

Doctoral Project Approval Sheet

This doctoral project entitled

THE GOD-SHAPED JOURNEY OF A CHURCH PLANTER:
SPIRITUAL FORMATION AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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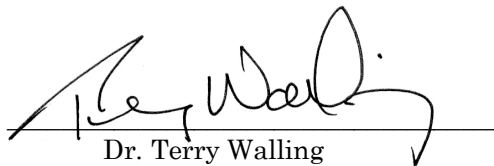
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THE GOD-SHAPED JOURNEY OF A CHURCH PLANTER:
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DEVELOPMENT

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BY

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ABSTRACT

The God-Shaped Journey of a Church Planter: Spiritual Formation as an Integral Part of Leadership Development

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This doctoral project argues for spiritual formation as essential to the church planter's development as a leader. The level of spiritual maturity is brought into question as one faces the difficult challenges of church planting. To navigate wisely through the difficulties associated with church planting, confidence, endurance, and stamina are necessary character traits. This paper argues for pain, hardship, and failure as major parts of the spiritual formation process in shaping the development of leader/church planters.

The study is based on the observation of leader/church planters in the LeaderImpac Network. They are leaders by reason of their calling into the difficult enterprise of church planting. The research author's personal journey as a leader/church planter of three church plants in the course of sixty years will also be a contributing factor. The leader/church planters in this network are predominantly of ethnic minorities and are generally oral learners.

The lessons one is able to extract from the crucible encounters are shaping moments in the spiritual formation process. The consequences of not extracting the lessons potentially factor into one's failure to finish well. Unless an intentional rhythm of spiritual formation disciplines is in place, accomplishing one's goal and finishing well will be exposed to possible failure. The Scriptures consistently highlight trials and hardships as contributing factors in the spiritual formation of a leader.

Church planters, as leaders in the effort, are potentially at a higher risk for disappointment than the general population in the leadership community. It is critical that spiritual formation is understood as a lifelong God-shaping journey of the inner being in leader development. The project will propose guidelines to a sustainable rhythm in ministry. The project concludes with the practice provided in the writings of Terry Walling, coaching, and leader development, Will Mancini, leading the church and Dallas Willard's writing on spiritual formation. The Doctoral Project concludes with a timeline for the process and its assessment plan.

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What an opportunity this is to put into words the gratitude I feel deep within my being. This research project is the result of family support, encouragement, and sacrifice. In addition, it relies on the contribution of two principle mentors who early in this journey strategically set in motion the values to be embraced.

I would like to acknowledge the love and encouragement I have received throughout the years. First, the many family members along the way who have made their lasting handprint on this would-be leader/church planter. My mom, in spite of her church being on the east side of Los Angeles, was determined to make that journey from the west side of town with five children in the back seat of a 1946 Chevy coupe. My dad showed his approval by following in the footsteps of his number one son by accepting Christ. I thank Tia Angie Cruz who loved me like a little brother, Tio Johnny Salazar who gave me my first study Bible, Tia Alice Salazar who always made me feel special, and my siblings, Rosie Jorgenson, Alfred Jose, and Gloria Rosas, who looked up to their big brother for direction. I thank pastor and church planter Ramon Micro and missionary Gilbert Amaya who instilled in me the importance of prayer and the study of Scripture. They set the example and finished the race, not before leaving me an example of faithfulness and dedication to emulate.

Special recognition goes to my children, Richard Jonathan Jose and Christy Jose Frederick, as they endured the sacrifices made in the midst of this journey. I also thank my nine grandchildren, Ryan, Brittany, Ashley, Alexi, Kristen, Evan, Austin, Bela, and Grey, who bring me a smile in my quiet time.

I will always treasure the memory of my sister Anna, whose life opened my blind eyes to realize the life we live we live for others. Finally, special gratitude goes to a special woman, Annie, who has accompanied me on this lifelong journey. Her hand in marriage these fifty-four years has made this journey a wonderful life.

PART ONE
MINISTRY CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

This doctoral project advocates for spiritual formation as foundational in the leadership development of the leader/church planter. Church planting quickly develops into a personal journey involving situations of intense challenges. It is not a question of whether hardship will come, but when it will come. The level of spiritual maturity and character is brought into question as one faces the challenges of the journey. Without the benefit of a mentor, coach, or accountability community, the venture and challenge will be a very trying experience. Leader/church planters tend to be self-sufficient and reluctant in reaching outside their immediate comfort zone. As Ed Stetzer states, “Planters who miss out on the benefit of coaching miss out on a tremendous help throughout the ministry journey. My analysis of more than six hundred church planters shows there’s even a significant numerical value to having a mentor or supervisor.”¹

The LeaderImpac Network is composed of young, predominately ethnic minorities who are leader/church planters learning on the go. “According to the Department of Education over half the people in the United States are oral learners.”² Many of the LeaderImpac leader/church planters that come to us are at a disadvantage because of their lack of formal training and therefor are at a higher risk of greater disappointment. Having to learn on-the-go and through painful experiences can lead to a painful decision of ending the church planting effort. This doctoral project advocates for leader/church planters with little or no experience, who are learning on the go, and who

¹ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2006), 102.

² Jim Putman, *Church Is a Team Sport: A Championship Strategy for Doing Ministry Together* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), 13.

are at a disadvantage in facing the challenges associated with church planting to pursue the advantage gained by a mentor or coach. The misguided understanding of how he or she has been shaped contributes to the failed attempts of many of these emerging leaders. Understanding how he or she has been shaped gives insight into his or her identity. Knowing their unique identity gives them further insight into his or her unique purpose as a leader/church planter. Unless an intentional rhythm of spiritual formation disciplines is in place, it will be a constant struggle and frustration to overcome all the challenges of the journey. The research author has observed leader/church planters struggled largely due to their failure to recognize God is at work in the hardship, struggles, and potential failures in the journey. The failure to integrate spiritual formation as a God-shaping journey of one's inner being is to fail to understand that one's outward influence is a direct reflection of one's inner life.

In order to navigate wisely through the difficulties associated with church planting, inner confidence, endurance, and stamina are major character traits needing to be developed. This study stresses spiritual formation as a vital process that develops the character traits needed in leadership development. Spiritual formation must be understood as an ongoing, sustaining source of developing strength. The ability to understand spiritual formation as an ongoing experience and a lifelong journey is crucial to the demands of ministry. Chuck Miller affirms how crucial it is: "I describe a lifelong journey with God, a journey that offers answers to these and other questions about spiritual growth and about leadership. I am convinced a key to effective leadership is our

personal, intimate, ongoing, and ever deepening relationship with God.”³ The development of character is about the inner being and is crucial in moving forward into the sovereign plan and purpose of God. It is important to understand that the lessons one is able to extract from the crucible encounters are actual shaping moments in the process of spiritual formation.⁴ The consequences of not extracting the lessons can potentially factor into the ultimate failure as a leader/church planter. This is why spiritual formation must be understood as a lifelong process under the divine hand of God. The Scriptures consistently highlight trials and hardships in the lives of biblical leaders, a contributing factor in their formation as spiritual giants, developing endurance and resolve as deeply rooted values. Spiritual formation is the cornerstone in the leadership development of potential leader/church planters. Spiritual maturity is reached because of the many challenges they were able to work through in life and ministry. The resolve and stamina developed are the by-product of challenges they were able to endure and overcome. The ability to see the future through the eyes of God is defined by Terry Walling as having a “sovereign perspective.”⁵ This perspective is clouded in the initial calling of many leader/church planters. The many distractions, voices, and appeals in the world of Christianity are overpowering in that decisions made are based on situational circumstances with little consideration of how it affects the future. Terry Walling

³ Chuck Miller, *The Spiritual Formation of Leaders: Integrating Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development*. (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2007), 11.

⁴ Warren G. Bennis, and Robert J. Thomas. *Leading for a Lifetime*. (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2007), 109.

⁵ Terry B. Walling, *Stuck: Navigating the Transitions of Life & Leadership* (Bloomington, MN: ChurchSmart Resources, 2008), 106.

describes this as a “situational perspective.”⁶ Secondly, what has been a detriment in the leadership development of the leader/church planter is echoed by Darrin Patrick: “One of the common errors of young men who surrender to ministry is to simply adopt the model of a church that they have experienced or idolized. A similar mistake is to blindly adopt the ministry philosophy and practice of a ministry hero.”⁷

This has been the pathway many have taken in ministry, heavily influencing the direction and strategy of the church planting effort. It appears to be the way of least resistance for most leader/church planters. Included in this paradigm is the ethnic traditional influence on the leader/church planter. The thought is that what has worked in the past will work in the church today. “For most people a vision for the future tends to involve revisiting an effective past experience.”⁸ Failure to duplicate the apparent successful model has caused many leader/church planters to end their efforts prematurely. This influence has derailed many and has caused others to deviate from what was their God given direction in life and ministry. Little attention has been directed towards how God shapes the leader throughout life, and that is a recipe for failure. Their understanding of success has been altered to view success as pain-and failure-free. The absence of clarity pertaining to his or her place in ministry is presumed rather than embraced as a clear understanding as to where God has placed him or her in ministry.

⁶ Ibid., 106.

⁷ Darrin Patrick, *Church Planter: The Man, The Message, The Mission*. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 37.

