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USING COACHING FOR THE PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOME
FELLOWSHIP LEADERS OF HORIZON CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER
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ABSTRACT

Using Coaching for the Personal Development of the Home Fellowship Leaders of Horizon Christian Fellowship

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The goal of this ministry focus paper is to present a strategy that helps develop, retain, and sustain home fellowship leaders at Horizon Christian Fellowship by means of a personal development plan through a coaching relationship. It is argued that the strategy presented could lead to an increase in the retention of small group leaders, thus strengthening the home fellowship system. This plan was tested in the home fellowship system at Horizon Christian Fellowship (hereafter, Horizon) in San Diego, California.

An analysis of the home fellowship system revealed a consistent loss of home fellowship leaders at Horizon. One reason for this loss is due to the lack of personal development in the leaders' lives. An examination of the Scriptures reveals that moral purity and strength development are a vital part of the leadership position. Consequently, for the leaders in the home fellowship system, personal development should be a high priority.

It is believed that through the utilization of a personal development plan through a coaching relationship, there will be a greater retention of home fellowship leaders. To test this hypothesis, a class was initiated at Horizon. The class served two purposes: to instruct leaders in the area of moral purity and strength development and to give the leaders the opportunity to learn the art of coaching in triads. The class was given at Horizon and met with some measure of success; however, due to time constraints the results of this strategy were limited. Additional training is already planned for the small group leaders towards the achievement of this goal.

Theological Mentor: Kurt Fredrickson, PhD

Words: 259

To my wife and best friend, Sylvia, who kept me constantly in her prayers.
It has been a long journey together.
Thank you for always being there for me.

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INTRODUCTION

The home fellowship system has been an extremely productive and beneficial ministry for close to thirty years at Horizon Christian Fellowship (hereafter, Horizon) in San Diego, California. Home fellowships have proven to be a valuable training arena for leaders in developing their leadership skills.¹ A number of Horizon home fellowship leaders have moved on to become full-time pastors, worship leaders, and chaplains at various Christian and non-Christian agencies throughout the city. The home fellowships have assisted non-profit agencies in helping to feed the homeless and they have held mini-festivals where many people received free medical care and clothing. Additionally, they have participated in a wide range of activities that aided not only in the well-being of Horizon but in the city of San Diego as well.²

Nevertheless, for a ministry considered the backbone of the church there has been an alarming trend in the loss of leaders. Over a twelve-month period of time (August 2005-August 2006), Horizon lost 23 percent of its leaders in the home fellowship system followed by a 17 percent loss of leaders the subsequent year. Moreover, this tendency has not been limited to a two-year period but it continues to occur in the home fellowships. The loss of leaders portrays a troubling trend and may have a number of rippling effects throughout the small group system.

¹ Since the start of home fellowships at Horizon, only men have been allowed to lead home fellowships where both men and women attended. As Horizon started having home fellowships for women only, it has been natural that a few of the husbands and boyfriends start attending, although they were not officially welcome. Possibly in the future, as Horizon acknowledges the presence of some very gifted women teachers, the opportunity will be present for them to teach in the standard home fellowships. However, for the purpose of this paper the home fellowship leaders will be acknowledged as male only.

² A mini-festival is where home fellowships go out into the community not only to share the Gospel, but to meet some of the needs of the people. All home fellowships are encouraged to be part of and engage with the surrounding community.

First, a change in leadership causes a lack of continuity in the home fellowship. The turnover in leadership may lead to stagnation of the group, which could adversely affect the spiritual growth of believers in the fellowship. It is not unusual to see a home fellowship shutdown, or drop in size, due to a variation in leadership. The role of a leader in the home fellowship and the impact he has on the small group is significant. Knowing that a change or loss of leadership affects the small group system directly and Horizon as a church indirectly, this issue needs attention.

As an elder at Horizon for the past twenty-two years, I have held every position of leadership in the home fellowship system during that time. Having begun as a small group leader, I subsequently moved on to section leader, then area leader, and finally to regional leader. This experience has given me an understanding regarding the operation of the small group and a good knowledge of the Horizon fellowship structure.³ I have also had the privilege and opportunity of being one of the instructors teaching Horizon's leadership training class for close to ten years. These classes involved teaching present as well as future fellowship leaders. During my extensive time in the home fellowship organization, I have talked to hundreds of leaders on a personal level about problems and concerns that affected them as home fellowship leaders. In these personal discussions with home fellowship leaders, the problems and issues affecting them appear to be broad in nature.⁴ However, there are a few concerns that keep repeating themselves in all of these dialogues.

³ The home fellowship has five levels of leadership: home fellowship leader, section leader, area leader, regional leader and the head pastor who gives oversight to the entire system. More on the structure will be considered in chapter one.

⁴ Home Fellowship Leaders Interviews, interviews by author, San Diego, CA, 2005-2010.

The first issue that many leaders have acknowledged is a moral complacency in their lives. This may show itself through a lack of integrity in dealing with people and situations in the leader's life. For example, Horizon has a strict rule that to be involved in leadership one must not drink alcohol. Leaders are aware of this when they take over the leadership position and agree to the conditions, yet some of them feel free to compromise and continue to drink. While acknowledging that it is certainly not a sin to drink, what is troubling is that leaders agree to the rules then deliberately go back on their word with no sense of remorse. Other leaders have compromised in areas of their lives that affect not only ministry, but also more importantly their family. Pornography has become a real problem to a number of the leaders. This problem has affected some marriages of the home fellowship leaders. For some leaders their external behavior negatively reflects on their inward profession of faith and commitment.

The second area of concern reveals itself in the lives of leaders who may be leading small groups, but who fail to discover their talents or are unsuccessful in developing them into areas of strengths. Most home fellowship leaders are aware of their spiritual gifts, but they have no awareness of their God-given talents—much less how to develop them into strengths. Instead of showing signs of strength development, these leaders continue to direct the fellowship in the same manner month after month with little evidence of growth in their areas of strengths. This has been apparent in a number of leaders by the high level of frustration in their lives and discouragement that comes from failing to continue to develop their talents into strengths.⁵ This may explain why some leaders step down from the home fellowships. Some are simply not equipped to lead a

⁵ Tom Rath, *Strengths Finder 2.0* (New York: Gallup Press, 2007), 12.

home fellowship; others neglect to embrace their own unique talents and instead they try to emulate other leaders. Either way, the results are still the same in that Horizon loses leaders. I have observed men doing phenomenal jobs working with the children on Sunday mornings, leading worship teams, or simply running the bookstore. However, when they assume a leadership role in the home fellowships, it is frustrating to them and they do not last. The talent to lead other ministries does not necessarily indicate that the same person has the talents and strengths to lead a small Bible study group. The home fellowship leadership training must help leaders learn, develop, and strengthen their talents in order to endure as leaders.

There are many facets to personal development of the small group leaders. For the purpose of this paper, the focus will be on the role that moral purity and strength development play in its growth. These appear to be two of the more significant concerns affecting the home fellowship leaders. The thesis of this ministry focus paper is to formulate a strategy that will help retain home fellowship leaders at Horizon. This will be accomplished by strengthening moral purity in their lives while also helping them recognize their talents and learning how to develop them into strengths. The strategy is to accomplish this through a personal development plan (PDP) for each of the small group leaders at Horizon through a coaching relationship. Using a personal development strategy gives all leaders the opportunity to strengthen their moral steadfastness. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, leaders should mature in the area of moral purity and strength development as they embrace the use of spiritual disciplines. Furthermore, using personal development assessment tools, leaders will become aware of their individual talents and the discipline needed to turn those talents into strengths.

The implementation plan includes teaching a course to the home fellowship leaders at Horizon. The strategy for this class is to lay out a plan for the personal development of all the leaders, specifically in the area of moral purity and strengths development. Instructing the leaders in the methodology of coaching is vital in order for them to leave the class and start coaching future leaders in a personal development plan. The ultimate goal is for the leaders to take the information they learn and reproduce themselves into a new set of leaders using coaching as the foundation.

There are several reasons for wanting to write on this subject. Home fellowships play an important role in the spiritual growth of Christians. While the leadership tries to increase the quantity of home fellowships at Horizon they keep hitting a certain growth plateau. Then the number of groups either stops growing or even starts declining. Changes in leadership might be an important reason for the lack of growth of the fellowships. The lack of moral purity in the leaders and a failure to develop their talents into strengths could play a vital role in losing leaders. Horizon needs to have a training plan for the home fellowship leaders that would reinforce their moral purity while building talents and strengths.

The main target audience for this strategy is the home fellowship leaders. They are the ones who need support and training to assist them in their pursuit of moral purity and strength development. However, it written not only to the leaders, it is also for the upper leadership who do not seem to understand the importance of their role. The loss of leaders needs to stop, but this will only occur when the system makes needed modifications in training. Therefore, a secondary audience for this strategy is the leadership training system. The present methodology is not efficient and adjustments

need to take place. The present system of training is too generic. It does not take into account any individual giftedness, but trains all leaders with the same methods. There is also a lack of focus on moral purity in the training. Both of these issues will be discussed more in depth in Chapter 1.

Approximately one thousand people attend the fellowships, thus it is vital to have coordination and spiritual growth in the small groups. Many leaders of other ministries attend home fellowships, thus it is imperative to provide an environment that will contribute to their growth as Christian leaders. When there is a consistent turnover in small group leadership this goal is in jeopardy of coming to fruition. Thus, this topic is important not only to the home fellowships, but to Horizon as a whole. Since so much emphasis is placed on the small groups, any disruption in home fellowship leadership may have a rippling effect throughout the rest of Horizon.

At times Horizon appears to place more weight on executing the job of the ministry and less on personal development. Home fellowship leaders may observe their small groups growing sufficiently and conclude that everything is satisfactory in their Christian lives. As a result, too many leaders have become task-oriented in their position as leaders and less concerned with personal growth and development. The strategy in this ministry focus paper will play an important part in the integration of a personal development plan in the small group leaders.

Coaching will be the method used for the utilization of this strategy. While acknowledging the significant value of mentoring, discipling, and counseling, they are not as effective as coaching in helping to train and retain leaders. Coaching helps draw out issues in leaders' lives that need to be addressed. It is also an indispensable tool for

promoting discovery and awareness of God's kingdom. In the discipline of coaching there is much emphasis placed on the individual.

Part One will look at the overall history of Horizon and the important role that home fellowships play in the church. It will also examine past and present methods used in training the small group leaders and their effectiveness. Acknowledging that various situations can lead to a loss of leaders, importance will be on the role that personal development plays in building and retaining small group leaders. The emphasis of personal development is on moral purity while discovering and building a leader's talents into strengths. The context for this ministry-focus paper will be laid out carefully in this first part. The problem will be seen clearly as a lack of training in the area of personal development.

Part Two will develop the biblical and theological foundations necessary for personal development using the coaching technique. The results of a biblical study that focuses on Scriptures that specifically use coaching in the personal development of leaders will be of primary concern. Scriptural evidence will be given supporting the theme of personal development. Additionally, this section will consider the theological importance of moral purity and development of strengths. The theological and biblical foundation for coaching will also be introduced. Coaching focuses on the uniqueness of the leaders and how they are able to fulfill their God-given potential.

Part Three will address the strategic role of the coach in aiding personal development in home fellowship leaders. The multiple roles of the coach will be examined with a focus on the basics of coaching. Additionally, a specific plan for moral purity and strength development in the leaders using different types of assessment tools

will be studied. A major focus of this section is on the drafting of a personal development plan to assist the home fellowship leaders in their pursuit of moral purity and strength development. Analysis of the effectiveness of this strategy is the conclusion to this ministry focus paper.

PART ONE
MINISTRY CONTEXT

CHAPTER 1
THE HISTORY OF HOME FELLOWSHIPS AT HORIZON CHRISTIAN
FELLOWSHIP

The main purpose of this chapter is to narrate the history of the home fellowships at Horizon Christian Fellowship. It will explain how tremendous numerical growth of Horizon resulted in the need for the more intimate home fellowships. The different types of training programs will be discussed and evaluated. Personal development will be introduced as a vital part of the training that has been lacking. Personal development is comprised of a person's distinctive strengths, talents, and moral qualities that distinguish one person from another.

Church Demographics

The history of the home fellowships at Horizon started with an unassuming Bible study at a home in the Point Loma area of San Diego in June of 1974. Living in Orange County at the time, intern pastor Michael MacIntosh had little interest in driving down to San Diego every Monday night to give the study.¹ Agreeing to a sixteen-week trial, he would teach through one chapter of the Gospel of Mark per week. MacIntosh assumed

¹ Sherwood Eliot Wirt, *For the Love of Mike* (San Diego: Little Island Productions, 1984), 140.

that when the four months were up his commitment would end and he could leave San Diego and return to Orange County.²

The first week of the Bible study started with a modest twelve people in attendance. However, by the conclusion of the tenth chapter of Mark the number had risen to seventy-five. One of the noteworthy details of this Bible group was the fact that most of the participants were under the age of twenty-five. Individuals who had never attended church in their lives were coming to hear this young preacher from Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa on Monday nights. When the thirteenth week had arrived, there were ninety people crowded into this normal-size residence.³ It was clear that the house was not going to comfortably accommodate this many people. It was very evident to those in attendance that God was doing something very special in the life of the young pastor, as well as in the Bible study.

Phenomenal Growth

Rapid growth necessitated the need of finding a larger place to meet. They were fortunate to obtain a room at Balboa Park's Hospitality House that had seating for five hundred people. During this transition, MacIntosh had fulfilled his obligations by finishing the book of Mark, but realized that he could not possibly stop at this point. After sixteen weeks, the number of people in the study had risen from a dozen, up to 150.⁴ Although the Monday night studies were continuing to grow at a phenomenal rate, there

² Wirt, *For the Love of Mike*, 141.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 142.

was a persistent desire in the hearts of those attending to have something more than just a weeknight Bible study.

The time was quickly approaching when MacIntosh needed to make some difficult decisions. He was not only driving down to San Diego on a weekly basis for the Bible study, but was additionally driving to Palm Springs during the week to give more studies. The time and expense started to take its toll and the time arrived when MacIntosh needed to decide where to base his ministry. Chuck Smith, head pastor of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa where MacIntosh was an intern pastor, was the one who essentially asked him if he would consider making a permanent move to San Diego. Many leaders had seen what the Lord was doing through him, and it was clear that the time had arrived for this young pastor to make San Diego his hometown.

In January of 1975, MacIntosh and his family left their home in Orange County and headed for San Diego. It is no exaggeration to say that his choosing San Diego would dramatically change the city in many ways. The effects of the ministry reached into many areas of San Diego County and beyond.⁵ Once they relocated to San Diego, MacIntosh fulfilled the desires of many people by immediately starting a Sunday morning service in the Hospitality House in Balboa Park, while continuing the Monday night Bible study.

⁵ Twelve additional churches have multiplied from Horizon in San Diego alone. Many more churches have been planted around the country, with additional ones in Mexico, Asia, Europe and Australia. Many of the San Diego pastors are involved with outreaches within San Diego, such as chaplains with the San Diego Police Department, San Diego Sheriff's Department, San Diego Fire Department, San Diego Chargers and numerous hospitals. All of these chaplains started their ministries at Horizon. Pastor MacIntosh is also on the National Emergency Response Team and was one of the first team members in New York City on 9/11. They have also spent countless hours training other people around the country in crisis management. The list goes on and on, but the point is that many people have come out of Horizon Christian Fellowship and have gone into Christian and secular ministries that have helped aid and shape the people of San Diego and others around the world.

The Sunday morning service multiplied quickly to two, and once again, they needed to find another location that would accommodate the rapidly growing church.

They ended up renting an auditorium in the Linda Vista section of San Diego. By Easter Sunday of that year the church was doing two services and had grown to over 650 people, while the Monday night Bible study was drawing well over 1,000 people.⁶ During this period of growth, the media in San Diego also sensed something special going on and wrote articles in the local papers about this new movement of God.⁷ Other pastors and ministers came to visit to see what was so different about the new church that did not use songbooks, choirs, or organs. People were not dressed up in suits and dresses, but instead wore casual clothing. This was definitely not the “normal church.”

Due to continued growth, another move was necessary and through some God-ordained types of works, Horizon purchased a former movie theater in North Park that was fixed up to accommodate the young church. In about three years, from the initial meeting in a living room in Point Loma, they had found a place in this old theater that they could finally call home, at least temporarily. By the early 1980s, Sunday attendance in the remodeled movie theater would reach over five thousand adults, while the Sunday schools would be reaching another fifteen hundred children and young adults. This made it one of the largest churches in San Diego.⁸

⁶ Wirt, *For the Love of Mike*, 150.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 154.

A significant point is that Pastor MacIntosh firmly believed in Horizon's vision of "win, disciple and send."⁹ This vision statement would become the foundation for all ministries at Horizon. Consequently, it was very natural for him to be more concerned with sending people out to plant other churches than in trying to build a larger and larger church. This missional passion would become an important part of the faith tradition at Horizon. By training new leaders and sending them out to start churches in other parts of San Diego and beyond, he would be in a position to touch more and more lives with the good news of Jesus Christ. His desire was to bear witness for the kingdom of God and not to bear witness for himself. MacIntosh chose the building of people to be more important than the building of an institution. This former movie theatre in North Park would be their home for a few more years before more growth forced them to find another location for the church. This final move would bring them to a former junior high school property no longer used. This is where Horizon still finds itself twenty-five years later.¹⁰

Origins of the Home Fellowships

As the phenomenal growth at Horizon continued, it became very clear that there were urgent ministerial needs. Although church growth was increasing, there was not a ministry available that encouraged deeper spiritual development of the new believers. There were a number of issues that needed to be resolved if the church was going to continue such remarkable growth.

⁹ The vision of "win, disciple and send" was formulated while MacIntosh was pursuing his Master's of Divinity degree from Azusa Pacific University. It is fair to say that all Horizon ministries are based on this vision. The vision is explained more in depth later in this chapter.

¹⁰ The church was originally called Calvary Chapel of San Diego, but later changed its name to Horizon Christian Fellowship.

A ministry was needed where young Christians would be able to grow and mature among the interactions of more mature believers. An environment was desired that encouraged all types of questions and comments. Also of necessity was a place where new believers could be held accountable. Horizon was growing so fast, it was exceedingly easy to get lost in the crowd. Some kind of ministry was needed that would be able to assist the young Christians in becoming part of the community of believers.

Leadership at the Horizon recognized that as effective as the Sunday morning and Monday night services had been, there needed to be a resource available that would fulfill the needs of the ministry. The home fellowships were started in order to provide believers an opportunity not only to grow in their relationship with God, but also to give them the chance to become more intimate with fellow believers. The home fellowships became groups emphasizing mutual support, where people loved and served one another while at the same time reaching out to their local communities. One of the most basic needs of the new believers was the desire for intimacy.

Need for Intimacy

The leadership at Horizon recognized the need for intimacy for people attending the church and understood the distinct advantages of utilizing a small group system. First, it gave people the ability to interact with the Sunday morning message. Like many churches, Horizon had a Sunday service in which one person was primarily doing the teaching. While not ignoring the phenomenal instruction that came from this lecture method, what it lacked was the ability for people to engage and interact with the message. The intimacy of the small group setting allowed for dialogue to occur between various

parties in the group, thereby adding to the spiritual growth of all people involved. All people in the fellowship were encouraged to participate not only in the Bible study, but also in time of prayer and worship. Biblical understanding increased as knowledge from multiple sources aided in the spiritual development of believers in the group.

The home fellowships gave many people the opportunity to discover what a community of believers is supposed to be. This focus on the community of believers was to become an important theme of the faith traditions for Horizon. For single mothers, divorced fathers, and young adults with virtually no parental role models, the home fellowships provided an ideal environment to have needs met. The home fellowships literally became family for many of the people in the small groups. They were places of refuge where people could be themselves without fear of rejection. For quite a few people in the fellowships this was the only family that they had.

Additionally, small groups also became very effective in taking some of the burden off the counseling staff at the church. Due to the volume of people seeking counseling, the staff was overwhelmed. Therefore, the number of counseling sessions allowed to each person was limited to a maximum of three. In the intimate surrounding of a home fellowship, people would be able to forge new friendships and have ample opportunity to share personal problems. The home fellowships allowed an opportunity for those who had special needs to be involved in a small community of believers where intimate counseling could take place. Thus, the small groups played a significant part in the general health of the church.

Small groups aided in the discovery and development of spiritual gifts. The home fellowships presented an environment that allowed people to take spiritual assessment

tests. Discussions and suggestions on implementation of those gifts assisted many young believers in deciding how to use those gifts.

One final benefit of home fellowships was how they increased accountability in the lives of the people attending the groups as well as for the leaders. Due to the size of Horizon, it was very easy to attend the service and yet have little interaction with fellow believers. Having a community available where people asked lovingly tough personal questions was a formula for growth. Although there were additional advantages for home fellowships, it is a reasonable statement to say that the groups have played an extremely valuable role in the people at Horizon.

Small groups fulfilled the need for intimacy at Horizon. Friendships established many years ago continue to thrive in spite of all the issues that enter into people's lives. There was one crucial element that aided in the intimacy of the home fellowships—the size of the group. The number of people attending the fellowships played an important role in the closeness of the group. Keeping the attendance of the home fellowship to a manageable number increased the intimacy of the small groups.

It is recognized by a number of small group advocates that the number of people attending a small group should be from about eight to fifteen.¹¹ Recognizing this important concern, the number of people attending a home fellowship became very significant. Home fellowships having seven or fewer people in attendance do not normally tend to be ones that have longevity, although there certainly are exceptions.¹² It has been shown that these small groups of seven or fewer have a significantly higher

¹¹ Dan Williams, *Seven Myths about Small Groups* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 51.

¹² Neil Cole, *Cultivating a Life for God* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1999), 50.

failure rate, produce less fruit, and cause the leader more frustration and anxiety than larger groups.¹³

The other extreme also can happen when the size of fellowships increase so much that the social aspect of groups may be affected, cliques could form, hindering the overall intimacy of the groups. Additionally, leaders may become so overwhelmed with trying to meet the needs of so many people that they lose heart. Since one of the key initial factors of Horizon's small groups was to create an environment that was conducive to spiritual growth, keeping the groups at a small size was imperative. A group of approximately twelve people gave the leaders freedom to be more involved with the personal dimensions of people's lives. In looking at the Bible, Jesus chose the twelve disciples (Mark 3:14) and spent approximately three years pouring his heart into them. This has been the pattern at Horizon from the beginning, keeping the groups down to a dozen people and praying for the Holy Spirit to nurture and work in the hearts of his people.

Vision of the Home Fellowships

The vision for the home fellowships is essentially the same as for the church as a whole: win, disciple, and send. Horizon's home fellowship manual explains this very clearly. It states the following:

Win a person to Christ (Mark 16:15). Home fellowship members inviting friends and neighbors to the home meetings where the gospel message is proclaimed and where an individual's personal needs can be met through loving Christian witnesses accomplish personal evangelism. In addition to this, evangelistic outreaches are also sponsored and implemented by numerous fellowships in a given section or area to reach out through concerts, sporting

¹³ Nelson Searcy and Kerrick Thomas, *Activate: An Entirely New Approach to Small Groups* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2008), 17.

events, drama presentations, and through many other facets of the Horizon ministries.

Disciple a person in Christ (Matthew 28:19, 20). The home fellowship provides a casual and intimate setting where believers come together with pastoral oversight and care to study the Bible, fellowship, share in communion, pray, worship, express spiritual gifts, evangelize, and to meet one another's basic life needs (e.g. spiritual, physical, emotional, social, and intellectual).

Send a person for Christ (Acts 1:8). Home fellowships are an excellent place for the church members to live out their Christian faith. As each person matures in their relationship with Christ, they can grow into new positions of service and leadership as opportunities are available in supporting missionaries, being actively involved in outreach projects, becoming a home fellowship leader or assistant, discipling new believers, and in simply meeting one another's needs in love.¹⁴

One of the keys to analyzing the vision statement of the home fellowships is to understand the emphasis of Horizon, which is mission. Missiology is the foundation and focus of all three parts of the vision "Win" is the first element of the vision statement. Winning does not necessarily mean persuading people to make a decision for Christ, but may simply involve planting seeds of the gospel into people's lives. In Mark 16:15, Jesus commands the remaining eleven apostles to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Horizon has taken this directive and applied it in outreaches around the world. Home fellowships do the same—going out into the surrounding communities spreading the gospel and meeting the needs of the people.

Discipling is part of the vision where the home fellowships should excel. Given the fact that the size of Horizon is so large, this makes it difficult to disciple on Sunday mornings. Thus, it is imperative that small groups be capable of completing this task. The small groups are set up to allow new and experienced believers an opportunity to grow in their faith, encouraging spiritual growth. Going through the Bible as a group while also

¹⁴ Horizon Christian Fellowship Pastors, *Home Fellowship Ministry Leadership Helps*, San Diego, CA, 1980-2010.

praying and sharing needs is a great benefit to the discipleship process. Additionally, as relationships grow in the fellowships, accountability also increases. As people get more involved with one another, they are able to encourage each other in their Christian faith. One of the primary purposes of this ministry focus paper is to present a strategy that will strengthen and retain the leaders. Thus, ultimately this plan should aid Horizon in stemming the continual loss of small group leaders. Therefore, the ability to disciple new believers should strengthen as the continuity in leadership lengthens. Discipling new believers in the home fellowships allow the next part of the vision to happen naturally.

Sending a person for Christ involves not only directing some people out into various parts of the world to share the gospel, but it also encompasses those who are not called to be missionaries. Occasionally it arises in the home fellowships where people may sense God's call upon their lives to leave San Diego for other parts of the world to share the love of God. Nevertheless, more often the home fellowships support those already called out. This may include financial and prayer support while at times actually visiting the missionaries in foreign countries. Sending also applies to those not called to go out as missionaries but whom, in their daily jobs, also feel the responsibility to try to be witnesses for Christ. Although there have been many changes within the home fellowship system over the years, the vision remains the same.

