregations are using our facilities, how many languages we worship in, how many community groups use our facilities, how many church activities target people who aren't here yet. (67)

A corollary relationship exists between effective leadership and congregational health. Specifically, congregational leaders' utilization of power and authority may determine qualitative factors for congregational health. The ways in which a congregational leader utilizes power and authority directly determine his or her effectiveness as a leader and influence the overall health of the congregation he or she leads. Consequently, the manner in which leaders utilize power and authority establishes the manner in which their respective congregations utilize power and authority in turn. Congregations ultimately will present an understanding of and utilization of power and authority mirroring the

pattern of power and authority modeled by their leaders, thus determining the health of said congregations.

In *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches*, Schwarz identifies eight quality characteristics present in all healthy and growing churches. His conclusions are based upon research conducted for more than twelve years in over fifty thousand churches all over the world. Like the definition given by Freeman for healthy churches in the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church in which Freeman says that all six of the characteristics of health he identified must be present in a church for it to be designated as healthy, Natural Church Development (NCD) posits that the “key to church growth...is found in the harmonious interplay of all eight elements” (41). NCD determines church health based upon scoring on surveys developed through NCD research. The higher a church’s score on each of the eight quality characteristics, the greater the theoretical condition of congregational health. Table 2.2 highlights the eight NCD characteristics for church health.

Table 2.2. The Eight Quality Characteristics of Congregational Health According to the Institute for Natural Church Development

Quality Index Scoring Based on NCD Testing Reflective of Health & Growth	Quality Characteristic	Quality Index Scoring Based on NCD Testing Reflective of Decline
64 and above	Empowering Leadership	45 and under
64 and above	Gift-Based Ministry	45 and under
64 and above	Passionate Spirituality	45 and under
64 and above	Effective Structures	45 and under
64 and above	Inspiring Worship	45 and under
64 and above	Holistic Small-Groups	45 and under
64 and above	Need-Oriented Evangelism	45 and under
64 and above	Loving Relationships	45 and under

Source: Schwarz 59.

The first of these qualities contributing to overall congregational health is *empowering leadership*. NCD research proposes a corollary relationship exists between utilization of power and authority and church health. Leaders of healthy churches “invert the pyramid of [power] so that the leader assists Christians to attain the spiritual potential God has for them” (Schwarz 24). NCD research and findings offer epistemological evidence to support this study’s overall hypothesis that a unique usage of power and authority positively affects congregational health. The kingdom paradigm of power and authority promotes laity empowerment by encouraging utilization of their respective gifts. Congregational leaders in healthy churches use power and authority to empower those persons with whom and to whom they minister.

The social sciences offer increased understanding regarding NCD’s findings. Rodney Napier and Matti K. Gershenfeld explore the group theory of Fred Fiedler in their book *Groups Theory and Experience*. Fiedler’s research invites inferences regarding

how differences in the utilization of power and authority by church leaders may influence church health. From a social science perspective Fiedler observes that the utilization of power and authority can determine leadership and organizational effectiveness. Fiedler suggests that a leader's effectiveness can increase by using power and authority in three specific ways: empowering others, promoting the choice to act in accordance with the leader, and using leadership as influence (229, 244, 237). Interestingly, these three characteristics are elements of Jesus' paradigm of power and authority. Napier and Gershenfeld assert that discussions on "leadership sooner or later evolve[s] into a discussion of power" even though the term "power" is often "taboo" (230).

Group dynamics research may help explain the relationship between leadership and congregational health. Social scientist and group dynamics researcher Marvin E. Shaw writes, "The behaviors of the powerful group member and the reactions of others to him inevitably influence the functioning of the group" (270). A study on groups of boys and power dynamics by Ronald Lippitt, Norman Polansky, Fritz Redl, and Sidney Rosen examined power dynamics in a camp setting in which group members were "more likely to 'contage' from the behavior of a high power member" (Cartwright and Zander 468). Studies of group dynamics suggest that the way the leader of a group utilizes his or her power and authority directly affects the functioning and behavior of the group in which the empowered individual is involved.

As a result, the utilization of power and authority always bears either positive or negative results. Church leaders "who abuse their power are, theologically speaking, idolatrous. All leaders shape the lives and spirits of those they influence after the spirit that dwells in them, but abusers of power incarnate a false god. They do not serve 'in the

image' of God" (Meyer 89). Utilizing power and authority in accordance with Jesus' paradigm manifests God's redemptive purposes for the world. Ultimately the health or dysfunction of congregations can be determined at least in part by the manner in which church leaders use power. Essentially, the way congregational leaders understand and exercise power and authority determines the health of the congregations they lead.

Summary

The Church currently is experiencing waning influence over American culture. The reasons for this waning influence are manifold. Director of Congregational Development in the Alabama-West Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church Paul Nixon foresees "most of the denominational faith communities that first evangelized North America are now rapidly down-shifting toward oblivion and near extinction. Most mainline pastors are leading churches that will not exist by the year 2100" (9). One unique cause may be the way in which the Church in the United States has understood, utilized, or failed to utilize the power and authority it has been given. Healthy congregations and congregational leaders who are effective in fulfilling the Church's mission may provide insight into the proper use of power and authority in the kingdom of God. Jesus teaches the "[n]ot so with you" principle for all persons who would participate in his kingdom (Mark 10:43). Jesus modeled a unique utilization of power and authority and explicitly taught the way in which power and authority in the kingdom of God should be understood and used. As such, Jesus is the paradigm for the Church. Specifically, for this study, Jesus provides the paradigm for the utilization of power and authority by congregational leaders.

[A]s Jesus makes it clear, we are called to live by a different model of leadership. The recognized rulers lord it over their subjects, and their great

ones make them feel the weight of their authority. But it mustn't be like that with you. We are called to struggle for, to bear witness to, a way of leadership which is neither the bullying arrogance of the tyrant nor the weak vacillation of the populist. In the Church itself, and in leadership roles within society, we must struggle for the way of the suffering servant, sharing and bearing the pain of his people. (Wright 88)

The Gospels highlight a distinct pattern for the use of power and authority. Jesus used power and authority to serve, to empower, to influence, and to promote the freedom of choice to follow him all in a collaborative and diffusive fashion. Jesus' utilization of power and authority is antithetical to the world's default power paradigms that clamor to control, dominate, and force people into compliance with those leaders who exercise their power and authority through the utilization of worldly power dynamics such as weaponry, position, wealth, or threat.

Jesus offers a better way, a proper use for power and authority. Further, Jesus tells the Church that its ability to carry out God's redemptive mission in the world is intricately linked with the ways the Church utilizes power and authority. The Church possesses power and authority for certain, but the kingdom of God can become visible only when power and authority is used according to Jesus' pattern. As the Church, "[s]houldn't we acknowledge that all persons have power, that organizations are reliant on the responsible use of power to fulfill their goals and mission, and that leaders who exercise power may in fact be servants and not simply in it for themselves or their group?" (Robinson 10). This study posits that congregational leaders who understand and utilize power and authority in keeping with Jesus' teachings enable their respective congregations to be healthy, and thereby increase the effectiveness of the Church's mission. Congregational leaders utilizing power and authority in accordance with Jesus'

paradigm cause the kingdom of God to be seen and contribute to the manifestation of God's redemptive intentions for creation.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Problem

This was an explorative study utilizing a researcher-designed semi-structured interview protocol and an emailed questionnaire. The purpose of this study was to explore the way power and authority is utilized by healthy congregations within the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church. This study asserted that Jesus taught and modeled a paradigm of power and authority contrary to the paradigm of power and authority propagated at an epistemological level in the world. The study maintained that the paradigm of power and authority in the kingdom of God, as outlined in Chapter 2, manifests God's will for utilizing power and authority. Proper usage of power and authority is a sign of God's kingdom and brings about God's redemptive purposes in the world.

This study hoped to discover the manner in which healthy congregations and congregational leaders utilize power and authority. Further, the study hoped to explore the corollary relationship between the aforementioned use of power and authority and the paradigm of power and authority Jesus taught and modeled. I interviewed leaders of healthy congregations in North Alabama United Methodist churches to explore their respective use of power and authority. I distributed a researcher-designed questionnaire to a convenience sampling of laity at each church designated as healthy. The questionnaire also was used to make qualitative determinations regarding the use of power and authority within participating congregations.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

Two primary research questions guided the scope of this study.

Research Question 1

How is power and authority utilized within congregations recognized as healthy?

I conducted semi-structured interviews with pastors and leaders of a sample population of healthy congregations in the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church (see Appendix A). Integral to this interview process was the assumption that certain characteristic uses of power and authority were dynamically at play in these congregations. Also integral to the interview process was the exploration of perceptions regarding proper utilization of power and authority by healthy congregations. Determinations were made as to how power and authority was actually utilized within respective congregations.

Interviews were conducted with pastors and leaders of healthy North Alabama United Methodist congregations. I conducted interviews at the churches according protocol in keeping with qualitative field research design. Further, I utilized a researcher-designed interview guide throughout each interview (see Appendix A). Prior to each interview, I reviewed ethical concerns with each participant and obtained informed consent (see Appendix E). Field research also included administration of a researcher-designed questionnaire (see Appendix B) to a convenience sampling of laity at each of the designated healthy congregations. The questionnaire addressed the five components of the paradigm of power and authority in the kingdom of God. As such, interviews and questionnaires attempted to identify both the perception of power utilization and actual utilization of power and authority within this sample of healthy congregations.

Research Question 2

Is this use of power and authority in keeping with the paradigm of power and authority characteristic of the kingdom of God?

With this question I sought to discover whether a positive corollary relationship existed between study findings regarding the utilization of power and authority in healthy North Alabama United Methodist congregations and the kingdom paradigm of power and authority. Further, the question sought to explore whether or not congregations led by pastors and leaders utilizing power and authority in accordance with the kingdom paradigm promote congregational health in positive and recognizable ways.

Participants

Participants in this study emerged from a sample of healthy North Alabama United Methodist congregations. I selected participants through assistance from directors of the Congregational Development Office of the North Alabama Conference. Specifically, I used a researcher-designed interview guide to conduct semi-structured interviews with pastors and leaders of participating healthy congregations. A convenience sampling of laity at each church completed the researcher-designed questionnaire.

Instruments

This study utilized both a researcher-designed questionnaire (see Appendix B) and protocol methods characteristic of qualitative-interview research including a researcher-designed interview guide (see Appendix A). Both methods sought to explore the utilization of power and authority by leaders of healthy congregations in the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church.

The first method of field research employed a semi-structured interview protocol. Personal interviews with pastors and/or congregational leaders of participant congregations identified recurring themes throughout this study. A high probability that certain themes would recur during the interview process existed. A researcher-designed guide aided the interview process (see Appendix A). The interview guide was designed to explore actual utilization of power and authority by pastors and leaders of healthy churches in the North Alabama United Methodist Conference. Questions also were designed to explore the utilization of power and authority as related to the paradigm for utilizing power and authority in the kingdom of God. Structurally, interviews were dialogical in nature. I recorded interviews on both an audio-recording device and on Microsoft Word.

The second method of field research involved using a researcher-designed questionnaire distributed to a convenience sampling of laity at each of the designated healthy congregations. The questionnaire consisted of fifteen multiple choice statements and ten open-ended questions. Each statement and question, based upon the kingdom paradigm of power and authority as examined in Chapter 2, sought to discover each person's perception of utilizing power and authority in each of the designated healthy congregations participating in the study. Ultimately, through the questionnaire I sought to determine if a corollary relationship existed between the perception of power and authority held by laity in healthy churches and the kingdom paradigm of power and authority.

Independent Variables

This study identified five independent variables. The first variable was the

Biblical paradigm for the use of power and authority I outlined in Chapters 1 and 2. The second, third, and fourth independent variables were my role as interviewer, the participant group being interviewed (leaders and laity of healthy congregations), and the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church. Each of these variables may have caused, effected, or influenced study outcomes but were independent of the actual outcome. The fifth independent variable was the participant representative designated by each of the fifteen senior pastors to receive, copy, distribute, and gather questionnaires used to obtain data from a convenience sampling of laity at each church. The first, second, and third variables' independent nature was self-evident. The fourth variable, the North Alabama Conference, was independent in that Conference representatives provided both the definition of health and also the participant group that served as the context of study, yet the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church was not involved in oversight of the study.

Dependent Variables

Most of the dependent variables identified for this study related to instrumentation. Both the researcher-designed questionnaire (see Appendix B) and interview process including the researcher-designed interview guide (see Appendix A), influenced research outcomes based upon the qualitative and therefore partly subjective nature unique to such methodological tools. These variables were dependent upon the aforementioned independent variables.

Based upon study conclusions, church health was identified as a variable dependent upon the paradigm for the utilization of power and authority demonstrated by the study group.

Intervening Variables

Intervening variables for this research proved less concrete than either the independent or dependent variables. Variables factoring into the defined nature of the participant group may have helped to interpret observed outcomes. Participants in this study were determined based upon nature and definition. As such, participants were healthy congregations in the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church. Specifically, participants included pastors, staff, and laypersons affiliated with each of the designated healthy congregations. The participants were not intervening variables for this study, but the designation “health” was, and therefore, contributed to the explanation of observed findings.