⁸ Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches*, 22.

This prevalent situation highlights the importance of clarity. Clarity is the initial step in having an effective ministry. The lack of clarity causes one to walk in uncertainty, not fully understanding success from God's perspective.

What is clarity really about? . . .it means being free from anything that obscures, blocks, pollutes, or darkens. Being clear as a leader means being simple, understandable, and exact. The leader helps others see and understand reality better. Leaders constantly bring the most important things to light: current reality and future possibility, what God says about it and what we need to do about it.⁹

The research author has learned through his own journey that understanding the purpose and call of God can be a time consuming and lengthy experience. The difficulty Moses encountered in understanding his calling was a lengthy process filled with crisis, isolation, self-reflection, and ultimately coming to a clear understanding of a relationship with God. The Apostle Paul, Joseph, Jonah, and the endless list of biblical leaders illustrate the complexity of how a leader is shaped for a particular mission. The common thread in the lives of all these leaders is the personal journey filled with crisis, tragedies, and hardship. What distinguishes them as leaders is the ability to work through the issues and come out shaped with character, resolve, stamina to assume the greater purpose of God. The lessons extracted from the crucibles contributed to their spiritual formation that allowed them a place in God where they are able to say, "Not my will, but yours be done." The journey is filled with painful experiences and deep moments of reflection, ingredients that shape the values and traits that allow one to make valuable contributions in the lives of those who follow. Accordingly, God has always been at work in the life of

⁹ Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass 2008), 52.

a leader.¹⁰ As in the case of biblical leaders, leaders today continue to struggle in defining their unique purpose and calling as they are being formed and shaped by God.

The troubling issue is the fact that many leader/church planters fall into a pattern of emulating leaders whom they perceive as having reached success. The perception of a successful church is a large membership, financial stability, and status recognition among peers. In so doing the leader/church planter fails to take into consideration how God has shaped him or her and for what purpose. So often it is a crisis that draws one into intimacy with God, thereby under the burden of a crisis the leader is now vulnerable to whatever he or she might be introduced to as their life purpose in God. The biblical examples of this spiritual formation process are Moses and Paul. This paper argues that these elements are interconnected stages of their God-shaping spiritual formation in fulfilling His purpose for reaching the world.

The problem that arises among leader/church planters is the idea of duplicating an attractive church model of another leader, hoping that model will produce the same results. This has led to a world of copycat leaders/church planters who have copied others in an effort to produce similar results but who have been disappointed and faced with failure in their effort. It is the purpose of this paper to offset the misguided concept of what success is, what failure can be, and how spiritual formation can provide a healthy understanding of a sovereign perspective.

Leader/church planters of this network have struggled to understand how God uses adversities and failure in their development. “The competition to succeed and win

¹⁰ Terry B. Walling, Zack Curry, and Kyle Walling, *Awakening: Awakening to the Call of God*. (Authors, 2014), 49.

admiration is so fierce that it becomes all-consuming.”¹¹ Spiritual formation has been overlooked in today’s environment primarily because of the pressure to see quick results. In today’s busyness, time to nurture one’s inner being has not been a priority. Leaders have not been fully willing to invest the time in their leadership development to understand the importance of how spiritual formation adds to their effectiveness in ministry and the purpose for which they have been called.

What makes spiritual formation difficult to integrate in leadership development is the various forces that compete for the leader’s time. Leader/church planters have many demands upon them: family, church responsibility, and being bi-vocational. Amidst all of these demands is the issue of understanding the dynamics of spiritual formation. The fact is that spiritual formation is the character development of the inner self that finds its expression in a leader’s behavior. Spiritual formation tends to be understood as reaching a stage as a leader, without recognizing it as a process and a lifelong journey. Prayer, fasting, and intimacy with God creates an environment for God to work His will, and the other component in spiritual formation involves the interaction with the hardship, pain, betrayal, and failure that one experiences throughout life. How one reacts to the difficult experience brings us to a point of decision that will define his or her character.

The presumed concept of failure in the form of trials, hardship, and failure is almost always considered a negative experience of little value. However, according to Warren G. Bennis, “The extraction of wisdom from the crucible experience is what distinguishes our successful leaders from those who are broken or burnt out by

¹¹ David Brooks, *The Road to Character* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2015), xiii.

comparable experiences.”¹² A lesson from that crucible will be of value. Failure to understand the experience of failure has caused undue and premature closures in the church planting effort and possibly his or her ministry coming to an end. There is also the misguided concept that success is accomplished by duplicating the contemporary attraction and performance model. In the process, what is overlooked is an understanding that spiritual formation is an ongoing journey and a component in leadership development. In times of difficulty, it is important that he or she learns “the language of God, that [one cooperates] with what he is doing. . . God will do something *through* you when you first allow him to do something *in* you.”¹³ With many distractions, it is easy to be derailed from the ultimate goal in one’s life and ministry.

It has been the experience of the research author in ministry, especially with leader/church planters, that they “often face significant feelings of failure, usually fueled by misguided expectations for success.”¹⁴ They compare themselves to pastors they consider successful and view themselves as failures. Many do “leave the ministry convinced they are failures.”¹⁵ I have an accumulation of furniture from church planters that have sadly come to that conclusion when in fact, while gifted, they are misguided and view themselves as failing in their mission. One prevailing idea is the perception that a building, a growing membership, and an increased budget is the perfect picture of

¹² Bennis, and Thomas, *Leading for a Lifetime*, 94.

¹³ Wayne Cordeiro, Francis Chan, and Larry Osborne, *Sifted: Pursuing Growth Through Trials, Challenges, and Disappointments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 40.

¹⁴ Kent Hughes and Barbara Hughes, *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1987), 9.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

success. Others entertain attraction and performance models, anticipating a crowd will appear miraculously. Lost in this dynamic is what God expects. Christ highlights in the parable of the talent what was the key to success (Mt 25:14-30; Lk 19:11-27). Each servant was given a responsibility and each one was successful except for one servant. They were successful because they were faithful to the responsibility given to them. The servant given very little responsibility was not successful because he was not faithful with the responsibility given to him. Success is based on faithfulness in whatever God has entrusted to a servant. The servant with one talent would have been successful if he had been faithful with what he had been entrusted, “for a faithful life is a successful life.”¹⁶ Wayne Cordeiro supports this position in writing that one of the most challenging personal issues for a church planter is the following: “we can tell ourselves that what matters is faithfulness in doing what God has called us to do. But the temptation to compare often lies dormant in our hearts, emerging anytime we ask ourselves, how am I stacking up against everybody else?”¹⁷ The main thrust of this doctoral project is to address the absence of an in-depth understanding of spiritual formation as an important, intricate part of leadership development. The question becomes, what have I been shaped to do? and can I be faithful to that responsibility?

To continue to compare one’s status with other ministries contributes to the possible disappointment in planting a sustainable church plant as well as the leader/church planter’s leadership development. When total reliance is on an inherited

¹⁶ Ibid., 43.

¹⁷ Cordeiro, Chan, and Osborne, *Sifted*, 43.

tradition from which he or she has come, it will create a gap between them and the emerging generation. On the other hand, many find it favorable to just replicate the ministry down the street, which is easier than to discover the who, what, why, and how in life to which he or she is called. Herein is the challenge: finding clarity as to how one has been shaped by God, and for what task, and how it will be accomplished. The absence of clarity will derail efforts in planning for a successful pathway forward to accomplish God's ultimate plan. Without clarity one moves forward without a defining purpose or vision, without which makes carrying the burden difficult. "According to a 2007 study by the Center for Missional Research of 12 denominations and church planting networks, one-third of church plants do not survive past four years (32%)."¹⁸ There are many reasons to consider potential causes for leader/church planters to conceive defeat. This project will focus on leader/church planters and their understanding of the spiritual formation components, the negative, the positive and how they have been God-shaped and for what purpose.

The one area of focus is to facilitate the means to accomplish a sustainable rhythm in ministry. One piece of the big picture puzzle that contributes to the success of the leader/church planter. Chapter 1 identifies elements of the context that tend to derail the leader/church planter and thereby lose focus of what he or she was created to achieve. To support the research, the research author will refer to his own lifelong experience. Chapters 2 and 3 supports those findings with biblical examples and the writings of contemporary scholars. In so doing an initiative is introduced to be implemented in

¹⁸ Barna Group, *Church Startups and Money: The Myths & Realities of Church Planters & Finances* (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2016), 7.

addressing the leader/church planter's potential challenges and by equipping him or her with an understanding of the God-shaping spiritual formation journey. Chapter 4 will lay out the Network plan, the goal, the theological implication, and the strategy for leadership development. Chapter 5 maps out the implementation of the project, drawing on material from various scholars providing the major part of leadership development training and resources. The doctoral project concludes with a timeline for the process and its assessment plan.

CHAPTER 1:

MINISTRY CONTEXT: LEADERIMPAC NETWORK OF CHURCH PLANTERS

The journey of the research author has direct implications in the ministry context. The journey will illustrate a common thread revealed in Scripture. In order to fully understand the journey of a leader/church planter, one must first experience the journey. His journey will serve as a reference for assumptions and comments throughout the paper.