As previously mentioned, one of the resources available to the group leaders to support them in fulfilling the vision has been the Leadership Manual. In addition to clarification of the vision for the fellowships, also included in this valuable resource are ideas on how to: facilitate a Bible study, tips on prayer and worship, notes on group dynamics, along with many other tools that will aid the leader in managing a small group.

There have been many different versions of the Leadership Manual over the years, with each version improving on the previous one. It has proven to be an extremely valuable tool in giving the home fellowship leaders abundant information for helping them fulfill their position.

In summary, it was clear that a small group system was going to meet the needs of the ministry. However, another problem became apparent very quickly: the need for leaders. Since Horizon was so young, a certain level of maturity had not yet been attained by the vast majority of the church. What was needed was some method of training men to become home fellowship leaders.

Training History of the Home Fellowship Leaders

The training history of the home fellowships has been long and varied. There have been various methods of training used throughout the years with some having more success than others. The drawback has been that most of the training has been very generic in nature. Little training was accomplished with the strengths and giftedness of the individual taken into account. Additionally, there has been little emphasis placed on personal development. A brief summary examining different methods of training follows.

Generic Training

Horizon trained many men over the years who have gone on to become very effective small group leaders.¹⁵ The training has taken on many different forms during this period. At times, the area leaders or section leaders did the training utilizing small

¹⁵ Although the leadership training is primarily set up to train men to become home fellowship leaders or assistants, there is also a part of the training that helps train women to become home fellowship woman helpers. Their valuable role is varied and somewhat dependent upon the needs of the leader.

classes.¹⁶ These classes were open only to those specifically invited by the pastor. Since classes were small, the training was intimate leading to substantial interaction among the leaders in attendance. This gave the new and prospective leaders opportunities to ask questions and to gain insight from those instructing the class. These yearly twelve-week classes covered a multitude of topics that aided the leaders in directing the small groups. Although there were multiple areas discussed, the majority of the time was spent on how to implement the responsibilities of the home fellowship leader.

Replacing the small training classes with larger ones occurred after a number of years. These large training sessions were open not only to present leaders, but also to anyone at Horizon who desired to learn more about home fellowship leadership. These semi-annual classes normally held over a hundred people. The classes usually focused on five specific topics: introduction to home fellowships, prayer and worship, facilitating Bible discussion, group dynamics and support systems, and pastoral care. The problem with the large training classes was that there was more lecturing with much less interaction than the small classes. The intimacy attained using the smaller classes was definitely lost and it gave the appearance that the focus was more on the quantity of people taking the training than on the quality of the training. Having a very structured agenda, there was very little time to discuss topics that were not on the schedule.

Training has always been a very valuable resource for the new leaders, as well as a good refresher course for those who had been leading a fellowship for a while.

However, improving training in some areas is critical. First, the training has been too

¹⁶ Area leaders and section leaders were the people in authority above the home fellowship leaders. Part of their job is to come along side of the leaders and aid them in fulfilling their role as leader. Some of the area and section leaders were also teachers in the leadership training program.

generic. Although there was definite value in the training classes, training everyone the same way became the standard. Giving little or no importance to the fact that the leaders were all very different people with dissimilar backgrounds and character limited the effectiveness of the training. Neglecting the individuality of the leaders reduced the successfulness of the training.

Moreover, the major emphasis has always been on how to execute the position of home fellowship leader, with very little training given on how to develop spiritually in order to become a better leader. Personal development was never a major focus of the training classes. The strategy set forth in this ministry focus paper is not to take away what is presently being taught, but to emphasize the importance of personal development while leading the home fellowship.

Need for More Specific Training

Understanding that the current training methods lacks any type of instruction that benefits each leader as an individual, there needs to be an adjustment to the program. A strategy needs implementation that appreciates and embraces the differences of each individual while seeking a method of educating each leader on how to build upon them. Teaching leadership classes in the same manner year after year is probably not going to train Horizon's future leaders adequately. The training must change as the culture and people change, recognizing that young leaders do not look at the world the same way a fifty-year-old does. As Horizon starts training the home fellowship leaders more as individuals, they will be better prepared for the difficult issues that come their way.

While acknowledging generic issues that all leaders battle in their lives, there are also very specific issues that leaders deal with that are very personal to them. Based upon the fact that each person comes from a multifaceted background, leaders need a training method that will help equip them for the rest of their lives. In casual discussions with leaders over the years there have been numerous comments made regarding the amount of time wasted in training classes discussing issues that had no relevance to them as leaders. There is a need for a specific type of training where leaders have the opportunity to share issues that are affecting them. Having no avenue to discuss their problems causes discouragement among the leaders. When the problems of leading a home fellowship are added to the personal issues that the leaders are dealing with, it is too much for many of them and they step down. In casual discussions with leaders, there is a desire to get more personal in the classes and have teaching that is more relevant to them as individuals.

As mentioned, there is virtually no training given to the men to encourage them in their day-to-day concerns. The leaders need to know how to battle the darkness of pornography while at the same time learning how to become better husbands. There is no training given on how to persevere through the difficult times that come into their lives, and the consequences of compromising moral issues. Moreover, there is very little training regarding the crucial role of spiritual disciplines in their lives. The loss of leaders and the lack of maturity in some of those who remain stress the urgency for a change in the method of training that addresses these matters.

Another important part of more specific training needs to evaluate the idea of whether using classes to build personal development in the leaders is the most productive method. In evaluating class size it was determined that the larger the class size, the less

intimate the interaction. What needs to be established is a process of teaching where there is abundant personal attention given to the small group leader. Acknowledging that there is usually some value in virtually any type of training, if Horizon desires to have more longevity with the leaders it needs to establish a form of training that will help the small group leaders persevere through the difficult times. The problem seems to be that since the training appeared to work thirty years ago when Horizon was showing phenomenal growth, some feel that it must continue to be the most effective method of training. However, this is proving to be antiquated reasoning and change needs to occur to sustain leaders in the small groups.

Personal Development as an Integral Part of Training

One of the problems leaders are encountering is the concern of being too morally complacent. At times leaders may become so focused on doing ministry, they lose track of striving to become more God-like and obedient in their behavior (1 Peter 1:16). Especially as home fellowship leaders mature and stay in ministry year after year, it is easy for them to become content with life and cease personal development. Leaders start identifying themselves by their ministries and they lose focus of the fact that ministry is what they do—it is not who they are.

There is a danger when home fellowship leaders become a little successful in their own eyes. There is a tendency that when ministries are going well, there is less time spent in examining personal development. The ancient philosopher Socrates asked the question: If I do not care or strive to be a better human being, then what does that say

about the condition of my life, much less the condition of my personal character?¹⁷ As small group leaders become complacent in their moral purity, it is often the result of very little time spent in self-examination. This needs to be included in a personal development plan in a new training regime.

A small group leader displays his moral character through actions and behavior. It is one thing to articulate one's feelings regarding the role of personal morality in leadership and it is quite another to be actively living out those values. Thus, a leader's behavior is simply a reflection of his core nature. Horizon needs to instruct leaders how to walk in a manner worthy of the call (Philippians 1:27). This is where importance of focusing on becoming a moral person is much more important than on leading a successful ministry. While acknowledging the occasions where right actions can help shape correct thinking, it is much more likely that one's actions are simply a reflection of correct thinking. Right thinking leads to right actions and behavior.

Leaders define their personal development as much more than simply the ability to make good moral choices. Discovering the talents and strengths of home fellowship leaders give them the best chance to fulfill their calling as a leader. The evidence clearly points out that when leaders are aware of their talents, and start investing time turning them into strengths, they are much more likely to stay in leadership.¹⁸ When leaders fail to work from their areas of strength, the level of frustration might increase and they could

¹⁷ Russell W. Gough, *Character is Destiny: The Value of Personal Ethics in Everyday Life* (New York: Crown Forum, 1998), 18.

¹⁸ Marcus Buckingham and Donald O. Clifton, *Now, Discover Your Strengths* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 5.

become less successful. Using a personal development strategy, more of the leaders should grow and thrive in their small groups.

In summary, the leadership training needs to include personal development as an integral part of that regime. In challenging the leaders to a higher level of moral purity, and by helping them discover and invest in their strengths and talents, the retention rate of the leaders should go up. This will aid not only in the spiritual development of the individual, but will also bring continuity into the leadership at the church and as a result should strengthen the body of Christ as a whole.

CHAPTER 2
CHALLENGES FACING CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IN THE HOME
FELLOWSHIP LEADER

Henry Blackaby writes, “Leadership is more about ‘being’ than ‘doing.’ Leadership development is synonymous with personal development.”¹ Small group training at Horizon has been beneficial to the leader in a number of important ways. These training classes provide the leaders with the basic information needed to guide a small group. Nevertheless, in spite of some valuable instruction given to the leaders, certain issues remain.

This chapter will describe multiple challenges facing home fellowship leaders that may hinder their personal development. Emphasis on how to train leaders in their individual relationships with God, while dealing with the challenges they face is a necessity. Personal development training is deficient in the current training system. While exploring each of the challenges facing the small group leaders individually, ignoring the cumulative effect these issues may have on the leaders cannot be ignored. Failure to

¹ Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 31.

modify or correct these challenges may lead to consequences resulting in a continued lack of continuity of home fellowship leadership.

Understanding the Role

There are two main elements in understanding the role of home fellowship leaders: doing and being.² Through the training that takes place and the materials administered to them, most of the small group leaders end up with a respectable understanding of the required leadership tasks. In the previously mentioned Leadership Manual, officially titled the *Home Fellowship Ministry Leadership Helps* manual, there is a list of the required roles and responsibilities. A concise look at a few of these will help clarify expectations of the small group leaders.

Regular attendance at weekend services is mandatory for all the leaders. At the services they are expected to make themselves available to the pastors should there be an alter call or should additional leaders be needed to help with pastoral counseling. Some of the leaders are also part of the Communion Team that serves once a month at all the services. Attendance is also required for all the necessary meetings with area and section leaders. Additional meetings might be required with assistant home fellowship leaders or women helpers to discuss any relevant issues within the fellowship. Furthermore, there are usually people within the home fellowship who would value spending time with the leaders. There is significant time spent in this area and most of the leaders are very willing to assist the people in the fellowship in any way possible.

² There needs to be an awareness of the difference of “doing” the tasks of the home fellowship leader and of “being” the kind of leader with a Christ-like character. Too often the assumption is made that if a leader is doing the completing the required tasks then the character must also be correct. The Blackabys address this issue in their book on leadership development.

The leaders also prepare a weekly Bible study for the home fellowships. Thus, time must also be set aside for study and preparation. Organizing and facilitating the Bible study is a primary reason most of the men accepted the position of small group leader, so this study time is normally very beneficial. The gratification that comes from being able to teach the Bible is extremely inspiring and inspirational to most of the leaders.

There are additional tasks and assignments that are mandatory for the home fellowship leaders.³ However, while none of the duties is necessarily wrong, for some leaders the result is that instead of being spiritual directors of the fellowships, they end up performing a never-ending list of responsibilities. While acknowledging the need for leaders to be faithful in the role that was accepted, at times the role of home fellowship leaders consists of simply doing chores. This continual completion of tasks has been one reason why some of the leaders become disheartened and frustrated. Discouragement left unchecked or unchallenged has led to the undesired conclusion of leaders stepping down from the ministry. Focusing primarily on tasks as leaders and neglecting character development may lead not only to stagnation as a leader but also lead to a quenching of the spirit. In talking to leaders, as discouragement continues the tendency might be to start carrying out the duties in the flesh. Thus, any type of personal growth is on hold while other issues are resolved.

³ In addition to the tasks mentioned, the home fellowship leaders are expected to participate in a regional discipleship plan as outlined by the regional leader. They are also expected to attend all three levels of the Leadership Training classes, train men in the fellowship to become assistant leaders, and keep in monthly contact with the appropriate section and area leaders.

Remaining Accountable

One of the major obstacles in the home fellowship system has been in the area of accountability. Horizon's fellowships are set up with multiple levels of leadership: regional leaders, area leaders, section leaders, and home fellowship leaders. Regional leaders oversee the area leaders, area leaders oversee the section leaders, and section leaders are responsible for administering to the home fellowship leader. Admittedly, this may be too many levels of leadership to remain effective. However, the problem does not appear to be too many levels of leadership—the problem seems to be that the right people are not in the right positions.

Regional leaders are responsible for keeping the vision of Horizon before the various levels of leadership in the small group system. They also schedule regular meeting times with the area leaders for mentoring and times of fellowship. It is imperative that the right people be in the position of regional leader since this is the top position of leadership outside of the head pastor. The problem has been that normally only full-time pastors have occupied this valuable post as regional leader. This means that it may become simply one more responsibility that they need to oversee. The result is that the regional leaders do not always fulfill the responsibilities of the position, which in turn affects all other leadership positions beneath them.

Area leaders are responsible for administering to the section leaders, also through mentoring and times of fellowship and sharing. They are under the authority of the regional leaders and rely on them for some guidance and direction. The section leaders are accountable for being directly involved in the personal and ministerial lives of the home fellowship leaders. Arguably, the role of section leader may be the most important

position outside of the home fellowship leader due to their interaction with the small group leaders. Section leaders should be in consistent contact with the home fellowship leaders to assist in any issues within the small group.

In theory, the structure of the fellowship system is effectively set up to maintain accountability in the leadership. However, in reality it does not operate very smoothly or efficiently. The accountability issue continues to be a problem on multiple levels. The first concern is maintaining accountability of home fellowship leaders to those who are in a higher position of authority. This answerability might be with the regional, area, or section leaders. Part of the home fellowship leader's responsibility is to attend the regular meetings that the section leaders plan for training and fellowship. There have been numerous problems in trying to persuade some of the home fellowship leaders as to the importance of these meetings.

A number of home fellowship leaders simply do not understand the value of meeting with their section leaders, so they avoid the meetings whenever possible. There have been instances where removing leaders from their positions became necessary because they did not see themselves as part of a larger organization. These leaders operated in any manner they desired with scarce attention given to system expectations. For example, Horizon puts out a list of weekly announcements that must be read when the fellowship meets. The head pastor used this method to help keep in touch with the people at Horizon. In addition, any type of special events or needs would be in the announcements so the people in the fellowships would be aware of current and future events. Nonetheless, even though the leaders knew that the head pastor considered these announcements an important part of the fellowships, some of them refused to read them

to the group. These simple acts of disobedience show a disturbing lack of integrity among these leaders. This reinforces the idea that there must be accountability on the part of the small group leaders.

Another problem of accountability has been attempting to persuade the section, area, and regional leaders to perform their required tasks. These duties are necessary to sustain the health of both the leaders and small groups. Their primary duty has been to meet regularly with the leaders beneath them in order to ensure adherence to the visions of the fellowships. This issue has been a dilemma for quite a few years and has shown little improvement in recent history. A number of these upper leaders have lost sight of the fact that they are in their positions to help nourish and support the home fellowship leaders.

There have been some very faithful regional, area, and section leaders in the home fellowships, but somehow this issue continues to be a major concern. When the upper leaders are not doing their jobs faithfully, home fellowship leaders may end up feeling very isolated from the system. When section, area, or regional leaders are not around, there is very little accountability in the small group leader's life. This has consistently led to problems. This lack of attention creates problems in the leaders' lives, and their problems filter into the fellowship and affect it as well.

Staying Kingdom Focused

God's kingdom or rule is the range of his effective will, where what he wants done is done.⁴ Keeping a watchful eye out for the activity of God, instead of possessing a

⁴ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998), 25.

personal agenda, is an important challenge facing small group leaders. In a ministry that has the possibility of becoming too task-oriented, leaders are continuing to look for better and more resourceful ways of leading the home fellowships. Recognizing the importance of being as efficient as possible in the small group ministry, the original intent of the fellowships can be lost and the leader may fail to observe the movement of God. Dallas Willard, in *The Divine Conspiracy*, states that

Jesus came among us to show and teach the life for which we were made. He came very gently, opened access to the governance of God with him, and set afoot a conspiracy of freedom in truth among human beings. Having overcome death he remains among us. By relying on his word and presence we are enabled to reintegrate the little realm that makes up our life into the infinite rule of God. That is the eternal kind of life. Caught up in his active rule, our deeds become an element in God's eternal history. They are what God and we do together, making us part of his life and him a part of ours.⁵

It is essential that home fellowship leaders reclaim the anticipation and expectation of God's kingdom. Keeping an observational attitude and awareness should alleviate some of the pressure leaders experience in their lives. Recognition that God is in their midst to guide and assist them with their personal and ministerial lives should be of comfort. At times, the personal agenda of the leader may tend to override the agenda of God. This may easily lead to a loss of kingdom perspective.

Along with this emphasis on kingdom awareness comes a perception that God's kingdom is not the only one vying for the leader's attention. Willard correctly states that Jesus' basic message is the fact that other "kingdoms" are still present on earth along

⁵ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 27.

with the kingdom of heaven. They too are “at hand.” That is the human condition. People other than God are still allowed to have a “say” that is contrary to his will.⁶

Part of staying Kingdom focused is the realization that all believers, leaders even more so, must remember that following Jesus means bearing the cross.⁷ Taking on the position of leadership is never an easy one. Nonetheless, realization that trials and tribulations will come their way must be stressed. Training must take place that will help leaders persevere through the arduous times. In discussions with another elder at Horizon, he called the lack of perseverance one of the biggest character issues facing the home fellowship leaders.⁸ Some leaders faced with obstacles have simply walked away from the home fellowships, leaving the small groups in a tough situation. Perhaps some leaders are simply too young to be taking on the responsibilities of leadership. Additionally, some leaders are not willing to discipline themselves in order to stand strong during the times of difficulties.

In his book, *Organic Leadership*, Neil Cole states, “The power of Christ’s kingdom is not found in buildings or religious ceremonies. It is found in a transformed heart.”⁹ Staying focused on the kingdom of God requires a paradigm shift for a number of home fellowship leaders. Leaders must remaining alert to the purposes of God, while keeping the heart and mind directed on him. Success in accomplishing this will lead to a

⁶ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 29.

⁷ Arthur F. Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 193.

⁸ Home Fellowship Leaders, interviews by author, San Diego, CA, September 2010.

⁹ Neil Cole, *Organic Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2009), 67.

transformation of the heart. This will be instrumental if there is to be longevity in leadership.

Facing Burnout

All of the previously discussed difficulties are possible challenges to personal development in the small group leaders. In discussing this situation with other leaders at Horizon, there was a consensus that when the home fellowship leaders start focusing more on required tasks, less time is spent on developing their moral purity and strengths. Many leaders simply become exhausted from continually being busy doing ministerial chores. In addition to being physically worn out, unrealistic expectations of the leaders and the lack of personal development training will probably lead to discouraged leaders. Numerous home fellowship leaders reach the point where the benefits and joy of leading a small group are overcome by the continual responsibilities of leadership. The effects of all these issues appear to result in a spiritual complacency of the leaders. One leader referred to it as a moral complacency.¹⁰

This spiritual or moral complacency has demonstrated itself in a number of diverse ways. In one particular situation the leader demonstrated a lack of integrity, where his profession of faith was not matched by his actions. This leader was very vocal and deliberate in his actions, choosing to disobey what was asked of him by the pastors. Ignoring counsel by Horizon leadership, he was eventually removed from his leadership position and the home fellowship was shut down.

¹⁰ Home Fellowship Leaders, interviews by author, San Diego, CA, September 2010.

It is vital for the well-being of the small group that the leaders demonstrate integrity in their personal lives as well as in their ministerial lives. There is a risk involved when too much attention is placed on the role of leadership within the ministry without accountability for the personal life. In discussing these issues with other leaders, it is acknowledged that many of the people in the church will look at a leader fulfilling his leadership call and believe that the person's personal and spiritual life must also be acceptable. The fact is ignored that ministry is not who we are, it is what we do. As stated earlier, numerous leaders have led home fellowships for a few years only to step down due to personal issues.

As leaders they are frequently being scrutinized by people in the church, so it is essential that the leaders be reminded that they are in fact leading by example. Scripture reminds believers to avoid acts that would cause other believers to stumble or fall (Matthew 18:6, Mark 9:42, Luke 17:2, 1 Corinthians 8:9,13, Romans 14:20,21). Therefore, it is essential for the small group leader to lead a life of integrity and at the same time display Christ-like character.

Unrealistic Expectations

Unrealistic expectations are another challenge facing home fellowship leaders. Stories are heard among home fellowship leaders of pastors who started another church after leading a small group at Horizon. Although these testimonies are stirring and stimulating, they may provide a false expectation in the life of the new leader. The expectancy that home fellowship leaders move on to the role of pastor after a period of

time is generally not true. While this may occasionally take place, it is certainly not the normal procedure.

It is important for new leaders to realize, however, that some leaders' strengths and talents do not lend them to becoming pastors. Some leaders are called to fulfill the role of home fellowship leader for their entire time at Horizon and this should be encouraged. Author Marcus Buckingham states in his book to "not over-promote people."¹¹ Because a person was a very successful home fellowship leader does not mean that he will become an effective area leader or pastor. In talking to one of the small group leaders, he recognized that his God-given strengths were not in the area of pastor but in simply being a faithful home fellowship leader. Thus, he has served in that capacity for over twenty years with his ministry bearing abundant fruit.

Another unrealistic belief is that the spiritual lives of leaders will not be changed when they assume the role of leadership. Many leaders fail to recognize the reality of spiritual warfare. If there is not a dedicated effort for personal development in their lives, the results of the warfare in some leaders' lives has been quite dramatic. There have been instances where new leaders started having marital issues within a year of taking over a home fellowship. Additional leaders have lost jobs, while others have started getting involved with pornography.¹² These problems are not out of the ordinary in the lives of leaders, but there must be recognition that as leaders the spiritual battle will intensify. Leaders often underestimate the fact that greater spiritual growth is required from those

¹¹ Marcus Buckingham & Curt Coffman, *First, Break All the Rules* (New York: Free Press Business, 1999), 16.

¹² This information was gathered over a number of years in casual conversations with different area and regional leaders.

in leadership. Therefore, it is imperative to focus on personal development if they are going to persevere as small group leaders.

Unequipped Leaders

Leaders who are unequipped in multiple areas of their lives will probably not have longevity as home fellowship leaders. Small group leaders may be unprepared in matters of spiritual maturity, emotional maturity, and the ability to deal with one's own personal problems. These areas of concern will be briefly examined.

One of the principal areas where small group leaders may be unequipped is in the matter of spiritual maturity. Situations have occurred where a small group leader needed to step down for various reasons. When this happens there is a need for another leader to step in and take over the group or the fellowship will dissolve. There have been instances where the upper leadership simply found another man to take over the fellowship regardless of his qualifications or spiritual maturity. However, putting a new convert into the role of leadership may end up being worse than letting the group suspend meetings until a mature believer is found who is capable to take the position. The Bible states that those in leadership should not be new converts due to the possibility of pride puffing up the person and causing more problems (1 Timothy 3:6). An erroneous thought process seems to emerge where it is more efficient to have an immature leader in the position than to let the fellowship disband. What needs to be recognized is that time and experience are necessary for the maturity level of the leader to grow. This is usually accomplished away from the duties and responsibilities of leading a home fellowship.

Most of the small groups have assistant leaders for this very purpose—to let them learn and grow while being under the guidance of a mature leader.

Emotional immaturity may also be a challenge facing the small group leader. When there has been a lack of personal development in the life of a leader, this may expose itself as a lack of emotional maturity—an inability to deal with other people and the problems they may have in their lives. Due to his position, a home fellowship leader encounters many people, which can become a draining experience. For example, one of the home fellowship leaders was becoming frustrated with all the relationships he needed to maintain that he ended up dealing with the people in the fellowship very impatiently. Due to the leader's behavior, the fellowship started having some problems. People in the home fellowship are looking to the leader for wisdom and guidance in their spiritual lives. When a leader is too emotionally immature to be able to empathize with others, it may inhibit spiritual growth in the small group.

The inability to deal with people's issues may also be a reflection of the leader's incapability of dealing with personal problems. A leader may be struggling with some significant obstacles in his life. If not dealt with in a mature manner it may end up affecting the spiritual life of the home fellowship in a negative way. This lack of character may be a reflection of neglected personal development and spiritual growth in the home fellowship leader.

Results: Leadership Turnover

The results of all the previous challenges are that Horizon loses home fellowship leaders. It is acknowledged that when some of the leaders step down it is probably change

for the better. Some of the men should never have taken on the responsibility of becoming small group leaders for many of the reasons mentioned above. However, there have been a number of situations when a well-qualified man stepped down and the loss was an unfortunate one.

One home fellowship leader had been leading small groups for over ten years. His fellowships had multiplied three or four times, so it appeared that he was fruitful as a leader. Nevertheless, the leader started to have problems in his personal life and there was no area, section, or regional leader to help him sort through his issues. It became apparent when his problems started disrupting the home fellowship and affecting those in attendance. Some of those members decided to leave the fellowship because of the leader's personal struggles. The leader ended up stepping down from leadership because of all the problems and discouragement he was facing. If there had been a section or area leader present, even occasionally, the leader might have been able to work out his issues with some assistance.

All of the issues mentioned above are definite challenges affecting the home fellowship leaders. Nonetheless, another issue may actually be leading to the other problems. This problem is one of truth—failure to believe that the Bible is the word of God and failure to act upon it. According to The Barna Group, 42 percent of born-again believers accept the principle of absolute moral truth.¹³ The numbers of evangelicals who believe in an absolute moral standard is higher at 70 percent.¹⁴ Although these statistics do not convey the whole story, it is troubling that when the same groups are polled about

¹³ The Barna Group, "Most Adults Feel Accepted by God, but Lack a Biblical Worldview," August 9, 2005, <http://barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/174> (accessed September 14, 2010).