Validity

While a large portion of the research for this study involved semi-structured interview protocol, I determined that research findings would be enhanced through the distribution and analysis of a questionnaire designed to gather laypersons’ perceptions of the utilization of power and authority within their own respective church. Specifically, the validity of two researcher-designed instruments was determined. The design of these instruments are detailed below.

Eight pastors provided feedback regarding both instruments, and I used this information to modify the instruments to improve validity. The pastors with whom I consulted were recognized as effective in ministry and scholarship by Asbury Theological Seminary, the churches they have served, and for seven of the eight pastors, by the conferences in which they hold membership.

The group made suggestions to improve upon the design and wording of the statements and questions appearing on both the interview guide and questionnaire. The group assessed the clarity of the instruments and made suggestions. Three of the same pastors provided feedback on the subsequent modified versions of the questionnaire. These measures assured instrument validity.

Researcher Design

While I considered certain non-researcher-designed questionnaires for this study, ultimately I found these instruments unsatisfactory for this particular study due to the qualitative nature of the overall research. Specifically, I considered the Natural Church Development questionnaire based upon the eight characteristics that are associated with NCD research but found the largeness of the characteristics too broad in scope for the purposes of this study (Schwarz 4-8). In addition, I also reviewed the *Power Perception Profile (PPP)* generated by Dr. Paul Hersey and Dr. Walter E. Natemeyer through the Center for Leadership Studies, Inc. While the *PPP* proved helpful, I found this instrument unsatisfactory for answering the research questions attached to and prompting this study.

Additionally, I considered the writings and research of Janet Hagberg, author of *Real Power: Stages of Personal Power in Organizations*, while developing the researcher-designed instruments but found this information inadequate for the purposes of this study as well. Hagberg's work primarily considers the stages of evolving understanding and use of power by individuals, while this study sought primarily to explore the manner in which power and authority was utilized within healthy congregations. I determined that Hagberg's work had the potential to alter the scope of the study.

As a result I developed a researcher-designed interview guide and questionnaire for laity based upon literary interaction and theological exegesis. The design was characteristic of a typical qualitative research approach. Statements regarding the utilization of power and authority emerged from critique of literature and Scripture. Statements developed primarily through theological exegesis and interpretation of Jesus' use of and teaching on power.

Pretest and Refine

I administered the instrument (see Appendix B) to a group of eight pastors, each of whom demonstrated effectiveness in ministry as recognized by Asbury Theological Seminary, the congregations they had served, and for seven of the eight pastors, the United Methodist Conferences in which they are members. The group tested the validity of the instrument and made multiple suggestions regarding refining the instrument. The group offered clarity regarding assessment statements. Accordingly, length, wording, and design modifications grew from this group's feedback.

Data Collection

Data collection was interactive by design. I distributed the researcher-designed questionnaire electronically (via e-mail) to a representative from each of the participating healthy congregations. Accordingly, the church representative copied and distributed the questionnaire to a convenience sampling of laity. Participants had a period of two weeks during which to respond the questionnaire. The representative then gathered and compiled the completed questionnaires. Ethical concerns were addressed. I collected all completed questionnaires during a visit to each church. During these visits I conducted interviews with the pastors and/or other congregational leaders.

Field interviews provided pertinent data obtained both through recording-secretary style methods and an audio-recording device.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was qualitative in nature. I used an audio-recording device, pencil/pen note-taking, and Microsoft Word in order to record the semi-structured interviews. Recurring patterns and themes were determined in the process of compiling the interview and questionnaire data. The questionnaire was distributed to a convenience sampling of laity by a representative from each of the participating healthy congregations. Representatives distributed paper and electronic questionnaires to participating laity. The laypersons invited to complete the questionnaire were chosen at the discretion of the representative. Again, ethical concerns relating to said representatives were addressed. The questionnaire explored perceptions of the utilization of power and authority unique to each healthy congregation. The questionnaire explored the utilization of power and authority in five unique ways with questions relating to each of the five components of the kingdom paradigm of power and authority. I explored the corollary relationship between congregational health and the kingdom paradigm of power and authority through analysis of recurring themes and patterns gathered during field research.

Ethics

In order to ensure the integrity of my study, I addressed certain ethical considerations during the course of my research. Each study participant read and signed a consent form addressing ethical considerations pertinent to the study (see Appendix E).

Such considerations included: gathering data, storing and/or disposing data, and reporting data.

I asked each participating congregation to assign a representative to receive, copy, distribute, and gather the questionnaire (see Appendix B) from a convenience sampling of laity at each church. Unique ethical considerations had to be considered. Through e-mail each representative was asked to read and respond to a consent form addressing specific ethical concerns (see Appendix F).

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways in which leaders of healthy North Alabama United Methodist congregations utilized power and authority and to determine possible correlations to Jesus' utilization of power and authority.

General Characteristics of Study Group: An Overview

Congregations participating in the study represented the top 10 percent of healthy United Methodist congregations in the North Alabama Conference as designated by the current North Alabama Conference Congregational Development Director, Dick Freeman, and staff. Fifteen churches participated in the study.

87 percent of participating congregations were less than twenty years in existence. 13 percent of participating congregations were greater than one hundred years existence. The fifteen churches participating in the study were categorized by size according to established measurements set by the North Alabama Conference. According to these measurements 20 percent of the congregations were small, 27 percent of the congregations were medium sized, and 53 percent were large (see Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1). All but one of the participating churches were led by male senior pastors.

Table 4. 1. Key To Understanding Congregational Size Designations for North Alabama United Methodist Congregations

Size	Average Attendance
Small	Fewer than 99 persons attending principal worship service
Medium	100—499 persons attending principal worship service
Large	>500 persons attending principal worship service

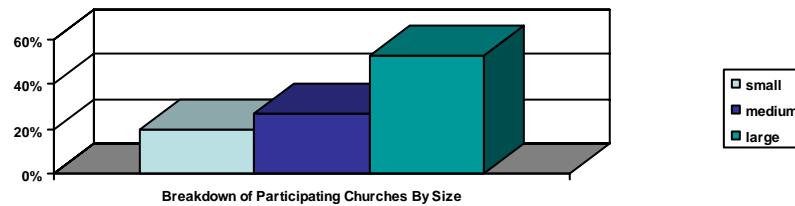


Figure 4.1. Size distribution of participating congregations.

Only one of the participating congregations was located in a community of fewer than one thousand persons. Instead, fourteen of the fifteen congregations were located in urban or suburban communities characterized by rapid growth within the last ten years. Only one of the participating churches was located in a predominately low-income, under-resourced community. This church represented the only participating congregation whose senior pastor was female. Further, eleven of the fifteen churches were located in communities characterized by suburban sprawl and mid-level to significant signs of wealth. Two of the congregations were located in urban downtowns featuring a wealthy and socially influential constituency. One congregation was located in an area of characteristically middle-class growth, but the members of the congregation primarily were lower middle-class to substantially under-resourced persons (see Figures 4.2-4.4).

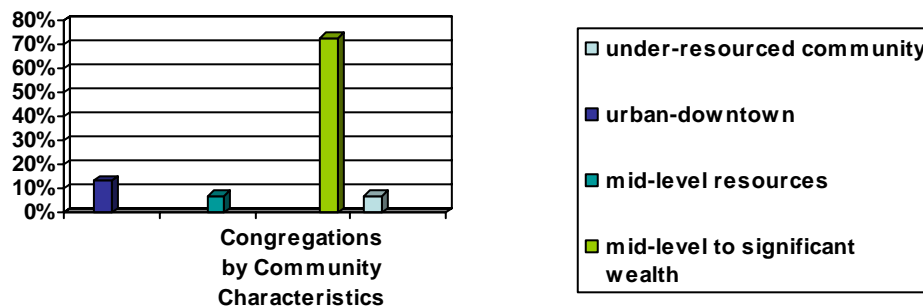


Figure 4.2. Community characteristics of participating congregations.

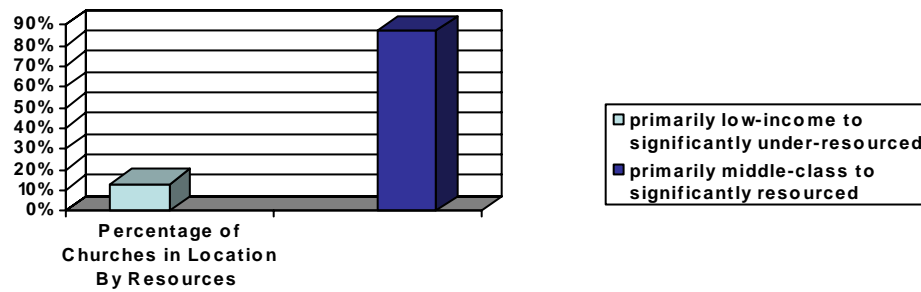


Figure 4.3. Resourcing of primary constituency of participating congregations.

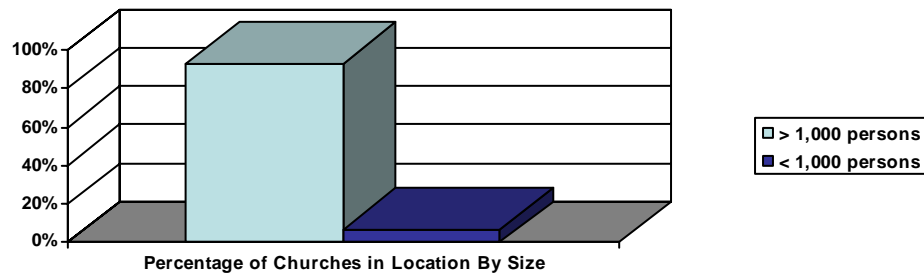


Figure 4.4. Size of communities in which participating congregations were located.

Process and Procedure

For the purposes of this study, I compiled data via two methods: face-to-face interviews with senior pastors and staff of participating congregations, and questionnaires distributed and collected by a representative at each participating congregation. I interviewed every senior pastor of each participating congregation and recorded interview data by digital recording, on Microsoft Word, and on paper. Via e-mail, I distributed questionnaires to an agreed upon representative selected by the senior pastor at each participating church. Questionnaires were returned by electronic and/or postal mail or were given directly to me during interviews.

Ideally, the study sought to collect data from senior pastors, select staff, and at least fifteen laypeople at each of the participating churches. Table 4.2 categorizes general demographic information with regarding gender, age, and ordination status of senior pastors participating in the study. Table 4.3 lists participating congregations and pastors, but participants' personal e-mail addresses and phone numbers were omitted from this table in order to assure confidentiality.

Findings Related to Semi-Structured Interviews with Senior Pastors

The select group of senior pastors participating in the study represented unique pastoral leadership in the North Alabama Conference. Semi-structured interviews revealed the manner in which these pastors of healthy congregations both used power and perceived the use of power. The following bullets outline major findings from these interviews:

- Pastors of healthy congregations utilized their power and authority to set the direction of ministry for the church.
- Pastors of healthy congregations used their power and authority to help other people in physical and spiritual ways.
- Pastors of healthy congregations utilized their power and authority to connect people with God. Participating pastors developed means for other people to encounter God.
- Pastors of healthy churches utilized their power and authority to provide opportunities for people to serve and participate in the life of the church. Participating pastors actively sought to create opportunities for laity to become actively involved in ministry and discipleship.

- Pastors of healthy congregations utilized their power and authority to create opportunities for laity to connect with one another for the purpose of nurturing and strengthening the sense of community in their respective congregations.

Group Characteristics

The fifteen participating pastors were distinguished by their contributions to the overall health of the congregations each pastor led and by their contributions to the North Alabama Conference as a whole. Specifically, the study sought to explore how these pastors utilized their power and authority. The following Tables and bullet points illustrate specific characteristics of the participant group.

Table 4.2. General Information Regarding Senior Pastors of Participating Congregations (N=15)

Pastors by Sex	n	%
Male	14	93.3
Female	1	6.7

Pastors by Age	n	%
< 30 years of age	0	0
< 40 years of age	1	6.7
< 50/< 40 years of age	11	73.3
> 50 years of age	3	20

Mean=48

Pastors by Ordination Status	n	%
Full Elder Status	14	93.3
Local Pastor Status	1	6.7

- One of the fifteen participating pastors was female. She also represented the only local pastor included in the study. Participating pastors and churches were selected by Dick Freeman, the Conference director of congregational development, in consultation with me.
- A majority of the participating pastors were between forty and fifty years in age. Further, 93.3 percent of participating pastor were older than forty years.