The research author came to Christ at the age of eighteen years old after years of street gang violence in the Los Angeles area. Gun violence was a weekly occurrence. Near-death incidents were frequent occurrences. After months as a fugitive for a list of assaults, he found himself running with another violent crowd in the city of Santa Barbara. Two members of the gang were hired by Elizabeth Duncan to kill her young, pregnant daughter-in-law. They buried her alive.¹ Shortly after returning to Los Angeles, he was apprehended and questioned by the FBI only to be cleared of any involvement in the crime. Shortly thereafter, he was incarcerated for one year in the California Youth Authority. After serving a year sentence, he was released in October 1959 only to be

¹ People v. Elizabeth Duncan (Ventura County District Attorney)
<https://www.vcdistrictattorney.com/mission/team/people-v-elizabeth-duncan/>.

involved in a car chase and shooting incident. While being pursued in a high-speed chase a rival gang continued riddling bullets into his car. He remembers crying out in his spirit, “God, you’re not going to let me die, are you?” His resistance to God was out of pure ignorance. Paul reflecting on his own experience confessed his own ignorance, “what I did was done in the ignorance of a man without faith” (1 Tm 1:13 J.B. Phillips New Testament). In retrospect it is now obvious, as with Paul, God had a divine plan.

Sadly, one month after the shooting incident, the crisis came to a head. His sixteen-year-old sister, a devout Christian, died of leukemia. The effect of her death spoke profoundly; in a total moment of rage, he slapped her on the face, he felt no remorse as she cried. In retrospect he thinks about all the tubes she was wired too when he did this painful deed. He can home one night to receive the painful news of her death. In his room, he cried out to God, “Why didn’t you kill me?” His thoughts were that she was a Christian and, in the words of Paul, was “a violent man” (1 Tm 1:13 New International Version) Reflecting on what transpired, today it becomes obvious God was at work. He had a spiritual formational plan to develop a leader who would be indebted.

God has a plan for every leader. Ruth Haley Barton brings out an insightful concept in leadership development: “Moses was destined to be a leader. When you are raised as the son of a princess, you are groomed to lead. You are scrutinized and evaluated regarding your capacity to lead. Expectations are high.”² Paul was also groomed for the purpose of God: he lived with the privileges of a Roman citizen and

² Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2008), 36.

studied at the feet of the most prominent scholar which contributed to a mindset of religious arrogance. Patterns of behavior are shaped by people, events and environments.

Ruth Haley Barton adds more light to the spiritual formation of the leader:

“All of us develop ways of adjusting and staying safe in the midst of whatever danger or difficulty is present in our environment. We develop these patterns before we are conscious that we are doing so, and they become very normal. Because these patterns are formed unconsciously while we are still young, as adults we have little conscious awareness of these adaptations until they start to hamper our current relationships and no longer serve the journey that God is inviting us to.”³

Moses and Paul had the potential to inflict harm, as is evident in Scripture. Such was the case with this research author. The parallel is that all were brought to their knees, for in the words of Jesus, “without me ye can do nothing” (Jn 15:5 King James Version).

Paul’s responsibility for the killing of an innocent man, Stephen, Moses’s killing of an Egyptian, and the violent lifestyle of this research author ultimately served a greater cause. All three were groomed to become kingdom leaders for a specific purpose and calling for which God had determined. The memories of guilt are always present; however, Paul was reminded, “my grace is sufficient.” The heartbreak experiences serve as a motivational force for the Apostle Paul, Moses, and the research author who must remember that “A sovereign mind-set believes that there is an ultimate, God-ordained purpose.”⁴

After his conversion, while studying in Mexico City, he remembers sitting down at a curb site and reading a newspaper about events in the States. He was drawn to a

³ Ibid., 37.

⁴ Terry B. Walling, *Stuck: Navigating the Transitions of Life & Leadership* (Bloomington, MN: ChurchSmart Resources, 2008), 106.

picture of Luis and Agustin who he had been with at the time he was a fugitive. The article revealed they would be executed that year, in 1962.⁵ They were found guilty of the murder of Elizabeth Duncan's daughter-in-law.

Needless to say, answering God's call was a move towards total surrender. What did total surrender mean? Surrender to what purpose in life? The search began to unfold. Problem number one: his conversion was in a Spanish-speaking church. He did not speak or understand Spanish. To survive this God-shaping journey, he must learn the Spanish language. At the age of nineteen years old, he journeyed to a Bible Institute in Mexico City to learn the Spanish language. The director of the Institute was finishing his Doctor of Ministry degree at Fuller Theological Seminary. The experience had all the handprints of a divine plan.

As a student, he wrote to his pastor requesting to be initiated into the ministry. He was eventually ordained as a minister. Being ordained as a minister was the only means of doing ministry in the denomination. After returning home he was encouraged to attend the denominational Bible College from 1962 through 1966; he completed his Bachelor of Arts. In the summer of 1963, he was involved with a mentor who was planting a church in Carson, California. In the summer of 1964, he traveled to Central America, preaching in the jungles of Panama and Costa Rica. This was part of the journey to discover his calling. Since his uncle was a missionary in San Salvador, it was suggested his calling was that of a missionary. In 1965, he led a summer team of four students across the country to New York and back to California, holding revivals along the way. In the

⁵ People v. Elizabeth Duncan.

summer of 1966, he led a summer team of students holding revival meetings in New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah. The one place he did not desire to return to, was the one place that became his destiny. While evangelizing in Texas, he remarked, “I never want to come back to Texas.” Chris Lowney writes about Pope Francis, “the good leader’s journey: it’s not about the leader; it’s about the mission; and the mission sometimes takes leaders where they might not have wanted to go.”⁶ In 1966, he led his final student summer trip; he and his wife returned home only to be asked to return to Texas to assume the pastoral position thereby allowing the existing pastor to attend a Bible College. Reluctantly, he said he would go, but on one condition: he would go for one year. On his one-year wedding anniversary he was installed as pastor in Weslaco, Texas.

In 1969, it occurred to him that returning to California was a distant dream. He and his wife moved to Fort Worth, Texas to plant a church. He knew no one, he had no trade skills, and he had no financial support. His wife was able to find office work while he worked odd jobs. They had one car, so he had no choice but to walk miles to and from work. Saturdays were spent knocking on doors. He rented a storefront on main street in the Stockyards of Fort Worth. In the first service, the people in attendance were an elderly lady, his wife, and himself. By the end of that year one hundred people were baptized. Six of them were carpenters. A realtor asked if they would knock down three buildings, in return they could have the material, and they did. They bought property and built a church facility. In 1985, he resigned from the church he had planted and pastored for sixteen years and returned to California. In 1994, in the course of planting a church,

⁶ Chris Lowney, *Pope Francis: Why He Leads the Way He Leads* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2013), 146.

he was challenged to attend Fuller Theological Seminary. One year after his enrollment, his wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. If that was not enough, in 1996 his wife received a call from Texas that their granddaughter had died in a drowning accident. This resulted in their son and daughter-in-law renewing their commitment to Christ. The research author and his wife felt they had no alternative but to return and support their son and his family in their walk of faith. In 1998, they returned to Fort Worth, Texas and planted the church they presently pastor. In 2010, a new uncharted journey would appear.

In 2010, he started the Doctor of Ministry program. In the first class, he gathered several peers to evaluate where he was in ministry. Prior to the meeting, he had a vision or perhaps a dream as follows: he was traveling down a well-lit freeway at a fast rate of speed. Suddenly, he came to the end of the highway and the road thereafter was a dark, an underdeveloped road. He shared the vision with the peers in his DMin class session. In addition, he uttered, “If God wants me to resign as pastor I will; however, in doing so, I could envision this place being a missional center.”

Now, sixty years since coming to Christ and having planted three churches, and now eight church plants call his facility their home. He serves as a mentor and coach of young leaders in their effort to plant a church. This long journey has provided an extended time of reflection on the most valuable action steps for a church planter. In the church planter’s development, the most essential skill is understanding how important it is to understand the God-shaping journey of spiritual formation. Its goal in accomplishing God’s purpose and finishing well. Darrin Patrick writes, “we have forgotten that the most

important thing in our ministry is our own walk with Christ.”⁷ Chuck Miller writes, “I am convinced a key to effective leadership is our personal, intimate, ongoing, and ever deepening relationship with God.”⁸ The spiritual formation journey is a learning process in how one responds to pain, struggles, and hardship. How one responds reflects his or her spiritual maturity.

Today, the research author can speak from personal experience of a church planter’s narrative and as one who is approaching the end of the journey. As he reflects on the impact of the tragedies, pain, and failures and how they have served to shape him into who he has become, he can see God’s divine handprint throughout his life, shaping his life for a purpose and calling. It has led him to understand the ultimate contribution that is now at the top of the climb. As one reflects on life’s journey and how one has been shaped, it reveals how one is to be used of God. All of this has caused him to see his place as a catalytic leader, as one that initiates things as in the case of a church planter. It is in this capacity as a church planter, mentor, and coach that his life has found fulfillment. People, events, and environment have contributed to what he now has accepted as his identity, a catalytic leader, a church planter, and ultimately one who provides a pathway for those who follow.⁹ This was reinforced when a young church planter approached him with his desire to plant a church. After making him aware of his

⁷ Darrin Patrick, *Church Planter: The Man, The Message, The Mission*. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 61.