¹⁴ Ibid.

their feelings on abortion, same-sex marriage, sex between unmarried men and women, the numbers expose incorrect biblical thinking.¹⁵

The Gallup organization conducted its own survey, but the story differs little from that of The Barna Group. According to Gallup, 94 percent of Americans believe in God and 74 percent claim to have made a commitment to Jesus Christ. About 34 percent confess to a “new birth” experience. These figures are shocking when thoughtfully compared to statistics on the same group for unethical behavior, crime, mental distress and disorder, family failures, addictions, financial misdealings, and the like.¹⁶

This paints an extremely disconcerting picture for the evangelical Church, of which Horizon is part. When the Bible is no longer acknowledged or used as the standard of what is morally correct, the definition of truth becomes completely subjective based on the whims of the individual. It is imperative that home fellowship leaders understand the importance of reading and applying the Scriptures. This in turn will help them think in terms of a biblical worldview. Professor Paul Jersild states, “A moral seriousness runs throughout the Scriptures, a seriousness that is reflected in the community of faith as it earnestly seeks in every generation to be doing the will of God.”¹⁷

This leads to possibly the principal reason the home fellowships are losing leaders: the lack of time in the Word of God, which translates into a life that is not being transformed. All of the previously mentioned challenges are valid concerns that can draw leaders away from spiritual growth. Nonetheless, there are leaders who are able to handle

¹⁵ The Gallup Organization, “Four Moral Issues Sharply Divide Americans,” May 26, 2010, <http://www.gallup.com> (accessed September 4, 2010).

¹⁶ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 38.

¹⁷ Paul Jersild, *Making Moral Decisions* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 26.

the leadership tasks yet remain small group leaders. In interviews with these small group leaders who have been in the position for over ten years, the one consistent practice these leaders have in common is their time spent in the Bible. In discussions with some area and regional leaders, a definite problem was revealed concerning time some small group leaders are spending in the Bible.¹⁸ The time that these leaders do spend is normally in preparation for the weekly study with little or no time for personal growth. Although the preparation study period is valuable, it does not replace a consistent personal quiet time with God—a time of abiding in his word. When leaders fail to remain in his word, the Bible is clear that the freedom we have as Christians is lost (John 8:32) and discouragement and frustration can take over. George Gallup writes the following:

The churches of America face no greater challenge as we approach the next century than overcoming biblical illiteracy, and the prospects for doing so are formidable because the stark fact is, many Christians don't know what they believe or why. Our faith is not rooted in Scripture. We revere the Bible, but we do not read it. Some observers maintain that the Bible has not significantly penetrated our culture.¹⁹

The consequence is that transformation ceases to occur. All the challenges become overwhelming to the leaders and spiritual development is hindered. As the Blackabys state, when personal development stops there is a shift from becoming the type of leader that God desires to a life of doing tasks. This concern needs to be addressed in the leadership training.

In summary, there are numerous challenges facing the home fellowship leaders at Horizon. These challenges may take varied forms but they all have the possibility of

¹⁸ Home Fellowship Leaders, interviews by author, San Diego, CA, 2010.

¹⁹ Randy Frazee, *The Connecting Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 76.

leading to the same conclusion—a loss of leaders. A strategy needs to be devised and implemented that will assist in the retention of the small group leaders. Part Two will examine the theological importance of personal development.

PART TWO

THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Having examined the historical background of Horizon and the challenges facing personal development of the small group leaders, it is necessary to evaluate the theological importance of personal development. Passages of Scripture will be examined for their theological support of personal development. Two subjects of Horizon's faith tradition critical to personal development will also be explored.

There are two key themes consistently forming the structure for all the ministries at Horizon: missiology and eschatology. They are seen very clearly in the home fellowship system as well as in the small group leadership training. Missiology is defined as "the theological study of the mission of the Church, especially the character and purpose of missionary work."¹ Horizon's mission statement of "win, disciple, and send" is clear in its expectations. Through its services and numerous community outreaches, Horizon attempts to be a vessel of the Holy Spirit in drawing people into a loving relationship with God. Discipleship is a prime function of the home fellowship system. Effective discipleship allows the final part of Horizon's vision, "send," to take place.

¹ Reference.com, s.v. "missiology," <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/missiology> (accessed May 4, 2011).

Sending people out as missionaries might take on many forms, as was explained in the introduction to this paper.²

Eschatology is seen as “any system of doctrines concerning the last, or final, matters.”³ Horizon is very eschatological in its approach in that there is an urgency to be living godly lives as the return of Christ is imminent. This expectancy is continually reflected in the head pastor’s teachings encouraging faithfulness as the people of God. Each of these themes will be examined theologically throughout this chapter to establish why they are critical to the personal development of home fellowship leaders.

The theological importance of imitating Christ through a life of moral purity and strength development will be evaluated in this chapter. Various means of attaining this manner of life will also be assessed. The role of the Holy Spirit, as well as that of the coach, will be shown to be indispensable in bringing about transformation of the small group leaders. Finally, theological examination will illustrate that significant personal development is not possible without support of the community of believers.

Imitating Christ

As previously mentioned, discipleship is a prime function of the small group system. A significant theme of discipleship is obedience to the commands of God. This theological purpose is supported by many passages in the Bible. One primary Bible passage supporting the area of obedience is found in the Book of Matthew. In Matthew

² As discussed in Chapter 1, being sent out may be as a missionary in a foreign country. However, it could also be as a pastor starting a new church or perhaps as a chaplain for the police or fire department. Being “sent” may take on many various forms at Horizon as the church’s goal is to spread the good news around the world.

³ Reference.com, s.v. “eschatology,” <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/eschatology> (accessed May 4, 2011).

28:19, believers are directed to go and “make disciples of all the nations . . . teaching them to observe all things that I (Jesus) have commanded you.” Unfortunately, the end of this passage is one that is often ignored by Christians when asked about the “Great Commission.” Obedience to the word God is vital in this command from Jesus. Additionally, the command is not to “tell” disciples to obey, but to “teach” them the way of obedience. Thus, what is directed by the Bible is a method of teaching believers how to obey the word of God. This section of Scripture is also used to support the vision statement of Horizon.⁴ Therefore, the Scriptures point out the need for some type of instruction in order for believers to fulfill the command of Jesus. The personal development plan is going to be used by this ministry focus paper in order to try and obey the instruction of God.

The call to lead a holy and virtuous life, one in which Christians are directed to imitate Christ, is set forth by the Bible (1 John 3:3, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Hebrews 12:14, 2 Peter 3:14). There are many elements involved in discussing what it means to imitate Christ. In the command to imitate, a call to moral purity is one component along with the obligation to fulfill and develop the strengths that God has imparted to each believer. Both of these will be examined in this paper, but there are other factors in imitating Christ that need to be studied at the outset.

The Book of Genesis explains that humankind was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). Some theologians believe this indicates that men and women have the

⁴ Chapter 1 of this paper provides a complete explanation of Horizon vision statement, along with supporting Scripture.

capacity to think, analyze, and reason.⁵ Additional scholars understand this to insinuate the morality of humankind—that people are capable of comprehending right from wrong.⁶ If these definitions are accepted, then it is acknowledged that humans have the ability to evaluate good and bad, and then choose accordingly. This proposal of choice is backed up by numerous verses found in the Bible (Deuteronomy 30:19; Joshua 24:15; Proverbs 1:29). The people of God are also exhorted to choose the path that pleases God (Isaiah 56:4; Proverbs 3:31), with the realization that a Christian’s life is no longer his or her own (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20).

Part of the methodology of imitating Christ is the recognition that leaders are called to a life of denying of their own human desires in order to embrace the Kingdom of God. Home fellowship leaders are part of the body of Christ—fulfilling their specific role in order that the church may function better as a whole. There is one common goal in leading small groups—reflecting God and letting his light shine in the ministry in order that others may see the works and glorify God (Matthew 5:16). It is vital that small group leaders bear in mind that the ministry is not about them; it is about God. Leadership is not a simple external event, but a life dedicated to God through serving others.

Call to Moral Purity

The vision of Horizon is very missional in stating that its “vision is evangelism with a responsibility to win a person to Jesus Christ, disciple a person in Jesus Christ, and

⁵ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 442-444.

⁶ Ibid.

send a person for Jesus Christ.”⁷ As mentioned, there are three key parts to this vision: winning, discipling, and sending. Although home fellowships play an important and active role in all three components, there is little doubt that discipling is central to the small groups. The home fellowships are expected to be the instruments that bring new believers into a mature relationship with God.

The small groups are considered the backbone of Horizon. They are looked upon as the ministry that presents an environment that allows for discipling to occur. Changes in leadership have been shown to affect the disciple component of Horizon’s vision, thus possibly affecting the spiritual growth of the believers in the small groups. This rippling effect ultimately affects the number of people being sent out to the mission field which has seen a reduction in the last ten years.

There is also dramatic exhortation from the head pastor to be leading lives that bring honor to God. His thoughts and teachings are very eschatological in exhorting people to be aware that the end times are here. To live as if Jesus is coming back at any moment means to be living a pure and moral life. There is consistent teaching from the pulpit regarding the necessity to be walking in a manner that reflects God’s sacrifice.

The Book of Galatians focuses not so much on the activities of a person, but more on the motive behind the actions. In *The Great Omission*, Willard states, “Fruit of the spirit . . . does not consist in actions, but in attitudes or settled personality traits that make up the substance of the ‘hidden’ self, the ‘inner man.’”⁸ The call to moral purity comes in the Galatians 5:22- 23, which states that the “fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace,

⁷ Horizon Christian Fellowship, *Vision Statement* (San Diego: Horizon Christian Fellowship, 1988).

⁸ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission* (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), 16.

longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” This is another command to the believer to reflect the life of Christ.

Webster’s Dictionary defines “moral” as “concerned with the principles of right and wrong in relation to human actions and character.”⁹ It goes on to define “moral” as “in accord with standards of what is right or just in behavior; arising from conscience or the sense of right and wrong.”¹⁰ In evaluating the definition for “moral,” it is plain to see that one’s morals are not only what one does, but additionally the thought process that goes into making decisions.

Webster’s definition for “purity” states that it is “freedom from guilt or sin.”¹¹ This could be a very ambiguous definition in that there are many people who do wrong but who feel no guilt or remorse for their actions. In that case the definition becomes very subjective according to who is defining the term. What is needed is an objective definition that uses a standard that does not change.

For the purpose of this ministry-focus paper, “purity” will be evaluated as freedom from sin. This designates God as the objective source of what is right or wrong. Furthermore, in tying the two words together the definition reads: standards of right and wrong, whether in thoughts or actions, that are free from sin. This definition is very objective with the facts stating that any thoughts or actions that deviate from what God commands are sinful. This definition is supported by *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, which states that sin is “to miss the mark, of sinning against

⁹ *Webster’s II, New College Dictionary* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), s.v. “moral,” 712.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, s.v. “purity,” 899.

God.”¹² Therefore, men and women are held accountable for their actions based upon what God has determined to be right or wrong, thus eliminating any subjectivity on the part of people. Acknowledging the fact that there are numerous discussions regarding cultural issues that the Bible may not directly address as right or wrong, a Christian’s behavior should be guided by what God has laid out in his written word—the Bible. This fact is especially important to leaders in the Church—they are obligated to a life of obedience to the Scriptures.

In the Book of John believers are challenged by Jesus that “if you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).¹³ Jesus further states, “He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him” (John 14:21). There is little doubt that a person’s love of God is directly related to obedience. In Luke 6:46, Jesus asks the question, “Why do you call me Lord, Lord and not do the things which I say?” Obeying the commands of Jesus is not an option to the Christian leader. Willard states that most problems in contemporary churches can be explained by the fact that members have never decided to follow Christ.¹⁴ It is evident that most Christians have no plan in place to develop themselves as believers. Yet the Scriptures are very clear in directing God’s children to obey his word and walk in moral purity.

¹² W.E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 33.

¹³ All biblical references have been taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

¹⁴ Willard, *The Great Omission*, 5.

In 1 Thessalonians 4: 1-7, Paul makes a very clear argument for obedience to God and pleasing him with a life of moral purity. This passage of Scripture makes it clear that leaders are called to lives of moral purity because that is what God has directed—it is his will. Home fellowship leaders need to know how to control and manage their lives, leaving behind the old way of living and deliberately choosing to walk with God. The verse following the above passage states it very clearly that “he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has given us his Holy Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 4:8).

The apostle Paul, in writing his second letter to Timothy, encouraged the young leader to “flee youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22). He also reminded Timothy that he had served God with a pure conscience (2 Timothy 1:3). As Paul recognized that the time of his departure was at hand, he exhorted Timothy to lead a holy and pure life because this is what pleased God. In what some theologians consider Paul’s final letter, he takes the time to remind Timothy to lead a life of moral purity.

Call to Fulfill Development of Strengths

In addressing the people of Israel, Moses informs them that “the Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:4, 5). This verse is followed up in the New Testament with a statement from Jesus who tells a scribe that he should “love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30). In examining the Hebrew and Greek meaning for “strength,” it is very possible to come away with the meaning of loving God with not

only one's physical and mental strength possible, but also with all of the talents and abilities that he has bestowed upon his people. This theory would be supported by Romans 12:1, which commands believers to present their bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God. All of the leader's gifts and talents are to be used for the glory of God. Coach Jane Creswell, in her book, *Christ-Centered Coaching*, states that if the meaning of strengths is expanded to include all the gifts, talents, skills, personality traits, cognitive preferences—all the characteristics that contribute to making each individual a unique being created in God's image—then that is how believers love the Lord with all of their strength.¹⁵

The Book of Proverbs states that if a parent trains up a child in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6). The obvious and standard meaning to this verse is for parents to raise their children in the instruction and discipline of the Lord, with the right way being the way of wisdom. However, there are additional commentators who believe that the meaning goes beyond that explanation to include the child's habits, talents, and interests. Thus, the parents are instructed to take into account the child's inclinations and individuality.¹⁶ This is reinforced and taken one step further by former pastor J. Vernon McGee, who writes that parents are to “train up a child in the way he should go,” meaning that God has a direction in which he wants the child to go, and the parents are to discover that path.¹⁷

¹⁵ Jane Creswell, *Christ-Centered Coaching* (St. Louis: Lake Hickory Resources, 2006), 1.

¹⁶ Charles Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press), 968.

¹⁷ J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible: Proverbs through Malachi* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982), 76.

Means of Personal Development

There are various means and methods through which personal development may take place in an individual. The leader certainly has an active role in his personal development and must deliberately choose to engage. Using spiritual disciplines and with the support of a coach and community, there can be progress in the spiritual maturity of the leader. However, the most important work is that which is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul states that “neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:7). The effort of an individual is useless without the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit. The pursuit of holiness is the joint venture of God and the individual. No leader can attain any degree of holiness without God working in his life, but just as surely no person can attain it without effort on his own part. Jerry Bridges, in *The Pursuit of Holiness*, writes, “Man cannot do what only God can do, but God will not do what man should do.”¹⁸ The next section will examine the different means of personal development and the theological importance.

The Use of Coaching

The theological importance of the coach in the personal development of small group leaders is a significant one. The role of the coach is a diverse one and instrumental in the spiritual development of the leader. Through the assistance of the coach, the leader will be challenged in different ways to develop in the area of moral purity and strength development. The coach will support the leader in these areas by helping the leader to understand and fulfill the call of his ministry, persevere in that call, and to bear fruit in

¹⁸ Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1978), 9.

the selected ministry. The coach will play a vital role in this process of leader development.

Throughout the Scriptures, believers (leaders) are admonished and encouraged to persevere in their personal lives as well as in their ministries (Romans 2:7; Colossians 1:11; Hebrews 6:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:3). The apostle Paul goes so far as boast about the believers in Thessalonica regarding their perseverance in the midst of persecutions and tribulations that they endured. The author of Hebrews informs the believers that they need to persevere so that after they have done the will of God they may receive the promise of God's return (Hebrews 10:36-38). Small group leaders desperately need to persevere and endure in order to be able to finish well—to complete the tasks they were given (2 Timothy 4:5-7). There is virtually no doubt that at times the Christian walk is a difficult one. Nonetheless, home fellowship leaders need to be aware that in spite of arduous circumstances that come into their lives they are expected to persevere. This is where an effective coach coming alongside of the leader will be of tremendous importance. The specific roles that the coach engages in will be discussed in a subsequent section.

Efficient coaches will help leaders to understand and fulfill the call of God upon their lives. As part of the body of Christ, each leader has an obligation and privilege of being in cooperation with, and interacting with, the Kingdom of God. The coach will be a valuable resource in helping the leader stay focused on the big picture while diverting some of the attention away from self.

The book of Romans admonishes the believer to be transformed by the renewing of his or her mind (Romans 12:2). This transformational process involves a new manner

of thinking in the life of the leader. Coaching enables this transformation to take place.¹⁹ Great coaches come alongside leaders so that leaders can be transformed into the image of Christ and join him on his redemptive mission.²⁰

The basis for utilizing coaching instead of mentoring, counseling, or discipling is important. One of the key motives behind the use of coaching instead of these other methodologies lies in the rationale of coaching: helping people discover God's plan for their lives. The coach has no ulterior motives and does not have a preconceived plan that he or she is going to follow. The absolute motive of the coach is to assist leaders in fulfilling God's plans for their lives.

While acknowledging the value of counseling, mentoring, and discipling, these methods often direct the person into an alternate manner of behavior without significant introspection. These methods rely on the expertise of the one who is directing, and many times knowledge is passed on to the one being counseled regardless of the circumstances. However, the coach's role is to help leaders discover how to use more of their own potential and how to determine a strategy for which expertise is needed that does not already exist.²¹

The Holy Spirit as the Agent of Change

Coaching focuses on discovering the plans that God has for a person's life. Putting Christ at the center of the coaching utilizes the power of the Holy Spirit in that

¹⁹ Steve Ogne and Tim Roehl, *TransforMissional Coaching* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2008), 7.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Creswell, *Christ-Centered Coaching*, 15.

discovery process.²² In the Book of Acts, the apostles were commanded by the Lord not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the father. This promise was that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:4, 8).

Consequently the apostles waited until the Day of Pentecost for the promise to be fulfilled. When that day arrived the whole house was filled with the sound of a mighty rushing wind, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues (Acts 2: 1-4).

Throughout the Bible God is seen as the agent of change (Matthew 10:1; Mark 3:15, 6:7; Luke 9:1) and the one who gives power. It is clear that humankind is not the cause of change (Acts 3:12), but the receptor of God's power to bring about his bidding. The leader is told to seek the gifts and power of God (1 Corinthians 12-14). God's power is freely given to any of his children who earnestly desire and seek it.²³ It is under the empowerment of the Spirit that fruit comes into the ministry of the home fellowship leader.

Along with the promise of power is the assurance of renewal through the power of the Spirit. Titus 3:4-8 states that renewal in a leader's life comes through the Holy Spirit as it is poured out upon him. The Book of Philippians promises the leader that the one who started a renewal in his or her life will continue to do the work until the Lord returns (Philippians 1:6). Although leaders are not capable of completely changing their lives on their own, as they become more sensitive to the leading of the Spirit, transformation will take place.

²² Creswell, *Christ-Centered Coaching*, 13.

²³ Robert Heidler, *Experiencing the Spirit* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1998), 96.

Spiritual Disciplines

An important part of staying true to the missional theme is the role of spiritual disciplines. In his first letter to his spiritual son Timothy, Paul advises the young man to exercise himself toward godliness (1 Timothy 4:7). The Greek transliteration of the word exercise is *gumnazo*, which means literally “to train naked, as the Greek athletes.”²⁴ Metaphorically it is to train in godliness. A Greek synonym is the word *askeo*, which means “to exercise by training or discipline, to strive, to contend.”²⁵ As was stated in the previous section, God is the one who empowers the leader through the influence of the Holy Spirit. However, that does not negate the leader’s involvement. One of the methods that leaders may practice is the use of spiritual disciplines. In looking at the theological importance of spiritual disciplines it is vital to recognize that practicing the disciplines themselves are not the final goal of the leader; the ultimate goal is to glorify God. Practicing the mechanics does not necessarily bring the leader closer to God. The spiritual disciplines are an inward and spiritual reality, and the inner attitude of the heart is far more crucial than the mechanics for coming into the reality of the spiritual life.²⁶ Richard Foster, in *Celebration of Discipline*, writes, “By themselves the spiritual disciplines can do nothing; they can only get us to the place where something can be done. They are God’s means of grace.”²⁷

²⁴ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1992), 385.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1978), 3.

²⁷ Ibid., 7.

Scripture gives the believer different types of spiritual disciplines. In *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, Willard breaks down the disciplines into two categories: disciplines of abstinence and disciplines of engagement.²⁸ The disciplines of abstinence include: solitude, silence, fasting, frugality, chastity, secrecy, and sacrifice.²⁹ The disciplines of engagement include: study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, fellowship, confession, and submission.³⁰ While Foster, in *Celebration of Discipline*, breaks his disciplines into categories that vary from Willard's, the focus here will be on a few of those that both authors have in common: prayer, study, and worship.

The theological importance of the discipline of prayer is recognized throughout the Bible. Jesus was a primary example of demonstrating the necessity of prayer. If Jesus, being God, found that he needed time alone with the father, nothing less should be expected from small group leaders. He stated very clearly that believers are called to pray for various reasons. One reason to pray was that one would not enter into temptation (Mark 14:38; Luke 22:40). Jesus recognized that all people, leaders even more so, would be open to the temptations of the world, and that fellowship and communication with God would be one method of avoiding temptations. When leaders come to God in prayer, they are acknowledging that there is one more important than themselves and they are recognizing dependence on someone other than themselves, thus demonstrating a sense of humility in their lives and a submission to God (James 4:7).

²⁸ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), 158.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

Study is another discipline that is indispensable for the leader. The Scriptures state that people are “transformed through the renewing of the mind” (Romans 12:2). The mind will be renewed by applying it to the things that will transform it.³¹ Believers are directed by the Bible to “meditate on things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely and gracious” (Philippians 4:8). As leaders study, they are called to meditate with these types of thoughts in mind. Concentrating on these kinds of concepts does not only assist them in the preparation of studies, but there is an actual transformation of their entire lives. The Bible has the power to change and renovate a leader’s thought life. The writer of Hebrews states that the “word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells the Jews that “If you abide in my word you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32, 33). There are some key points in these two verses for the small group leader. Jesus only considered those who truly abide in his word as his true disciples. Abiding in this case means to remain united with the word, steadfast and persevering.³² There is a standard leaders are expected to adhere to and envelop their lives and their thoughts around—this standard being the Word of God. The truth of the Bible is not a subjective opinion but an objective reality that is unchanging. As the leader faithfully abides in God’s word, the truth is revealed to the leader and transformation can take place. It is not necessarily doctrine that the leader is studying, although that certainly is important. The

³¹ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 62.

³² Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary; New Testament*, 960.

central purpose of studying is an inner transformation of one's life. With all the temptations home fellowship leaders face, it is vital that they spend consistent time studying the word of God.

The final discipline to be examined is that of worship. It is naïve and incorrect to think of worship as simply our voices rising up to God on a Sunday morning. An examination of the Scriptures makes it clear that there is more to worship than simply singing. The Old Testament is filled with references regarding the Israelites being commanded to forsake all other gods and to seek the Lord and to worship him only (Exodus 9:1; 10:7; 23:25; 34:14; Deuteronomy 8:19; 12:4; 29:18). In evaluating these Scriptures it is evident that worship was primarily focused on relationship. Worship is to know, to feel, to experience the resurrected Christ in the midst of gathered community.³³ Worship is focusing and responding to God.³⁴ The Bible urges the believer to present his or her body as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is one's reasonable service (Romans 12:1). Worship involves all of the leader's thoughts, intents, motives, actions, and desires. Leaders are all urged to bring everything to God as a form of worship and obedience. The apostle James wrote that as people draw near to God, he would draw near to them (James 4:8).

One of the greatest promises in the Bible is found in the Book of Jeremiah. The northern tribe of Israel had already be taken into captivity by the Assyrians, and the prophet Jeremiah had a strong message to the southern tribe of Judah to forsake her ways and turn back to God (Jeremiah 1-24). However, Judah continued along her path of

³³ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 158.

³⁴ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 80.

disobedience resulting in Babylonian captivity. The Lord then offered the sinful nation a wonderful promise: “You will seek me and you will find me when you search for me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13). Leaders have the option of turning to God even in the midst of chastisement, and he promises to be found by them.

Perseverance in Ministry

We are captives of a culture that celebrates instant gratification and individual success no matter the larger costs.³⁵ People have access to instant messaging, e-mails, faxes, internet, and instant food. Long-term planning has become a concept that is foreign to most businesses. The attitude of immediate gratification has influenced marriages in this country when couples are no longer willing to persevere through the trials of their relationships but instead choose the easy route of separation. Unfortunately, this attitude has also had an impact on the Church, where some leaders expect instant results, or pastors who are not satisfied with the spiritual or numerical growth of their churches grow discontent.

Being able to persevere in ministry is important for a number of reasons. First of all, character is produced and formed when the leaders persevere through the difficult trials in their lives. The Bible states that “tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Romans 5:3, 4). The Book of James declares that leaders should “count it all joy when they fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of their faith produces patience” (James 1:2, 3). The subsequent verse then exhorts Christians to “let patience have its perfect work in order that one may become

³⁵ Jersild, *Making Moral Decisions*, 12.

mature, perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:4). The trials and tribulations that enter into the home fellowship leaders lives serve a purpose in helping them become more Christ-like in their personal and ministerial lives. In 2 Corinthians 11:23- 27, Paul narrates the trials and persecutions that he endured while committing his life to Christ.

Paul had endured extremely demanding circumstances, yet in his second letter to Timothy he was eager to report to him that he had fought the good fight and he had finished the race and kept the faith (2 Timothy 4:7). Paul had persevered through all the hardships and recognized that they had actually served a valuable purpose in helping to build genuine faith. Paul saw that perseverance was built into his life by accepting the approaching trials and valuing them as an occasion for spiritual growth, and as an opportunity to bring glory to God.