Table 4.3. Top 10% of Healthy United Methodist Congregations in the North Alabama Conference by Alphabetical Location

Location	Pastor	Church Name	Size
Athens	Calvin Havens	Friendship	L
Birmingham	Keith Elder	Liberty Crossings	S
Birmingham	Jim Savage	Riverchase	L
Birmingham	Mark Lacey	Asbury	L
Grant	Phil Howell	New Life	S
Guntersville	Robin Scott	Guntersville First	L
Guntersville	Deborah Moon	Genesis	S
Helena	Lyle Holland	Cahaba Bend	M
Huntsville	John Tanner	Cove	L
Madison	Alan Weatherly	Asbury	L
Madison	David Tubbs	Good Shepherd	M
McCalla	Mike Skelton	InnerChange	M
Trussville	Tommy Gray	ClearBranch	L
Tuscaloosa	John Kearns	Christ's Harbor	M
Tuscaloosa	Ken Dunavent	Tuscaloosa First	L

- Participating pastors represented the full geographic boundaries of the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church (see Table 4.3).
- A majority of participating pastors and congregations were located in highly populated areas.

Table 4.4. Size of Participating Congregations (N=15)

	n	%
Small	3	20
Medium	4	26.7
Large	8	53.3

- A majority of participating congregations averaged medium or large attendance at their principal weekly worship service (see Table 4.4) according to the figures provided by Dick Freeman, the North Alabama Director of Congregational Development (Refer to page 7).
- Participating congregations that averaged “small” attendance at their principal weekly worship service represented 20 percent of the overall study group.

Power and Authority to Set the Direction of Ministry

Phil Howell described New Life at the time of his arrival as a languishing church-start averaging seventy in worship. According to Howell, the church’s state at the time of his arrival indicated the church “needed a charge.” Howell and a majority of the other participating pastors articulated they used their power and authority to set the direction of

ministry for their respective congregations. Eight years later, Howell's languishing church had tripled in size and increased its influence in the community. Further, Howell still asks the question, "Where is New Life going?"

Under Howell's leadership, New Life, located in Grant, Alabama, began a much needed daycare. Parents reported driving outside of Grant to Guntersville for adequate childcare because Grant did not have a day-care. In addition, Howell led the church in totally revamping the style of worship at New Life. Regarding the church's worship style at the beginning of his tenure as pastor, Howell remarked, "It wasn't really traditional, but it wasn't contemporary either, it was a floundering mishmash of styles." New Life attributes much of its growth to vibrant contemporary worship. Howell envisioned the church as the hub of the small community in which it was planted, an "anthill" in his words, "busy and alive" with people excited about God.

Ken Dunavent, senior pastor of the Tuscaloosa First United Methodist Church, saw his church as out-of-touch with its community. Upon his arrival, the congregation consisted primarily of middle to upper middle class persons and had the reputation of "a white-collar congregation." Dunavent described the state of Tuscaloosa First United Methodist at the time of his arrival as a "beautiful fortress" accessible only to certain kinds of people. Accordingly, the senior pastor claimed his "job is to see the future. I had to get out front, they weren't going to lead themselves." Consequently, Dunavent led a team of church leaders on a "visioning retreat." As a result the walls of the fortress came down in many ways. Dunavent set the direction for ministry, and Tuscaloosa First experienced growth outside its traditional population of socially upward mobile persons. Dunavent led the creation of a second service, "The Bridge," contemporary in style and

setting. He remarked that it has become more common to see blue jeans on Sunday as a result.

Dunavent has also led his congregation in other ministry areas. He invited Hurricane Katrina victims and the Red Cross to use church facilities. His invitation initially raised eyebrows but has since caused the church to move toward caring in more practical and tangible ways for the needy people in the surrounding community. Further, Dunavent is moving First Church toward church planting and is encouraging the church to consider establishing satellite churches in some of Tuscaloosa's fastest growing suburbs.

Like Tuscaloosa First, Guntersville First United Methodist Church counted among its congregation a constituency comprised mainly of people from upper middle to wealthy socioeconomic statuses. Their reputation as a church for "that group" of people coupled with their formidable looking building deterred segments of Guntersville's population from attending. Enter Robin Scott. Much like Howell and Dunavent, Scott set the direction for ministry. According to Scott, even as a church with a history of more than one hundred years, Guntersville First "is a new church. Every church can be a new church every time a new person comes in and every time there is a spiritual birth." Scott led the charge of tearing down the old reputation that Guntersville First held as a church for the elite and set about building a reputation as a church for everyone. He said he primarily led this change from the pulpit and by initiating relationship building ministries: "I've had to take the robe off, and remind myself there is no difference between me and the folks in the pews. Hopefully that translates, there is no difference between the folks in the pews and the folks in street—we all need Christ." Scott comes

across as a mild, deferential sort of personality, and yet interaction with this pastor and his staff revealed that they followed him and joyfully were walking in the direction he had set. Since Scott's arrival church attendance has increased from just over two hundred people in worship on Sunday to nearly nine hundred people in worship on Sunday.

Even in light of such changes, Scott realized First Guntersville was not reaching all the people it could. He concluded that some people might never come through the "doors of a First church." As a result Scott felt God's leading to plant a church in the most significantly under-resourced lowest income part of the city. Guntersville First planted the Genesis church, and both churches participated in this study. Resourced by Guntersville First, Genesis is growing and reaching a social group who felt uncomfortable at Guntersville First. Regarding this church plant Scott remarked, "In a sense, Genesis is First incarnate." Robin clearly experienced an understanding that his power and authority set the direction of ministry for his congregation.

Significantly these pastors do not set the direction of ministry for their congregations in a haphazard or arbitrary manner. Instead, these pastors lead their respective congregations with confidence as they follow God's lead. This kind of activity on the part of these pastors implies two logical considerations. First, these pastors experience a deep connection to God and dependency upon God's leading. Secondly these pastors experience a very real sense of possessing divine power and authority as they set the direction for ministry. Participating pastors shared a sense of God's leading and empowerment to carry out God's will. It is with a sense of being in possession of God's authority that these pastors set the direction for ministry in their respective churches. Dunavent said, "Once I sense God is moving, then I move in that direction."

Pastors of healthy churches set the direction of ministry for their congregations because they understand and accept their power and authority.

Power and Authority to Help People

All fifteen pastors described using their power and authority to help people.

Deborah Moon related her personal story of coming to faith in Christ to the ministry which she is now part. Moon spoke candidly of a time of brokenness in her life and how her pastor, Robin Scott, “loved me where I was and valued me as a person showing me the real love of Christ.” Deborah pastors Genesis, the church planted by Guntersville First to target the most impoverished and broken population segments in Guntersville. Through her pastoral leadership, she helps families and individuals experiencing brokenness to find healing and help in Christ and Christian community. Further, she recognizes her own power and authority to help people struggling with multiple problems. Moon leads an anger support group at Genesis, a Celebrate Recovery ministry for persons struggling with addictions, and a Positive Parenting program teaching parents, many of whom are unwed mothers, to re-evaluate their parenting in terms of the long-term positive effects their parenting can have on their children. Motivated by her past brokenness and coupled with the transforming power she experienced in Christ, Moon uses her power and authority to help others.

Self-identifying as “a lead by example” kind of pastor, David Tubbs participates actively in helping people in his community and beyond. As such, his behavior offers a type of visual sermon. When he founded Good Shepherd in a store front, he wanted to create a community of service to God and neighbor. Tubbs began right away helping in practical ways in his community and confessed that “nothing is beneath me” when it

came to what he would do with regards to serving others, from wiping down tables, serving meals, or taking out the trash. Tubbs quoted James 2 and said, “if you say to your brother be warmed and filled and do nothing about it, though it’s in your power to do so? We are told to serve. Helping, serving others is a long-term investment, we didn’t have immediate benefits but now it’s paying off.” The Good Shepherd congregation now meets in a new building located in a Madison suburb, but Tubbs continued insisting the church share Christ through acts of service. Good Shepherd gets reminded of this many Sundays from the pulpit. Tubbs tells his congregation, “Your homework is this week do something and experience God.” At the time of Tubbs’ interview, Good Shepherd was working to build a home for an elderly person in their community with Habitat for Humanity. Tubbs, along with others from Good Shepherd, visits the Limestone Correctional Facility weekly to hand out a cup of hot coffee and donuts to visiting family members of incarcerated inmates as they arrive. Additionally, Tubbs leads mission work-teams to a community in Honduras in order to help in both physical and spiritual ways. He has led work-teams on six occasions to help in the rebuilding of coastal towns hardest hit by recent hurricanes, and Tubbs has initiated an English tutorial ministry at Good Shepherd to reach the increasing Hispanic population in their community. Tubbs uses his power and authority to initiate and bless ministries helping many people in practical, concrete ways.

Each pastor involved in the study sought active means to help people in their respective congregations, local communities, and abroad. Ten percent of the budget at Asbury at Birmingham is allocated for the support of local and global missions. When asked, “Why serve in the community these ways?” Jim Savage, pastor at Riverchase,

replied, "Because Jesus told us to." Not only do these pastors believe Jesus had commanded them to help others, these pastors also express belief that Jesus imparted to them the power and authority to carry out their mission.

Power and Authority to Connect with God

Pastors of healthy churches utilize their power and authority to connect with God on a personal level and to connect members of their respective congregations to God. The majority of participating pastors reported relying on God to accomplish their respective ministry tasks. Specifically, these pastors relied on God through prayer and through spiritual accountability to other Christians. These pastors recognized that preaching, leading worship, and prayer were vital means connecting both themselves and their congregations to God. Each pastor operated according to this paradigm of connection out of an implicit understanding that he or she possessed the authority to proclaim God's word, lead people in worshiping God, and invite people to speak to God. These pastors used their power and authority to invoke the presence of God in worship services and bring congregants to experience God. Each pastor communicated that connecting with God was a primary function of their role as pastor and that they were endowed with the power to do so.

Regarding his evolving preaching style, Mark Lacey, pastor of Asbury Birmingham, said, "God has power over my preaching and I live it out. I listen and God speaks through me. I have to say some tough things for people to hear sometimes, including me." Pastors of healthy congregations often understand that God communicates with them and speaks through them. In this way they believe they possess the power and authority to connect God with God's people.

Sitting at the table with the staff and senior pastor of Friendship, the pastor, Calvin Havens, opened the meeting with a question, “Did God show up Sunday?” He asked the question with every bit of sobriety, fully expecting his staff to seriously consider the answer. Alan Weatherly, pastor at Asbury in Madison, the largest United Methodist church in North Alabama, remarked, “People want to experience God on Sunday.” Weatherly, along with the majority of participating pastors commented on the importance of spending time with God in order to “have a word” to share with their respective congregations. These pastors contend that their personal connections with God enable them to connect their congregations to God. Pastors of healthy congregations view themselves as functioning in this unique role of bringing God and God’s people into communion. They do not use their authority to do so with flippancy, but with confident expectation. Participating pastors sought to invite their respective congregations into a communicative relationship with God. Lyle Holland, senior pastor of Cahaba Bend, set the direction of ministry for his congregation with a mission statement: Connect, Commit, Be. Holland asserted connection with God and other people as first priority. His congregation is moving that direction. The Cahaba Bend praise band has drawn hundreds into the church, prompting Holland to say, “Worship leadership is both horizontal and vertical.” Holland’s comment points to his implicit understanding that authority and power are to be used to connect people to one another and to God. As a result, the church he founded at Cahaba Bend has steadily grown and now offers multiple worship services designed to allow congregants to encounter God.

The InnerChange church connects with a demographic group unlike many other churches and draws in large numbers of unchurched and dechurched persons.

Additionally, more than 60 percent of worship attendees are in their teens and early twenties. Pastor Mike Skelton believes that a critical use of the power and authority at InnerChange involves creating ways to connect people with God. Skelton says that people “at their core” really want to “encounter” God, and “I help them do it.” At InnerChange, Skelton views the time he spends preparing and delivering sermons as paramount, since through his preaching people connect with God. Music is also a vital means through which persons who attend InnerChange encounter and connect with God. As the church began to grow the first staff person Skelton hired was a worship leader, with whom Skelton enjoys a partner like relationship. Every Saturday night the church hosts Christian heavy-metal bands drawing hundreds of young people into an environment Skelton described as an “opportunity to connect with God.” Skelton shared that initially the Saturday night services were “very agitating” to the “religious folks, local government, and police.” However, as time passed the local community began to observe “positive effects” resulting from the presence of InnerChange. Skelton cited specifically a drop in teen criminal behavior. The community now vocally supports the church.

Power and Authority to Provide Opportunities to Serve and Participate

Pastors of healthy churches use power and authority to provide opportunities for people to serve and participate in church life. Pastors participating in this study demonstrated a desire to allow for congregational participation. They wanted to afford people opportunities. These pastors were candid about both their strengths and weaknesses. In light of their weaknesses these pastors recognized opportunities for laity to become involved in ongoing areas of ministry needing leadership, support, and

implementation. Many of the pastors creatively offered vision for both the staff and laity of their respective congregations as opportunities to serve and participate. Some examples of the opportunities these pastors spearheaded included: study groups, foreign mission trips, alternate worship services, leadership, discipleship, local mission work, and other activities. Pastors of healthy churches communicated explicitly and implicitly that they were making space for people to serve and participate. Pastors of healthy churches used their power and authority to make room for such opportunities and demonstrated willingness to share power and collaborate in ministry. These pastors wanted laity to utilize their gifts and talents and proactively sought to make opportunities available.