⁸ Chuck Miller, *The Spiritual Formation of Leaders: Integrating Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2007), 11.

⁹ Gentry McColm, *The Inner Life of the Church Planter: Getting to the Heart of God-Centered Leadership* (Bloomington: ChurchSmart Resources, 2012), 24.

lack of energy at this time in life, the young man uttered the following: “I can’t find an old man to teach us what to do. They all want to make us like them.” The research author was reminded of the lonely and difficult time in his first church plant in 1969 without a mentor or coach. This highlighted another gap in ministry: the shortage of experienced mentors that understand mentoring is not about replicating self or their vision but providing guidance into what God has called that person to become. “First-class mentoring and coaching is part of the answer and a growing number of organizations recognize that there is no one-size fits-all approach.”¹⁰ Replicating and projecting one’s style and formula of ministry to someone else may not apply to how that person has been shaped.

The life experiences since early childhood have deeply shaped the journey of this research author. The journey has formed a natural link and transition into a church planting context. The life journey has become a point of reference in resourcing the church planters of the LeaderImpac Network. The personal church planting journey has allowed the research author a platform to provide a mentoring and coaching relationship. This is a vital resource for the church planter. It is well documented that the journey can be physically, emotionally, and spiritually draining. “Many of the cries go unresolved as they cannot find a relational type mentor to fulfill these needs.”¹¹ The hardship of this environment has led promising and gifted leaders to question their calling and ultimately see leaving the ministry as their only alternative. “Often, emerging leaders become

¹⁰ Warren G. Bennis, and Robert J. Thomas, *Leading for a Lifetime* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2007), xv.

¹¹ Leatha Camille Still, *A Model for Mentoring Clergy for the Work of Ministry: A How-to Manual for Pastors and Mentors Omega Baptist Church* (Ann Arbor: ProQuest LLC, 2012), 1.

discouraged when there appears to be little or no path to achieving their dreams—and obstacles are many.”¹² Through the years in ministry the research author has witnessed this common occurrence. Obviously, his personal experience may have contributed to a desire to mentor and coach leader/church planters. The effort to come alongside leader/church planters has long been in progress as a one-man unstructured effort. However, in 2016, while enrolled in Fuller’s Doctor of Ministry program, he was required to take a mentoring class with Dr. Terry Walling. The components of this formable project were initiated. This was followed by a coaching decision to accept Leader Breakthru’s offer to equip leaders who are now part of the LeaderImpac team. He cannot help but reflect on that dream or vision that he shared in his first Doctor of Ministry class. It was now taking form in a very tangible and structured format.

The team was formed out of the passion of the research author. There are eight team members. Four are Hispanic, two are African American, and two are Anglos. They are all leader/church planters in their forties except for two of them who are at the top of the hill at seventy-five and seventy-seven years old. Collectively the two of them have 120 years of ministry experience. They have served in various capacities in a denomination as a state youth president, evangelist, denominational state overseer, pastor, and church planter, and are now in a position to qualify and sponsor would-be church planters in receiving financial funding from the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

The LeaderImpac team is undergoing intense training under the teaching of Dr. Terry Walling and the research author. This training process will equip the team with

¹² Terry B. Walling, Zack Curry, and Kyle Walling, *Awakening: Awakening to the Call of God* (Authors, 2014), 44.

leadership resources to replicate among the growing network what they have learned in their training. In addition, the team is moving towards their certification with LeaderBreakthru. The process is at the end of its second year of a two-year training process. This will multiply the effort of the research author's desired outcome.

A Multiethnic Network of Church Planters

The scope of this effort is far beyond the Dallas-Fort Worth area with far reaching efforts in Indiana, New Mexico, and California. The task of leadership development is a vision in progress. The project is to reach the larger context composed of ethnic minorities who are open to leadership training tailored to their level of education.

The research author's extensive exposure in a bi-lingual multicultural ministry has contributed to the diversity of the Network. It has allowed the Network's influence to reach areas of great need among the minority community. The lack of well-informed mentors and coaches for the minority church planter is an unparalleled challenge. The research author affirms the view suggested by Leatha Camille Still in her dissertation: the lack of qualified mentors adds to the prolonged process in the development of leaders in ministry.¹³

The Network is composed of leader/church planters from various ethnic backgrounds. They are as follows: Congolese, Liberian, Burmese, African American, Salvadorians, Hondurans, Mexicans, and Mexican Americans. Each one of these ethnic backgrounds presents a unique circumstance in itself. The Congolese church planter is planting a French-speaking church. The Burmese speak Burmese and the Central

¹³ Leatha Camille Still, *A Model for Mentoring Clergy for the Work of Ministry: A How-to Manual for Pastors and Mentors Omega Baptist Church* (Ann Arbor: ProQuest LLC, 2012), 3.

Americans and Mexicans speak Spanish. It does help that the research author has learned the Spanish language. However, unique cultural traits need to be addressed in their particular learning style. The African American and Mexican Americans are all Americanized; nevertheless, they are faced with the issue of the American Christianized Dream. That is to say, the common trend is that they are quickly adapting to the Christian dream of attraction and prosperity. The African American and Mexican American planters are drawn to the excitement of success. In spite of the fact they come from different cultural backgrounds, they struggle with the symptoms of potential burnout. Yet, because of their cultural backgrounds, they are influenced by their traditional understandings of church. The challenge is their targeted people groups are of their own ethnicity. The limit of their context limits what they can expect of their vision.

Many of the leader/church planters of the LeaderImpac Network are in the low-income bracket, so planting a church becomes a greater challenge. Without financial backing, they have no alternative but to be bi-vocational. This appears to be the case among most minority church plants where there are little to no financial resources available. There are not many organizations with a financially concentrated effort to assist in church planting among minorities. One particular leader/church planter works six days a week, which leaves him very little quality time for personal, inner self-development. *Doing* ministry tends to take precedent. Another leader/church planter has his day job and drives for Uber at night. These are challenges within the church planting context. Both cases illustrate the difficulty one faces in church planting.

As a bi-vocational leader/church planter, he or she demonstrates great courage in facing these challenges. Case in point, is the issue of availability for ministry, self-

development, and family. It is no secret marriages have been affected because of the lack of quality time dedicated to the marriage relationship. That has been a concern of the research author among the LeaderImpac Network leader/church planters. Also, clarity has not been established concerning a strategy for planting the church. These are areas of concern visible to the research author.

A unique situation in this context is the level of education among many of the participants of this network. Many of them come from a background of poverty, from a foreign country, having to learn English as a second language. This lack of traditional education and familiarity with English will slow down the learning process. Because of the circumstance, adjustments on the part of the strategy will be a major challenge.

Working with the non-English speaking group of leader/church planters presents an additional challenge, because we are not only dealing with non-English speaking but with a group of oral learners the challenge is multiplied. Because the research author is bilingual and the first church he planted and pastored for sixteen years was a Spanish-speaking church, this affords him at the least the opportunity to engage Spanish-speaking communities.

How They Became Who They Are

The leader's background has always been a point of reference for those in ministry. Tradition is who we are and moving out of a traditional experience in doing ministry is a step out of the comfort zone. Taking a step towards innovation requires a defining heart-felt move from God. Leader/church planters in the Network are heavily influenced by tradition. Coming from traditional church life with values set in tradition

makes for a difficult journey towards clarity as to how he or she will be shaped for the kingdom contribution. Moving away from what one has always known to be the way of doing ministry is always an uphill battle. It requires a close walk with God in understanding in what direction one must go. This is the importance of spiritual formation. The spiritual formation is God-shaping process in the development of a leader as he makes his kingdom contribution. Most agree on the need for spiritual formation, but few actually recognize its purpose. Terry Walling concludes, “It is in transitions where we often grapple with the deeper issues and learn that effective lives for God flow from being. God grants greater influences and increased spiritual authority to those who courageously choose to go deep with Christ.”¹⁴ It is difficult to move into the unknown. However, we live in an everchanging society. The societal culture is always changing and the traditional approach to ministry is alienated in the emerging faith communities and the general population. This is obvious in our context where a growing number of minority church plants are appearing while churches with an older congregation are in decline. Within the Network there are those who adhere to a tradition that holds high regard for titles, apostle, prophet, or bishop. There is a presumption that with titles comes a greater opportunity to succeed in attracting a following. Today, we have Facebook and other digital outlets that offer a very appealing opportunity to gain recognition and increase a following in the religious community. It is the observation of the research author that the desire to attract a following has taken over spiritual formation with some of the Network leader/church planters.

¹⁴ Walling, *Stuck*, 16.

In another segment of the Network are those who hold tightly to legalistic views that tend to isolate themselves from the larger community of believers. Because of their views on certain parts of Scripture, it becomes difficult for them to interact with those who hold a more liberal view of Scripture. This presents a challenge for LeaderImpac in promoting the leadership development training.