It is imperative to recognize that there are biblical promises given to those who are able to endure to the end. Once again, the apostle Paul addresses the church at Galatia and urges them to “not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” (Galatians 6:9). He reinforces this theme in 2 Thessalonians 3:13 when he tells them to “not grow weary in doing well.” The writer of Hebrews exhorts his readers to look to Jesus and “consider him who endured such hostility from sinners against himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls” (Hebrews 12:3). The Scriptures point out that when a leader’s eye has left the Savior, there is danger of letting circumstances get overwhelming.

An additional method of learning to persevere is to be able to decline, when possible, supplementary assignments that may be offered to the leader. No leader is able to continue to take on more and more assignments without some type of consequences. In

his book, *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives*, Richard Swenson states that “we need to choose carefully where our involvement should come.”³⁶ This ability to decline specific tasks is supported in the Book of Mark when Jesus is informed by his disciples that everyone was looking for him (Mark 1:37). Nonetheless, Jesus being aware that his presence was requested by others made the decision to leave the town he was in and go to the next town (Mark 1:38). Jesus did not heal all, he did not minister to all, he did not visit all, and he did not teach all. He did not work twenty-hour ministry days.³⁷ Leaders need to be prudent and cautious in the situations they choose to engage in, and recognize the important part that rest plays in persevering in ministry.

The position of home fellowship leader is a difficult one, but leaders must be trained and encouraged to persevere through the difficulties that are going to come into their lives. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, the Apostle Paul affirms that “no temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man, but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” Scripture encourages the believer to examine all the witnesses for God through the ages (Hebrews 11) and “lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12: 1-2a).

³⁶ Richard A. Swenson, *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives* (Colorado Springs: NavPress Publishing Group, 1992), 87-88.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

Role of Community

Jesus was deeply concerned for the continuation of his redemptive work after the close of his earthly existence, and his chosen method was the formation of a redemptive society. He collected a few unpromising men and women, inspired them with the sense of his vocation and theirs, and built their lives into an intensive fellowship of affection, worship, and work.³⁸ Consequently, the church community plays a vital role in the home fellowship leader's life.

There is danger when Christians imagine that the moral life is possible without support of the community of believers. One's relationship with God is inseparably rooted in one's relationships with others.³⁹ We were designed by God physically, emotionally, and spiritually to require community for our health.⁴⁰ Without the backing and encouragement of fellow believers there is a danger of individual people becoming the source of what is right and wrong. What is good is what one finds rewarding. If one's preferences change, so does the nature of the good.⁴¹ The recent impact of individualism in the sphere of religious experience has often led to centering one's attention on one's own religious development rather than on the community.⁴² As an individual Christian, therefore, one is never an individual in contrast to the Church, but an individual who shares in the life of the Church and who as a Christian bears both an individual and

³⁸ Glen Murray, *The Community of Believers* (2007), <http://glenmurray.net/articles/communityofbelievers> (accessed November 12, 2010).

³⁹ M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Shaped by the Word* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2000), 29.

⁴⁰ Frazee, *The Connecting Church*, 32.

⁴¹ Robert N. Bellah, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1998), 1.

⁴² Jersild, *Making Moral Decisions*, 51.

corporate identity and responsibility.⁴³ It is imperative not only for the sake of the leader, but also as one that leads by example, that the leader models his role of authority within the context, structure, and morals of the community.

The moral importance of friendship and community is often overlooked by some leaders. Conscience is shaped by the community in which one is raised, marked by its moral distinctions as well as its continuities with other human communities.⁴⁴ One of the reasons believers gather together is for accountability in the pursuit of moral purity. Proverbs 27: 17 states that as “iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.” Positive interaction on a leader’s character is what happens in a community with the same mission. People may enjoy their friends and seek out communities, but they seldom think that the development of their character and their growth in happiness and goodness are inherently linked to them.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, there is little doubt that the role of community plays a vital role in the personal development of leaders.

The writer of Hebrews instructs believers to “consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together . . . but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25). The local church is a special community with every member playing a special part in helping shape the personal development of believers. Wadell states that community is needed in one’s quest for goodness because it is impossible to become

⁴³ Jersild, *Making Moral Decisions*, 7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁴⁵ Wadell, *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life*, 25.

good without others who have made that desire their own.⁴⁶ Community is not a luxury but a necessity for life.⁴⁷ Wadell goes on to state that people are not always the best judges of their own character, especially when it comes to their shortcomings. One's self-knowledge is limited, but also selective and sometimes deliberately cloudy.⁴⁸ It is imperative for leaders to use the people of God to aid and shape their personal development. There needs to be a certain amount of transparency to those they lead, letting Christians who are mature assist in pointing out areas where personal development might be necessary.

In summary, it is imperative that churches give support to the personal development of the home fellowship leader. God's role in the transformation of the individual cannot be overstated. Job 29 narrates Job's rehearsal of the past, which clearly acknowledges God's role in the formation of character, which in turn leads to a life of gratitude and opportunity, in which self-interest plays no discernable role.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Wadell, *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life*, 24-25.

⁴⁷ Frazee, *The Connecting Church*, 33.

⁴⁸ Wadell, *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life*, 31.

⁴⁹ William P. Brown, *Character in Crisis* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 79.

CHAPTER 4

BIBLICAL IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Following an examination of the theological implications of personal development, it is necessary to evaluate the Scriptural significance. The main emphasis of this chapter will be on examining the Biblical importance of personal development. Examination of foundational passages of Scripture will present how Jesus and other leaders utilized coaching methodology in aiding the personal development of his disciples.

The first section of this chapter will concentrate on the biblical definition of coaching. Coaching will be shown to have been used throughout the Scriptures resulting in dramatic changes in the disciples' lives. The definition of coaching used by various professional coaches will also be examined for scriptural accuracy.

The next segment will focus on biblical examples of personal development using coaching. Emphasis will be placed on the lives of Moses and Paul, and how their lives were impacted through coaching methodology. Different methods of coaching will be illustrated in the lives of these two men, revealing that coaching is not simply the action

of talking to one person face to face. These various options will be explored in this segment.

The third section concentrates on Jesus and the importance he placed on personal development. Examination will reveal how Jesus used different methods to achieve transformation in his disciples' lives. Coaching techniques will be seen throughout the ministry of Jesus. The effects of intimate relationships will be shown through the use of small groups in his coaching.

The final section will evaluate the effectiveness of coaching looking at some of the examples given above. Some of the outcomes of coaching resulted in moral development, a greater passion for God and people, and a greater discernment of one's personal gifts, talents, and strengths. In the truest sense of the word, God is constantly using various coaching techniques throughout the Bible. He continues coaching today in order to draw people into relationship with himself.

Biblical Definition of Coaching

The writer of Proverbs wrote that "counsel in the heart of man is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out" (Proverbs 20:5). This may be one of the cornerstone verses in the Bible supporting the theory of coaching. The verse in Proverbs makes the claim that there are goals, objectives, and plans in men and women that are deeply hidden in their inner core. However, not just any person is capable of drawing those purposes out, but only a person of understanding. Observation shows that a wise individual is able to draw answers out of another person. One key aspect of coaching is recognition that the goal is not to simply to give people answers. However, through the

use of probing questions the purpose is to help people discover answers for themselves. Thus, through the use of the coaching technique there could be a fulfillment of this verse in Proverbs.

In the Book of Jeremiah the Lord states that he “knows the plans he has for [people], plans for [a leader’s] welfare and not for harm, to give [him] a future with a hope. Then when [leaders] call upon God and come pray to him, he will hear. When [a leader] searches for God, [he] will find him if [he] seeks him with all [his] heart, he will let [him] find him” (Jeremiah 29:11-14). God is waiting to reveal his thoughts and plans to all people, leaders probably even more so because of their responsibilities. Once again, a man of understanding (coach) will help the leader try to perceive what God is trying to show him and lead him into times of discovery. The coach who is walking in the power of the Holy Spirit is a dynamic and powerful tool in helping leaders discover God’s plans for their lives.

In evaluating biblical definitions of coaching, it is important to appraise some coaches’ definitions and evaluate whether they are truly based on the Bible. Jane Creswell, founder of the IBM Coaches Network, explains that “Christ-centered coaching focuses on promoting discovery while utilizing the power of the Holy Spirit in that discovery process.”¹ Placing God at the center of her coaching is a customized approach to conversations between two individuals “who trust God to be a partner in the conversation.”² Creswell also understands coaching to be a valuable tool in helping leaders identify and reinforce their strengths. She sees 1 Corinthians 12 reinforcing the

¹ Creswell, *Christ-Centered Coaching*, 13.

² *Ibid.*, 7.

idea that all members belong to the body of Christ and thus have an important role to play in keeping the body healthy and strong.

Christian counselor Gary Collins believes that “coaching is the art and practice of guiding a person or group from where they are toward the greater competence and fulfillment that they desire.”³ This is not a counseling session trying to resolve the problems in someone’s life, but a determined effort forward in seeking God’s guidance. This theory is backed up scripturally by Philippians 3:13, which calls believers to forget those things that are behind and reach forward to those things that are ahead. Collins believes that coaching “is not about healing, it is about growing; it is not reactive looking back, but proactive looking ahead.”⁴ He does not concentrate on a person’s weakness but more on building his or her skills and strengths. His definition of coaching is scripturally sound and places God at the center of the coaching relationship.

In evaluating the different biblical examples of people using the coaching technique, it is clear that Jesus, Moses, and Paul consistently used coaching methodology. They used coaching various times throughout their ministries in order to facilitate spiritual growth, or discovery, in the lives of their disciples. Additionally, in the omniscience and omnipresence of God is bound up those same coaching skills that make this such an effective tool as God interacted with many people in many and varied situations. These encounters were sometimes expected and planned, while other times they were meetings that were spontaneous and unexpected. The subsequent section will

³ Gary R. Collins, *Christian Coaching* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001), 16.

⁴ Ibid.

consider a number of different scriptural passages that portray this coaching relationship along with evaluation of its effectiveness.

Biblical Examples of Personal Development Using Coaching

Numerous examples are given in the Old and New Testament showing leaders using the coaching paradigm to help progress the personal development of people. One biblical leader who acted as a coach was Moses. Examining the use of coaching in the life of Moses, there appear to be two separate roles: Moses being coached by God and Moses coaching leaders. Moses was personally coached by God and was then able to turn around and coach those around him in the area of personal development. A second person who acted as a coach was Paul. Paul is unique in that much of his coaching took place in the form of letter writing, although he also coached leaders face-to-face.

Moses

The story of God revealing himself to Moses at the burning bush at Mt. Horeb is a great example of coaching. Although the majority of the initial dialogue between Moses and God was one-sided, what took place was a time of discovery on the part of Moses. He also discovered God's call on his life—both facets being an integral part of personal development. God was leading Moses into a situation where life-changing discovery could take place. Knowing that one important aspect of coaching focuses primarily on discovery this interaction of God and Moses was a phenomenal time of breakthrough and change on the part of Moses.⁵

⁵ Creswell, *Christ-Centered Coaching*, 12.

The beginning of the third chapter of Exodus starts with a paradigm shift in Moses' theology. As Moses approached the burning bush, a voice proceeded from it instructing him to remove his sandals for the place he was standing on was "holy ground." God then revealed himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Immediately Moses was aware that this was not any standard encounter as he "hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God" (Exodus 3:5-6). He might have simply passed by the extraordinary sight but he chose to stop and observe. An action that started out as simple intellectual curiosity in wonderment at the bush, turned into a discovery process that would forever alter the life of Moses. God was coaching Moses and facilitating the discovery of this God that was going to deliver his people.

In subsequent verses God reveals some remarkable information to Moses. First of all, Moses discovered that God was aware of all the suffering and oppression that his people had been going through. Additionally, Moses learned that God was going to use him as his instrument of delivery, but it was not going to be in the manner that Moses had originally thought (Exodus 2: 11-15). Where initially Moses had sought to deliver the Hebrews on his terms, God was demonstrating to Moses that being God's tool was going to cost him his life. In a dramatic shift in Moses' thinking, he was now going to put all of God's people in a position of importance above his own. It had taken Moses forty years in the desert to arrive at the point where he was usable by God.

The Book of Exodus goes on to reveal the rest of the encounter between God, Moses, and his people. There was little doubt that God had used the previous years of Moses' life to prepare him for this unique time of deliverance. God used the burning bush experience to promote discovery on the part of Moses. Moses learned that God was alive

and fully aware of the suffering of his people. In addition, he was going to use Moses as an integral part of his plan in the deliverance of Israel. Exodus 3:1-22 describes the exchange and how God revealed himself as the great “I AM” to Moses. This encounter would completely change Moses’ life and lead to the exodus of his people.

All of the occurrences that took place had a profound impact on the personal development of Moses. A life that had been focused on his immediate cultural and familial surroundings was now going in a completely different direction. As Moses opened his heart to the coaching of God and showed a willingness to be used, the transformation started to take place.⁶

Nonetheless, as influential as the experience was for Moses, what was important for the people of God was for Moses to be an effective coach in helping other leaders discover God’s plan for them. Scarce biblical data is given on how the relationship between Moses and Joshua was initiated, but the Book of Numbers informs the reader that Joshua had been an aide of Moses since his youth (Numbers 11:28). It appears that Moses had spent time with Joshua and that he was a man that Moses trusted to lead the men in battle (Exodus 17:9). Moses also requested that Joshua accompany him up the mountain of God (Exodus 24:13). This time spent with Moses certainly aided Joshua in becoming the man who would lead the Jews into the Promised Land. An integral part of coaching is the development of an individual’s strengths and talents. Creswell affirms

⁶ Although there was ultimately a willingness to be used by God, there was also initial reluctance on the part of Moses to be the one that God used. Exodus 3 and 4 narrate the dialogue between God and Moses showing a tender but firm God teaching Moses that he would be with him in the exodus of his people.

this theory, saying that “coaching focuses on identifying and strengthening strengths.”⁷ As Moses’ ministry and life was coming to a conclusion, he passed on the mantle of leadership to Joshua in front of the whole nation of Israel (Deuteronomy 31:7-9). Jesus then reinforced the new leadership role by telling Joshua that “as I was with Moses, so shall I be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you” (Joshua 1:5). Thus, although there is not an abundant amount of information regarding how Moses coached Joshua, the results of this relationship are very clear in seeing the leadership role pass from Moses to Joshua.

Paul

In examining the apostle Paul and his use of coaching techniques, the issue needs to be explored from two different viewpoints: using coaching techniques through his letters to different churches and his personal interaction with individuals. Outside the Book of Acts, there are very few examples of Paul having face-to-face dialogues with people. Through the use of very probing and challenging questions in his letters, Paul is able to achieve the goals of a good coach—helping people discover God’s plan for their lives. Tony Stoltzfus, in his book, *Leadership Coaching*, states that “a coach pushes you to think, to stretch yourself, to take responsibility for your life and get done what you now you need to do.”⁸ Paul is able to carry this out through his writings to the different churches in the New Testament. Some examples will verify this conclusion.

⁷ Creswell, *Christ-Centered Coaching*, 19.

⁸ Tony Stoltzfus, *Leadership Coaching* (Virginia Beach, VA: self-published, 2005), 7.

One of the most valuable books of the New Testament for contemporary leaders is 2 Timothy. This personal letter by Paul is one of encouragement and challenge to his spiritual son and protégé, Timothy. It was penned to point out the need for Timothy to finish well in the ministry that was entrusted to him. Paul was in the process of being tried in the Roman courts at the time of this letter, and yet very few details of his problems emerge in this letter. Paul is coaching by example, showing Timothy that he was more concerned with Timothy's welfare than he was with his own. After spending years in labor for the Lord and gaining valuable pastoral experience, Paul lays out in detail to Timothy how to persevere in ministry. He teaches him to recognize that trials are a necessary part of leadership growth and must be endured. True leadership will come through modeling a life of righteous living; and always remembering that he was in labor for the glory and pleasure of the Lord, not to please men.⁹

An effective coach unlocks a person's potential to maximize his or her own performance. It is helping another to learn rather than teaching the person.¹⁰ Stoltzfus adds that coaching is practicing the discipline of believing in people in order to empower them to change.¹¹ The book of 2 Timothy has numerous instances of Paul's belief in Timothy and his exhortation for him to persevere and continue on the same path he started (2 Timothy 1:5, 13; 2:3, 15; 3:10, 12; 4:1, 5). Coaches are change experts who

⁹ J. Robert Clinton, *The Bible and Leadership Values* (United States: no publisher listed, 1993), 294.

¹⁰ John Whitmore, *Coaching for Performance* (London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1992), 9.

¹¹ Stoltzfus, *Leadership Coaching*, 7.

help leaders take responsibility for their lives and act to maximize their own potential.¹² Paul exhorts Timothy to stir up the gift of God, which is in him (2 Timothy 1:6), and to endure the hardships as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 2:3). Although not always in Timothy's physical presence, through his letter Paul was able to urge Timothy towards a closer relationship with Jesus and appeal to him to be faithful to his call (2 Timothy 4:2). It seems clear that through his letters to Timothy, Paul was simply reinforcing the same personal development theme that he had been addressing with Timothy while in his presence.

There are other examples of Paul using coaching techniques to help assist people in discovering God's plan for their lives. The heart and passion that Paul displayed showed the love and concern that Paul had for his people and his desire for them to come into relationship with the Lord. In Romans 9, Paul states that he has great sorrow and continual grief in his heart for his fellow citizens. He even goes so far as to wish himself accursed from Christ for the benefit of his fellow Jews.

The Example of Jesus

There is a profusion of examples in the New Testament of Jesus using the coaching style in his interactions with his disciples. For example, the gospels record over 150 situations in which Jesus asked questions.¹³ He is seen posing challenging questions to his disciples as well as to the merely curious seekers. At times, in order to promote discovery, he challenges the religious community to let go of their old way of thinking

¹² Stoltzfus, *Leadership Coaching*, 6.

¹³ Creswell, *Christ-Centered Coaching*, 35.

and seek a new method of interacting with God. Through questions and parables Jesus attempts to bring people into a greater Kingdom awareness. At times his interaction was met with exciting anticipation, while at other times there was a complete lack of willingness to listen or to change. On some occasions he encouraged his followers, yet turned around and had words of chastisement for the very same people (Matthew 16:1-2). A number of these coaching situations will be explored in this section.

Utilizing the Coaching Method

There are many instances of Jesus asking powerful and provoking questions to people on the road, as well as to his disciples. To the blind man on the side of the road in Luke 18:41, he asks, “What do you want me to do for you?” In the story of the Good Samaritan, after telling the story to a lawyer Jesus asks the young man, “Which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?” (Luke 10:36). To the scribes and Pharisees he asks if it was “lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save a life or to destroy” (Luke 6:9). On the road to Emmaus Jesus asks the two men traveling with him, “What kind of conversation is this that you are having with one another as you walk and are sad?” (Luke 24:17). In Luke 10:26 Jesus asks a lawyer who was putting him to the test, “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?” Most of the questions Jesus asked were the thought-provoking type and required more than a simple yes or no response from the one he was questioning. Many times he encouraged the one he questioned to look beyond the surface issue and dig deeper into the situation. Quite a few of the questions required responses that reflected the state of

one's heart. One of these exchanges in the book of Matthew will be more closely scrutinized.

While in the area of Caesarea Philippi, a small town at the foot of Mt. Hermon, Jesus asked his disciples whom they thought he was (Matthew 16:1). The question was raised by Jesus, challenging his followers to evaluate all that they had seen so far in their time with Jesus. The question was an important one because a correct response required more than simply observing the actions that had taken place. Some thought that Jesus was a resurrected Elijah, or perhaps John the Baptist, or some other prophet from the past. However, these responses may have been simple replications from other people. Nonetheless, Jesus caught them and asked the second time who they thought he was. Although the question was asked to the group as a whole, Jesus was seeking a personal response from them. When Peter responded with his answer, that Jesus was the Messiah and King that was prophesied in the Old Testament, there is a question as to whether he was answering on behalf of the group or for himself alone. This issue is resolved with the reply from Jesus, who states that Peter's answer is not one that comes from human and earthly wisdom, but insight that could only come from God. Peter's recognition of who Jesus is must have come from God himself.

An examination of this passage reveals a number of reasons why this is a good example of Jesus' coaching. In asking his question the first time it was apparent that Jesus was not satisfied with the different responses from the group. Jesus listened but it was clear that he desired a deeper and more thought-provoking answer than the one that was given. After the incorrect first response from the group, it would have been undemanding of Jesus to give them the answer to his question. On the contrary, by Jesus

asking the question once again he is demonstrating an effective coaching technique by not giving out the answer. Good coaching is helping people learn instead of teaching them.¹⁴ The question Jesus asked required his followers to be listening to God to receive the accurate conclusion.

It was clear that Peter had learned an important revelation from God—the true identity of Jesus. This is exactly what successful coaching accomplishes, people receiving personal reactions from God. One of the secrets of good coaching is trying to have people listen to God for answers.¹⁵ Peter learned a valuable lesson by listening to God more than the other disciples around him. By his confession Peter represents the type of person on which the true Church would be built.¹⁶

Jesus displayed another key component of coaching in the manner of his reply—calling Peter blessed because of his response. Jesus took the time to encourage Peter in front of those who were surrounding them. A coach should be constantly tuning into what is great about a person, so when the opportunity for some valuable affirmation comes along the coach is primed and ready to offer something significant.¹⁷

There are other examples of Jesus using coaching techniques in the Bible. The value of these examples goes beyond searching for illustrations in the New Testament. As important as these instances were, what is just as important for home fellowship leaders

¹⁴ Stoltzfus, *Leadership Coaching*, 8.

¹⁵ Robert E. Logan and Sherilyn Carlton, *Coaching 101: Discover the Power of Coaching* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2003), 24.

¹⁶ While acknowledging the controversy of this passage, it is beyond the purpose of this ministry focus paper to look at the different theological issues that are involved.

¹⁷ Stoltzfus, *Leadership Coaching*, 27.

is the recognition that God is still utilizing coaching in the present day. In the quietness and stillness of a leader's heart, God is asking questions that require thoughtful and meditative introspection. The Bible admonishes all believers to "meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still" (Psalm 4:4), and to "be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). God's questions and assistance in discovering new and wondrous Kingdom experiences can still be heard if leaders have the desire and willingness to hear.

Teaching Emphasizing Personal Development

Debatably, one of the most challenging passages of Scripture that deals with the role of moral purity is found in fifth chapter of the Book of Matthew. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus sets out before his followers the ethics of the kingdom of God. There has been much debate regarding the words of Jesus and the intent of his teaching. Nevertheless, the Scriptures taken in context must first be addressed to the disciples and secondarily to the Church today. The sermon is authoritative in that it addresses not only the actions, but is also concerned with the inward thoughts and intent that led to the behavior.

Cases in point are verses 27-30 where Jesus speaks to the sin of adultery. It is not simply the act of adultery that is an offense to God, but even the act of gazing upon a woman with a lustful heart is also a transgression to God. The sin of moral impurity has been elevated from the sinful act itself, to the place where the action actually originated: the heart. The prophet Jeremiah stated that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9). Jesus reinforced this teaching by asserting that out of the hearts of men and women come "evil thoughts, adulteries,

murders, and foolishness. All of these evil things come from within and defile a person” (Mark 7: 20-23). Jesus is pressing for personal development in the life of his disciples. He no longer wants his followers to be easily content with not completing the sinful act but to evaluate the thoughts and intents of their hearts.

Other issues are also addressed in the Sermon on the Mount: loving their enemies; going the second mile; doing good to please God; and seeing marriage as sacred and binding. Although Jesus asks virtually no questions in these passages of the Bible, what he does is aid in the discovery of what kingdom life is all about. He also pushes his followers from the external life to the internal. He exhorts his disciples to leave their area of comfort and discover how God is working around them. This sermon was foundational teaching that Jesus would refer back to many times in dealing with his followers. An effective coach helps people promote discovery in their lives utilizing the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁸

It is also very clear in Scripture that God wants people to be faithful to the call upon their lives by developing their own personal talents and gifts. In the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30), Jesus narrates the story of three servants who were given a command by their master to take money that would be given them while he went on a journey. To one servant was given five talents, to another two talents, and to the last servant one talent was given.¹⁹ The important fact to note is that the Scriptures state that each was given the money according to his own ability (Matthew 25:15). Jesus was

¹⁸ Creswell, *Christ-Centered Coaching*, 13.

¹⁹ A talent was an extremely high monetary unit of currency. Although the word “talent” in this case is dealing with monetary value, the English word “talent” which means a natural endowment or special ability is derived from this parable.

instructing each servant to use his or her own talents and strengths to add to his original investment, and there was an expectation that there should be some results.

Usage of Small Groups in Coaching

Jesus dealt with several groups of people simultaneously. He had a large group of seventy that he sent out two by two into every city and place that he was about to go (Luke 10:1).²⁰ This fact is only mentioned twice in the gospels and very little additional information is given. Jesus also had his smaller group of twelve, the apostles that were personally selected by Jesus. All the names of the apostles are listed in three of the four gospels, indicating that this group was definitely more intimately involved with Jesus than the group of seventy. There were occasions when he took them to deserted places for times of prayer (Mark 6:30) or for specific teaching (Luke 9:11; 17:5). Moreover, it was with the twelve that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:15-23). There was also his inner circle of three, where he executed some miraculous accomplishments. Jesus also spent time alone with a number of people, coaching them into a new way of interpreting their relationships with God. It was in these small groups where Jesus seemed to spend a substantial amount of time.

As mentioned, there is very little evidence of Jesus having much interaction with the large group of seventy. It can be assumed that they were present when Jesus taught the multitudes, fed the five thousand, and carried out other life-changing actions (Matthew 14:21; Mark 6:44; Luke 9:14; John 6:10). Therefore, although they may have

²⁰ It is not definite that the exact number was seventy. Some of the Greek manuscripts are divided as to whether the number was seventy or seventy-two, and there is no way of being certain which is correct.

been present, the directed questions were aimed at the disciples in the smaller group of twelve. It is clear that Jesus saved his most intimate moments for the smaller groups.