The study noted that eight of the fifteen senior pastors possessed a unique professional and spiritual relationship with another person in leadership at their respective churches. This was a unique and very unexpected finding. Eight of the pastors possessed what appeared to be a co-leadership relationship with one other person in their respective churches. These relationships also appeared to have been initiated by the senior pastors. The role of these co-leaders was to serve as sounding boards, voices of clarity, accountability partners, and leaders of others. In some interviews these co-leaders communicated that they had been given the opportunity to lead and to speak into the lives of their senior pastors candidly.

Skelton created space and opportunity for a worship leader, a praise band, and an opportunity for laity to work with InnerChange's burgeoning youth population. John Tanner offered other people the opportunity to preach at Cove through the creation of a contemporary service. John Kearns, pastor of Christ Harbor, provided space for laity to take part in a prison ministry called Kairos mission and encouraged families to participate

in the J & H Ranch, a ministry designed to strengthen families. These pastors use their power and authority not to squelch ideas, but rather they seek to make room and offer opportunities for laity to serve and become involved in the overall ministry of the church. They make it possible for people to experience the practice of their faith in tangible, concrete ways. Karen, an administrative assistant at Asbury in Madison discussed the church's sending her on a long-anticipated mission trip to China. Pastors of healthy churches see needs in their respective churches and communities and actively look for creative ways to involve laity. They realize they are unable to lead every aspect of ministry and gladly give away power to laity to serve and participate, be creative, and do ministry.

Pastors of healthy churches intentionally find venues for people to serve and train leaders. These pastors utilized their power and authority to train and raise up leaders to serve within their congregations and many of these developing leaders have begun to serve outside of their local congregations. Tommy Gray is the pastor of ClearBranch United Methodist Church, one of the largest and fastest growing churches in the North Alabama Conference. Gray described a priority use of his power and authority as developing leaders to serve at ClearBranch. Regarding his style of leadership development, Gray stated, "Through preaching and teaching, I set up opportunities for others to lead, and through a leadership round-table designed to identify potential lay leaders." Gray and ClearBranch created a leadership round-table as the church grew. The round-table offered laity opportunities to serve in identifying potential leaders and to utilize these leaders' respective gifts.

InnerChange pastor Mike Skelton described his leadership style as “very team oriented,” he leads “by example, [while relying] on the Word to lead as he preaches and teaches hard.” Skelton told his core group, “I very much need your help.” Training leaders and developing opportunities for people to serve and participate in the life of the church are priorities for Skelton. Skelton sees that a fundamental use of his power and authority, and that of the church, is to position and empower people in particular areas of ministry in which their gifts best can be developed and where the church as a whole can benefit. Skelton attributes the difficult task of training and identifying leaders in the congregation to the demographics of InnerChange. InnerChange is mainly comprised of formerly unchurched persons. Skelton said, “We haven’t been good at attracting solid Christians.” In turn, Skelton has found it more difficult to raise up solid leaders. He remarked, the “spiritual warfare side of [leadership development] is insane.” Healthy church leaders recognize that leadership development is essential to the overall health of their respective congregations and requires the full attention of their God-given power and authority.

Power and Authority to Connect the Community of Faith

Only two of the participating congregations were older than one hundred years. Guntersville First has grown from an average attendance of 212 persons at their principal weekly worship service to 860 persons in attendance in 2007. Scott, pastor of Guntersville First, was asked about distinctives of Guntersville First, one of the oldest churches included in this study. Most of the churches that participated in the study were new churches organized for fewer than twenty-five years. Scott said that since his coming to Guntersville First “the laity took over the church. Any church can be a new church.

This church doesn't see itself as an old church. There is an excitement here, we expect things to happen." Essential to understanding Guntersville First is understanding Scott's unique perception and use of power and authority. He views his power and authority as a means to connect people within the body of Christ to one another in mission, vision, and mutual faith. Scott attributed the growth of the church and the church's change in self-perception to laity's desire to connect with one another and to connect with people assimilating into the congregation.

Mark Lacey, Pastor of Asbury at Birmingham, said "the greatest threat for ministers is isolation. Our goal is to be the healthiest individuals and congregation we can be, speaking truth in love to one another and caring for each other." Lacey described a pivotal moment in his personal relationship with Christ that produced positive results in the life of his congregation. Early in his tenure at Asbury he focused his attention on pleasing the congregation and "trying to fix" problems; nevertheless, through an intense time of personal spiritual renewal and concerted prayer with a group of men in the church with whom he had begun to form spiritual bonds, Lacey discovered his "highest priority was my relationship with Christ, and that having these men to connect with, who were in the position to tell me the truth, that my preaching changed. I was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit." As a result Asbury now encourages members and staff to connect with one another in small accountability groups, support groups, and mission-centered groups. Lacey noted the positive results this effort to connect members and attendees has yielded. Specifically, Lacey cited Celebrate Recovery groups and a group of medical professionals who came together for study and prayer and as a result established a free medical clinic.

Christ Harbor has a unique requirement for members. Senior Pastor John Kearns reported that all members are required to participate in a small accountability and study group. Kearns cited many other ways that he works to connect members with one another—mission groups, youth gatherings after ball games, prayer groups, and joint ministries with other area churches.

Findings Related to Semi-Structured Interviews Held with Staff of Healthy Congregations

Interviews with staff were guided by the nine questions I developed that appear in Appendix A *Field Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews—Interview Guide*. I was particularly interested in responses to questions 8 and 9: I would like to know how you use your personal power, authority, and influence as a leader of this congregation. Can you give me a specific illustration? and How do you understand the way Jesus used power, authority, and influence in Scripture? The study found that staff of healthy congregations utilized and perceived power and authority in their respective congregations in the following ways:

- Staff members utilized power and authority to create and provide opportunities for other laity to serve in ministry. Additionally, participating staff members remarked that power and authority was used by senior leaders to create opportunities for staff members to develop ministry.
- Participating staff members shared stories of power and authority used to help people in physical ways.
- Staff members described the various means their respective congregations developed to connect people to God as a use of power and authority.

- Participating staff members sought to utilize power and authority to connect people with the community of faith. Staff members created intentional venues for the purpose of strengthening the sense of community between attendees and members.
- Staff members remarked that power and authority was used by their respective senior leaders to set the direction for ministry.
- Power and authority was used to provide an umbrella under which staff members and other church volunteers could take creative risks.

Participating staff members remarked that power and authority had been given them by senior leaders in order to take risks in ministry. Staff members described having the freedom to fail in ministry. Power and authority was used to create opportunities to participate in and lead ministry.

Group Characteristics

Staff persons participating in the interview process represented twelve of the fifteen churches involved in the overall study. A total of thirty-six staff persons were interviewed. The ministerial roles of these persons were diverse and highly specialized. Each staff person functioned within a defined area of ministry but in collaboration with the overall mission of their respective congregations. Fourteen of the thirty-six staff persons interviewed were male.

I conducted staff interviews both individually and corporately depending upon staff availability and upon arrangements made by some senior pastors for me to participate in staff meetings. Staff members were interviewed at twelve of the total fifteen

participating churches. At three of those twelve participating churches only one staff person was interviewed.

Table 4.5. Breakdown of Staff Participants According to Congregation and Gender

Church	Staff		Male n=14/n=38.8%		Female =22/n=61.1%	
	(N=36)	Percent		%		%
Asbury Madison	2	5.6	1	7.1	1	4.5
Good Shepherd	1	2.8			1	4.5
Friendship	9	25	4	28.6	5	22.7
New Life	1	2.8			1	4.5
Tuscaloosa	4	11.1	2	14.3	2	9.1
Riverchase	4	11.1	2	14.3	2	9.1
Cahaba Bend	1	2.8			1	4.5
Genesis	3	8.3			3	13.6
Guntersville 1 st	12	33.3	3	21.4	9	40.9
Asbury Birmingham	1	2.8	1	7.1		
Liberty Crossings	2	5.6			2	9.1
InnerChange	1	2.8	1	7.1		

To Provide Opportunities to Serve in Ministry Capacities

Overwhelmingly, staff persons at healthy congregations perceived their ministerial roles as positions of opportunity. Staff expressed a desire to use their power and authority to provide others with opportunities to participate and serve in the life of the church. At Friendship, various staff communicated how opportunities provided them by the senior pastor and other staff led them to the particular ministerial area in which they were serving. David, the sound/technical coordinator at Friendship, said, “One day

Calvin [the senior pastor], who knew my background with computers, said, ‘David how would you like to come work with me full-time,’ and that was all I needed to do what I’m doing now.”

Deborah Moon, senior pastor of Genesis UMC, began her ministry as a layperson at Guntersville First, where she also continues to serve on staff. Genesis church was birthed out of Guntersville First in order to reach socially marginalized persons Guntersville First members wanted to reach but felt their facility and general demographic make-up inhibited them from reaching. Deborah shared her journey from member to volunteer to staff person to pastor and observed her journey as resulting from opportunities to do ministry given her by the senior pastor, other staff, and the Guntersville First church as a whole. Deborah said, “There he was nudging me to use my gifts and he gave me the permission to grow into what God was already calling me to be.” Senior pastor Robin Scott used his power and authority to encourage Deborah to pursue ministry and he worked to create the opportunity.

In interviews staff related constant striving to involve laity in ministry. Staff members understood their positions, power, and authority as a share in the power and authority of their senior pastors and in the power and authority of the overall church. This unique understanding informed the way staff utilized their power and authority; namely, staff members of healthy churches in turn looked for ways to involve and empower others in ministry. The researcher discovered that staff continually explored ways to utilize congregants in the ministries of their churches.

Jesse, worship leader at InnerChange, talked about the formation of a Saturday night lay-led worship service that utilized a rotation of worship bands. He also talked

about the unique ways the worship team used laity during communion and offertory in worship. At InnerChange laity led communion and were responsible for the offering. Pastor Mike Skelton does not invite an offertory during services, instead laity encourage one another to support the ministry and all tithes and offerings are received at times other than the during the worship service. Communion tables are arranged at various entryways to the worship center. Laity are free to partake in communion as they feel led or as they organize to do so themselves. “Mike [the senior pastor] is always wanting people to get involved, he’s upfront about not being able to do it all, and really he shouldn’t be. Besides I think people today want to be involved, they want to touch worship.” Nikki, the administrative coordinator at Good Shepherd, spoke of “all of the opportunities for people to get involved.” Good Shepherd church helps to support a small village in Honduras by providing basic needs like clothing and school supplies. Each year a team from Good Shepherd travels to this village to help with physical needs and teach the gospel. This foreign mission trip is an opportunity for the people of Good Shepherd to get involved. Nikki explained that she and her family began attending Good Shepherd because they were offered opportunities to become involved in study groups and missions, whereas at their former church they felt like they were “just observers” who were never “challenged to get involved.” Good Shepherd staff talked about a prison ministry, a literacy ministry, a thriving youth group, a thrift store for under-resourced families in their area, mission trips, and many other opportunities for laity to become involved in the overall work and ministry of the church. Staff members at healthy churches recognize that their power and authority is used to create opportunities for ministries and discipleship.

To Help

Staff at healthy churches communicated an essential use of their power and authority was to help improve the physical and spiritual conditions of men and women's lives. New Life staff talked about the daycare that had been established at the church during the tenure of their current pastor. New Life's administrative assistant Kim remarked, "This has filled a tremendous need that this community had, we hear all the time how our daycare has helped so many working families." Grant, Alabama is a small community nestled in the hills above Guntersville Lake. New Life church is less than twenty-five years old. One of the ways the church recognized it could help the young families of Grant was by offering a daycare. Kim said, "Most of the working moms and dads were driving the distance to Guntersville for daycare." New Life, located on the main road through Grant, found its daycare grow quickly.

When asked to give specific illustrations regarding the use of power and authority, they offered stories of service and help. Nikki, Administrative Coordinator at Good Shepherd remarked that the church and pastor possessed a "big heart for people in need." She cited specific helping ministries such as a food and clothing pantry through which financially under-resourced persons in the community can purchase these items at minimal cost, gasoline vouchers and snacks for persons passing through the community seeking help, and help with utilities. Nikki was visibly moved when she spoke of a retired minister whose home was "a mess" and for whom the church repaired his bathroom and sagging kitchen floor.

Staff at Tuscaloosa First talked about a recent ministry initiative they call *Bless Your Neighbor*. *Bless Your Neighbor* is an intentional, pro-active ministry campaign

designed to motivate laity to engage in small acts of service and offer physical help that can “bless their neighbors” as expressions of Christ’s love. During the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Tuscaloosa First opened its doors to many displaced people and fed, clothed, and housed them. When asked of the church’s reason for this undertaking, associate pastor Dan Kilgore referred to Jesus’ parable of the sheep and goats in the Gospel of Matthew and added, “Jesus has called us to offer help unto the least of these.”