The idea that the “bigger-is-better”¹⁵ church mentality is the way to grow a church is now the prevalent point of view among the Network leader/church planters. This idea of success has served as a driving force towards accomplishing what is perceived as success. It has captured the minds and hearts of would-be church planters. The church planter in the LeaderImpac Network have not been exempted from this enticement. This is a deeply embedded understanding of success. This misguided and misunderstood view of success has been a setback for many gifted leaders.¹⁶ Researchers reveal that in America only 1 percent of churches can be considered megachurches, while 50 percent of all churches in America have under one hundred in attendance and 80 percent under two hundred in attendance on an average Sunday morning.¹⁷ These are hard facts leader/church planters find difficult to accept as their church planting outcome. The process of spiritual formation will provide answers to the heartfelt calling of the leader/church planter. Church planters as leaders must hear and be in alignment with

¹⁵ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2006), 7.

¹⁶ Kent Hughes and Barbara Hughes, *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1987), 9.

¹⁷ Gary L. McIntosh, *One Size Doesn't Fit All*, (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1999), 18.

God.¹⁸ This is the task before the research author as he moves towards development of the leader/church planter in his or her purpose and above all to finish well.

It has been well expressed in literature: traditions are difficult to overcome. What appears to be a common pathway among leader/church planters is to copy the best model that is perceived as successful.¹⁹ To copy the model of another is failing to recognize God has shaped him or her for a specific contribution. Leader/church planters are often quick to plant a church without getting a clear picture of what is their specific calling in the plan of God. In the mindset of the leader/church planter, it is seen as more convenient, faster, and easier to copy someone who in their view has succeeded. When one copies someone else, he or she is unaware they are denying their God-shaping identity.

The Spiritual Formation Challenge

Spiritual formation is more than a radical believer's journey into seclusion; it is the God-shaping journey of the leader and culminates with the words, "well done, thou good and faithful servant," the ultimate prize (Mt 25:21 KJV). The research author sets forth spiritual formation as a core value every church leader and planter should recognize as his or her priority in their leadership development. Statistics reveal a sobering revelation of those called to ministry: "over 4,000 churches closed in America last year."²⁰ "It is staggering to see the number of pastors . . . who leave the ministry within

¹⁸ Hughes and Hughes, *Liberating Ministry*, 73.

¹⁹ Patrick, *Church Planter*, 37.

²⁰ Samuel R. Chand, *Leadership Pain: The Classroom for Growth* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 37.

the first five years.”²¹ In sixty years of ministry, the research author has encountered leader/church planters enduring a frustrating journey and not ending well. This personal experience has brought the research author to the conclusion spiritual formation must be a vital part of the life of a leader, especially a church planter. Because of the low percentage of church planters who succeed, spiritual formation must be considered an integral part of leadership development.

Spiritual formation is a process and not an event or a one-time fix-all experience. It is a spiritual journey that gradually transforms a person’s character. The transformation of character moves the person closer to Christlikeness (Gal 4:19). It is a lifelong journey into Christlikeness. Understanding how the components of spiritual formation contribute to a person’s character gives confidence and greater dependency on God to face challenges no matter how great they may be.

What has become a frequent issue in the research author’s interaction with leader/church planters and in the larger community of leaders is how busyness and the demand on time has limited their alone time. Richard Beck describes busyness “as a spiritual sickness that runs throughout American society.”²² It is a persuasion that somehow busyness will get them to their desired goal. Life is lived in a whirlwind of a busy schedule. “The critical commodity of our culture has moved from money to time. Incredible demands are now placed on so few hours in a day.”²³ In all this, “we become

²¹ Patrick, *Church Planter*, 37.

²² Richard Beck, *Stranger God: Meeting Jesus in Disguise* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 134.

²³ Walling, *Stuck*, 101.

so busy doing this for God that we fail to guard time to be with God.”²⁴ The overwhelming pursuit to accomplish the goal preoccupies the agenda at the expense of a relationship with God.

Tellingly, this survey reveals that pastors and Christian leaders seem to be as caught up in the culture of busyness as anyone else. A full 65 percent of pastors (right up there with lawyers, managers and nurses) are among the most likely to rush from task to task in a way that interferes with their relationship with God. “It’s tragic. It’s ironic,” notes Zigarelli, “that the very people who could best help us escape the bondage of busyness are themselves in chains.”²⁵

The task for the research author is to bring to the forefront the importance of developing a spiritual life as foundational to reaching the goal in alignment with God’s purpose and goal according to how He has shaped the leader for the task.

Church planting starts with the leader/church planter. His or her inner life is the soil wherein the seeds of life become the values that shape his or her character and the values of Christlikeness. The people, events, and environment are instrumental in shaping lifelong values and are instrumental in forming the leader God would have him or her become. The development of clarity of purpose is a slowly evolving process. “We crave certainty, but God desires to give his followers clarity”²⁶ and destiny revelation. “When a person begins to see and realize the providence of God playing out in his or her future... it’s not something any one can create by his or her own doing—or even something that can be done by others.”²⁷ It is completely orchestrated at the hands of God. “God is the

²⁴ Virginia Todd Holeman and Stephen L. Martyn, *Inside the Leader’s Head: Unraveling Personal Obstacles to Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press), 38.

²⁵ Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2008), 118–119.

²⁶ Walling, *Stuck*, 9.

one who initiates and guides the process and brings it to fruition.... The soul-full leader is faithful to the one thing he can do—create the conditions that set us up for an encounter with God in the places where we need it most.”²⁸

If transformation is to occur within the newly developed church plant, it must first occur in the life of the leader/church planter. To succeed, he or she must be aligned with the purpose and plan of God. Issues of identity, formation, and purpose are indispensable in order to face the many decisions and obstacles he or she will have to overcome. This makes the development of the inner self vital. “What we do will naturally flow from who we become as the person God is shaping us into.”²⁹

“The real question, then, is not whether we will face failure. It is how well will we face it. How we respond to the challenges and trials in our lives and ministries makes all the difference in the world.”³⁰ Wayne Cordeiro brings to the forefront a question every leader/church planter will have to face. How does the leader/church planter respond to the difficulties in ministry? It is here that many fail to fulfill the mission. It further highlights the critical issues that hardship reveals. There is no other way to reveal how strong, resolved, and firm a leader is until he or she faces failure. “Challenge, setbacks, failure, and even suffering come to all of us, and these trials introduce leaders to themselves. They force us to discover not only our own resilience but to reflect on our deepest sense

²⁷ Walling, Curry, and Walling, *Awakening*, 67.

²⁸ Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, 16.

²⁹ Wayne Cordeiro, Francis Chan, and Larry Osborne, *Sifted: Pursuing Growth Through Trials, Challenges, and Disappointments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 35.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

of self.”³¹ Without experiencing failure, it is doubtful a deep reflection into self will occur. “It is staggering to see the number of pastors who end up divorced.”³² Within the LeaderImpac community, marital issues have been an occurrence too frequent. This reveals a weakness that needs to be dealt with. Church planting requires endurance. Without a strong faith to carry one through the difficult times, it is probable he or she will fail in the church planting journey. It is the trying of faith that will sustain the leader/church planter. “Faith that is revealed only under strain. . . it is something that can be acquired only through failure, learning your limits and learning to trust not in yourself but in the God who has called you.”³³ It is no secret why so many leaders quit. However, it is clear that experiencing failure has a positive value in that the true self is revealed and the opportunity to grow by recognizing our failure drives one to greater dependency on God.

Spiritual formation is a lifelong journey that involves growing in greater dependency in God, ultimately leading to understanding the ultimate plan for which one has been shaped. Moses is a prime example of a journey of a lifetime: a moment of crisis, a time of deep reflection, and the revelation of his ultimate contribution. His spiritual formation spans years of endurance, reflection, and coming to terms with who he had been shaped to become.

Once a leader/church planter realizes spiritual formation is a lifelong journey, he or she eventually comes to realize the big picture (sovereign perspective) and how God is

³¹ Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 32.

³² Patrick, *Church Planter*, 93.

³³ Cordeiro, Chan, and Osborne, *Sifted*, 32.

at work in his or her entire life. Leader/church planters tend to conceptualize spiritual formation as an event that takes place before the next event in life. The other misguided concept is that it only occurs in moments of intimacy and solitude. What is not understood is that the God-shaping spiritual formation journey includes the victories, hardships, and failures that occur throughout life. There is a continual shaping occurring in the spiritual formation process. It is initiated at birth and continues throughout life. Ministry is a stage in one's spiritual formation that continues to encompass a whole set of unique challenges. Expect trouble.³⁴ “The ultimate success of a leader will be determined by how well he or she masters the spiritual formation of the inner life. God saw all other skills, talents, and gifts only as effective as the foundation on which they are built—that foundation being the leader's inner life.”³⁵

Samuel D. Rima takes this quote from Spurgeon. The spiritual development of the leader/church planter is a lengthy process. It is important to understand that to have a “successful long-term ministry—that you're only as powerful as your dependence on God's strength.”³⁶

³⁴ Ibid., 31.

³⁵ Samuel D. Rima, *Leading from the Inside Out: The Art of Self-Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 14.

³⁶ Cordeiro, Chan, and Osborne, *Sifted*, 73.