The group of twelve had more private time with Jesus and there are instances of Jesus challenging this group with thought-provoking questions. At the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus asked Philip where they should buy bread to feed the multitudes (John 6:4). However, Jesus was asking Philip in order to test him (John 6:6). Jesus was coaching Philip to see if he was able to look beyond the circumstances to see what God was trying to do in this situation. Unfortunately, Philip was not at the point where he was able to get beyond the temporal issue to see an eternal truth. Nonetheless, Jesus did not criticize Philip or have any harsh words for him.

Nevertheless, it was with his inner circle of three where Jesus revealed some of his most intimate experiences: his transfiguration; his raising of a little girl from the dead; and his prayer at the garden of Gethsemane. Three of the Gospels narrate the story of Jesus taking Peter, James, and John up on a high mountain where he was transfigured before them (Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9: 1-12; Luke 9:28-36). It is also important to bear in mind that part of coaching is encouraging discovery regarding God's plan, as well as instigating breakthrough in one's routine way of thinking. In the transfiguration, God revealed himself in a manner that the inner three may not have understood at the time. However, this was definitely a shift in the way that Peter, James, and John were used to thinking. There are other examples of Jesus spending time with his small group of three, challenging them in their thinking about God.

Nonetheless, Jesus also did some of his most effective coaching in one-on-one relationships. A prime example is his interaction with the Samaritan woman at Sychar

(John 4:1-26). In this discussion with the woman, Jesus showed the value of simply building relationships. Ignoring the customs of the Jews in dealing with the Samaritan woman, Jesus disregarded the questions of the woman and encouraged her to look at the bigger picture.²¹ The woman had a temporal view, but Jesus encouraged her to look at her life from an eternal one. At the end of their dialogue Jesus reveals himself to the woman as the Messiah. The woman left Jesus to go into the city and told the men about the interaction with Jesus. Many lives would be changed because of the woman's witness to the people in her village.

Outcomes of Coaching

There are many outcomes from effective coaching: moral development; a greater passion for God and his people; greater Kingdom awareness; and increased discernment regarding personal gifts, talents, and strengths. The Scriptures give many examples of people whose lives were impacted after coaching sessions. Some of this coaching lasted only a few minutes and yet left the one who was coached with a changed life. At other times the coaching may have lasted years, such as the case with the apostles, with it also leaving a radical change in their lives. This section will focus on biblical examples of the various manners in which coaching left a dramatic outcome.

Moral Development

True coaching promotes discovery while additionally helping people discover God's plan for their lives. One more facet regarding the outcomes of coaching needs to

²¹ The problem was not only that Jesus was talking with the Samaritan woman, but that he was willing to drink from a Samaritan vessel.

be recognized: the willingness of the coachee to open his or her heart to change.

Allowing for this readiness on the part of the coachee, there are examples in the Bible that present a change in moral development of a person. A brief examination will reveal a few of these examples.

A phenomenal passage of Scripture (Luke 7: 36-40, "the anointing of Jesus") narrates the story of a woman whose moral life had been dramatically altered after interaction with Jesus. Little is known about this woman and how she met Jesus or what type of coaching experience she encountered.²² She may have had direct contact, as Jesus had with other women, or she may have been part of a group that followed Jesus from a distance. Nonetheless, there was a definite shift in the moral development of this woman after interfacing with Jesus.

In Luke 17:11-19, a short story is told of ten lepers who sought the Lord for healing. What is remarkable is not the fact that ten lepers were healed from their contagious disease, but that only one of the ten was morally changed enough to return and give thanks and praise to Jesus. With all these lepers had been through, it would have been assumed that there would be a sense of gratitude on their part for their healing. A moral attitude that gives thanks to God for his healing touch was missing from the lives of the other nine lepers.

²² It is assumed from the context that this woman was probably a prostitute. Anointing the feet of Jesus with an alabaster box of perfume that was worth a great deal of money showed that not only was there a turning away from her former vocation, but that even what she had earned from her previous sinful lifestyle was given to the Lord.

Passion for God and People

Undoubtedly, one of the most remarkable lives affected by coaching was that of Moses. Part of his life change was discussed in an earlier portion of this chapter but there was another significant outcome in his life. It is notable that Moses has a greater passion for God as well as his brethren the Jews after his coaching by God. Throughout the exodus from Egypt, Moses had to tolerate all the complaining and murmuring by the Jews.²³ As Moses spent more and more time with God, it was incredible how much patience and love Moses exhibited for the very people who were complaining against him. Just as the glow on Moses' face displayed his time with God, so did his zeal for his people.

Moses' passion for the people of Israel was further demonstrated when he descended from Mt. Sinai after receiving the law from God. As he returned to the Israel camp he heard the sound of war in the camp. However, the noise was not war but the sound of the people corrupting themselves by worshipping a golden calf. As the Lord's anger burned against the Jews and he threatened to consume them, Moses interceded for this "stiff-necked" people and pleaded with him to do no harm to his people. "So the Lord relented from the harm which he said he would do to his people" (Exodus 32:14).

Furthermore, Moses also exhibited great fervor for his God in that after interceding with him on behalf of Israel he was passionate in defending the holiness of God. His anger was such that he cast the tablets out of his hand and broke them at the

²³ Many examples of murmuring against Moses are found in the books of Exodus and Numbers. Some of the complaints occurred before Moses led the people out of Egypt (Exodus 5:21) but most of the grumbling came as Moses led Israel through the wilderness (Exodus 15:24; 16:2-3; Numbers 16:2-2, 13-14, 41).

foot of the mountain. He then held the responsible parties accountable for their behavior (Exodus 32: 20-29).

However, to complete the story of Moses, perhaps the greatest exhibition of his passion for God and Israel was displayed in the wilderness of Zin. It was there that Moses went to the Lord again because of all the grumbling regarding having no water to drink. Moses was directed by God to speak to the rock and water would proceed from it in order to quench the thirst of his people. Nevertheless, Moses disobeyed the Lord and smote the rock instead of speaking to it (Numbers 20: 11). His disobedience would prevent him from leading his people into the Promised Land, a punishment severe enough that the Lord had to direct Moses to not speak of the consequences again (Deuteronomy 3:26). The ultimate obedience and passion that Moses showed to God and the Jews was truly remarkable. In spite of knowing that he would never enter into the land of milk and honey, Moses continued to faithfully lead his people with all his heart. He remained committed to God and Israel while fully recognizing that he would never achieve his goal of entering the Promised Land.

There is no doubt that the change in Moses' life was brought about by his relationship with the Lord. Through this association there were very significant moments in the life of Moses. These included times when God revealed his will for Moses; times of discovery as Moses matured in his awareness of God's plans; and a willingness on the part of Moses to be changed and used by the Lord. All of these outcomes are results of coaching methodology with an end result of personal development in the life of Moses.

Greater Kingdom Awareness of Spiritual Authority and Power

Recognizing the continuing coaching role of Jesus, the effect that he had on Peter was arguably the most influencing. The book of Matthew narrates a remarkable story that vividly illustrates the fact that Jesus was more than a simple prophet or teacher (Matthew 14: 22-33). Jesus had just fed the five thousand with the five loaves of bread and two fish (Matthew 14:15-20). After this revealing episode, Jesus made the disciples enter the boat and go before him to the other side.

As the boat was being tossed by the waves due to the gusting winds, Jesus came to them walking on the water. Perceiving that they were seeing a ghost, they cried out in fear. After Jesus identified himself, Peter stated that if it was really Jesus then he (Jesus) should command Peter to go to him on the water. In spite of the surrounding waves and wind, Peter steps out into the water in the midst of the storm. This remarkable act of faith on Peter's part showed that through his interactions with Jesus (coaching) he was slowly changing his awareness of God's kingdom. As Peter's attention turns to the circumstances around him, and off the one who is able to control them, he starts to sink. As Jesus immediately reaches out to catch him, he asks Peter why he had such little faith. While climbing back into the boat, the wind and waves die down. It was at this point that Peter and the other apostles showed that they were acquiring a greater awareness of the kingdom of God and Jesus' spiritual authority and power. Once they were in the boat, the Scriptures state that they "came and worshipped him, saying 'truly you are the son of God'" (Matthew 14:33). This was a revealing statement by the apostles as they were finally getting a glimpse of whom this man really was. Through the coaching of Jesus, Peter was starting to see that the kingdom that Jesus had been talking about was not a far-

off kingdom, but one that was here now and one in which Peter could interact with authority and power.

Peter continued to show a greater awareness of the kingdom of God as Jesus and the disciples were walking into the region of Caesarea Philippi. Using effective coaching methods, Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do men say that I, the son of man, am?” (Matthew 16; 13). The subsequent verse reveals that after some quick responses from the disciples Jesus asks the probing question, “But who do you say that I am?” This inquiry required more than a simple reaction; it forced the disciples to look deep inside and evaluate all that they had encountered thus far in their relations with Jesus. Peter’s response of declaring that Jesus was the Christ demonstrated understanding that God had revealed himself through this man Jesus. Additionally, Jesus makes the comment that Peter’s response was due to the fact that God had revealed this truth to Peter.

This was truly an experience that revealed the change that had occurred in Peter’s life through his relationship with Jesus. It showed a dramatic responsiveness to the kingdom of God and openness to God himself to allow transformation to take place in his life. There are other examples of Jesus’ followers showing a greater awareness of God’s spiritual authority and power through a revelation of his kingdom. Jesus continually stated that the “kingdom of God is at hand” (Matthew 12:28, 19:24, 21:31, 21:34; Mark 1:15; Luke 4:43, 9:2). In the midst of this proclamation of the arrival of God’s kingdom was a new consciousness that God was going to be working in, and changing his disciples’ lives.

Helping People Discover God's Plan for their Lives

When people come into relationship with the Lord, there may be no change as far as vocation is concerned; however, at times there is a radical change of direction.

Searching the Scriptures for examples of how God helped people discover his plan for their lives there are a number of disciples whose lives came under God's divine plan. A brief examination of the Bible will demonstrate that through the coaching of Jesus, followers were able to discover God's plan for their lives.

In the book of Matthew the story is related regarding the call of the disciples into the ministry of Jesus. Following the onset of Jesus' ministry, he is seen proclaiming the arrival of the kingdom of God. Little is known of what occurred in the subsequent twelve months or so, but there is little doubt that the questions and statements Jesus was making caused an internal unrest in the hearts of many people. Included in this group would be Peter, Andrew, James, and John. As Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, he initially saw two brothers, Peter and Andrew, "casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen" (Matthew 4:18). In the following verse Jesus tells them, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their boat and manner of living, and turned to follow Jesus. This story would be repeated with James and John.

Nonetheless, the most radical change in these four men's lives would be after the death of Jesus. As the resurrected Jesus appears to the disciples he states the call upon the lives of his followers, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all the things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19). From their early start as fishermen, Jesus entered the lives of these men coaching them into discovering God's

plan for their lives. There was willingness on the part of the disciples for change and Jesus was able to coach them into times of discovery. All of these examples are the result of effective coaching on the part of Jesus.

Another illustration of how coaching transformed people's lives were in the case of Paul.²⁴ There had been no recorded interaction between the Lord and Paul before his conversion. Nonetheless, while on the road to Damascus, the Lord reveals himself through a supernatural event (Acts 22:6-10). The coaching event was extremely limited, but the results were what coaching is all about: a time of discovery on the part of Paul. He would soon discover God's plan for his life along with a willingness to change. Paul was later told by the Lord that he would leave Jerusalem and be sent out to witness to the Gentiles (Acts 22: 18- 21). The result of Paul's short coaching experience with the Lord resulted in a dramatic change of life for him.

The book of Acts continues with results of the changed life of Paul as the Lord directs him to several missionary journeys with Barnabus, Mark, and Silas (Acts 16-28). The coaching continued on the part of Paul as he pours his heart and life into the men who followed him. As previously mentioned, Paul did much of his coaching via letters that were sent out to the many churches that he had influenced. Paul was successful in coming alongside of people and encouraging them fulfill the potential of their calls (1 Timothy 4:1-5; Colossians 4:17).

The outcome of the coaching experience in Paul's life continues into the present day. The letters that he pinned have continued to help change the lives of innumerable

²⁴ It is acknowledged that at the time of his call, his name was Saul. However, for the purpose of this paper he will be referred to as Paul.

people. Through the power of the Holy Spirit his words have continued to challenge and assist people in helping to discover God's plan for their lives. One other benefit that resulted from Paul's changed life was that he also discovered his personal gifts and talents that supported him during his missionary journeys.

Discernment of Personal Gifts, Talents, and Strengths

A major part of discerning one's personal gifts, talents, and strengths is the recognition that each one is a special creation of God. Each person is given abilities that make him or her unique. Little information is given on Jesus directly giving his disciples a command to "go and use their talents and gifts." Nonetheless, an argument can be made that Jesus deliberately chose certain people to carry out specific tasks. The line of reasoning can follow that he chose those that he knew had the right strengths and giftedness to realize his wishes.

The book of Ephesians states that all Christians are part of the body of Christ. Every individual believer has a role in this body: "He himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12). Peter, James, and John had a specific role to fulfill in the birth of the new Church. Jesus spent approximately three years coaching them, helping them discover God's plan and getting them to the point where they were willing to put the kingdom of God ahead of the kingdom of humankind. Jesus knew the talents, strengths, and giftedness of each apostle and coached them in how to use these God-given abilities in furthering the kingdom of God.

There are multiple passages in the Bible that support this assumption. In the book of Ephesians, Paul admonishes the believers to “walk worthy of the calling with which you were called” (Ephesians 4:1). As Paul used coaching techniques through the use of letters, he admonished the saints to be faithful to the call of God in their lives. He desired for them to fulfill their calls not only in doing the work of the ministry, but to accomplish this through the use of their individual strengths and giftedness. He desired for them to recognize that they were a part of something special and that each one of them had a particular role to execute.

The book of John quotes Jesus, stating, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit” (Jon 15:16). In John 6:70, he asks the disciples, “Did not I choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?” It appears from these and other verses that Jesus chose exactly who he wanted to carry out his ultimate will and desire. There are obvious issues with individuals having free will in the midst of those plans, but God’s purposes will eventually come to fruition. Jesus chose those who he knew would be faithful to use the gifts and talents they were given.

Therefore, as Jesus spent time coaching his disciples, especially his inner three of James, John, and Peter, the assumption needs to be made that these are the exact men that Jesus wanted to achieve his objectives. These are the men who had the correct gifts, talents, and strengths to go out into the world and be witnesses for the kingdom of God. Jesus had a purposeful impact on these men in discovering their roles in accomplishing his purposes. There is little doubt that the coaching of Jesus, Paul, and others was vital in aiding them in the discernment and discovery of their gifts, talents, and strengths.

PART THREE

STRATEGY

CHAPTER 5

THE ROLE OF THE COACH IN PROMOTING PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Subsequent to considering the theological and biblical basis for personal development, there needs to be a strategy for implementation. The main purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the role of the coach in promoting personal development in the lives of the home fellowship leaders. By asking questions, being an effective listener, being a spiritual guide, and being a ministry advisor, the coach will have key responsibilities in bringing about transformation in the leaders' lives. Through those four roles the coach will also be a source of accountability in assisting the leaders in discovering their strengths as well as drafting their personal development plans.

Past Methods of Developing Leaders

Coaching plays a crucial role in the implementation of the strategy of this ministry focus paper. In the past, different methods of interaction with the home fellowship leaders were attempted. Mentoring, discipling, and even counseling had little impact on the home fellowship leaders and did nothing in helping to sustain them. Moreover, these methods never took into consideration the individuality of each leader.

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, these methods never gave the leaders opportunity to share the issues and concerns that were most relevant to them.

Coaching brings a completely new dynamic into the situation. By investing their time, coaches will play a valuable role in the personal development of the home fellowship leaders. These are some of the reasons why coaching was chosen as the methodology for this ministry focus paper. Coaching will also help bring direction and focus to the lives of the small group leaders.

Effective leaders envision a future and invest in the present. They need to have a sense of where they are headed through a strategy of mission, purpose, vision, or goals. Then, they need to see how their decisions today move toward that endgame.¹ Coaching can be an effective tool in assisting leaders in the planning of their goals. Therefore, although counseling, discipling, and mentoring have a valuable position in the Church, coaching is the selected method for this paper due to the aforementioned reasons.

The Selection of Coaches

The role of a coach is a varied and complex one. Not only must coaches be capable of asking effective questions, they must also be careful listeners. They must be willing to be used as spiritual and ministerial guides. Therefore, great care must be used in the selection of the coaches.

Coaches will be selected from two different groups. The first group will be from the men who are already in a position of leadership above the home fellowship leaders. These men could be either section, area, or regional leaders who have chosen to complete

¹ Howard Morgan, Phil Harkins, and Marshall Goldsmith, eds., *The Art and Practice of Leadership Coaching* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2005.), 74.

the classes on the techniques of coaching. These men would be ones who recognize the need for change in the home fellowships and welcome new direction. The second group would consist of men or women who have also completed instruction in the techniques of coaching and who feel called to coach the small group leaders. Both of these groups have some distinct advantages as well as some drawbacks. Each of these will be examined.

Men from the Upper Levels of Home Fellowship Leadership

Selecting men from the upper levels of the home fellowships provides a number of advantages. First, they are familiar with the small group system and its manner of operation. This means they are acquainted with the roles and responsibilities of the home fellowship leader role as well as those of their own position. This familiarity might prove to be an advantage when it comes time to start coaching. Being acquainted with the system should assist them in asking more probing questions in the area of ministry. Another advantage is that they might already have informal relationships with leaders from previous contact. This should make it much easier for the home fellowship leaders (coachees) to open up and share more intimate issues. The coaches should also have attained “spiritual maturity” at this point in their lives. This is also very important, knowing that some questions and discussions in the coaching session might be sensitive or stumbling to a spiritually younger person.

However, there are some definite drawbacks to using the upper leaders of the small groups. The first problem was also an advantage—that of familiarity. If this possible coach is open to a more efficient method of supporting the leaders, then the coaching relationship should work. However, as previously mentioned, in the past the

upper leadership has played a significant role in providing little accountability and support to the leaders. This was one of the challenges facing the small group leaders. This potential coach must understand the necessity for change and be willing to be part of the solution.

Men or Women outside the Home Fellowship Leadership Structure

The second group of possible coaches could be either men or women. These might very well be people with little or no experience in the home fellowship system. Nonetheless, they will be people who have attained spiritual maturity through their years of having a relationship with the Lord. They should also be people who have at least attended home fellowships in order to have a general knowledge of how they function. One of the benefits of using people outside of the leadership environment is that they bring in a freshness that may be lacking in those who have been leading in the small group system for years.

There is no apparent significant downside using men and women who have not been involved in the upper leadership of the small groups. Lack of experience in this area is a factor overcome by their desire to coach the leaders. These people have a passion for the small groups and aspire to see them grow spiritually. They also recognize the importance of sustaining and retaining the leaders in order for the fellowships to grow.

Therefore, the selection of coaches will be a careful and deliberate decision. There must be personal interviews with those desiring to be a coach in order to eliminate those who are not ready. Regardless of which group the coaches are selected from, they will need to attend a class on the basics of coaching. This will provide additional screening for

those who are not ready to coach the small group leaders. This will be discussed more in-depth in Chapter 7.

The Role of the Coach

The implementation of this ministry focus paper considers the coach to have a four-fold role. This role includes asking questions, being an effective listener, being a spiritual guide, and being a ministry advisor. In providing this type of interaction with leaders, coaches will assist in bringing about transformation in the leaders' lives. Through these four roles the coach will also provide accountability to the leaders as they discover their strengths and draft their personal development plans.

Asking Questions

In the Old Testament God's people were told what to do by the prophets with very little discussion or interaction. The same problem exists to a certain extent in the contemporary Church in America. Cole states, "The multitudes of Christ-followers are always looking for someone else to tell them what to think."² This is one reason why asking questions of small group leaders is such a dynamic and valuable tool—it forces leaders to think. It compels them to be part of the solution, which ultimately leads to a more likely transformation.

An examination of New Testament times reveals Jesus' style of asking questions while having substantial interaction with those around him. There were times when Jesus responded to questions by asking additional questions. In the Gospels there are over 150

² Cole, *Organic Leadership*, 76.

recorded questions asked by Jesus.³ This shift from telling people what to do, such as often occurs in contemporary counseling, mentoring, and discipling, to asking people what they are doing is a dramatic shift. When leaders are asked questions by the coach and they respond to the inquiry, ownership and discovery start to take place.

In his book, *Coaching for Performance*, John Whitmore lays out a chart that illustrates the importance of having leaders take ownership of a situation and being part of the solution (see Appendix B). His graph demonstrates the importance of a leader not simply being told what to do, but also being shown and then learning by experience. When leaders are simply told what to do or think, the retention rate after three months is a lowly 10 percent. However, when leaders are not only told what to do or think, but they are also shown how to do it and then they experience it, the retention rate after three months goes up to 65 percent. This is one reason why coaching plays such an important role in the overall strategy of this ministry focus paper. For long-lasting change to take place in leaders' lives, it appears that coaching is an extremely valuable resource. All of this is initiated by the coach asking the leaders questions and having the leaders start taking ownership of the issues at hand.

Due to the type of questions that may be brought up, it is imperative that confidentiality be observed in all matters. Choosing mature coaches is a necessity for this very reason. This is another reason why quality time will be spent selecting the coaches. At times, a relationship with the coach and coachee may already exist which should enhance the coaching relationship. Nonetheless, as the coaching commences there needs

³ Creswell, *Christ-Centered Coaching*, 35.

to be an awareness that at no time will confidences ever be betrayed. Creswell states, “Confidentiality is at the core of coaching.”⁴

Additionally, it is imperative that objectivity be observed as much as possible by the coach. This may be difficult if a relationship previously existed between the coach and leader. Nonetheless, it is important that subjectivity be eradicated from the coach’s position as much as possible. This is one important reason why there must be training for the person desiring to become a coach.

Once these issues have been acknowledged, the coaching session should be initiated, beginning with the questioning. Questions play a valuable role in the development of leaders by helping them stay involved. Coaching helps the leaders to actively participate while it directs them towards becoming part of the solution.

The ability to ask the correct type of question plays a vital role in effective coaching. However, the use of questions during a coaching appointment can be either very powerful or possibly very confusing. Questions can be used, misused, and abused by the coach. They can be used to help the leader or to harm the leader.⁵ There is a definite skill in learning to ask the right kind of question at the correct time when coaching a leader. For example, asking closed-ended questions that require simple “yes” or “no” responses from the one being coached require no introspection or analysis on the part of the coachee.

⁴ Creswell, *Christ-Centered Coaching*, 8.

⁵ Ogne and Roehl, *TransforMissional Coaching*, 145.

Strings of closed-ended questions tend to shut down a coaching conversation rather quickly.⁶ However, simply asking any type of open-ended question is not going to make an effective coaching session either. There are types of questions that need to be avoided by the coach. For instance, questions that start with “why” and sometimes “how” should be discouraged because they often imply criticism and evoke defensiveness on the part of the one being coached.⁷ For example, questions such as “Why did you do what you did?” or “How could you make such a decision?” clearly put the one being coached into a self-protective mode and could definitely hinder future communication. This might be another path to closing down the coaching session. It is important to keep the coachee relaxed and comfortable during the coaching session in order to keep the lines of communication flowing. Being put on the defensive does not lead to a smooth interaction between the coach and the coachee and thus inhibits the exchange of ideas and dialogue between the two.

However, asking non-judgmental, open-ended questions of leaders requires some thoughtful reflection. Coaches can learn to ask open-ended questions when they become convinced of the value of the individuals being coached and the importance of those persons’ insights; then, asking these types of questions becomes a passionate, instinctive response.⁸ Effective questions by coaches will require leaders to dig deeper into their thoughts, dreams, and desires to uncover issues that they may have never considered before. It is not necessary for the questions to be complex. Simple questions may even be

⁶ Stoltzfus, *Leadership Coaching*, 180.

⁷ Whitmore, *Coaching for Performance*, 47.

⁸ Joseph Umidi, *Transformational Coaching* (Virginia Beach, VA: Xulon Press, 2005), 33.

more effective as they avoid any ambiguity. If a question is not understood, the coach needs to discern this and be able to restate the question in terms that the coachee will comprehend. Speaking in plain simple terms may be the most effective manner of asking questions.

In addition, asking the type of question that actually distracts from what is being accomplished is to be avoided. Direct and succinct questions that get to the point keep the coachee alert and paying attention. The art of asking penetrating questions will also require patience and practice on the part of the coach. This subject will be examined in the subsequent section and is an important part of the coaching process.

Open-ended questions, being subjective, are also safer for the coachee as there are usually no incorrect answers. Since there is no right or wrong answer, these types of questions do not put people on the defensive. When people feel accepted it promotes more conversation. Additionally, since subjective questions can be answered in so many ways, they let the coachee direct the coach to what is really important.⁹ When the right questions are asked, conversations flow down paths that are most important to the leaders (coachees). One of the key objectives in asking questions is to get the leaders to talk. Given the proper amount of time, most people will invariably end up discussing the issues that are most significant to them.

The coach also needs to remember that the coaching session is not simply asking one question after another. Just as the coachees are expected to be attentive and willing to reflect on their answers, so also the coaches need to be engaged with the leaders. This requires careful listening and thoughtful reflection to what is being stated in order to

⁹ Stoltzfus, *Leadership Coaching*, 180-181.

recognize what direction to go in next. The art of listening will be discussed more in depth in the subsequent section, but it is understood that the coach must thoughtfully consider all that is being stated.