Staff at Asbury in Madison spoke proudly of the help their church was supplied families in the Madison area and people around the world. Staff talked about a clothing and discount store the church maintained in the city; about mission teams to China, Africa, and Central America; and about a church-led food pantry. Staff operationalized their power and authority to meet the physical needs of persons they felt called by God to help.

To Connect People with God

One of the ways staff perceived the use of power and authority within their respective congregations involved creating opportunities for laity to connect with God. A staff member at Liberty Crossing church commented on the identity of the church, saying, “We’re so different, here you feel like you are connecting with God.”

At Friendship, staff spend much of their time planning how to connect people with God in worship. The worship experience is the paramount focus at Friendship. When the senior pastor, Calvin Havens, sits down with staff at Friendship, one of the first questions out of his mouth is, “Did God show up on Sunday?” Accordingly, he invites the staff to answer that question honestly. The staff collaborates to discern whether or not laity were able to encounter God and connect with God during worship. This staff does a

very interesting and emotionally touching exercise at this point. Friendship staff members talked about individual persons in the congregation for whom they were concerned. They addressed whether or not certain persons in the congregation were connecting with God and with church. Then staff entered into the practice of connecting with God themselves as they prayed together over the individuals they had just discussed. The priority utilization of their power and authority appeared to be creating ways for laity to connect with God.

Before I visited Asbury in Madison I learned of the church's reputation for prayer from participating churches I previously visited. After interviewing John Tanner, pastor of Cove church, Tanner made the comment, "If you're going to Asbury expect to get prayed for." My conversations with staff members corroborated the pastor's claim. Encountering God through prayer, corporate worship, and service is priority at Asbury. Staff remarked that one of the "things" that had drawn them to Asbury was the feeling that at Asbury one could authentically connect with God. They explained, "all that they do" is geared toward offering people the opportunity to encounter God. Staff members often referred to the Holy Spirit's presence in the overall life of the church and communicated sensing God's presence in worship and ministries of service in which the church engaged. Staff at Asbury met together for prayer daily and reported attempting to carry that same fervency of prayer into their specific areas of service and ministry in the church.

To Connect People with the Community of Faith

Staff understood their power and authority as a primary method to find and offer

ways for laity to connect within the community of faith. Ann, the director of the church's shepherding ministry at Guntersville First leads the church in both maintaining and making connections between laity. Guntersville First reported an average membership of 860 persons per week in worship. As the church grew leadership faced the problem of attrition. Many people were visiting and joining the church, but a large percentage of those persons left the church after a short time. The church needed to find ways to foster and maintain their sense of community. Ann is utilizing her abilities organizing and leading the shepherding ministry. This ministry connects the community; essentially Ann and other church leaders have selected over 140 leaders each to shepherd a group of members and nurture the relationship these members have with church. Ann described the Shepherding ministry as "a continuous care program, not a crisis program, where people are being cared for on a daily basis, and every member is prayed for everyday. Some contact is made, whether by email, phone, or a card." Staff reported that this connectional ministry has cut back on attrition in attendance and membership and has in fact led to a 40 percent increase in small group membership.

Staff at Liberty Crossing identified connecting laity with one another as one of their primary functions, and therefore one of the primary uses of their power and authority. Sharon, administrative assistant to Liberty Crossing's senior pastor, Keith Elder, remarked that the connectional ministries at Liberty Crossing drew her and her family to the church. She cited a men's group, a women's group, and youth and children's ministries as means through which laity at Liberty Crossing connect with one another. She also noted neighborhood small groups and a community event called Sundown Cinema that served to foster and build connections in their community and church.

Staff of healthy churches time and again identified their primary functions and primary uses of power and authority as creating connections for fellowship within their respective churches. Staff cited small groups, worship, missions, and common interest groups as means by which these connections are made.

To Set The Direction of Ministry

To a large degree participants in this study regarded the use of power and authority as fundamental for setting the direction of ministry. During staff interviews at Guntersville First, staff reiterated the church's mission to reach people for Christ and bring them into the fellowship of the church. Staff remarked that the vision had initiated with the senior pastor and provided them the framework for ministry.

When Pastor Ken Dunavent arrived at Tuscaloosa First, he had staff members read the book *The Purpose Driven Life*. Consequently, Dunavent and staff secured a copy of the book for every member of the church. Wide-eyed staff observed the "powerful" effect that putting this book into every member's hands had on the church and how it set the tone for the church's eventual direction. Tuscaloosa First has re-invented itself under its current leadership by shifting its image from a traditional downtown church to a more regional church and extending its appeal to include a younger, less socially elite composite. Staff recognized that power and authority helped make this transition possible. One of the ways Tuscaloosa First set the direction of their church's ministry was through the creation of a thriving contemporary worship service led by an associate pastor.

Cove United Methodist Church developed from a vision for a church in a developing community near Madison. Pastor John Tanner said, "Population growth

exploded on the other side of the mountain.” The North Alabama Conference seized the opportunity to reach the people in this developing area with a new Methodist church. John Tanner has led this church as senior pastor since its inception. Staff at Cove church have inherited a “DNA” in which utilization of power and authority for direction-setting comes naturally.

Genesis church reaches socially marginalized people with the gospel by attracting broken, under-resourced families. The congregation of Genesis is a composite of poor, uneducated, and dysfunctional lives. The church was birthed out of a vision the Guntersville First church had to reach a group in their community with whom they were unable to connect because of their reputation in the community. Historically Guntersville First was a downtown church attracting mainly middle class to upper-middle class individuals. Staff envisioned ministering to a portion of their community they wanted to reach but had felt hindered to do so by history and reputation. Staff at Guntersville First and Genesis recognized that utilizing power and authority served to promote and carry forward this vision.

To Provide an Umbrella under Which Persons Can Take Creative Risks

In the process of examining data gathered from the semi-structured interviews held with staff at healthy churches, I recognized a recurring theme among staff responses with regard to power and authority fostering and creating a setting in which staff felt empowered to take creative risks. A majority of participating staff members remarked that they were afforded opportunities to utilize their gifts and live into their callings in fulfilling and positive ways within their respective settings for ministry. Interviews revealed that staff persons valued opportunities for creative expression and risk-taking in

ministry. Staff members of healthy congregations understand that power and authority creates an umbrella under which church leaders can take creative risks and develop ownership of ministry. Subsequently, staff of healthy congregations utilize power and authority to take creative risks. Creativity is encouraged in healthy churches and power and authority is utilized in ways that promote creativity even at risk of failure.

While discussing levels of creativity in ministry that has marked Tuscaloosa First in recent years, one staff member remarked, “We are free to fail.” Staff persons interviewed at Tuscaloosa First noted that the senior pastor utilized his power and authority to allow for failure. As such, the senior pastor wants staff to possess the freedom to take risks, share ideas, and develop ministry. Staff at Tuscaloosa First expressed that “this mind-set has trickled” throughout the congregation, creating a higher level of volunteerism. Staff at Tuscaloosa First shared how a group of parents identified a need for a weekly ministry to the children of their congregation, joined together and remodeled classrooms, and now lead a thriving children’s program. Healthy congregations use power and authority in ways that encourage persons to take creative risks even with the possibility of failure.

Findings Pertaining to Lay Response—Who Participated

During the process of data collection some of the participating congregations chose not to pursue actively completing the number of questionnaires desired by the study. The study desired at least fifteen lay persons at each participating church to complete the researcher-designed questionnaire and submit their responses.

Questionnaires were distributed at each of the participating churches by a representative of said churches assigned by the pastor of each church. In some instances the pastor acted

as the representative. The congregational representative distributed questionnaires according to a method characteristically described as convenience sampling; as such, questionnaires were distributed to a wide variety of random laypersons at each church and those persons who received them were invited to complete and submit their responses. Several inferences suggest reasons for participating congregations' failure to return the desired number of questionnaires. Participating churches were less likely to complete the desired number of questionnaires once interviews with their respective senior pastors and staff were conducted. Questionnaires were less likely to be completed by congregations whose senior pastors interviewed earliest in the six month period of field research. Conversely, participating churches were more likely to complete the number of lay-response questionnaires desired by the study whose senior pastors were interviewed later in the six month period of field research. The difference here noted in lay response appeared to depend upon the time frame in which senior pastors completed their respective interviews. It may be inferred that pastors were more apt to continue gathering lay data in anticipation of their own interviews. Consequently, as long as senior pastors viewed the study process as a priority so did their laypeople.

Despite repeated attempts to collect the desired responses from each participating congregation following interviews with senior pastors and staff, this process yielded limited results. In total I collected 108 lay-response questionnaires from the fifteen participating congregations.

In seeking the answer to Research Question 1, "How is power and authority utilized in congregations recognized as healthy?" I determined the importance of

ascertaining data from laity, as well as pastors and staff, representing the fifteen healthy North Alabama United Methodist churches participating in the study.

I developed a researcher-designed questionnaire in order to collect lay responses to answer Research Question 1 and Research Question 2, “Is this use of power and authority in keeping with the paradigm of power and authority characteristic of the kingdom of God?” The questionnaire featured twenty-five questions designed to prompt responses from lay persons revealing their respective understandings of the use of power and authority. Further, I designed questions based upon the paradigm of power and authority I postulated as characteristic of Jesus’ paradigm as taught and modeled in Scripture.

For the purpose of answering Research Question 1, I concentrated on responses to question 20: “How have you seen this church and its leaders use their power and authority?” Of the 108 returned questionnaires, 93 persons responded to question 20. I received 86.1 percent of possible data regarding Question 20 (N=108; n=93). I only considered the 93 questionnaires that included responses to Question 20. I decided to disregard the fifteen questionnaires that did not include responses to Question 20 because of the nature of the distribution of the researcher-designed questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to a group of laity invited to complete and return it in keeping with the research method of convenience sampling. According to such method, only those persons who responded to Question 20 were analyzed. Ten of the fifteen participating congregations, or 66.7 percent of the participating congregations returned questionnaires. Further, 33.3 percent of the churches that participated in the study had no lay input. These 33.3 percent of churches included data gathered only through semi-

structured interviews with pastors and/or staff. The study was able to breakdown each of the 93 responses according to four demographic variables: participating church, gender, age, and longevity at participating church. Conclusions could be drawn regarding utilization of power and authority within each of the participating churches, according to the contrast and comparison of male to female perceptions of the use of power and authority, perceptions of and use of power and authority according to age, and conclusions could be drawn based on the longevity in attendance of laypersons at their respective churches and their responses. Tables 4.6-4.8 reflect this study's demographic data.

Table 4.6. Breakdown of Responses to Question 20 According to Demographics Requested by Researcher-Designed Questionnaire—(By Church)

n	%	Church
9	9.7	Asbury Madison
8	8.6	Cahaba Bend
15	16.1	Riverchase
11	11.8	Asbury Birmingham
10	10.8	Good Shepherd
8	8.6	Guntersville First
15	16.1	Friendship
5	5.4	New Life
10	10.8	Genesis
2	2.2	Tuscaloosa First

- Participating laity represented ten of the fifteen participating congregations. Of the 108 returned questionnaires ninety-three laity respondents answered Question 20.
- Further, 65.6 percent of participating laity represented five of the total fifteen participating congregations.

Table 4.7. Breakdown of Responses to Question 20 According to Demographics Requested by Researcher-Designed Questionnaire—(By Gender)

n	%	Gender
48	51.6	Male
43	46.2	Female
2	2.2	Not noted

- Men comprised 51.6 percent of participating laity.
- Less than 3 percent of participating laity did not disclose their gender. Gender may influence perceptions of utilization of power and authority.

Table 4.8. Breakdown of Responses to Question 20 According to Demographics Requested by Researcher-Designed Questionnaire—(Average Age and Average Longevity in Attendance at Participating Churches of Respondents)

N	Average Age	Average Longevity in Attendance at Participating Churches
N=93	mean=49.2 years	mean=8.1 years

- The average age of participating laity was 49.
- Additionally, on average, participating laity attended their respective churches for more than eight years.

Findings Based on Responses to the Researcher-Designed Questionnaire by a Convenience Sampling of Laypersons

As the study explored the responses of laity to Question 20, “How have you seen this church and its leaders use power and authority?” patterns were noted and seven dominant themes were revealed. Laity in healthy congregations understood power and authority to be used in the following ways:

- A majority of participating laypeople viewed the use of power and authority as a positive. Collected responses revealed participating laity held positive opinions of the leadership, decisions, and overall direction of ministry within their respective congregations.
- Laity recorded they witnessed power and authority used to set the direction for the ministry of their respective churches. Laity articulated specifically the goals of their individual churches.
- Participating laity recorded power and authority was shared and given away in their congregations. They communicated that power and authority was used to empower and influence people to do ministry.
- Lay responses revealed power and authority being used within participating churches to intentionally train leaders.
- Laity at healthy churches illustrated stories of power and authority being used to help people in physical ways. Participating churches used their power and authority to help needy people in practical and creative ways.
- Participating laity explained that power and authority was being used within their respective congregations to make decisions of great impact. When “big” decisions needed to be made laity perceived those decisions by senior leaders as the use of power and authority. Consequently, some laity made negative comments regarding leaders who avoided making decisions.
- Participating laity said power and authority was used to build consensus and unity within their churches. Laity realized power and authority was used to build collaborative ministry.