PART TWO
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter two will introduce a portion of the literature in support of the project premise. The contribution will bring into view the widely accepted notion that hardship, and failure are negative elements in a leader's development. The success criteria among leader/church planters has also led to the disappointing experience. These noticeable elements are well documented in Scripture. Upon reflection of the lives of biblical leaders one is made aware of the reality that leaders have been developed through a series of hardships, failures and the disappointing absence of success which can be attributed to an ill-conceive criteria. These factors can be illustrated in the lives of Moses, Joseph, and Paul as defining moments in their development as leaders. Moses could not control his emotions and killed a man, Joseph struggled with relationships and lost extensive time with his family, and Paul experienced hardship in transitioning from legalism to grace. These elements are defining moments in one's spiritual formation that continue as intricate parts in the development of today's leaders. How these leaders finished well is an indication that the presumed negative elements are actually positive defining moments in one's spiritual formation and continue as intricate parts in the spiritual formation of today's leaders.

The literature review will refer to the experiences of various authors who single out the struggles of a leader/church planter. They will reveal challenges that evoke a sense of failure and at times they will thrive towards success only to be disappointed. Dan B. Allender highlights the urgency for leaders to face their weaknesses that can become the doorway to becoming a better leader.¹ Keller, McIntosh, and Rima reveal the pain and struggles associated with a leader and complicated further by the leader/church planter experience. The writings of David Brooks and of Kent Hughes and Barbara Hughes focus on the success syndrome. Chuck Miller and Ruth Haley Barton stress the lessons extracted from the crisis moments as factors in spiritual formation and leadership development.

Failure as a Positive Tool

Timothy Keller describes the prevalent reaction to pain and suffering as follows: “When we hear of a tragedy, there is a deep-seated psychological defense mechanism that goes to work. We think to ourselves that such things happen to other people.”² We deflect pain and suffering as some unfortunate experience in the lives of others. Unfortunately, if we live long enough, “The loss of loved ones, debilitating and fatal illnesses, personal betrayals, financial reversals, and moral failures—all of these will eventually come upon you if you live out a normal life span. No one is immune.”³

¹ Dan B. Allender, *Leading with a Limp* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2006), 6.

² Timothy Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2013), 2.

³ *Ibid.*, 3.

Keller's thesis is that we must take life seriously and in so doing, "we all need support if we are not to succumb to despair."⁴ He argues that none of the material things of life can provide the needed support that is necessary to heal and address the question, "why me?" in these times of pain and suffering. He argues that support can only be spiritual.⁵ In so doing he provides biblical support for pain and suffering as a positive part of our spiritual maturity in becoming more like Jesus. Keller uses the biblical account of the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace. As a metaphor the book is broken down into three parts. Part one looks at the "furnace." Part two moves into what the Bible says about the character of suffering and how we are to walk through afflictions. Finally, the third part provides a practical and positive biblical understanding of pain and suffering. "Suffering can refine us rather than destroy us because God himself walks with us in the fire."⁶ In the end the positive conclusion is that "suffering is at the very heart of the Christian faith. It is how Christ learned obedience and how he redeemed us. It is how a leader becomes Christlike. And that means that our suffering, despite its painfulness, is also filled with purpose and usefulness."⁷

The closing chapters relate "a first-person story from someone who has encountered suffering and walked with God through it."⁸ The insights from this book

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁷ Ibid., 163-164.

⁸ Ibid., 9.

give a broader perspective to the issue of pain and suffering. The process illustrates how spiritual formation occurs as a fiery furnace experience of life.

A scholarly and personal experience in this project comes from the work of Dan B. Allender. The main thesis of *Leading with a Limp* is based on his personal experience as a leader. It is important to reflect on his personal experience in walking through failure and hardship because it gives credence to his writings. The crisis experience as the founder and president of Mars Hill Graduate School sets the stage for what is the core claim of this book: “to the degree you face and name and deal with your failures as a leader, to that same extent you will create an environment conducive to growing.”⁹

Failure has a positive impact; the experience helps the leader recognize he or she is fundamentally “not in control,”¹⁰ and therefore a “deep, personal and abiding relationship with Jesus”¹¹ is vital. The difficulties of leadership will impact the leader’s character and that “makes the difference between advancing or de-centering the morale, competence, and commitment.”¹² He points out that the leader can respond in one of two ways. He or she can hide the failure, or the leader can acknowledge it openly and receive “the grace he [or she] most desperately needs to live well, not to mention lead well.”¹³ “When at last he [or she admits] flaws and failures, we gain a stronger personal center and greater peace.”¹⁴ He presents “six universal challenges leaders face in their journey

⁹ Allender, *Leading with a Limp*, 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹² *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 4.

and negative and positive responses to those challenges. Every leader faces them and is reminded that “we are fundamentally not in control.”¹⁵ The six challenges are as follows: crisis, complexity, betrayal, loneliness, weariness, and glory. On the negative side one can respond as such: cowardice, frigidity, narcissism, hiding, or fatalism. However, on the positive one can respond with courage, depth, gratitude, openness, or hope.

Allender’s contribution gives insight from the perspective of a professor of counseling and a therapist. There is a whole chapter titled “Forming Character, Not Running an Organization” followed by a chapter emphasizing that no one grows to maturity alone. Allender gives no mention of spiritual formation specifically; however, the emphasis is on hardship as a cause that moves one towards “a deep, personal and abiding relationship with Jesus.”¹⁶

- Gary McIntosh and Samuel Rima write, “In light of this increase in failures among Christian leaders, or at least our increased awareness of them, something must be done to educate present and future leaders as to the causes, results, and potential prevention of these failures.”¹⁷ This is the driving motive behind the thesis of their book.
- One of the basic claims of the book is that “Every leader suffers from some degree of personal dysfunction varying from extremely mild to extremely acute.”¹⁸ This personal dysfunction often serves as a driving force behind the desire to achieve

¹⁴ Ibid., 5.

¹⁵ Ibid., 29.

¹⁶ Ibid., 2.

¹⁷ Gary L. McIntosh and Samuel D. Rima, Sr, *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership: The Paradox of Personal Dysfunction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books 1997), 9.

¹⁸ Ibid., 12.

success.¹⁹ It is ironic that the same driving force to achieve success ultimately results in their downfall. “[This] dynamic is what has been labeled in this book as the “paradox of personal dysfunction in leadership.”²⁰ The book also suggests that communities of faith have the tendency to relegate this problem to the realm of spiritual warfare or some demonic attack, therefore the problem is seldom addressed.²¹ The author calls this leadership dysfunction a badge of the Boomer generation and a focal point of the church ministries.²² The claim is that “Baby Boomers...felt driven to achieve and succeed in an increasingly competitive environment.”²³ Thus, the drive was therefore inherited by this present generation to succeed at whatever cost.

The book is divided into three parts. Each part addresses a particular issue of the problem. Part one discovers what the dark side is, how it has developed, and how it affects one’s life. Part two focuses on the idea that there are five prominent dark sides experienced in leadership. Part three offers a five-step plan to overcome each dark side.

Success Is Not Always What One Thinks

Kent Hughes and Barbara Hughes bring insight into the misguided understanding of success. Their personal experience having been schooled in how to grow a successful church prompted the writing of a book with the lessons learned from their experience.

“None of the input was bad in itself, but the underlying premise of the advice, in

¹⁹ Ibid. 13.

²⁰ Ibid., 13.

²¹ Ibid. 13.

²² Ibid. 13.

²³ Ibid., 14.

aggregate, was deadly.”²⁴ Those areas in dispute are summarized as follows: marketing, sociology, stewardship, godliness, and preaching. Focusing and developing these five areas would ensure growth which is equivalent to success. “[The] messages kept coming to me, ‘If you will do this one thing well, your church will grow.’”²⁵ The focus was directed towards perfecting the five areas and doing so would guarantee growth which is equivalent to success. However, perfecting the five areas did not result in increased church growth. The efforts became more about self and less about God’s approval.

The five principles as a formula for success is a misleading concept. They are important elements to consider, but the concept alone is no guarantee for success. It does not take into account the ability of the leader and how he has been shaped by God. A formula for success without a healthy relationship with God often fuels significant feelings of failure in his or her endeavor.

The book is divided into four parts. In part I, the authors reveal their struggle to come to grips with the fact that a growing church and success do not equate. In addition, the realization “that 8 out of 10 will never pastor a church larger than 150” became their dark night of the soul.²⁶ They wrestled with questions, such as, can a person be a success as a pastor of a small church?, what is failure?, and what is success in ministry?²⁷ In part II, they define success as faithfulness, serving, loving, believing, prayer, holiness, and

²⁴ Kent Hughes and Barbara Hughes, *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1987), 27.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

attitude. God’s call is to be faithful rather than successful as perceived by the five principles. “A faithful life is a successful life.”²⁸ Part III draws from Scripture to encourage support for the calling of a leader. The Scripture, “I know the plans I have for you,” further encourages the leader to trust in God for the task he or she is called to (Jer 29:11 NIV).²⁹ Part IV offers ideas the leader can embrace to encourage faithfulness to the calling in his or her life against the “secularized ideals of success, straight from the business world, [which] are increasingly being applied in the church.”³⁰

David Brooks highlights the two sides of self: the inner and the outer. Without “a strategy to build character...not only your inner life but also your external life will eventually fall to pieces.”³¹ He labels this dynamic Adam I and Adam II. Adam I is the external self, focused on the pursuit of success with all its goals and ambitions. Adam II represents the internal self, focused on the moral qualities of love and the sacrifice of self in the service of others: being good, doing good with a serene inner character.