Nevertheless, there are times when a question is perfect and yet there is no response from the coachee. This is where maturity plays a role in the coach in that he or she must recognize that silence is not necessarily an unhealthy situation. As previously mentioned, the question may be overly complex or ambiguous, but there is also the possibility of it being the ideal question. The coach needs to recognize that the time of silence may be what is needed for the coachee to evaluate the correct response. Therefore, the coach needs to be prepared to wait out the silence and give the coachee the necessary time to ascertain the best reply. At times, coaches may be well aware what a particular response should be from the leaders. Nonetheless, coaches must learn that coaching is not a matter of simply giving right answers. Successful coaching results in the leaders discovering for themselves responses that work for them. This time of silence will be further discussed in the following section.

An additional key factor in the skill of asking questions is the necessity of the coach in listening carefully to the responses and then skillfully narrowing the focus of subsequent inquiries. As a result of careful and concerned listening, questions should begin broadly in nature, but then begin to focus increasingly on details.¹⁰ If some of the leader's answers seem to be off topic, the coach must be prepared to bring a wandering conversation back on track. This aids the leader in regaining his direction while continuing to probe for more detail. This demand for more detail maintains the focus and

¹⁰ Whitmore, *Coaching for Performance*, 47.

the interest of the coachee.¹¹ The skill of asking effective questions takes time and practice. Nonetheless, good coaching is not the art of giving good answers; it is the art of asking good questions.¹² Using reflective questioning, the coach will be a tool in helping the small group leader on the path of personal growth.

People who know how to ask good questions while patiently waiting for responses are going to be effective and fruitful coaches. This is why care will be used in selecting the coaches and why there will be regular evaluation of all coaches. This will be discussed more in-depth later in this chapter.

The Coach as a Listener

One sign of an immature believer is the lack of ability to listen carefully and prayerfully to the one speaking. These types of people will not make successful coaches. Through training classes that will be held on the basics of coaching, hopefully most of these people will be eliminated from the possibility of coaching. Listening is the one skill that all great leaders recognize as indispensable in their capacity to influence others.¹³ The ability to listen may be imperative to many leaders, but it is certainly not a skill where much training is realized. If most people were asked how their communication skills could be improved, most of them would cite the need to become more persuasive or

¹¹ Whitmore, *Coaching for Performance*, 47.

¹² Ogne and Roehl, *TransforMissional Coaching*, 143.

¹³ John C. Maxwell and Jim Dornan, *Becoming a Person of Influence* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers), 79.

to sharpen their public speaking skills. Few of them would cite a desire to listen better.¹⁴ Listening is a skill that requires concentration and practice.¹⁵

One major obstacle to effective listening is that most people are not listening to understand what is being stated; they are simply waiting for a chance to respond. The book of James tells the believer to be “quick to listen but slow to speak” (James 1:19). Whenever a person is not alert to what others have to say, the message is being sent that those speaking are not valued.¹⁶ There is little doubt that focused listening plays a significant part in successful coaching. A coach may have acquired the skill of asking deep and probing questions, but if he or she is not proficient in their listening skills, the questions will be of little value.

Effective and concentrative listening skills aid the coach in a number of different manners. First, it supports the coach in learning valuable knowledge about the coachee. It will also be of assistance in asking subsequent questions. Efficient listening will also contribute in building the relationship between the coach and coachee. The coaching relationship will be expanded upon in the following section, but at this point, it is important to note that listening plays a vital role in building a strong, loyal, and trustful connection between the two parties.

There are a number of mannerisms that the coach needs to be aware of if he or she is going to be an efficient coach with effective listening skills. First, the coach should maintain eye contact with the leader being coached. It is imperative that the leader be

¹⁴ Maxwell and Dornan, *Becoming a Person of Influence*, 85.

¹⁵ Whitmore, *Coaching for Performance*, 49.

¹⁶ Maxwell and Dornan, *Becoming a Person of Influence*, 81.

assured that he has the complete and undivided attention of the coach. One issue that can seriously harm a coaching session is for the leader to see the coach's eyes wandering around the room being distracted by events other than the coaching session. While recognizing that some coaching may be performed over the phone, the majority of the coaching sessions for the home fellowship leaders will be completed in person. Therefore, the coach needs to maintain eye contact.

If the coach is asking probing questions, it should stimulate deep reflection that may not be easily answered.¹⁷ Therefore, it is important that the coach perceive the situation and be willing to simply watch and wait for the response. Once again this stresses the importance of selecting mature believers to coach the home fellowship leaders. Silence is a constructive tool in the hands of an effective coach. As previously mentioned, when times of silence occur, the coach needs to be assured that the leader understands the questions. Having confirmed that the question is understood, the coach needs to exhibit patience and calmness while waiting for a response.

Additional benefits of good listening are that it helps coaches gain valuable insight and helps clarify issues and bring focus into the coaching session. Through clarity and focus, the leaders will find that true value comes from being who they were created to be.¹⁸ At times, it may be useful for a coach to repeat back to a leader what the leader stated. By doing this, coaches will avoid any type of misunderstanding that may occur. Listening intently also aids in empathizing with what the leader may be going through.

¹⁷ Maxwell and Dornan, *Becoming a Person of Influence*, 129.

¹⁸ Creswell, *Christ-Centered Coaching*, 55.

Empathetic listening makes a major contribution to a leader's emotional bank account. Leaders want to be heard.¹⁹

Becoming an efficient listener is not a simple task for the successful and fruitful coach. It takes all of a coach's focus and concentration to aid the leader in discovering God's plan for his life. Coaches must have no agendas of their own and be flexible enough to understand the direction of discussions and make any necessary changes. Coaches must also be sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the midst of the session. There must be a passion and desire in the hearts of coaches to temporarily put the lives of the leaders above of all else that may be taking place in their lives.

Because listening is an art that demands concentration on the part of the coach, it is vital that the number of leaders in each session be addressed. There are many possibilities when considering the number of leaders the coach will work with. However, there are issues that will dictate how the strategy in this ministry focus paper proceeds. Additionally, starting with one strategy does not mean that there is no room to adapt to a more efficient method in the future. Nonetheless, the topic of how many leaders each coach works with needs examination.

For each home fellowship leader to have a one-on-one relationship with a coach would be ideal, but there will probably not be enough coaches to allow that to happen. Therefore, each coach is going to work with two or three home fellowship leaders. This seems to be a productive figure for a number of reasons. First, it keeps the coaching group at a level that is going to stay intimate. Home fellowship leaders will have the opportunity to build their relationships with other leaders in the group. It also allows the

¹⁹ Ogne and Roehl, *TransforMissional Coaching*, 124.

leaders to ask each other questions while the coach monitors the conversation. This not only will assist the leader who is asking questions, but will also give the other leaders valuable experience in how to coach. Additionally, in smaller groups there is also more freedom to share personal concerns than there would be in a large coaching group. Triads seem to be a size that allows for all of this to happen. Chapter 7 further expands on the use of triads and gives explanations on their use. Suffice it to say here that it appears that triads allow for a good coaching environment. Therefore, to retain the advantages of intimate coaching sessions, the groups will be comprised of two or three small group leaders and one coach.

A situation that will need to be resolved is that of a single woman coaching a group of men. Horizon has always been exceptionally cautious in these types of conditions. In order to avoid any appearance of impropriety, these coaching sessions would need to take place in a controlled environment, such as the counseling offices at Horizon. Discussion and resolution of this issue might require assistance of the head pastor. However, the loss of this valuable group of potential coaches should not occur. Since there are many single women at Horizon there needs to be a way to include them as coaches.

It is also possible during the coaching sessions that one of the coaches sees this ministry as more than simply meeting a need. Perhaps a coach might see this as a special lifetime ministry call from God. If this were to occur, effort will be made to give this coach the opportunity to coach an additional triad. Thus, there may be situations where a coach is involved with more than one triad. This would need to be monitored, but there is an expectation that this scenario is going to transpire.

The Coach as a Spiritual Guide

This third section will examine the coach as a spiritual guide for the personal development of the small group leader. The focus is on whom the leader “is,” which will be followed in the subsequent section by what the leader “does.” Coaches help leaders practice their “first-order calling” (that is, being) as worshippers and followers of God and their “second-order calling” (that is, doing) as servants and ministers for God.²⁰ This impact on personal development illustrates the value of the coaching strategy of ministry focus paper.

Coaches play an extremely important role as they minister at the side of leaders in order to help them find focus.²¹ These foci are going to be important in the leaders’ personal lives as well as in their ministerial lives. As a result of coming alongside of leaders, coaches are able to influence the spiritual foci and personal development of leaders in various ways. Christianity has never been a faith where one is called to walk alone. God intended that believers join one another walking down the path of spiritual growth.²² Coaches are going to collaborate with leaders in this joint venture.

One of the initial areas that coaches may engage in is with the leaders’ mindset—what they have been thinking and how to address the possibility of a new way of thinking. For leaders who have become addicted to pornography, drinking, possible drug abuse, or are simply tired and discouraged, a new way of thinking is going to be vital if these issues are going to be successfully addressed. Additionally, some leaders start

²⁰ Ogne and Roehl, *TransforMissional Coaching*, 30.

²¹ Logan and Carlton, *Coaching 101*, 13.

²² *Ibid.*, 17.

making mistakes and become so paralyzed with fear that they are no longer able to function in the power and strength that God designed for them. All of these concerns may be the start of failure in the area of moral purity and should be drawn out by the coach.

As a spiritual guide, the coach is able to focus in on the leader's spiritual relationship with God and address possible issues that may be stimulating the descending journey. When a leader starts on this possible downward spiral in his relationship with the Lord, the coach can be an effective tool in helping to draw the leader back to God. This is when supporting a new manner of thinking would be an efficient topic to pursue in the coaching session. In the Old Testament, Joshua was directed by the Lord to be strong, not to be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord his God was with him wherever he went (Joshua 1:9). Joshua was reminded by God not to be intimidated by the circumstances in his life. Regardless of how difficult or overwhelming the issue, he was being reminded that God was even greater. For leaders who may have been so busy doing the work of the ministry that they have taken their eyes off God, this is a great reminder. In the course of the coaching session, the coach is able to remind the leader of the omnipotence of God. In order for the coach to try and induce a change of thinking in the leader—from focusing on himself to looking at God—the leader needs to be brought back to the promises of Scripture. The coach may accomplish this by asking some valuable questions. For example, in reading Psalm 139 the leader may be asked, "How are you fearfully and wonderfully made?" Optimistically, this will remind the leader of the omnipotence of God and the uniqueness of each individual. Trying to have the leader meditate and contemplate the on the Creator will prayerfully support the leader in the recognition that he is not alone in this situation.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus heartens his followers with the words, “Come to me, all of you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). This promise could help remind leaders that if their burdens are getting too large then they are not yoked with the Lord. The coach might ask the leader, “What does Jesus mean when he encourages people to put on his yoke?” Finally, the prophet Isaiah advises believers who are tired and weary that they will renew their strength by simply waiting on the Lord (Isaiah 40:30, 31). The leader may be asked, “How can his strength be renewed simply by waiting on God?” There are many more examples of questions the leader could be asked that would remind him of the promises of God. These types of questions might be ones that are answered during a coaching session, or they might be part of an assignment to be discussed at their next meeting.

Leaders who have lost their spiritual direction in the area of moral purity can be led back to the Lord by these types of questions that challenge their relationship with God. John of the Cross once wrote that a silence of God can occur within experience because God can be “obscure” or we can be “blind”; an object can be vague because it is too distant or because we have bad eyesight.²³ Therefore, God can withdraw his presence in order to purify one’s faith, or one can have a weak experience of God because there is something wrong with the individual who is seeking God.²⁴ As the coach narrows the focus of the questions, and as the leader reflects deeply on his responses, it is hoped that

²³ John of the Cross, *The Living Flame of Love*, commentary on Stanza 3, numbers 70-76, trans. by K. Kavanaugh and O. Rodriguez (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1964), 637-640.

²⁴ Ronald Rolheiser, *The Shattered Lantern* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company), 20.

the leader might see that there is indeed a sin issue that needs to be resolved. The coach's role is extremely significant in the spiritual restoration of the leader. By means of penetrating questions, effective coaching should help lead to spiritual transformation in the life of the leader.²⁵

Coaching brings a valuable tool into the life of the leader: accountability. Many modern Christian leaders have no one holding them accountable for their own spiritual formation while they seek to lead whole congregations to be followers of God.²⁶ As was mentioned in a previous chapter, one of the challenges facing the home fellowship leaders at Horizon is the lack of accountability. Too many leaders are trying to fulfill their roles as leaders, and yet at times there is no person in authority holding them accountable in their personal lives. This results in a great risk of ineffectiveness, emotional burnout, and moral failure.²⁷

Through a consistent coaching relationship, accountability becomes a focal point of the coaching sessions. When there has been an acknowledged lapse of moral purity in the life of the leader, there may be the need for some higher-level counseling in the leader's life. However, the coaching relationship should normally be successful in the spiritual restoration of the leader. Once again, through the use of penetrating questions and responses, the leader becomes aware of and takes ownership of the solutions. A productive coach not only aids in bringing difficult issues to the surface, he or she is also

²⁵ Ogne and Roehl, *Transformational Coaching*, 7.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

instrumental in assisting the leader in formulating a plan that will promote spiritual health.

Devising a strategy will assist leaders and coaches as well in a number of areas. Foremost, it brings accountability into the solution. Leaders will now have someone they respect, asking them tough questions regarding their moral impurity and how successful they are in following through with their plans of restoration. An additional benefit of utilizing a plan is to have goals that can be measured. In looking back at the coaching relationship, it is much easier to measure effectiveness if there have been written measurable goals. This also aids in keeping the primary responsibility on the coachee, not on the coach, thus increasing the accountability of the home fellowship leader. The subsequent chapter will examine the value of a personal development plan for each leader. This plan will assist the coach in evaluating the progress of each leader through measureable goals.

The relationship with the coach will be developed in more detail in a subsequent section. Nonetheless, it is accurate to say that the role of the coach is significant if there is to be spiritual growth in the small group leader. This is not placing the responsibility on the coach for the leader's growth, but it recognizes the important role that the coach plays. Once the coach has entered into a relationship with the leader and there has been measurable progress, the time is right to facilitate discussions regarding the ministry of the home fellowship leader. It appears logical that fruitfulness in the ministry will be based upon achieving positive results in the previous sections.

The Coach as a Ministry Advisor

Fruitful, enduring ministry flows from the maturity of the leader. Therefore, it is fundamental that the leader's spiritual situation be resolved, or at least be addressed, before focusing excessive attention on his ministry. However, there are situations where ministry has actually been instrumental in the moral decline of the leader and thus needs to be recognized. Therefore, it may be necessary for the coach to address the ministerial conflicts as part of the moral lapses in the coaching sessions.

Nonetheless, once the coach has assisted the leader in identifying and resolving any moral purity issues, it is prudent to move on to the leader's ministry. The coach brings a valuable outside perspective into the relationship with the leader. This may help the leader to observe issues that others may have advised the leader about for years. A situation may exist where the leader knows that he has been negligent in certain areas of ministry. However, he has been unable to find any form of assistance to aid in making any type of necessary changes. Supporting the leader in evaluating ministerial options should be a worthwhile goal of the coach.

One of the initial issues that the coach can address with the leader deals with the discovery and development of his talents and strengths, which are an important part of one's personal development. A pastor or leader who has been in ministry for years can occasionally lose sight of his call or begin to doubt the validity of his ministry. This may be caused by a variety of reasons. Some leaders lose sight of their sense of call due to the fatigue and demands of ministry. Other leaders may lose their sense of call because of the ineffectiveness or perceived lack of results in the ministry. Additionally, others lose their

sense of call and passion because they are serving in the wrong place.²⁸ Recognizing the fact that there are no simplistic answers to these issues, one possibility is that leaders may have a certain set of strengths that may not be contributing to their present ministries. A leader might be involved in a ministry that is best served with a specific group of talents and strengths, while the leader's talents are probably a better fit for a different ministry. For example, some leaders may be involved in small groups but do not have the talents, giftedness, or personality conducive to this ministry. However, they might be very effective in the children's ministry. A coach can aid leaders in thinking through the numerous options that may be available while providing the necessary guidance and direction.

As previously mentioned, all leaders are born with certain innate, God-given talents. It is up to the leader to detect and enhance talents through some type of instructional routine. This is when the role of the coach is vital in supporting the leader's pursuit of talent development. Having the leader take the personal assessment test is a productive way to start.²⁹ Possessing that knowledge, the coach and leader are able to devise a plan that will aid the leader in planning out his ministerial options.

The coach's role is to help the leader discover how to use more of his own potential in determining a strategy for which future expertise is needed that does not presently exist.³⁰ Some simple questions might be of value at this point to get the leader focusing on the various options he may have. One helpful question is, "If you were using

²⁸ Ogne and Roehl, *TransforMissional Coaching*, 32.

²⁹ More information regarding the Strengths assessment test and why it was selected will be discussed in Chapter 6.

³⁰ Creswell, *Christ-Centered Coaching*, 15.

your full Kingdom potential, how would you see your role?” This type of question does not need to be answered immediately at the coaching session; it might be of tremendous value to let the leader reflect on the possible answers and then take up the topic at the next meeting with the coach. Instantaneous answers that are given sometimes turn out to be emotional responses instead of reflective and meditative ones. Waiting for the next session allows the leader to examine his heart and to seek the Lord when considering the answer.

Having the leader take some time to reflect on his answers will also assist in bringing clarity to the leader’s ministerial direction. The small group leader who is silent and still before the Lord is allowing himself the opportunity for transformation to take place in his heart and life. To achieve this desired clarity, it may take a process of the leader forfeiting his own will and desires in order to let the Lord mold and shape the leader’s plans in the manner that he wills. Completing this process will not only bring focus into the issue, but will also bring peace and comfort to the leader who is acknowledging the role of Christ as head of the ministry.

At some point in their lives, most leaders need help identifying their personality and leadership style along with their personal giftedness. Many new home fellowship leaders struggle in their initial efforts and wonder why the group is not functioning as well as it used to with the old leader. One possibility is that the leader is trying to imitate the previous leader and the manner in which he facilitated the group. The effective coach can identify this issue and help the new leader understand these differences. The astute coach may ask the new leader, “What made the old leader so effective?” or “What specific talents and strengths did the old leader appear to possess?” Through some

evaluating questions, the coach can assist the new leader in distinguishing between leadership strengths and personality variations. The coach will then be able to aid the new leader in the discovery and development of his talents.

As the coach and leader progress in their coaching relationship and decisions are made by the leader regarding his ministry, accountability once again becomes another indispensable tool. All of the processes that have taken place in order to have the leader achieve more clarity and focus in his ministry must be supported by the coach holding the leader accountable for the decisions that he has made. Just as the coach holds the leader accountable in his spiritual growth, as was mentioned in the previous section, the coach is also able to assist the leader in spiritual growth within the ministry life of the leader.

It can be easy for a leader to rationalize the decisions that he makes, especially when there is no person holding that leader responsible. The Holy Spirit plays a vital role in all of this by convicting the leader of bad choices made in ministry, but the coach also has a significant supporting function in the ministerial growth of the leader. When the leader knows that he is going to be asked if they followed up on the ministry issues that were brought up in the coaching session, that leader is much more likely to be faithful in fulfilling those obligations. Accountability that is gentle but firm, energizing, and encouraging draws the leader closer to God.³¹ Accountability handled correctly, kindly, and tenderly by the coach can be the catalyst that brings the leader's questions regarding ministry to fruition.

³¹ Stoltzfus, *Leadership Coaching*, 259.

Summary

In summary, the task of the coach is a diverse set of roles, each one playing an important part in the overall personal development of the home fellowship leader. The coaching relationship needs to be holistic, in that it brings all the different aspects of the leader into the equation. The spiritual dimension and talent aspect were at the center of this chapter, but these will be enhanced in discussing the leader's relationship with the coach in the subsequent chapter.

In examining all the significant functions that the coach plays, a consistent level of spiritual maturity in the coach's life is assumed. Although the purpose of the coach is not to give significant advice or counsel, it does not eliminate the responsibility of the coach to be growing in his or her relationship with the Lord. The coach must possess spiritual discernment in order to work in cooperation with the Holy Spirit in helping the leader discover God's plan for his life. It is correctly assumed that there are many secular coaches who are very knowledgeable and effective in the work they accomplish. Nonetheless, for the Christian coach there is a different set of standards by which he or she abides. The coach should be striving in his or her own life to discover God's plan, which in turn makes that individual a more understanding coach and a fruitful witness for the Kingdom of God.

Due to the fact that coaching plays a significant part in the overall strategy of this paper, it supports the importance of choosing the coaches carefully and wisely. As briefly mentioned, there needs to be a time when the coaches are also evaluated. This can be accomplished in a number of manners. First, there could be a meeting with the coach and triad for the exclusive point of coach evaluation and effectiveness. This would give all

parties involved the opportunity to access the coaching sessions and appraise its value. If the triad had a good relationship with the coach, this might be a method that could work.

However, there could also be a tendency for the small group leaders to withhold information in a group setting. Thus, there might be need for some type of anonymity on the part of the leaders. This is where it might be imperative to have one person in the role of coach evaluator. This could be effective, but it also brings in the issue of possible subjectivity problems on part of the evaluator.

An additional solution could be the formation of a Coaching Assessment Group. This group could be formed with the exclusive purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of the small group coaches. A group of four or five coaches could prove to be an efficient way to evaluate the other coaches. The use of a group would also take away a single person's subjectivity and make the evaluations more objective. This group could meet with each triad in order to judge the efficiency of the coach. Talking with the leaders in each triad would enable them to have a clear idea of the direction of the coaching.

Furthermore, part of the formation of this assessment group could include instituting a Coaching Evaluation Sheet that lists the expectations of the coaches. This evaluation sheet would be very clear in laying out what is expected from the coaches. Thus, the coaches would be aware of the expectations before they start sessions with the home fellowship leaders. The ideal time to introduce the evaluation sheet would be during the initial training classes. This would leave little doubt regarding the objectives of the coaches. The inception of a Coaching Assessment Group, along with the evaluation sheet, should be of great value in determining the effectiveness of the coaches. The Coaching Assessment Group would meet semi-annually with each coach for discussion

of the evaluation sheet. This could coincide with the evaluations of the triads, so if change is needed with either the coaches or leaders, this would be a productive opportunity. This demonstrates the importance of accountability at all levels of coaching the leaders.

This chapter is extremely important in the overall strategy of this ministry focus paper. It is going to be handed out and used in the initial training classes. Its purpose is to train men and women in the basics of coaching. In a short pilot program, it was very clear that the people attending did not know the basics of coaching. Thus, this chapter will provide them instruction on some of the important elements of coaching. Therefore, since coaching is the selected method for helping small group leaders in their quest for personal development, there needs to be a strategy in place that teaches them how to coach. Reviewing the thesis statement for this strategy states that coaching is only the tool; personal development of the home fellowship leaders is the goal. This chapter provides the needed guidance to achieve that goal.

CHAPTER 6

PLAN FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Subsequent to the evaluation of the role of the coach, it is apparent that some device must be in place in order for the strategy in this ministry focus paper to be successful. Part of the effectiveness of the coaching sessions is going to rely upon whether or not objectives have been met in the home fellowship leader's life. There must be a plan that allows for measurable goals for the home fellowship leader.

The purpose of a personal development plan (hereafter, PDP) would allow for small group leaders to list short-term and long-term goals. Along with these goals would not only be a timeline to aid in marking progress, but also other tools that will help bring the goals to fruition. Through use of the StrengthsFinder assessment tool, spiritual disciplines, and other available tools, each leader will be able to create a PDP. Chapter 7 will provide additional information regarding how to create a plan, along with a plan's key components.

An effective PDP for the home fellowship leaders at Horizon will include a combination of a number of factors. The use of a strengths assessment tool to help

identify the individual talents of a leader will be a beneficial place to begin. This step should be completed before the use of spiritual disciplines is introduced to the leader.

Assessment Tool: Individual Strengths Inventory

Clifton and Buckingham contend, “To excel in your chosen field and to find lasting satisfaction in doing so, you will need to understand your unique pattern.”¹ The leader must become an expert at finding, describing, applying, and refining his strengths.² The chances for longevity in ministry increase when a leader discovers his God-given talents and starts investing in them. At Horizon, the StrengthsFinder assessment tool will be used. Although some other tools were available, this one was chosen due to the extensive research provided by the Gallup organization.³ The intention of using the StrengthsFinder tool is to help identify the areas of a leader’s life where talents already exist.

Having identified one’s talents, a leader can then develop a strategic plan of education and investment, and turn his talents into strengths. The role of the StrengthsFinder test is a crucial one. As previously mentioned, when a person is able to consistently work from his or her strengths, there is a contentment that accompanies the work. Productivity and perseverance increase as one works from his or her strengths.

¹ Buckingham and Clifton, *Now, Discover Your Strengths*, 3.

² Ibid.

³ The Gallup organization has spent over thirty years conducting systematic studies of over eighty thousand managers from all parts of the country trying to analyze what the most effective managers had in common. Compiling all the information attained from the managers, along with over two million interviews, has led to an assessment test that has proven to be highly effective and accurate in identifying an individual’s talents. Taking the assessment test has become standard procedure for incoming freshmen at several colleges around the country. The test is also being used by many of the most proficient companies around the United States today in helping them develop and retain their leaders and executives.

Regrettably, the consistent pattern in leadership development, whether in the Church or secular society, has been to focus on weaknesses of the individual and try to turn these into areas of strengths. The problem with this unfortunate and unproductive approach is twofold: first, it fails to bring about personal growth, and second, it actually takes a person away from turning talents into strengths. The myth of young people becoming anything they desire when they grow up is in reality exactly that—a myth. The key to personal development is building on who one already is, not on who one wants to be. When people are able to put most of their energy into developing their natural talents, extraordinary room for growth exists. One cannot be anything one wants to be, but one can be a lot more of who one already is.⁴ Business expert Peter Drucker adds, “Most people believe that they know what they are good at, but they are usually wrong. A person can perform only from strength.”⁵ A person or organization will excel only by amplifying strengths, never by simply fixing weaknesses.⁶ Therefore, while leaders should be aware of their weaknesses and endeavor to manage them, they should not spend unnecessary time trying to develop them.