Power and Authority Perceived Positively

Laity in healthy churches viewed the use of power and authority positively. Respondents observed that power and authority was used for good and in ways that resulted in a generally positive view of both the leadership and their respective churches as a whole.

Table 4.9 offers explicit references to positive use of power. The prefix appearing before each statement designates the questionnaire from which the response was collected.

Table 4.9. Power and Authority Perceived Positively

Questionnaire	Response
Q71	“In positive ways. To motivate change and bring attention to issues.”
Q68	“ Positively . To God’s glory. To get our job done spreading the Good News.”
Q65	“To set a positive , caring example for others to follow.”
Q44	“In positive , uplifting ways. To encourage people to participate in growth, new buildings, new groups, and classes”
Q73	“To grow members in faith and talents. Power is used positively .”

Power and Authority to Set the Direction of Ministry

Laity perceived that the power and authority of church leaders was used to set the direction for ministry. Laypersons understood that congregational leaders used power to promote and proceed with specific ministries. Laity stated that power and authority was being used to set the agenda for ministry and prioritize where the church would focus people, money, and time resources. Responses demonstrated that laity possessed clarity regarding the focus of vision and ministry in each of their respective congregations (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10. Power and Authority to Set the Direction of Ministry

Questionnaire	Response
Q72	“To channel energy and resources into birthing a new church. To support Habitat, missionaries in Bolivia, get yearly aid to a village in Honduras, and support outreach to a local prison.”
Q28	“To help lead others in directions our church needs to move in. Respectfully, in a drive to make our church a faith-driven church. I’ve never seen any abuse of authority.”
Q11	“To lead, guide, and direct.”
Q15	“To get new things started in the church.”
Q81/108	“To lead our church into the direction of missions, it is now commonplace to see adults and their children reaching out to others here and across the world.”
Q19	“In a way that acknowledges Jesus as the source of power and authority. To provide guidance and direction.”
Q92	“To make sure the congregation knows the church vision ‘Growing Together In Christ’”

Respondents provided specific examples regarding the use of power and authority in their respective congregations. Examples such as promoting discipleship, training leaders, and missions served as concrete evidence regarding direction and focus of ministry in each congregation. Laity understood power and authority was being used to set the direction of ministry.

Power and Authority to Empower and Influence Believers to Do Ministry

Respondents perceived power and authority was being used to empower congregants to participate in ministry and develop spiritually. Laity described being influenced to find ways of contributing to the overall ministry of their respective congregations. Church leaders were perceived as encouragers and influencers who sought to empower lay people to do ministry. Laity perceived church leaders as seeking ways to share power and authority in order to benefit overall ministry (see Table 4.11).

Table 4.11. Power and Authority to Empower and Influence Believers to Do Ministry

Questionnaire	Response
Q90	“By turning power over to others to help establish a strong, caring congregation. I do not see our leaders clutching at control. By releasing it they in turn create more leaders.”
Q61	“To inspire and motivate by setting vision. To give permission to start a new ministry, as long as it is scripturally based, they are given the opportunity.”
Q72	“To empower others. To put others in positions where they can do the most good.”
Q56	“To challenge others and to give wisdom; no huge egos”
Q78	“To influence and encourage action on the part of the congregation—not for self-promotion.”
Q24	“To influence. To empower others through example”

Laity characterized use of power and authority within their respective congregations as permission-giving. Laity perceived that their congregational leaders utilized power and authority to provide opportunities for laity to use their respective gifts and talents. Overall, respondents identified power and authority being given away to laity in order to bring about positive actions within the congregation and beyond. This pattern of empowerment and influence characterized the responses of participating laity.

Power and Authority to Train Leaders

Analysis of questionnaire data revealed laity believed an essential use for power and authority within their respective congregations was to train leaders. Further analysis showed many responses to Question 20 dealt primarily with training leaders. Laity of healthy churches perceived power and authority being used by their churches and leaders for the important and specific task of training leaders (see Table 4.12).

Table 4.12. Power and Authority to Train Leaders

Questionnaire	Response
Q79	“To guide in service, to train leaders, and to stay focused on the big pix.”
Q72	“To train leaders.”
Q71	“to develop and grow leaders.”
Q27	“In positive ways. To search for more leaders in the church and encourage members to take on leadership”
Q22	“To train others to be leaders.”
Q90	“By releasing it [power] they in turn create more leaders.”
Q55	“To delegate duties.”

Power and Authority to Help in Concrete Ways in the World

Laity understood that power and authority was used by their leaders and churches to physically help and improve the lives of others. Laity in healthy churches observed power and authority used to carry out acts of service in the world in representation of Christ. Laity understood that good works embodied their understanding of Christ and the gospel. In some sense they viewed these good works as an extension of their faith and as works of which they had been given divine authority and mandate to carry out (see Table 4.13).

Table 4.13. Power and Authority to Help in Concrete Ways in the World

Questionnaire	Response
Q76	“To act as servant leaders; with hands on to get the job done”
Q66	“To further the Kingdom and help members in need”
Q33	“To initiate projects and growth”
Q43	“To build buildings, do mission projects, for example our Korean, Hispanic and prison ministries.”
Q67	“Hands on—Habitat—Church with no colours”
Q32	“Mission projects. Open to new ideas for ministry.”
Q72	“To support Habitat; missionaries in Bolivia, get yearly aid to a village in Honduras, to support spiritual aid to local prison”
Q13	“Personally, to assist my family through tough times with letters and phone calls to judges to aid in the process of the court system”

Laity in healthy churches observed power and authority being used in their respective congregations in concrete ways to help improve the physical and spiritual condition of others.

Power and Authority to Make Decisions of Great Impact

Data analysis regarding the 93 responses to Question 20 revealed laity understood power and authority was being used by the church leaders to make important decisions affecting the overall ministry. Laity recognized their leaders possessed power and authority to make decisions that could affect the future and overall well-being of their respective churches. Further, and more importantly, laity among healthy churches observed their leaders using power and authority to make decisions of great impact (see Table 4.14).

Table 4.14. Power and Authority to Make Decisions of Great Impact

Questionnaire	Response
Q55	“To delegate duties. To help make decisions about ministry in our community”
Q34	“Make decisions efficiently and effectively”
Q29	“To actively guide our church in the right direction, to grow the body of Christ and make decisions that are good for the church democratically”
Q23	“Strongly in making decisions and seeing them thru”
Q106	“Use power to do what they think is right in making decisions. To lead, to set a goal, set tone”
Q1	“Led by the Holy Spirit, they use their talents, decide on issues and don’t worry what people think of them”

Power and Authority to Grow Consensus and Unity

Laity of healthy congregations reported observing church leaders use power and authority to increase consensus and unity. Laypersons characterized “consensus in fellowship” as a positive component factoring into the overall well-being of their

respective congregations. Further, laity understood consensus in fellowship was not arbitrary, but rather the result power and authority utilization by their church leaders (see Table 4.15).

Table 4.15. Power and Authority to Grow Consensus and Unity

Questionnaire	Response
Q76	“To reach consensus”
Q74	“To bring consensus, rarely to dictate”
Q45	“To facilitate consensus in decision-making”
Q31	“By teamwork and consensus building”
Q87	“In submission to Christ & one another”
Q103	“I have seen the leadership move quickly when it seemed there was a crisis in spiritual leadership at the church, but even here a consensus was gathered and very deliberate action was taken. Even if a situation does not call for a rapid action leaders take time to gain consensus.”

Significant Finding with Regards to Lack of Use of Power and Authority

A small but significant number of respondents identified a lack of use of power and authority in their congregations. The following comments imply that avoiding the use of power and authority can yield detrimental results. Interestingly, comment Q95 appears to reflect an opinion on the use of power and authority more characteristic of that which is displayed in the world, a view much more in keeping with that of Weber. Notably then, these minimal findings contribute significantly to my hypothesis. This data suggests utilizing power and authority according to Jesus’ teaching and example may lead churches to experience greater degrees of health. Conversely, when a worldly paradigm is employed by churches they may experience lesser degrees of health. Essentially, these comments reflect frustration and negativity toward church leadership laity perceived as

unwilling or unable to utilize their power and authority, presumably in the seven ways previously described above (see Table 4.16).

Table 4.16. Significant Finding With Regards to Lack of Use of Power and Authority

Questionnaire	Response
Q96	"I have not seen a clear display of power and authority to drive our church to a common goal, and because of that, we have not accomplished near what our capabilities are"
Q95	"Those who disagree or don't play the political game aren't around very long"
Q93	"They don't use their power or authority."
Q99	"I'm concerned that we seem to lack the kind of visional leadership that unites decision-makers in attempting great things for Jesus Christ"

Major Findings in Summary

Findings emerged from data gathered from three groups of people representing the fifteen healthy congregations participating in the study: pastors, staff, and laity. My intent in this research involved answering the question, "How is power and authority utilized within congregations recognized as healthy?" Semi-structured interviews were held with fifteen senior pastors and thirty-six staff persons. I distribute a researcher-designed questionnaire to the fifteen churches involved in the study. In addition, a convenience sampling of laity was conducted. One hundred eight questionnaires were returned. I examined lay responses to Question 20, "How have you seen this church and its leaders use power and authority?" Of the one hundred eight returned questionnaires, ninety-three persons responded to Question 20.

Data was analyzed and recurring themes and patterns were noted to provide qualitative answers to Research Question 1, "How is power and authority utilized within congregations recognized as healthy?" Research Question 1 guided this study. Table 20

charts the themes and patterns discussed in Chapter 4 and reflects the major findings of this study.

Table 4.17. Major Findings: How is Power and Authority Utilized within Healthy Congregations

Pastor Response	Staff Response	Lay Response
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To set the direction of ministry. 2. To help people. 3. To connect people with God. 4. To provide opportunities for people to serve and participate in the life of the church. 5. To connect people to community of faith. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To set the direction of ministry. 2. To help. 3. To connect people with God. 4. To provide opportunities to serve in ministry capacities. 5. To connect people with the community of faith. 6. To provide an umbrella under which persons can take creative risks. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To set the direction of ministry. 2. To help in concrete ways in the world. 3. To train leaders. 4. As a positive 5. To make decisions of great impact. 6. To empower and influence believers to do ministry. 7. To grow consensus and unity.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Moving Toward an Answer For Research Question 1

Research Question 1 (RQ 1) guided the scope of this study. My intention was to explore the utilization of power and authority in healthy United Methodist congregations in North Alabama.

Addressing the Participants in the Study

In order to carry out this exploration, I addressed issues of power and authority utilization with clergy, staff, and laity. These three groups form a composite identity of each church. Although clergy, staff, and laity function in different roles within the overall life of their respective congregations, their collective response to questions of power and authority represent a holistic answer. The study noted many similarities among these three groups in their understanding of utilization of power and authority in their congregations. The similarities in responses between clergy, staff, and laity infer that a cohesive understanding of power and authority exists in most of the participating congregations and offers validity to the overall findings accumulated throughout field research with each unique group. Findings from each group can be understood as a checks and balance with regard to the integrity of this study's data. Dissimilarities in responses from clergy, staff, and laity discovered during data analysis do not suggest a conflict in the understanding of use of power and authority between clergy, staff, and laity within their respective congregations. Dissimilarities in responses may be viewed as additional insights regarding use of power and authority as perceived and understood by

each distinct group. Additionally, these dissimilarities provide a more in-depth answer to the question of power and authority utilization.

The poem *The Blind Men and the Elephant* by John Godfrey Saxe is the story of five blind men standing before an elephant (Saxe, noogenesis). Together they attempt to discern what each one of them is touching, but because they can not see the whole animal and are only touching a part, each man mistakes the elephant for something else. In much the same way that the blind men in the poem each held a piece of the overall picture, so too clergy, staff, and laity can all be understood as holding distinctive pieces of the overall answer to the question of utilization of power and authority in healthy congregations.

Liability of Self-Report

The findings in this study are based upon the reports I recorded in semi-structured interviews with staff and pastors and information I collected from laity utilizing a researcher-designed questionnaire. Therefore, my research is subject to the liability of self-reporting. The nature of my research data is limited by the information I was given by participants in the study and by their individual perceptions.

Clergy Response to Power and Authority

Pastors of healthy congregations understood their power and authority first from God and second from the United Methodist Church. They understood their power and authority as an extension of God's power and authority. In contrast to staff and laity, clergy tended toward an analysis of power and authority regarding their individual leadership. Clergy identified a responsibility to guide and lead their respective congregations in aspects of ministry, worship, and discipleship. Clergy further

communicated that congregational health results from the manner in which leaders utilize their respective power and authority.

The study noted that most participating clergy tended to deflect discussion from themselves toward the efforts and strengths of laypersons. Pastors communicated a strong desire to improve the health of their congregations, and they portrayed a strong personal connection with God.

Staff Response to Power and Authority

Staff added a unique insight into the overall answer as to how power and authority is utilized within healthy congregations. Staff communicated that power and authority could make space for creativity and foster a climate conducive to risk taking without fear of penalty. Certainly staff, like clergy, understood power and authority was being used to lead, but staff added the dimension of collaborative leadership to the utilization of power and authority. Staff both used and understood power and authority in ways to empower and equip other people to do ministry in the church and community. Staff members understood power and authority could be used in prohibitive ways that would have disallowed them of opportunities to create and lead and even fail in ministry, and resoundingly said that in their respective situations power and authority was being shared. Therefore, power and authority created an atmosphere in which staff efforts contributed to overall congregational health.

Laity Response to Power and Authority

The study found laity overwhelmingly identified that power and authority was utilized in positive ways within their respective congregations. Laity illustrated positive results from the utilization of power and authority in their congregations. Staff and

clergy, although implicitly stating that power and authority was being utilized to bring about positive results in the churches and communities they served, did not make the same kind of blanket comment about power and authority being utilized positively as did laity. A sound conclusion may be that healthy congregations are generally characterized by a positive atmosphere, resulting from a distinctive use of power and authority.

Laity offered observations regarding decision making and consensus building. Laity in healthy churches stated that power and authority was being utilized in both of the aforementioned ways. Again, as primarily acting as recipients of power and authority utilization, laity in healthy churches observed that they were included, and in a sense, empowered, to participate in decisions that would affect their church as a whole. In citing that consensus building was a primary use of power and authority within their congregations, laity in healthy churches perceived that they played an integral part in helping to set the direction that their churches would take and implicitly expressed that they felt their voices were important and valued.

Additionally, the study gathered a small number of lay responses expressing negative opinions on the use, or lack thereof, of power and authority as well. Although these lay responses were few in number, these responses were significant. This group of responses reflects two perceptions of power and authority very different from the paradigm taught and modeled by Jesus. These laypersons contributed the lack of vision and the inability to move forward toward achieving goals to church leaders' avoidance of utilizing power and authority. The inferences from this finding are great. Churches may avoid using power and authority because they view power and authority as negative and worldly. Accordingly, they may avoid using power and authority altogether because they

do not have a biblical understanding of power and authority. Secondly, some laity expressed that power and authority was being used to manipulate control and secure places of positional power. As such, persons disagreeing with authoritative church leaders were culled from leadership. This view and approach to power and authority is much more in line with worldly paradigms.

Lay responses provide additional insight to data gathered from pastors and staff on the use of power and authority. These insights may provide further understanding of the relationship between laity and staff and pastors. Typically, laity acts receptively to the use of power and authority. Lay responses suggest a more passive relationship to power and authority than that which pastors and staff possess. Generally, laity experience the outcomes of power and authority rather than initiate the use of power and authority.

Impact of Circumstances on the Context of Study

I recognize that unique circumstances existing within each of the participating congregations may have affected the perceptions of participants on the use of power and authority. Data suggests crisis may have influenced understandings of power and authority within at least two congregations. Genesis church was experiencing crisis characterized by the primary demographic constituting their congregation. The church ministered in a community dominated by poverty, broken families, addictions, and poorly educated people. While data did not suggest the church was characterized by conflict, data did indicate the church was enmeshed in ministry to a society in crisis. This unique situation may have influenced the understanding of power and authority held by the Genesis congregation.

Further, Asbury in Birmingham communicated perceptions of power and authority that may be characterized as negative when compared to responses obtained from all fourteen other participating churches. The church was experiencing a degree of conflict among the pastor, staff, and laity. This conflict may have likewise impacted the data given me at Asbury.

The Utilization of Power and Authority in Healthy Churches

Table 4.17 charts themes and patterns that data analysis yielded from semi-structured interviews held with clergy and staff and from the researcher-designed questionnaire distributed to laity. Very notable similarities were made between clergy, staff, and lay responses. The study is now prepared to offer the following paradigm for utilization of power and authority in healthy churches based upon data acquired during field research. The paradigm emerges from a composite response of clergy, staff, and laity representing fifteen of the healthiest congregations in the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church. Healthy churches utilized their power and authority in the following four ways.

Power and Authority to Set the Direction of Ministry

As noted in greater detail in Chapter 4, healthy congregations utilized their power and authority to set direction for ministry. Each participating congregation communicated that power and authority was being utilized for the purpose of directing ministry. Each congregation offered a picture of the direction that they were taking as a church while also demonstrating an awareness of their past situation. Participating congregations attributed their growth, ministries, and self-images to having a strong and clear sense of

direction. Consequently, these congregations perceived direction-setting as a utilization of power and authority.

Power and Authority to Help People in Concrete Ways

All of the participating congregations communicated that power and authority was being used to offer help in concrete ways to people in their churches, communities, and the world. Further, all of the churches cited that power and authority was used to serve people with physical and spiritual needs. Specific examples included Habitat for Humanity, prison ministry, thrift stores, food pantries, literacy programs, and a tornado shelter. Healthy churches use power and authority to serve others in need.

Power and Authority to Connect People within in the Community of Faith to One Another and to God

Each healthy congregation utilized power and authority to connect people within the community of faith to one another and to God. Congregations offered and encouraged small groups, discipleship courses, prayer groups, varieties in worship times and styles, nurturing and shepherding programs, and venues for youth and children to worship and connect with one another. Further, participating churches noted that power and authority made these connections possible. Staff and clergy exerted much of their effort, power, and authority to create and assess connections between laity and between laity and God.

Power and Authority to Empower Others

All of the participating congregations reported using power and authority to empower others for ministry. Healthy churches utilized power and authority to train leaders, develop opportunities for lay involvement, and promote an atmosphere of creative freedom for staff and lay volunteers. These churches used power and authority to include significant portions of the congregation in decision making and direction setting.

Healthy churches shared and invested power and authority among their members. They also recognized sharing power and authority contributed to the overall health of their congregations.

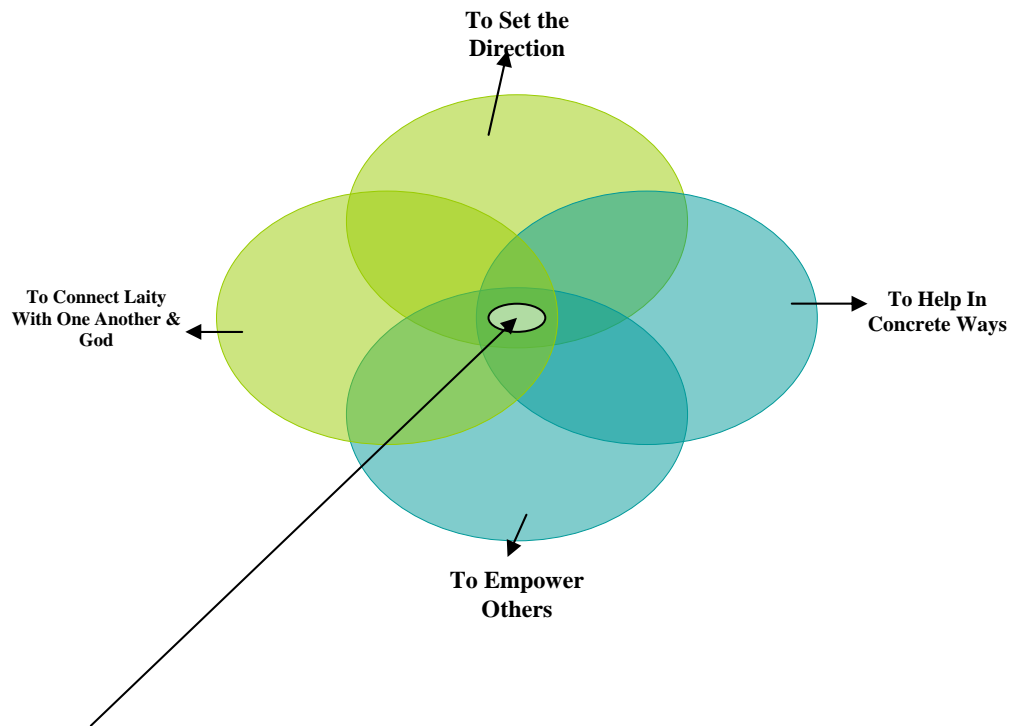


Figure 5.1. The utilization of power and authority in healthy congregations

Moving Toward an Answer For Research Question 2

I examined the use of power and authority in Scripture in Chapter 2 and interacted with pertinent literature throughout the course of the study. I identified five ways Jesus utilized power and authority in the gospels. Consequently, I hypothesized that the pattern of power and authority taught and modeled by Jesus might be the same paradigm present in healthy churches. I explored the possibility of a cause and effect relationship between church health and churches utilizing power and authority according to Jesus' paradigm.

I titled the five ways Jesus modeled and taught on power and authority *Paradigm of Power and Authority in the Kingdom of God*. The paradigm was characterized according to the following statements:

1. Power and authority in the kingdom of God is used to serve other people rather than for self-glorification. Power and authority does not use force to cause others to capitulate to the will of the powerful person.
2. Power and authority is utilized to empower others.
3. Power and authority is used in a collaborative and diffusive fashion in the kingdom of God.
4. Power and authority influences others without coercion.
5. In God's kingdom power and authority is utilized to promote the freedom for others to choose to act in accordance with God's will.

Conclusions can now be drawn as to whether the pattern Scripture prescribes for the utilization of power and authority also presented in the churches participating in the study. The way the study group utilized power and authority closely mirrored the *Paradigm of Power and Authority in the Kingdom of God*, particularly regarding points (1) through (4) previously listed. Participating churches utilized power and authority to serve others in concrete ways in order to improve the physical condition of others' lives. The churches intentionally sought to equip and empower others for ministry and communicated that training leaders was one of the dominant uses of power and authority within their congregations. The churches utilized power and authority in a collaborative fashion as well; giving power away was characteristic among the churches.

Nevertheless, regarding point (5), I did not see clear evidence of power and authority being utilized among the study group to promote the freedom for men and women to act in accordance with God's will. This particular point speaks to Jesus' evangelistic zeal in the gospels in which he encountered person after person in an effort to prompt them to choose to act according to God's will. In such interactions Jesus did not compel these individuals to act in accordance with God's will, but instead on the heels of his demonstration of power and authority invited these individuals to address the freedom he had offered them, whether from sickness or sin. Jesus prompted individuals to decisive action in light of what they had experienced through the utilization of his power and authority.

Participating churches did not explicitly communicate that power and authority was being utilized within their respective congregations to prompt the same kind of responsive action on the part of individuals as Jesus modeled. Data analysis suggests the possibility that power and authority was not utilized or used very little to this end in participating churches. Although questions for pastors, staff, and laity explored this particular use of power and authority, respondents did not provide substantial and clear data to support that power and authority was being used to elicit decisions from people to follow Christ.

Consequently, research findings call the *Paradigm of Power and Authority in the Kingdom of God* as outlined in Chapter 2 into question. Data analysis identified that power and authority was used by healthy churches to "set the direction of ministry," "to empower others," "to help people in concrete ways," and "to connect people with God

and one another.” These four uses of power and authority are included in the *Paradigm of Power and Authority in the Kingdom of God*.

However, in light of finding no clear evidence to support that healthy churches used power and authority to prompt individuals to freely choose to act in accordance with God’s will, I determined that one of three conclusions may be drawn. First, a deficiency with the researcher-designed questionnaire and with the questions provided to staff and senior pastors may exist, specifically with regard to wording. In addition, I may have failed to ask the right questions to answer point (5). Secondly, these fifteen churches may not associate the use of power and authority with what is expressed in point (5), and thirdly, the study group may not be utilizing power and authority to accomplish point (5).

Data did not reveal that power and authority was being used by participating churches to prompt individuals to make personal decisions to follow Christ as indicated by point (5) of the *Paradigm*. I identified the possibility of a deficit in the *Paradigm* as hypothesized. The paradigm of power and authority in the kingdom of God as currently postulated by this study needs reexamining to establish definitively Jesus’ use of power and authority.

Use of Power and Authority as a Contributing Factor to Overall Health of Congregations

The study demonstrated a plausible relationship between church health and the utilization of power and authority. The extent to which church health depends on the utilization of power and authority was not determined by this study. The study did, however, prompt considerable implications. Healthy churches may in fact present a paradigm for utilizing power and authority in keeping with the pattern for utilizing power and authority as modeled and taught by Jesus. Therefore, a corollary relationship may

exist between the utilization of power and authority as demonstrated by the fifteen participating churches and their overall health. Lastly, the study plausibly demonstrates an appropriate use of power and authority for the Church as prescribed by Scripture resulting in church health.