Although it is possible for people to change over time, and our personalities do adapt, scientists have discovered that core personality traits are relatively stable throughout adulthood, as are one’s passions and interests.⁷ People may assume different jobs or tasks and adjust to different routines, but the core person will remain basically the

⁴ Rath, *StrengthsFinder 2.0*, 8-9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶ Marcus Buckingham, *Go, Put Your Strengths to Work* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

same throughout the different environments. Thus, StrengthsFinder measures the elements of the personality that are less likely to change: the talents.⁸

The first step necessary for leaders in discovering their talents is to take the StrengthsFinder assessment test, which is an online test.⁹ The test includes a series of paired statements that require leaders to select one of the statements that most closely applies to them. The response time is limited to twenty seconds in order to prevent too much analysis on the part of the leader. The goal is to elicit instinctual, top-of-the-mind responses because they are more revealing than those that would be given if one sat around and debated each question.¹⁰ At the present time, the assessment consists of 177 questions that cover a multitude of topics designed to help identify the talents of the leader. It is recommended that the leader strive to take the assessment test when he has quiet time available with minimal distractions. To maintain accuracy of the test, it is stated that the leader attempt to answer the questions as honestly as possible. The leader should not respond in terms of who he wants to be in the future, but answering in a way that truly reflects who he is at the present.

When completed, the online test immediately responds with the top five signature themes for that particular leader. No information is given that would inform the leader of the other twenty-nine themes that are not personally relevant to him. There are a total of thirty-four possible themes in the StrengthsFinder test, but only the top five are given to

⁸ Buckingham, *Go, Put Your Strengths to Work*, 18.

⁹ Gallup, "StrengthsFinder Assessment Test," <http://www.strengthsfinder.com> (accessed September 2010).

¹⁰ Rath, *StrengthsFinder 2.0*, 17.

the leaders.¹¹ A complete list of the thirty-four themes can be found in Appendix A of this paper with a short explanation of each theme.

The thirty-four themes can be divided into four main sections: relating themes, impacting themes, striving themes, and thinking themes. These four different sections group similar themes from the thirty-four and place them together. For example, the “Relating Themes” include talents such as: communication, empathy, harmony, relator, includer, individualization, and responsibility. All of these relating themes stress the topic of “working with people.” People in this section love to interact and communicate with people; socializing plays a vital role in their lives. They consistently look for a consensus in the lives of their relationships and are able to sense the emotions of those around them. These people do not enjoy conflict and will do whatever is necessary to bring harmony into a situation.

Leaders with talents in the next section are in the “Impacting Theme.” The leaders in this segment have themes that are used to influence people. These types of leaders are able to take control of situations and make decisions when needed. They are normally competitive but also desire to recognize and cultivate the potential in other people. People having themes in this section are usually upbeat and love the challenge of meeting new people and building relationships.

Leaders with themes in the third section have “Striving Themes.” These are people who generally enjoy working hard. They love to achieve personal as well as corporate goals and love to turn thoughts into actions. These types of leaders are

¹¹ The lower themes are never disclosed to the leader taking the test. It has been proven through the Gallup testing that should the bottom five themes be given, the focus is diverted from the top five themes. Additionally, it has been shown that the bottom five will never become areas of strength for the leader; they may be managed, but they will never become a leader’s area of strength.

disciplined and focused in their work and relationships. They enjoy resolving problems and issues and are confident in their abilities. These leaders may also seek to be important in the eyes of other people.

The fourth and final section involves the “Thinking Themes.” Leaders in this segment love to work smarter, not necessarily harder. These thinking themes revolve around the rational and are very systematic. They are normally serious and have a desire to learn, think, and archive different types of information. People in this section may have a tendency to be more introspective compared to those in the other three sections.

Following completion of the assessment tool, the leader is able to discover his top five themes, and he is also able to discover how those five themes fit into the four different categories. This step is a significant one in that it shows the leader how his or her talents are grouped together. It may give the appearance of being balanced or unbalanced in certain areas; however, that is not the case. For example, a leader who has four of his five themes in the “thinking themes” may believe that he is unbalanced in the area of “thinking” while having very little talent in the themes that relate to people. Nevertheless, while the appearance may be one of being unbalanced, in reality there is nothing wrong with this type of person. The leader simply needs to be aware that he may have a tendency to be less of a social being compared to a leader who has two or more themes in the “relating” themes. However, there is nothing wrong with this position; it is simply different. Awareness on the part of the leader is vital to understanding and implementing his talents.

This could possibly be important information for a number of reasons. First of all, it makes leaders cognizant of the fact that they might be entering into situations or events

that do not play well with their strengths. Therefore, they can be attentive to the fact that they are not operating from their areas of strength. This information is also valuable simply because it gives the leader a greater self-awareness. This scenario will be discussed more in depth in the subsequent section. Every piece of information leaders learn about themselves will aid them in becoming more effective home fellowship leaders.

When the results are given to the leaders, what needs to be kept in mind is that the themes that are revealed to the leaders are talents; they have not yet been built into strengths. At this point, leaders need to develop a plan for how to invest in these newly discovered talents in order to turn them into strengths. Rath states,

Building your talents into real strengths also requires practice and hard work, much like it does to build physical strengths. For example, if you are born with the potential to build large biceps, but you do not exercise these muscles regularly, they will not develop. However, if you do work equally as hard as someone without much natural potential, you are likely to see much greater return. The most successful people start with dominant talent and then add skills, knowledge, and practice to the mix to become a strength.¹²

Broken down to a formula, it looks like this: talent (a natural way of thinking, feeling, or behaving) multiplied by investment (time spent practicing, developing one's skills, and building one's knowledge base) equals strength (the ability to consistently provide near-perfect performance).¹³ Once leaders have their five key themes, a strategy must be drawn and implemented that will allow leaders to develop their talents. Spiritual disciplines will play a valuable role in this development.

¹² Rath, *StrengthsFinder 2.0*, 19.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 20.

It is important for leaders to realize how much their five themes affect the manner in which they interact with the world. Leaders who have a top theme of “learner” are going to look at their surroundings through the eyes of one who is attracted to the activity of learning. These leaders are energized by the steady and deliberate journey from ignorance to competence.¹⁴ Leaders with a number-one theme of “learner” must be aware that their answer to a lot of problems in their lives is to gather more information about the issue. This is not necessarily a shortcoming, but these leaders need to recognize that other people around them are probably not going to react to situations in the same manner. Once again, it is a matter of awareness on the part of the leaders and their attentiveness to the talents of other people.

Leaders with the top theme of “harmony” need to realize that as they normally seek to find agreement in issues with other people in order to seek consensus, this is not always going to be possible. Should a leader with this top theme have a predicament with a person who has a top theme of strategic, he needs to be conscious of the fact that this person is going to resolve problems in a very dissimilar manner. Once again, neither person is wrong in how they address the issue; it is simply different, and there needs to be appreciation on the part of the leader regarding these differences. Knowledge of this possible dilemma should assist the home fellowship leaders with the people problems in their small groups.

Leaders also need to be wary of staying in ministries beyond their usefulness. For example, a leader may have the specific strengths that are extremely useful in bringing a floundering small group back to life. Nonetheless, once the group has achieved spiritual

¹⁴ Buckingham, *Go, Put Your Strength to Work*, 107.

health, the leader may not be the one who is able to maintain that health. Another leader with different strengths may be the one to preserve the well-being of the fellowship. Small group leaders need to stay aware of their surroundings and be willing to make some changes should the need arise.

One more possible downside for leaders with a number-one theme of “learner” is how they interact with the Bible. Leaders with this key theme may have a tendency to read the Scriptures in an “informational” manner, and these leaders may have the propensity to cover massive amounts of Scripture in their reading, giving little or no time to the discipline of meditation or biblical contemplation. Informational reading may tend to be more analytical, critical, and judgmental, so it is imperative that these leaders be aware of the possible concerns.

Many Christians may have been trained primarily to seek information when it comes to reading and to the leader with a learner key theme this could be even more precarious.¹⁵ Leaders who have the “learner” theme need to be able to balance their passion for knowledge with an appreciation of a discipline such as meditation, letting the Bible soak into their hearts. These leaders run the danger of failing to read the Bible in order for transformation to take place in their lives. This possible problem will be examined in more detail in the following section involving the use of spiritual disciplines.

In summary, the assessment tool plays a valuable role in the strategy of this ministry focus paper. It is one part of the plan for personal development in the lives of the home fellowship leaders. Although there are some possible obstacles that each leader needs to be attentive to, the use of the strengths assessment tool is going to be extremely

¹⁵ Mulholland, Jr., *Shaped by the Word*, 51.

beneficial and effective in the personal development growth of the home fellowship leader. The side benefit is that it may also assist in the moral development of the leader. However, an awareness of the strengths is the commencement of the journey. This will be a lifelong expedition that will prayerfully result in a more fruitful ministry for the home fellowship leader.

As with the previous chapter, this one will also be handed out to the prospective coaches and leaders in order to assist them in the formation of a PDP. Along with the use of spiritual disciplines and the relationship with the coach, a plan should start to take shape for the leaders. Thus, it is clear that the StrengthsFinder assessment tool is instrumental in fulfilling the purpose of this ministry-focus paper: personal development of the small group leaders.

The Use of Spiritual Disciplines

Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant gratification is a primary spiritual problem.¹⁶ The Christian walk with the Lord is dynamic in that it is always in motion and constantly changing. Intimacy with the Lord is not achieved in a short period of time but must be developed and cultivated over a lifetime. There must be a continuous effort on the part of the home fellowship leader to be growing in his or her relationship with God. The use of spiritual disciplines can play an important role in achieving the desired closeness with the Lord.

The use of specific spiritual disciplines is vital in the strategy to turn the newly discovered talents into strengths in the life of the home fellowship leader. The different

¹⁶ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 1.

disciplines will assist the leader not only in strength development, but also in the area of moral purity. The coach will be involved in the entire process and will keep the leader accountable for following through with a strategic plan. The disciplines serve multiple purposes in the leader's personal development of talents: strength development and limiting the drawbacks of strength development. The recognition and advancement of these two uses will be essential in building the maturity of the leader.

The use of spiritual disciplines will also prove to be indispensable in the development of moral purity in the leader's life. Through the use of disciplines, the leader will be in a position in which God can renovate his life while bringing moral repair. Needless to say, the role of disciplines will be of tremendous use in the transformation of the leader. However, what the leader needs to remember is that the use of spiritual disciplines cannot be reduced to a simplistic list of things to do. Through the use of these tools, a more personal awareness and confidence level as a home fellowship leader should be attained.

The use of spiritual disciplines as a means to personal development has already been examined from a theological viewpoint. Accordingly, the use and exercise of the disciplines are not an option to the home fellowship leader but are commanded by Scripture. The concern now is a practical application of these disciplines in the development of the small group leader. There must be a specific strategy for each leader in the implementation of spiritual disciplines. Since each leader has different God-given talents, there is not one single general formula that can be applied to each leader in order to build the moral purity and strength development of each leader. This is where the coach will provide valuable insight to the leader regarding his personal development in

the area of moral purity. Once again, this illuminates the necessity of the leader and coach establishing a strong and trusting relationship.

Psalm 139:14 explains that humans are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” Every leader is a unique creation of God with distinctive personality and character qualities. When spiritual gifts are added to the other personal traits, it becomes clear that each Christian is an inimitable design of the Creator. Recognizing this exclusiveness it becomes apparent that there is not one single plan of personal development using spiritual disciplines that would be effective for all leaders. There must be a distinctive and individual strategy for each home fellowship leader that recognizes and seeks to build on his exclusiveness.

Connecting Spiritual Disciplines to One’s Strengths

After taking the StrengthsFinder Assessment, each leader will have a list of his top five talents. What is needed next is an implementation plan that utilizes spiritual disciplines to in order to initiate talent development. In one example, a leader, Johnny, who has taken the strengths assessment has been told that his top five talents are: learner, input, intellection, belief, and strategic.¹⁷ In examining the StrengthsFinder dimensions it is shown that four out of five of Johnny’s themes fall under the “thinking” themes, with the last theme coming under the “striving” themes.

In looking back to Chapter 2 of this ministry focus paper, challenges facing the home fellowship leaders at Horizon were discussed in greater detail. Some of these challenges affecting the leaders included: discouragement, tiredness, and frustration in

¹⁷ These talents were the actual results of the assessment test for one for one of the home fellowship leaders. “Johnny” is not his real name.

leading the small group. In evaluating Johnny's five talents, it shows his talents are heavy in the "thinking" themes with virtually no talents in the "relating" theme (working with people) or the "impacting" theme (influencing people). This might very well lead to times of spiritual and moral discouragement in his life. Nonetheless, in a situation like this the talents are not necessarily "un-balanced," but Johnny must be aware that relating with people might be an area where he struggles at times.

When such a circumstance arises in which a leader is heavier in one or two themes to the neglect of the other ones, the role of spiritual disciplines can play a significant role in his personal development. For Johnny, certain spiritual disciplines are going to feed his talents and assist in turning them into strengths. For example, Johnny's number one talent was "learner," therefore a discipline such as study would aid in building Johnny's passion for learning into strength. Additionally, Johnny might want to read and study books that will require deeper than normal meditation and thought. Depending on Johnny's personal situation, he might want to also consider enrolling in a Bible school to get an advanced degree. All of these are possibilities that would help foster talent development.

Johnny's number two talent was "input," which means that he has a craving to know more. These types of leaders often like to collect and archive all kinds of information. Such a leader may collect books, famous quotes, or any type of information. Johnny particularly enjoys learning and memorizing quotes from all types of people. Whatever a leader collects is valuable because it appeals to him; and to this type of leader many different things are of interest to him. Since these leaders love to input all types of information, they would benefit from virtually every spiritual discipline because they find

so many things fascinating. There is no doubt that there would be certain disciplines that they would find more engaging, but probably all of them would be of interest to them. Having this wide variety of interests might make them very effective teachers in the home fellowship setting as they would be able to instruct the participants on the various spiritual disciplines.

For home fellowship leaders, having the “input” talent might lead to attaining valuable scriptural information, and even bits of trivia that could definitely add to the knowledge base of people in the fellowship. The world is an adventurous place for the leaders with this talent because there is always something new to learn every day. Journaling might also be a discipline that would benefit such leaders in that they could keep a written record of all the new information that they take in. The talent of “input” works very well with the number one talent of “learner.”

The third talent for Johnny was “intellection” which means that he loves to spend time in intellectual activity. Once again, “study” would be a valuable discipline for such leaders. However, the study needs to be intellectually challenging and stimulating. These leaders also see the value in meditating upon the issues they have learned. Due to their possible introversion, these leaders also have a passion to engage in the disciplines of “solitude” and “silence.” However, the time alone is not spent idle; it is valuable time contemplating the deeper issues of their lives. Once again, journaling would be a valuable tool in that it would allow these leaders to not only enter what they have learned onto paper; it would also give them the opportunity to look back and evaluate what they have learned and implemented.

Bible Study and Journaling

In order to develop moral purity in the life of the home fellowship leader, the role of spiritual disciplines is essential. In discussions with the leaders, a number of them have reduced the fight against moral impurity to a battle of the will—trying as hard as possible not to sin. However, the Bible is clear that the assault upon believers will not be won in the flesh but must be acknowledged as spiritual and thus must be won by the power of God and his might (Ephesians 6:10-12). The use of spiritual disciplines will prove to be invaluable in attaining this goal.

As stated in a previous chapter, one of the primary challenges facing the small group leaders at Horizon is the lack of Bible input into their lives. There is time for study of the Scriptures but not enough time for meditation and memorization. Nevertheless, these are the very tools that can lead to transformation of their thoughts, hearts, and actions. An integral part of the development plan for moral purity is the implementation of these two disciplines. Willard states,

My central claim is that we *can* become like Christ by doing one thing- by following him in the overall style of the life he chose for himself. If we have faith in Christ, we must believe that he knew how to live. We can, through faith and grace, become like Christ by practicing the types of activities he engaged in, by arranging our whole lives around the activities he himself practiced in order to remain constantly at home in the fellowship of his Father.¹⁸

Through the grace and mercy of God and through the use of Bible meditation and memorization the lives of the fellowship leaders can be renovated. Failure to do so may easily continue to result in leader turnover. What needs to be recognized by the coach is the individuality of each leader. In examining the various strengths it becomes clear that

¹⁸ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, ix.

leaders with certain strengths may find it easier to memorize and meditate more than leaders whose strengths do not necessarily lead in that direction. It is not practical or productive to implement a single plan that applies to every leader. The leader and coach must take into account the strengths of the leader in devising a plan for meditation and memorization.

While acknowledging the profitability of memorizing any portion of Scripture, for the small group leader battling issues of moral purity it might be beneficial for the leader to focus on Bible verses that address this matter. The gospels have different verses that would assist the leader in such a pursuit. The Sermon on the Mount in the book of Matthew is also a passage of Scripture that would support the leader in his or her search for moral purity. For the leader facing alcohol or drug issues the coach can assist the leader in obtaining biblical verses that the leader could use in halting the abuse.

An additional method of memorizing would be for the leader and coach to select verses that promote the promises of God. For example, Psalm 119:11 reads “Your word have I hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.” This remarkable verse should be an encouraging reminder to leaders that as they continue to put the Word of God into their hearts and minds the temptation of sin should decline. The example of Jesus in the gospels shows him battling the devil using Scripture verses, and the apostle Paul reminds the believers at Ephesus that the primary offensive weapon they have at their disposal is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). After the coach and leader pick the verses they believe deal with the issues that pertain to the leader, there must be an avenue of accountability. This will be discussed in a subsequent section.

Journaling is an additional discipline that will serve leaders well in the quest for moral purity. Journaling provides several benefits to leaders. First of all, writing down the struggles they are going through may provide time for internal examination of their issues. Some leaders who may have difficulties communicating their thoughts might find journaling to be the solution for them. It also provides the information needed to celebrate the victories as the leader and coach look back over a period of time. Additionally, in future years it will be a glorious reminder to the leader of the faithfulness of God and his promises. Journaling could be included with the leader's time of prayer. There will be days when leaders are mentally, physically, and spiritually tired and may not consider journaling the best use of their time. Nonetheless, the role of the coaches will be to hold leaders accountable for the time of journaling.

Relationship with the Coach

Effective coaches are people-sensitive. Since coaching is a relationship, it follows that one cannot coach well if he or she does not relate well to people. A coach cannot relate if he or she does not care about leaders or have much of an interest in their lives.¹⁹ A coach must be able to connect with the leader if the relationship is going to be one that is productive and beneficial to the leader. Coaches should be able to look ahead, see the leader's potential, and be willing to do what is necessary to help the leader's personal development. Without downplaying the role of necessary assessment development tools and the strong function of the spiritual disciplines, the role of the coach is extremely important in building the moral purity and strengths of the leader.

¹⁹ Collins, *Christian Coaching*, 4.

The relationship between the coach and the leader is going to be a significant factor if there is to be meaningful personal development in the leader's life. The coaching relationship should be a safe, long-term relationship in which personal development can be monitored and encouraged.²⁰ Coaching is relational; it values the individual needs of the leader and can address both the interior and exterior life of the leader.²¹ As examined in a previous chapter, coaches are capable of assisting leaders in their spiritual as well as their ministerial lives.

The effective coach recognizes that the coaching relationship is a privilege; it is an opportunity to be involved in the life of a leader. This should bring excitement to the coach and an anticipation of where the coaching relationship is going to go, as well as the transformation that will take place in the leader. The prospect of having a role in the transformation of a leader's life is an honor, but it brings with it some responsibilities. There are a number of these responsibilities where the coach can play a vital role in seeing the goals of the leader's coaching session come to fruition. The coach can aid the leader through prayer, caring, celebrating with the leader, and helping the leader keep perspective. All of these topics will be briefly evaluated.

Perhaps the most important function that coaches play is through their prayers for the leaders. The book of Ephesians tells believers that they "do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the ruler of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly place" (Ephesians 6:12). Leaders are warned to be sober and vigilant because his adversary, the devil, walks

²⁰ Ogne and Roehl, *TransforMissional Coaching*, 37.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

around “like a lion seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Prayer may be the most important aspect of coaching that holds everything together.

Although coaches and leaders both have specific roles that they play, what cannot be ignored are the spiritual aspects of the coaching relationship. The battle for transformation may very well be won or lost on the knees of the coach. There are few things more powerful or invigorating spiritually than hearing that another person who cares about you is standing in the gap on a regular basis for you.²² The coach has an obligation to keep the leader under a blanket of prayer.

Coaches also need to show through their actions, as well as their words, that they truly care about the leaders. Ogne and Roehl make the following statement:

Although a coach is not a counselor or a pastor, a measure of care enhances your ministry to the person you are coaching. Always remember that the value of the person you coach is more than the project you may be working on. Because you have taken the time to enter their world by good listening, you will know what issues are important to them. You will be sensitive to family concerns. Taking time to ask about a family member’s situation speaks volumes about your care for them on a personal level.²³

Coaches who show that they sincerely care about the leaders as people are showing the leaders that they are committed to them. What contributes to the leaders most is the level of dedication of the coach. The commitment does not come from technique or experience. It comes from the depths of a coach’s being.²⁴

An additional vital part of the coach/leader relationship is celebration—taking time to evaluate and rejoice in what has transpired in the coaching sessions. The power to

²² Ogne and Roehl, *TransforMissional Coaching*, 105.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Collins, *Christian Coaching*, 44.

take the time to look back over the past accomplishments and to celebrate them should never be underestimated.²⁵ Taking the time to express joy over what has transpired is important for a number of reasons. First of all, it helps to point out the benefits that have been derived from the coaching experience. One of the reasons that a leader may have sought out a coach initially was that there were difficulties in his personal or ministerial life that needed some assistance in evaluating. Taking time to point out constructive results that have transpired gives both the coach and the leader a cause for rejoicing. An important part of the coaching process is to set goals that are measurable. In taking time to celebrate, the coach and leader are able to see the results of the goals and ascertain whether or not the goals were completed.

Helping leaders keep a proper perspective is also another important function of a coach. This may be evident when coaches see the strengths and giftedness of the leader not matching his dreams and desires. Through some effective questioning a coach should be able to aid a leader in keeping proper perspective on his goals. For example, a very direct question by the coach might be asked: “What type of ministry do you believe that your strengths, personality, and giftedness might be best suited for?” Thought-provoking questions such as these will force leaders to take the time to evaluate their ministry options and to open their hearts to possible radical changes of direction in their ministries.

Coaches will also bring perspective into the coach/leader relationship by encouraging leaders not to lose heart if results are not occurring as quickly as they would expect. In a society that advances the theory of instant gratification, leaders may fall into

²⁵ Logan and Carlton, *Coaching 101*, 85.

the deception of expecting immediate results in their personal development. Unrealistic expectations can be addressed by the coach to bring a more balanced perspective of results to the leaders.

While the function that strength development and moral purity play in the development of the home fellowship leader are essential, it is also recognized that there are other areas in the leader's life that will need to be addressed. The coach can play a central role in making sure that the leader is examining all the necessary parts of his life. There needs to be a holistic approach to the development of the leader. As important as they are, it is foolish and naïve to believe that strength development and moral purity are the complete answer to leadership development. The coach needs to assist the leader in evaluating all the different portions of his life.

There are social and physical considerations to be considered, along with additional elements that will aid the leader in becoming the type of small group leader that will endure. However, it is beyond the scope of this ministry focus paper to analyze all the different areas that could be impacting the leader. Nonetheless, the coach and the leader must step back at times and evaluate all that is taking place in the leader's life. Having discussed the elements used for personal development, there needs to be an implementation plan for the leaders and coach. The following chapter will consider that strategy.

CHAPTER 7

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Subsequent to describing the PDP for the home fellowship leaders, there needs to be execution of that strategy. The main purpose of this chapter is to provide an implementation plan that will be used for the personal development of the small group leaders. Measurable outcomes that will evaluate effectiveness are an essential part of this strategy. The ultimate efficiency of the strategy will be seen in the fruitfulness and retention of home fellowship leaders.

Using Triads to Increase Leader Accountability

It is critical for the success of this plan that part of the strategy be carried out in smaller and more intimate surroundings than what a classroom environment provides. In examining the Bible, it is clear that Jesus never settled into a public speaking ministry because the impact was shallow compared to that of the one who pours his or her life into a few people.¹ This was seen many times in the life of Jesus as he poured his life into his inner group of three men. One avenue for following Jesus' model is the use of triads in strategy implementation. There are a number of options available in forming the triads.

¹ Cole, *Organic Leadership*, 49.

Since many of the small group leaders have relationships with one another, they will be given the option of organizing triads on their own. By allowing them the opportunity to have a part in the composition of the triads, they are more likely to accept the strategy. Those who have no preference in forming a triad will be assigned one based upon other factors.

This will also be an opportunity for some small group leaders to form a group with other small group leaders they may have never met. At the initial meeting that will take place discussing the implementation of this strategy, options will be given to the leaders in how they want to triads to be formed. It is imperative that the leaders feel comfortable with the choice of men in their group.

The coaches will also have options in deciding what triad they want to coach. If relationships have already been established with the leaders in a certain triad, a coach might choose this group for a smooth transition. In this type of intimate surrounding, leaders are more likely to share the important issues of their lives. Nonetheless, some coaches will not have a preference and will be assigned a group based upon other factors such as age, sex, or geographic location. Although age is not a primary factor, there may be some issues should a fifty-year-old desire to coach a triad of twenty-year-olds. As previously mentioned, there will also be the semi-annual evaluations taking place with the coaches using the Coaching Assessment Group.² Should the need arise for changes to take place, this will be the time. Therefore, there will certainly be recourse for any triad that is having issues or problems.

² The Coaching Assessment Group along with the Coaching Evaluation Sheet was described in chapter 5.