Considerations on Health as Defined in the Study

Table 2.2 (p. 57) outlines the eight quality characteristics espoused by Schwarz's theory known as Natural Church Development. These characteristics are each qualitative in nature. I record in Chapter 1 that the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church is currently using Schwarz's theory to help strengthen churches throughout the Conference. During the process of selecting participants for this study, I was referred to the NCD definition of health by Freeman.

Additionally, Table 1.1 (p. 7) outlines seven criteria provided by Freeman that together serve as a definition of health for North Alabama United Methodist churches. Freeman's definition, over the NCD definition, was used to select the churches participating in this study. The seven criteria are all quantitative in nature. The context of study was, therefore, limited by this definition of congregational health.

I explored the use of power and authority within healthy United Methodist churches of North Alabama, presuming the good health of participating churches based upon the recommendation of Freeman. Participating churches were chosen because they were considered healthy by conference leadership, and particularly Freeman.

No qualitative criteria comprised Freeman's definition of health; consequently, study participants were selected based almost entirely on quantitative measures, thereby eliminating churches whose health may be reflected by more qualitative measurements.

Perhaps problematically, less resourced churches were eliminated from consideration for the study because of their inability to meet the financial criteria named in Freeman's definition. In short, defining church health in purely quantitative terms may not be the best test for good health. Further, church health may not be measurable utilizing only quantifiable criteria.

Further Research

I identified three areas for further research during data analysis. First, this study explored the use of power and authority in "healthy" churches. Further research involving congregations characterized as "unhealthy" or "declining" may benefit this study. Such research may serve to either validate or contradict my findings by exploring uses of power authority among an "unhealthy" study group.

Second, data analysis revealed that non-utilization of power and authority may be as detrimental to the health of congregations as "worldly" use of power and authority. Exploration of churches avoiding the utilization of power and authority is a topic for further research. Third, this study included demographic data. Further research might examine perceptions and use of power and authority with regard to the demographics included in this study.

Unhealthy Congregations

The study was conducted with very clear delimitations. One of these delimitations was church health. The study group consisted of only churches designated as healthy according to the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church definition provided by Freeman and his staff. Essentially, I consulted with Freeman to select churches to participate in this study. Further, focusing on a group of congregations

regarded as unhealthy may yield greater clarity in understanding the relationship between the use of power and authority by churches and their leaders and overall church health.

Non-Utilization of Power and Authority in the Church

Chapter 4 noted that certain patterns regarding the non-utilization of power and authority by church leaders or congregations surfaced during data analysis. These patterns imply that unhealthy conditions may result in the overall well-being of churches when church leaders are reticent to use their power and authority. Additional research regarding non-utilization of power and authority by church leaders and congregations may provide further insight into the relationship between church health and use of power and authority. Consequently, such study might indicate why some church leaders and churches fail to utilize their power and authority while also identifying perceptions of power and authority in such study groups.

Demographic Research

In Chapter 4 findings regarding the demographic composite of the study group were discussed. Demographic information included churches, communities, pastors, staff, and laity. Each of these groups was addressed in varying degrees in the previous chapter. The inclusion of this demographic material into an expanded study on the relationship between church health and the utilization of power and authority may be profitable. Such study may yield unique findings regarding the use of power and authority and specific groups. The study has generated a number of questions that future research may wish to address. These questions would deal more specifically with how certain demographics might perceive the utilization of power and authority in contrast to one another. This study suggests that the following questions might be addressed:

1. Did under-resourced churches and churches of ample resources show any difference in the understanding of utilization of power and authority?
2. Did male and female responses differ regarding the utilization of power and authority, and if so what was that difference?
3. Did age of respondents yield contrast in the understanding of utilization of power and authority?
4. What contrast in responses exists regarding the understanding of utilization of power and authority based on the longevity of membership and attendance of laity within their respective congregations?
5. Did participating churches, individually, use power and authority in differing ways?
6. What do the dissimilarities among lay, staff, and clergy response as discussed in the previous chapter reveal about the way each of these groups individually understand the use of power and authority within the context of the church?

Power and Authority Reconsidered

In an attempt to understand better how Jesus utilized his power and authority and how he taught that power and authority should be used by the Church this study explored Scripture and relevant literature. Particular attention was given to Jesus' words to his disciples in Mark 10:35-45. In this pericope Jesus rebuked two of his disciples, James and John, who mistakenly regarded the use of power and authority according to a worldly paradigm. Jesus described proper use of power and authority in the kingdom of God. He drew a contrast between the way power and authority was used by worldly leaders and

the way he and his followers used power and authority. Jesus' words convey an appropriate use of power and authority unique to the kingdom of God and unique to the Church. Commenting on this passage from Mark's Gospel, de Mingo Kaminouchi makes the following statement:

In v. 42b the disciples are shown to know how the powerful exercise their power based on their own experience of how rulers use their strength to dominate. This knowledge of the way power operates in society is the starting point of this small discourse about the way power should be used within the community of disciples. In departing from what "they know" Jesus will teach what they do not know: an alternative way of exercising authority. (117)

The study hypothesized that healthy churches might use power and authority according to the paradigm offered by Jesus in Mark, and a corollary relationship might exist between church health and utilization of power and authority. Field research was conducted to explore the way healthy congregations utilized power and authority.

In general the study determined that healthy congregations perceive the use of power and authority in positive terms. Additionally, the study determined that healthy churches attempt to utilize their power and authority in accordance with the paradigm found in Mark 10:35-45. Participating congregations utilized power and authority primarily to serve other people whether for the empowerment of others, the alleviation of others suffering, or enabling others to connect with God and with the community of believers.

In short, the study found evidence that congregations utilizing power and authority according to the way Jesus both taught and modeled are also congregations that are experiencing health.

APPENDIX A

Field Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews—Interview Guide

1. Who are the most influential people in this congregation? How do they influence and what affect does their influence have on the overall mission of this church?
2. How does laity participate in the life the church?
3. Tell me about your leadership structure and your relationship with other leaders?
4. How are leaders in the congregation identified and operationalized?
5. How would you describe the relationship between this church and this community?
6. Can you tell me about persons coming to faith in Christ through the ministry of this church and how they are discipled here?
7. Tell me a little about your role in this church and community?
8. I would like to know how you use your personal power, authority, and influence as a leader of this congregation. Can you give me a specific illustration?
9. How do you understand the way Jesus used his power, authority, and influence in scripture?

APPENDIX B

**Questionnaire for Qualitative Assessment of Components of
Kingdom Paradigm of Power: Church Leadership in Healthy Churches**

Directions:

- 1) Please read each of the following 15 statements and 10 questions.
 - 2) Checkmark the response that most closely reflects your thinking toward each statement.
 - 3) Briefly respond to each of the open-ended questions.
 - 4) This questionnaire will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete.
-

Name of church_____

Gender_____

Years attending this church _____

Years holding this office_____

Age_____

Name_____

Occupation_____

1. The leadership of this church fosters an attitude and practice of service within both the congregation and community.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

2. I am personally involved in works of service.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Checkmark the response that most closely reflects your thinking toward each statement.

3. The preaching and teaching in this church communicates that serving others is vital to the mission of the Church.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

4. This congregation serves one another and serves the community in tangible, practical, and spiritual ways.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

5. Leaders of this church have a reputation within this congregation and community as men and women who serve, and as men and women who seek points of service for others.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

6. Members and attendees of our church are encouraged to use their gifts and talents to serve within the congregation and community.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Checkmark the response that most closely reflects your thinking toward each statement.

7. The leadership of this church invests in growing new leaders.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

8. The ministry of this church is a team effort.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

9. This community ‘listens’ when this church speaks or acts.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

10. Leaders and volunteers in this congregation contribute to the life and mission of the Church out of love for Jesus Christ.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

11. This congregation attracts men and women with “broken” lives.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Checkmark the response that most closely reflects your thinking toward each statement.

12. The most important aspect of discipleship and evangelism is personal example.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

13. The most important aspect of discipleship is learning the rules of the church.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

14. Choice is a central theme of the preaching, teaching, and overall life and rhetoric of this congregation. (choice to attend, to be involved, to know Christ)

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

15. This is a pastor-centered, pastor-driven congregation.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Briefly respond to each of the following open-ended questions

16. Describe the influence of this congregation on yourself and this community.

17. What draws people to this church?

18. How is this church structured?

19. What makes this congregation effective in ministry?

Briefly respond to each of the following open-ended questions

20. How have you seen this church and its leaders use their power and authority?

21. Describe the leadership style of the pastor and/or other leaders of this congregation.

22. Why do you attend this church?

Briefly respond to each of the following open-ended questions

23. How are decisions made that affect the life and ministry of this church?

24. How would you characterize the involvement level of members and attendees of this church, especially with regards to people using their gifts, talents, and giving.

25. Describe the relationship between the pastor and other leaders and church members.

Thank You!

APPENDIX C

Cover Letter for Semi-Structured Interviews

Date: Current date

To: Healthy Church Leader
Physical and/or Email Address

From: Rev. Jason McIntosh
_____ United Methodist Church
Physical and Email Address
Phone
Beeson Pastor, Asbury Theological Seminary

Dear _____,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me on the telephone. I deeply appreciate your participation in my doctoral research on healthy church leadership. You have been selected by the Office of Congregational Development, Dick Freeman and Thomas Muhomba, as a leader of a healthy congregation in the North Alabama Conference. This designation speaks highly of both your leadership and of the congregation with whom and to whom you serve.

I look forward to meeting you personally and sitting down to discuss more about both your leadership and the congregation and community in which you serve.

Most humbly,

Jason McIntosh

APPENDIX D

Top 10 Percent of Healthy United Methodist Congregations in the North Alabama Conference by Alphabetical Location

Size	Location	Phone	Pastor	Email	Church Name
L	Athens	256-232-4906	Calvin Havens	calvin@friendshipumc.org	Friendship
S	Birmingham	205-970-8163	Keith Elder		Liberty Crossings
L	Birmingham	205-987-4030 205-422-8220	Jim Savage	jim@riverchaseumc.org	Riverchase
L	Birmingham	205-995-1700	Mark Lacey	mlacey@asburyonline.org	Asbury
S	Grant	256-728-2093	Phil Howell	pandjhowell@earthlink.net	New Life
L	Guntersville	256-582-2001	Robin Scott	Diannes1978@gfumc.net	Guntersville First
S	Guntersville	256-571-9000	Deborah Moon	Diannes1978@gfumc.net	Genesis
M	Helena	205-621-8060	Lyle Holland	Lyle@cahababend.org	Cahaba Bend
L	Huntsville	256-539-2683	John Tanner	jtanner@covechurch.com	Cove
L	Madison	256-837-0365	Alan Weatherly	alan.weatherly@asburyumc.ws	Asbury
M	Madison	256-232-3331	David Tubbs	David@gslife.org	Good Shepherd
M	McCalla	205-292-5818 205-239-4787	Mike Skelton	revskelton@comcast.net	InnerChange
L	Trussville	205-655-9414	Tommy Gray	lbelding@clearbranch.org	ClearBranch
M	Tuscaloosa	205-339-7161	John Kearns	jkearns@christharbor.org	Christ's Harbor
L	Tuscaloosa	205-345-7261	Ken Dunavent	Glenda@fumct.org	Tuscaloosa First

APPENDIX E

Consent Form

All data obtained in the course of this study will be used for the express purpose of research exploration. All material, audio and otherwise, will be held by the researcher until the completion of all dissertation requirements. Upon completion of dissertation work data, outside the dissertation itself, will be destroyed. No personal information will be shared beyond the bounds of the dissertation work.

By signing this form I consent to the use of all data acquired via interview and questionnaire.

Signature _____

Date _____

APPENDIX F

Agreement And Consent Form for the Representative Designated to Receive, Copy, Distribute, and Gather the Questionnaire Designed for a Convenience Sampling of Laity

I agree to receive, via email, the questionnaire designed for use with a convenience sampling of laity, and to copy, distribute, and gather said questionnaire.

I agree to honor the integrity of those participating and will not intentionally read, copy, alter, or share completed questionnaires.

I understand that no personal information regarding myself will be shared beyond the bounds of the dissertation work itself.

By signing this form I both agree to these conditions and consent to my involvement in this process.

Signature _____

Date _____

APPENDIX G

Statement of Personal Ethics

All responses to questionnaires utilized during the course of this study will be held in the strictest confidence, and shall only be used by said researcher for purposes pertinent to and within the scope of the dissertation research and report. Questionnaires will be held until the completion of said dissertation and acceptance thereof by the faculty of Asbury Theological Seminary. After such time, questionnaires will be destroyed.

Jason McIntosh

APPENDIX H

Qualities Indicative of Health for United Methodist Congregations in the North Alabama Conference

Qualities of Health	
1:	Increase in financial giving
2:	Employment of additional full-time staff
3:	Growth reflected in increased attendance and membership
4:	Ongoing adult conversions and baptisms
5:	Greater number of people in worship than people on membership roll
6:	Numerical increase of ministry-related groups
7:	Numerical increase in children and youth
8:	“Something” that causes people to come, and “something” that causes them to stay

* Information submitted by Dick Freeman, Director of Congregational Development in the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church

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