The triads will also have options regarding meeting locations. Some groups may desire to meet at Horizon, while others may go into various parts of the community. The sites need to be reasonably quiet in order to facilitate effective communication. There is always the option of changing settings should the need arise. This decision should be left up to the members of the triad.

The frequency of the sessions also needs to be determined. As stated previously, the ideal time will probably be once a week. This allows time between meetings to analyze any progress made in the previous week, and make any necessary modifications. Time is also a major consideration for most of the small group leaders. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the role of leaders is sometimes reduced to doing chores. The addition of a coaching session might add to this problem for some of the leaders. Therefore, what will need to transpire is the elimination of any other meetings between small group leaders and any level of leadership above them. The coaching sessions will replace any of those engagements.

Desired Outcome for Each Home Fellowship Leader

A PDP plays an essential part in achieving the desired outcomes for the small group leaders. A PDP template will be handed out to all the leaders and coaches in order to assist in their development (Appendix C). The PDP will allow leaders to list their short- and long-term goals. Additionally, it will provide home fellowship leaders space to list their talents and a plan for turning them into areas of strength. The PDP will be generic enough to allow for the leaders individual strategy.

The PDP will also provide leaders a means of measuring the success (desired outcomes) of their journeys to personal development. It will be recommended that all leaders give copies of their PDPs to the coaches. Thus, in the coaching sessions it provides the coaches a means of keeping the leaders accountable. The PDP becomes a living document, in that the leaders are always open to making any necessary changes. This gives leaders a plan for their spiritual growth, as well as a method of looking back and measuring their growth. Thus, the PDP is continually being evaluated, not only by the leader but in the coaching sessions as well.

An additional benefit of the PDP is that it allows both coaches and leaders the opportunity to look back and celebrate progress in the leaders' lives. The home fellowship leaders who adhere to their PDP should see results in their lives. These outcomes should be strengthening of their moral purity along with a consistent use and building up of their strengths. All of this should result in added strength in their ministries, leading to longevity.

Due to the differences in their PDPs, each leader will also have distinctive outcomes based upon their individuality. Corporately, all of the home fellowship leaders are expected to increase in moral purity and consistently use their strengths in leading the small groups. As mentioned, the PDPs will assist them in having realistic and achievable goals.

As mentioned previously, there will be an initial training class where the PDP, along with Chapters 5 and 6 of this paper, will be distributed. It is recognized that coaching will take time to learn. However, the classroom environment will allow all parties the opportunity to ask any relevant questions. Mock coaching situations will give

future coaches a chance to practice coaching techniques. The class should take six weeks to cover all the necessary material. It may also be essential to hold this class more than once to allow for a smaller class size. This class will be flexible depending upon the number of coaches and leaders who initially sign up. There will probably be the need for a follow-up class for those desiring refresher training.

Development of Moral Quality

The development of moral purity in the lives of the home fellowship leaders is imperative if there is going to be longevity in their leadership roles. Moral quality issues may involve different forms of relationships, individual decisions that demonstrate a lack of moral character, or destructive habits that affect the moral quality of the leader. All of these are issues that affect the moral purity of the leaders.

What is expected from the leaders are specific goals listed in their PDPs. The plans will include several pieces of information: precisely what type of moral quality needs building; what spiritual disciplines they will engage in to support this moral quality; a timeline of when results might hope to be seen; and the source of accountability. The accountability person would preferably be the coach, but it might also include a spouse or another ministerial leader. For example, should a leader be dealing with pornography, the coach will be able to hold the leader accountable for staying off the internet. However, the wife might also desire responsibility in assisting her husband in making good moral decisions. The spouse would also be one of the first to analyze the effectiveness of her husband's plan.

This will be another option given to the home fellowship leaders: giving the spouse a copy of the personal development plan. This might prove to be more effective than simply giving a copy to the coach. This action is going to be recommended to all of the leaders. Letting the spouse take part in this plan will not only enable her to encourage her husband, it should also prove to be a source of inspiration to her. Therefore, one of the outcomes of the personal development plan should be strengthening the marriages of the small group leaders.

An additional outcome for the leaders regards dealing with destructive habits. While drafting their PDPs, leaders may become aware of too much time being spent in non-productive habits. These might include, but are not limited to: certain television shows and movies they watch, whether to drink or not, the language they use, and even certain ethical behavior at work. These issues might not be necessarily wrong or harmful in themselves, but they might signify a lack of balance and priority in their lives. Left alone, these areas have the possibility of developing into moral problems. The desired outcome is to honor God more with the moment-by-moment decisions the leaders make. The leaders will be asked to make specific entries in their PDPs regarding the issue of destructive habits. Long-term and short-term goals will be entered, along with target timelines. The coach can assist in keeping the leader accountable, as hopefully will the spouse.

Development of moral purity will also transpire as the leader engages more with spiritual disciplines. The PDP should reflect a system of discipline engagement that is easy to measure. This might include a specific amount of time in Bible study or

meditation. Regardless of the discipline, it should be on the development plan with short-term and long-term goals, along with the required timeline.

Strength/Talent Development

An additional outcome for the home fellowship leaders is in the area of strength development. Subsequent to taking the assessment test for the discovery of their talents, leaders will need to evaluate their talents to analyze whether leading a home fellowship is commensurate with their God-given talents. However, it needs to be recognized that there is not necessarily a specific set of strengths that leads to being a successful leader.

The leaders will use their PDPs to list the steps necessary to build their talents into strengths. This will include, but not be limited to, the role of spiritual disciplines. The small group leaders must be very specific in what disciplines they are going to use and how they use them. Timelines will be used and tracked to assure that the leaders are adhering to their plans.

Part of turning the talents into strengths requires the leaders finding different methods of investing in their talents. For example, leaders who have the number one talent of learning must make sure they find ways to feed the talent. Each leader will be asked to be very specific in listing the various methods available for turning the talents into strengths. The leaders will be encouraged to be creative in their planning.

Additional support for turning talents into strengths will come from the triad. It will be of tremendous value for the leaders in planning ways of investing in their talents. Through the assistance of the coach, the leaders in the triad will be able to encourage each other with new ideas for how to build their strengths. As the leaders learn to build

their ministries around their strengths, there is expectation that the talents will become strengths.

An additional outcome of strength development is the expectation of lessening of the pressure and discouragement of ministry. There will be a realization that not all of their ministerial issues are going to suddenly fall away. Problems do not dissolve simply due to leaders working from their strengths. However, there is an anticipation of how their ministries will flow more smoothly as they work from their strengths. Instead of the trials becoming a burden, they will hopefully become a challenge. As the strategy of this ministry focus paper is utilized there is hope and belief that the hearts and minds of the leaders will be lifted up. There will be an excitement as the leaders' talents turn into strengths, and ultimately how the ministries benefit. All of this will prayerfully lead to the retention of the small group leaders.

Perseverance

Following the implementation of each leader's PDP through the use of the triads, it is imperative for leaders to be patient and persevere in their ministries. Any type of development regarding moral quality and strengths will take time, and there will be spiritual opposition to such change. Thus, it is essential for home fellowship leaders to persevere in the implementation of their PDPs. The author of Hebrews states,

Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles us, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart (Hebrews 12:1-3).

It is imperative that leaders be able to focus and concentrate on the ultimate goals and not be affected and sidetracked by circumstances in their lives. Recognizing that some of the major obstacles in their lives (namely the moral and strength issues) have at least been addressed, they need to realize that not all of their problems have been eradicated. There are still going to be matters that will compete for their attention. Nonetheless, at this point leaders should have the wisdom and discernment to be in a more mature position to handle them. Having perseverance in ministry is critical for the leader; for if one does not persevere, he is missing an important tool in his character development. Paul exhorts, “We know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Romans 5:3-4).

Here is where the coaching triads are going to play a valuable role. Each leader’s PDP will reflect specific and measurable goals. In times of discouragement it will be simple for the coach to assist the leader in analyzing the effectiveness of the leader’s plan. This may also be the time to celebrate the victories that the leader has achieved in evaluating the PDP. Through the coaching session the coach will be able to aid the leader in either making necessary changes to the plan, or discovering why the leader is falling short in his plan. Either way, the coach and other leaders in the triad will exhort each other to continue to persevere.

Family members may also play a valuable role in discerning whether or not leaders are persevering. In the past, leaders who stepped down from their positions as home fellowship leaders have done so because of negative feelings. If this situation arises in the future, the leader’s family, the members of his home fellowship, and the triad should all step in to judge the leader’s progress. The leaders will be expected to include

the home fellowship as part of their plans for progress. There will normally be at least a few members of the small groups that leaders can look to for honest appraisal of their behavior.

However, one of the possible outcomes of this paper's strategy is the recognition that there may actually be leaders who step down from their positions. As leaders implement their PDPs and continue to grow, there may be a realization that the Lord is calling them to drop the home fellowship ministry. This is actually an expected outcome as leaders discern that their strengths, personalities, and spiritual gifts are leading them in different directions. Some change is expected in the small groups as the leaders grow closer to God.

One last expected outcome for the leaders will be their ability to learn to say "no" when necessary to alternative opportunities that may enter their lives. Looking at the example of Jesus, at times he left one city to go the next one having not finished all the work his disciples thought needed to be completed. Jesus also performed formal ministry for only three years. God is looking for his leaders to finish well in all areas of their lives. All leaders are going to have problems; this is guaranteed (John 16:33). The difference between leaders who drop out after a short time, as opposed to those who have been leading for years, is the ability to persevere.

Leaders Reproducing Themselves in Others Using Elements of Coaching

The thesis of this ministry focus paper is to develop a strategy that would help retain the home fellowship leaders at Horizon. The strategy up to this point should be of benefit in helping to preserve the leaders who are presently serving in the small groups.

Nonetheless, it is imperative at this point for the leaders to be faithful in reproducing themselves. Recognizing that the home fellowships are the backbone of Horizon, it will be of the utmost importance for leaders to replicate themselves in future leaders using the elements of coaching, with an emphasis on using a PDP for moral purity and strength development. As the small group system preserves the present leaders and new leaders are raised up, the overall health of Horizon small groups should improve, thus strengthening Horizon as a whole.

The successfulness of leaders replicating themselves should be an objective that is reasonably measured by the leader and by others in the leader's triad. The goals may be as simple as counting the number of small groups that have started due to his home fellowship multiplying. However, an increase in the quantity of fellowships should not be the sole indicator of having successfully reproduced himself. The quality should also been seen in the spiritual growth of the leaders' lives.

The primary purpose of this ministry focus paper is to develop a strategy that will help maintain home fellowship leaders; however that is not the only measureable objective. Should a present leader initiate a triad with two other men, the possibility always exists that through time with the triad, one or both of the leaders may realize that leading a home fellowship is not being faithful to the call on their lives. There is a distinct possibility that through the coaching sessions a small group leader may come to realize that the call of God on his life does not include home fellowships. Thus, the leader may leave the position of leadership in the fellowships to take a similar role in another ministry. Although when this occurs there is no growth to the fellowships, Horizon as a whole benefits from having a strong leader in another ministry.

The expectation for each leader is to make coaching another triad part of his PDP. This may be listed under the long-term or short-term goals. Nonetheless, every leader is going to be asked to make this a priority of their PDP. Since they are already leading home fellowships, there are men in their groups who might want to be part of a triad. Most of the leaders should already have assistant leaders in their small groups, so starting a triad should be relatively simple.

However, although triads seemed to be the best method for this ministry focus paper, it may not necessarily be the most effective method for everyone else. The leaders will be expected to start coaching other men, whether it is with only one assistant or a triad. This will be listed on their PDPs along with a timeline of meetings and expectations. It is hoped that in addition to the home fellowships, other ministries will also show an interest in this paper's strategy and start developing leaders.

The Leader's Personal Assessment

The leader's personal assessment might be very subjective if left to himself, but being part of the triad should help bring some objectivity to the situation. The leader's personal assessment might also include areas outside of the home fellowship ministry. If the leader is married, his family might be of assistance in helping the leader assess the outcomes that he has set. However, the assessment might involve areas other than ministry and family. There might be moral purity issues such as drinking, drugs, pornography, or other similar areas that leaders will need to assess. The triad, under the direction of the coach, will help clarify outcomes of the leaders, making sure that they are reasonable and measurable.

Regardless of what the assessment entails, it is important for all leaders to be in a continual state of evaluating their outcomes. This assessment will aid leaders in staying focused on the areas of importance in their lives. This also reveals the importance of the triads as it gives the leaders a resource to assist them in their evaluations of their personal development.

Assessment of Effectiveness: Retention of Home Fellowship Leaders

The long-term effectiveness of the strategy proposed in this ministry focus paper is impossible to express at this point. There is a realization that the effects may take years to ascertain. However, when the question of effectiveness is assessed from another point of view, there is some good information.

When interviewing some of the home fellowship leaders regarding the issue of whether this strategy might assist them in remaining in the home fellowship system, there was some valuable feedback. The majority of them stated that all of the information regarding moral purity and strength development that they had learned would be of tremendous benefit to them as leaders.³ Additional advantages were also realized by some of the leaders: benefits to the leader's family lives as well as to their personal relationships with the Lord.

Most of the leaders believed that focusing on spiritual disciplines would be of invaluable assistance in aiding the formation of moral purity in their lives. One result of this would be strengthened marriages, and most of them felt that it would also improve other relationships as a whole. Leaders also felt that focusing more on "being" the leaders

³ Home Fellowship Leaders Interviews, interviews by author, San Diego, CA, December 2010.

that God wanted them to be, and less time spent “doing” the work of the ministry would be a useful shift in their thinking.

In the interviews, there was excitement in many of the leaders regarding the strategy of learning their talents and discovering how to turn them into strengths. Learning about their strengths helped a number of the leaders in understanding some of the things they did as leaders, as well as an awareness of situations where they may need to use extra caution. As a whole, most of the leaders believed that any type of self-awareness was going to be of value to them as leaders and as Christians.

An additional tool that the leaders learned to use was coaching. Although experiencing difficulty in learning how to coach, they encountered first-hand the effectiveness of being coached. There is no doubt in the leaders’ minds that being coached was going to assist them in their roles as home fellowship leaders. Every one of them appreciated the time that was spent with the coach in helping them become more efficient leaders.

In summary, it will be difficult to ascertain the long-term effectiveness of the strategy in this ministry focus paper. However, the consensus among the leaders is that there is absolutely no drawback that they could see in the plan to improve their moral quality and strength development. Most of them were looking expectantly to the future as home fellowship leaders.

Assessment of Effectiveness: More Fruitful Home Fellowships

The assessment of the home fellowships should take time to gauge. Whether or not the strategy proposed in this ministry focus paper has long-term success might not be

known for years. However, the quantity of home fellowships is not the only gauge for success of this paper's strategy. Based upon the outcomes of the leaders it should be relatively easy to ascertain whether this strategy has been initially effective by evaluating the lives of the leaders. Therefore, although it might be difficult to corporately gauge the long-term effectiveness of this strategy, glimpses might be seen in the life of the small group leader and his home fellowship.

If the home fellowship leader is following his PDP, there will be some areas within the home fellowship that might reflect transformation of the leader's heart. For example, change in the home fellowship leader mentioned in the previous chapter (Johnny) could be seen in the manner in which he interacts with his home fellowship. He is more aware now of how his strengths play out in the fellowship and is patient in the expectations that he places on people in the small group. This patience and calmness should be evident to the people in his group, thus leading to a more fruitful ministry. In the past Johnny would tend to be a bit critical of the members of his group when they responded in a manner that was not acceptable to him. However, now he recognizes that all the people in the Church have different strengths and giftedness, and thus may look at issues in a different light than previously. The patience and calmness that he exhibits should make a significant impact on the home fellowship, thus leading to a more fruitful home fellowship. This is one manner in which the effectiveness of this ministry focus paper's strategy can be evaluated.

Another manner of gauging the effectiveness is through the actions of the entire home fellowship. In initial field-testing of this paper's strategy, one home fellowship leader started ministering to convalescent homes. He had the opportunity to go in front of

the church to share the many blessings that had occurred during the outreach. This leader's number-one strength is "empathy," which allowed him to come alongside the elderly while meeting some of their needs. In this instance he was not only using his strengths, he was also investing in them at the same time. The home fellowship is definitely more fruitful as a result of the renovation of this leader's life.

Another leader who had temporarily stepped down from being a small group leader is considering assuming the leadership position once again. What this leader briefly learned from an initial class on this strategy led him to the point of wanting to start leading a small group in order to share what he had learned. All the information regarding coaching, moral purity, and strength development was material that he wanted to pass on to others. In talking with this leader there is a passion to lead in a different style than he did previously. He is excited about the prospects of triads and how it may impact his future small group. It is expected that long-term results will be effective in retaining small group leaders thus leading to more fruitful home fellowships.

CONCLUSION

This ministry focus paper presents a strategy that helps develop, retain, and sustain home fellowship leaders at Horizon by means of a personal development plan through a coaching relationship. The home fellowship system has long been considered the backbone of Horizon. The intimate surroundings of a home fellowship present an environment that is conducive for personal spiritual growth in a believer that is not always attainable in a large Sunday setting. But in a one-year period of time, 23 percent of the leaders stepped down from the leadership position, followed by 17 percent the subsequent year. This turnover in leadership can lead to a stagnation of the home fellowships, and may be a detriment to the spiritual growth of the people in the groups. In a ministry that is considered crucial to the overall spiritual growth of the church, this loss of leadership in the home fellowships paints a troubling trend.

Horizon has proven itself to be very missional and eschatological in its theology. Therefore, emphasis is placed on the home fellowships to disciple believers in order to send them out. Thus, Horizon's vision of "win, disciple, and send" is fulfilled. However, when there are leadership issues with the home fellowships, this vision is not being brought to fruition. Therefore, the changes in leadership affect not only the small groups but Horizon as a whole.

The purpose of this paper is to determine a strategy that not only aids in the personal development of home fellowship leaders, but also one that results in the retention of these leaders in the home fellowship system. Part of this strategy is to assist leaders in forming a PDP using a coaching relationship. The PDP will concentrate not

only on the moral quality of the leaders, but also on developing each leader's talents and strengths. It is believed that this strategy will lead to more continuity of leadership in the home fellowship system resulting in spiritual and numerical growth to the church as a whole.

Coaching will be a vital part of the implementation strategy. Through the use of coaching triads, the small group leaders will start developing their PDPs. The use of a PDP for the home fellowship leaders is vital to the successful application of this strategy. The PDP will contain both short and long-term measurable goals along with a timeline for implementation. The coaching triad will use the PDP of each leader for a means of support and accountability. It is expected that the PDP will be invaluable to small group leaders in acquiring greater moral purity and for turning talents into areas of strength.

In the book of Colossians, Paul admonishes Archippus to "take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it" (Colossians 4:17). Then once again in the book of 2 Timothy, Paul encourages young Timothy to endure afflictions and fulfill his ministry (2 Timothy 4:5). There is an obligation for those involved in ministry to be faithful to the calling God has put in their lives. Being faithful means doing those things that will aid the ministry in bearing fruit

Leadership carries responsibilities, and home fellowship leaders have them on a number of different levels. First of all, small group leaders are accountable to God for what they do in ministry. Honoring God not only with their lives, but with their small groups as well should be a priority for the home fellowship leaders. Leading a life of moral purity is definitely one way this can be accomplished. As moral purity becomes a priority in their personal lives, this will become evident to those in the home fellowships.

If small group leaders implement the strategy proposed in this ministry focus paper, there is a good chance for this to occur.

Home fellowship leaders have a responsibility to those in their small groups to be living the type of life that the Scriptures portray. Since the most effective leaders lead by example, it is imperative that the leaders be faithful in the call to strength development and moral purity. When leaders are consistently striving in their lives to be the kind of people that others look up to, it becomes contagious to others in the small groups. Once again, the PDP discussed in this ministry focus paper will assist leaders in becoming that type of person.

Fruitful and efficient leaders are ones who put the needs of others above themselves (Philippians 2). However, leaders of this type do not happen by accident; they are the result of disciplined lives. Self-sacrificing is not a natural instinct for leaders; it must be cultivated. Through the coaching relationship, the use of a PDP will prove to be of great use to home fellowship leaders.

James advises his readers that not many of them should become teachers, knowing that they will receive a stricter judgment (James 3:1). Due to their position of influence, leaders must be living the type of lives that reflect Christ-like values. Because of their positions, home fellowship leaders must have an internal hunger and thirst to lead holy lives. The strategy presented here is not the solution to all the problems with the home fellowships; it is a single step. However, a single step in the right direction is a beginning. It is my intention to be part of this change. Under the leading and power of the Holy Spirit, it is hoped that this ministry focus paper will be a valuable tool for the home fellowship leaders at Horizon.

Finally, in briefly field-testing this strategy, a few issues have been illuminated. There appears to be a great desire in the heart of most leaders to be more efficient home fellowship leaders. There is also a passion to want to draw closer to the Lord and be more effective in the use of gifts and talents they have been given. The problem is that they do not know what to do or how to do it; they need direction and assistance. It is desired that the strategy in this paper will make a difference in the lives of the small group leaders while ultimately bringing glory to God.

APPENDIX A
STRENGTHSFINDER THEMES

Relating Themes
(Working with People)

Communication- People strong in the Communication theme generally find it easy to put their thoughts into words. They are good conversationalists and presenters.

Empathy- People strong in the Empathy theme can sense the feelings of other people by imagining themselves in other's lives or situations.

Harmony- People strong in the Harmony theme look for consensus. They do not enjoy conflict; rather, they seek areas of agreement.

Includer- People strong in the Includer theme are accepting of others. They show awareness of those who feel left out, and make an effort to include them.

Individualization- People strong in the Individualization theme are intrigued with the unique qualities of each person. They have a gift for figuring out how people who are different can work together productively.

Relator- People strong in the Relator theme enjoy close relationships with others. They find deep satisfaction in working hard with friends to achieve a goal.

Responsibility- People strong in the Responsibility theme take psychological ownership of what they say they will do. They are committed to stable values such as honesty and loyalty.

Impacting Themes (Influencing People)

Command- People strong in the Command theme have presence. They can take control of a situation and make decisions.

Competition- People strong in the Competition theme measure their progress against the performance of others. They strive to win first place and revel in contests.

Developer- People strong in the Developer theme recognize and cultivate the potential in others. They spot the signs of each small improvement and derive satisfaction from these improvements.

Maximizer- People strong in the Maximizer theme focus on strengths as a way to stimulate personal and group excellence. They seek to transform something strong into something superb.

Positivity- People strong in the Positivity theme have an enthusiasm that is contagious. They are upbeat and can get others excited about what they are going to do.

Woo- People strong in the Woo theme love the challenge of meeting new people and winning them over. They derive satisfaction from breaking the ice and making a connection.

Striving Themes (Working Hard)

Achiever- People strong in the Achiever theme have a great deal of stamina and work hard. They take great satisfaction from being busy and productive.

Activator- People strong in the Activator theme can make things happen by turning thoughts into action. They are often impatient.

Adaptability- People strong in the Adaptability theme prefer to “go with the flow.” They tend to be “now” people who take things as they come and discover the future one day at a time.

Belief- People strong in the Belief theme have certain core values that are unchanging. Out of these values emerge a defined purpose for their life.

Discipline- People strong in the Discipline theme enjoy routine and structure. Their world is best described by the order they create.

Focus- People strong in the Focus theme can take a direction, follow through, and make the corrections necessary to stay on track. They prioritize, then act.

Restorative- People strong in the Restorative theme are adept at dealing with problems. They are good at figuring out what is wrong and resolving it.

Self-Assurance- People strong in the Self-Assurance theme feel confident in their ability to manage their own lives. They possess an inner compass that gives them confidence that their decisions are right.

Significance- People strong in the Significance theme want to be very important in the eyes of others. They are independent and want to be recognized.

Thinking Themes (Working Smarter)

Analytical- People strong in the Analytical theme search for reasons and causes. They have the ability to think about all the factors that might affect a situation.

Arranger- People strong in the Arranger theme can organize, but they also have a flexibility that complements this ability. They like to figure out how all of the pieces and resources can be arranged for maximum productivity.

Connectedness- People strong in the Connectedness theme have faith in the links between all phenomena. They believe there are no coincidences and that every event has a reason.

Context- People strong in the Context theme enjoy thinking about the past. They understand the present by researching its history.

Deliberative- People strong in the Deliberative theme are best described by the serious care they take in making decisions or choices. They anticipate the obstacles.

Consistency- People strong in the Consistency theme are keenly aware of the need to treat people the same. They try to treat everyone in the world fairly by having clear rules and adhering to them.

Futuristic- People strong in the Futuristic theme are inspired by the future and what could be. They inspire others with their visions of the future.

Ideation- People strong in the Ideation theme are fascinated by ideas. They are able to make new connections between seemingly disparate phenomena.

Input- People strong in the Input theme have a craving to know more. Often they like to collect and archive all kinds of information.

Intellection- People strong in the Intellection theme are characterized by their intellectual activity. They are introspective and appreciate intellectual discussions.

Learner- People strong in the Learner theme have a great desire to learn and want to continuously improve. In particular, the process of learning, rather than the outcome excites them.

Strategic- People strong in the Strategic theme create alternative ways to proceed. Faced with any given scenario, they can quickly spot the relevant patterns and issues.

APPENDIX B

THE LEVEL OF RECALL AFTER LEARNING BY
BEING TOLD, BEING TOLD & SHOWN,
AND BEING TOLD, SHOWN, & HAVING EXPERIENCED

	Told	Told and shown	Told, shown and experienced
Recall after 3 weeks	70%	72%	85%
Recall after 3 months	10%	32%	65%

Source: John Whitmore, *Coaching for Performance* (London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1992).

APPENDIX C
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (TEMPLATE)

Short-term Goals

Short-term Goals	Actions Necessary to Achieve Goals	Desired Outcomes	Timeline

Long-term Goals

Long-term Goals	Actions Necessary to Achieve Goals	Desired Outcomes	Timeline

Be as specific as possible when listing goals, actions, outcomes, and timeline.
*Included in long-term goals should be a replication plan.

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