The argument of David Brooks is that Adam I and Adam II are not fully reconcilable, and one must live in the contradiction of both. This is because they live according to different logics. Adam I is a straightforward, utilitarian logic: input leads to output, effort leads to reward, and practice makes perfect. Adam II lives by an inverse logic. You give to receive, surrender to gain strength within yourself. Success leads to the

²⁸ Ibid., 43.

²⁹ Ibid., 123.

²⁹ Ibid., 188.

³⁰ Ibid., 188.

³¹ David D. Brooks, *The Road to Character* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2015), xii.

greatest failure, which is pride. Failure leads to the greatest success, which is humility and learning.³²

To weather the storms of life, the inner character of self must be developed. A strategy to build character must be in place; without that strategy, life will eventually fall to pieces.³³ The author proposes the following strategical plan. First, one must confront one's weaknesses and in doing so, build character. Secondly, character is built through relationships with those we admire. Examples are the best teachers. Through chapters two through ten, real life examples are highlighted to demonstrate how a person's struggles served to build character that ultimately served to make them the prime examples to be admired.

Spiritual Formation: The Answer in the Making

Chuck Miller's book *The Spiritual Formation of Leaders* carries this thesis: "This book is a call for Christians to become God-formed leaders, to minister from a place of spiritual health and an intimate relationship with their Creator and King....it is about a way of living that God can use to form in us the heart—and develop in us the lifestyle—of a healthy leader. This journey integrates spirituality and leadership."³⁴ The author argues that in the church today, "type A" people are accepted as potential leaders while those of more reflective natures are assumed to be candidates for ministries of prayer and

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., xiii.

³⁴ Chuck Miller, *The Spiritual Formation of Leaders: Integrating Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2007), 3.

spirituality. By doing so, churches effectively minimize spirituality as an essential part of leadership development.

The author contends there is a tension between the demands of leadership and the leader's spiritual health due to the busyness of ministry and the fact that much emphasis is placed on personality-driven ministry as opposed to ministry driven by character formed from the interior.³⁵ Miller emphasizes the importance of a character-driven ministry as a solution to making a godly "difference in the church and in the world."³⁶ He promotes the integration of spirituality and leadership development rather than their separation: "God's spiritual growth of the inner person and His development of that person's leadership knowledge and skills."³⁷ The approach is set forth as foundational to a healthy, productive, successful journey. The formational journey is a lifelong journey.

In Part I, the writer argues that the leader's life and ministry should reflect the solid integration of communion with God. He describes it as a lifelong journey with God, a journey in which answers can be found to many of the difficulties a leader will encounter on his spiritual and leadership journey. The argument is that effective leadership comes through a personal, intimate, ongoing, deepening relationship with God. This is spiritual formation. The second section deals with the community of the Trinity. The author argues that not enough effort is devoted to time alone with God. Once again, he states that leaders tend to be ministry-driven and not Spirit-led. And this is a major obstacle in finding time alone with God. The third part commissions how to live in the

³⁵ Ibid., 3.

³⁶ Ibid., 4.

³⁷ Ibid., 5.

world. Emphasis is in identifying the church as the people. Miller supports this assertion by quoting the many times Paul referred to the church: he referred to specific people by name. The church is not about the program or the building but about the people for whom Christ died. In part IV, the commission moves the people of God to the people who have not yet responded to Christ. This part deals with the generational changes that are shaping our culture and its values, and the paradigm shift moving from Modernity to Postmodernity. This is the generation leaders will be called to reach and without fully understanding that change is a constant issue, the leader will be limited in his or her ability to effectively reach this generation. How a leader is spiritually formed will determine his or her ability to adjust to and approach this generation.

Ruth Haley Barton writes about a total spiritual transformation “by which Christ is formed in us for the glory of God for the abundance of our own lives and for the sake of others.”³⁷ It is the view of the research author that this would give a leader the capability of adjusting his or her approach in a situation. In her words, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership* “is about the presence of God in the middle of a person’s leadership. It is an exploration of the relationship between a person’s private encounters with God in solitude and the call to leadership in the public arena.”³⁸ The author emphasizes the process to form Christ in the leader. The responsibility for transformation does not rest on the leader having to change his or herself but is the working of God. However, he or she does carry the responsibility of creating a condition and a place to

³⁷ Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2008), 15.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

encounter God. This allows the process to evolve and impact the leader in those quiet moments of seclusion. She draws support from the biblical story of Moses. His time in the desert provided the right condition and the right place to be with God.

Solitude caused Moses to slow down enough to pay attention to the burning bush in his life.³⁹ Leaders in today's world find themselves running through life unaware of a burning bush. Barton suggests,

One of the downsides of visionary leadership is that we can get our sights set on something that is so far out in the future that we miss what's going on in our life as it exists now....Before calling has anything to do with *doing*, it has everything to do with *being* that essence of yourself that God knew before the foundation of the earth, that God called into being and that God alone truly knows. It is the call to be who we are and at the same time to become more than we can yet envision.⁴⁰

In conclusion, the literature review reveals extensive agreement as to how hardship and failure are negatively perceived by some while with others it serves as a positive component in the spiritual formation journey. The secular ideals of success are becoming the standard to follow among many of today's leaders. The anticipation based on this standard has caused many leader/church planters to end their efforts prematurely.⁴¹ What has been overlooked is that a "faithful life is a successful life."⁴² Addressing the journey of spiritual formation from a personal experience gives increased credence to the premise of this project.⁴³ Clarifying hardship and failure as positive

³⁹ Ibid., 62.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 63, 77.

⁴¹ McIntosh and Rima, *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership*, 11-12.

⁴² Hughes and Hughes, *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome*, 9.

⁴³ Allender, *Leading with a Limp*, 2.

components in shaping the leader/church planter's character is shared by these scholars and practitioners. Spiritual formation is a necessary journey for all leader/church planters to minister from a place of spiritual health and an intimate relationship with Christ.⁴⁴

The literature review contribution gives an understanding to the purpose and proposed impact spiritual formation makes on the leader/church planter's development. The review provides a pathway of encouragement, relationships, and mentoring opportunities in dealing with the leadership challenges. Because "no one grows to maturity alone"⁴⁵ it is proposed by the research author to develop the LeaderImpac Network community into clusters and small groups that will provide opportunities for mentoring.⁴⁶

Missing in the literature is a strategy and direction to implement spiritual formation as an integral part of leadership development among the minority leadership community. A major part of the minority leadership community are oral learners. This creates a major challenge in communicating what may appear as complicated leadership concepts in the minority context. The challenge is to translate the leadership concepts into terms that are relatable and understood in this particular minority context. In addition, among the LeaderImpac Network are potential leaders in the Spanish speaking community that we envision as potential leaders that may implement the LeaderImpac strategy.

⁴⁴ Miller, *The Spiritual Formation of Leaders*, 3.

⁴⁵ Allender, *Leading with a Limp*, 155.

⁴⁶ Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, 15; Brooks, *The Road to Character*, xii.

CHAPTER THREE:

THEOLOGY OF THE NEW MINISTRY INITIATIVE

Chapter three explores the theological premise for spiritual formation as it relates to leadership development. Paul is a prime example of a leader/church planter. After a sudden life changing encounter, he spends three years of alone time in Arabia and progresses into a lifelong God-shaping spiritual formation journey. As a leader/church planter his life is filled with moments of transition that transform his inner being into a Christlike mindset.

The ultimate contribution of Moses is precipitated by his alone time in isolation. In the course of the journey the hardships, pain, and struggles are consistently present throughout the life of both biblical leaders. It is worthy to note that in spite of the painful adversity they are faced with their response demonstrates an inner strength that can only be attributed to an ongoing journey of spiritual formation. The research supports the premise of spiritual formation ultimately allows leadership to be sustainable. The positive take in allowing “the difficult, the confusing, and even the hurtful to enter a life – not because of His lack of caring, but to take us deeper into our pursuit of Him.”¹ The person

¹ Terry B. Walling, *Stuck: Navigating the Transitions of Life & Leadership* (Bloomington, MN: ChurchSmart Resources, 2008), 10.

becomes a stronger leader and grows in dependence on Him for the challenges he or she will face. Based on this theological reflection, a new ministry initiative is developed. The chapter concludes with spiritual formation as the underpinning process experience of the leader's development.

The Elements of Leadership Development

People, activities, and problems impact how one is shaped.² The spiritual formation process a leader must endure is an integral part of his or her leadership development. As one moves through life, the leader's ultimate contribution is gradually revealed: Such was the case with Esther: "Who knows? Maybe you were made queen for just such a time as this" (Est 4:14 Message). Church planting involves leadership, and for leadership to succeed continual process of spiritual formation is required. Leadership is about following God and people following the leader. In order to follow God, one must know where God is leading. It is evident in Scripture that those leaders who were called to implement the purpose of God were exposed to difficult people (Gen 37:19-20), hardship (2 Cor 6:4-6), and perilous situations (Ex 2:14). One cannot look in Scripture without acknowledging the hardship and the length of time leaders endure a God-shaped journey He has orchestrated.

Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation begins with God. In His sovereignty He allows leaders to be shaped by their exposure to people, events, and circumstances.³ The need to be born

² Robert J. Clinton, *The Making of a Leader* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1988), 33.

again is the essential reversal to the negative formation of the human spirit. To be born again is to allow the work of the Holy Spirit to reshape the human spirit into Christlikeness in order for the leader to face people, events, and environments in a Christlike matter. The presence of the Holy Spirit facilitates Christ formed in us. In the essay by Dallas Willard as published in the book *Life in the Spirit*, edited by Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis, Willard writes:

It is appropriate to regard this inner dimension of the self as the “spiritual” side of the human being, and then to “spiritual formation” as the process of reshaping or redeveloping it until it has, to a substantial degree, the character of the inner dimension of Jesus himself. This is a process in which the agency of the Holy Spirit is indispensable, along with other instrumentalities of God and his Kingdom. One can think of the process as formation of the human spirit as well as formation by the divine Spirit, for it indeed is both.⁴

Spiritual formation recently has been a major topic of books, discussions, and courses of study in seminaries. According to Greenman:

Arising from these core biblical teachings is the central concern of the Christian tradition for what is now customarily called “spiritual formation.” Although the church’s language to express this area of interest and commitment has varied over time and between different streams of Christianity, familiar phrases such as the pursuit of holiness, godly living, spiritual perfection, the deeper life and the like all point to a common core of ideas. The basic goal of spiritual formation—becoming like Christ through the Spirit—is shared across Christian confessions and has remained constant across the centuries in diverse communities.⁵

³ Terry B. Walling, Zack Curry, and Kyle Walling, *Awakening: Awakening to the Call of God* (Chico, CA: Author, 2014), 50.

⁴ Dallas Willard, “Spiritual Formation as a Natural Part of Salvation,” in *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*, eds. Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 46.

⁵ Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis, “Introduction,” in *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*, eds. Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 10.

In view of the present state among leaders in church planting, greater clarity and urgency must be forthcoming. The mystery over the concept of spiritual formation has hindered a deeper understanding of such an all-important detail.⁶ It is not enough to know about spiritual formation; such is the case among many leaders and church planters. If leaders and church planters are to grow in Christ and fulfill their calling, then a more complete understanding of spiritual formation is at the heart of accomplishing their goal. To explore the dynamics of spiritual formation, the following must be considered.

First, the question must be addressed: What is spirituality? Spirituality involves the realm of the inner life. Spirituality extends to all areas of the inner being in which the Holy Spirit is actively involved and sheds light on what eventually will occur in the leader's journey. "Spiritual experiences (Paul on the Damascus road, and so on) do not constitute spiritual formation, though they could be a meaningful part thereof and sometimes are."⁷ In an essay compiled in *Life in the Spirit*, Eugene Peterson writes, "Spiritual formation is primarily what the spirit does, forming the resurrection life of Christ in us."⁸ Positive or negative, one's spirit is being formed. This ultimately is exhibited in the leader's behavior, attitude, and outlook.⁹ Oddly enough, "Spiritual

⁶ Ibid., 11.

⁷ Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 25.

⁸ Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 237, as cited in Greenman and Kalantzis, eds., *Life in the Spirit*, 26.

⁹ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 19.

formation does not take place primarily in small groups and Sunday school classes; instead, it mostly takes place in the well-lived and everyday events of life.”¹⁰

Spiritual formation is not limited to the community of faith but continues throughout the leader’s journey. This is according to God’s purpose for the sake of the world.¹¹ Those who have responded to God’s call do not live isolated lives but serve a greater purpose in the kingdom of God. As a family, as a community, and as the body of Christ, we live with a kingdom purpose. In the spiritual formation journey, the leader is shaped into a vessel ready to fulfill God’s ultimate purpose.

In the development of the leader/church planter, it is crucial he or she be transformed within his or her inner life in order to press through the challenges he or she will encounter along the lifelong journey. Development, maturity, and transformation are gained through spiritual formation. Greenman offers the following statement: “Spiritual formation addresses the gradual and progressive movement of character development and personal growth.”¹² Sometimes spiritual formation involves dealing with the hurtful actions of other people, even those who may be close friends. Such was the experience of the research author his assistant pastor spilt the church in the middle of building the church facility. Dan Allender addresses his personal experience: “Beyond the loss of relationship and joy is the fear that comes when a friend becomes a sworn enemy.”¹³

¹⁰ James C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 38.

¹¹ Greenman and Kalantzis, eds. *Life in the Spirit*, 24.

¹² *Ibid.*, 24.

¹³ Dan B. Allender, *Leading with a Limp* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2006), 32.

There is no argument against achieving and maintaining a high level of spiritual maturity. “Being ‘conformed to Christ’ or ‘becoming like Christ’ involves embracing a ‘cruciform’ way of life with a distinctive shape expressed in obedience to God...[and this] involves personal spiritual disciplines such as prayer, confession, fasting and biblical mediation.”¹⁴

Being and Doing

When it comes to *being* and *doing* as they relate to spiritual formation, it is crucial to clearly define *being* and *doing*. It is prevalent in church planting that *being* and *doing* are viewed as one and the same. The more one accomplishes, the more one feels vindicated and in alignment with God.¹⁵ This has become a major stumbling block among leader/church planters. In their quest to succeed, *being* has been overshadowed by the relentless effort of *doing* ministry. The identity of the leader/church planter is often determined by achievements and accomplishments, and when performance stops, he or she ceases to be valuable.¹⁶

Often, not only does the leader/church planter’s effort fail, but the planter gives up entirely on ministry.¹⁷ *Doing* in such cases serves only to validate the calling. So often the *doing* is the result of one’s talent, skill, and personality. Eugene Peterson writes, “The great weakness of North American spirituality is that it is all about us: fulfilling our potential, getting in on the blessings of God, expanding our influence, finding our gifts,

¹⁴ Ibid., 26.

¹⁵ Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 268.

¹⁶ Ibid., 270.

¹⁷ Wayne Cordeiro, Francis Chan, and Larry Osborne. *Sifted: Pursuing Growth Through Trials, Challenges, and Disappointments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 25.

getting a handle on principles by which we can get an edge over the competition. And the more there is of us, the less there is of God.”¹⁸ The LeaderImpac Network is faced with this challenge. If Christ is to be lifted up, the Network members need to reflect Him more and rely less on the giftedness and talent of team members.

The pressure to be full-time in ministry as a sign of success and validation plays a great part in leaders taking for granted the importance of investing in *being*. *Doing* in itself is not spiritual formation. Leader/church planters may entertain after thoughts of one’s actions, “Did I build this church facility? Or did God help me, or did He build it?” The church spilt was a devastating experience. The facility was built, and the lesson was learned, complete dependency on God was more important than a building. *Doing* can easily be understood as one’s own doing. And to take ownership of the results is to not acknowledge God. At the expense of *being*, what also occurs is to overwork one’s self to the point of exhaustion and potential burnout. This continues to be a factor in the church planting community.¹⁹

The busyness of navigating a bi-vocational life—ministry, work, family, and *being* in His presence—is no easy task. The sovereign perspective is lost in the busyness of life. Terry Walling suggests aligning with God’s sovereign perspective as an important aspect of keeping one’s focus on one’s direction:

We typically live situationally, yet God calls each of us to live sovereignly. There has never been a time when God hasn’t been at work. The question isn’t whether

¹⁸ Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 335.

¹⁹ Boa, *Conformed to His Image*, 268.

God is at work; the question is: what is God at work doing? And the even greater question is: do we, God's people, have the courage to join God's work?²⁰

To have the sovereign mindset, it is imperative to be in His presence. *Being* encompasses more than a casual time of prayer; it is a time of allowing God to shape the inner self.²¹ Jacob wrestled with God, Abraham was tested by God, Jonah found himself in the belly of a whale, and Paul endured pain until the end. These experiences were lessons that served as a God-shaping journey into the deeper areas of a person's being. The lack of spirituality was a factor in not able to understand the interaction with God. Such was the case of the research author coming to Christ. *Being* in his presence allows for deeper insight into His divine purpose. To be in His presence is not about Him blessing our efforts or answering our concerns but allowing Him to reveal Himself to us while shaping us for His purpose. *Being* is about an intimate relationship with God. *Being* is to be developing a mental and spiritual alignment with Him. This is vital because, as stated by Kenneth Boa, "Being and doing are interrelated, the biblical order is critical: what we do should flow out of who we are, not the other way around. Otherwise our worth and identity are determined by achievements and accomplishments, and when we stop performing, we cease to be valuable."²²

Being with Christ and in alignment with Him requires total commitment. At the same time, we soon realize following Christ and leading people is like the right foot and

²⁰ Terry Walling, *IDEA Coaching Pathway: Coaching the Person (Instead of Just the Problem)* (Chico, CA: Author, 2015), 33.

²¹ Boa, *Conformed to His Image*, 270.

²² *Ibid.*, 270.

left foot in ministry. “Omitting either amounts to amputation.”²³ *Being* and *doing* cannot be separated without affecting one’s influence in ministry. The inward journey of *Being* must have an outward journey in *Doing*, so as to be interrelated.²⁴

Biblical Leaders

There comes a time in the development of every leader what Terry Walling calls a time of transition: “transitions are often the defining moments where Godly character is forged,”²⁵ Transitions are characterized by a prolonged period of restlessness, self-doubt, lack of motivation, job stagnation, diminished confidence, lack of direction distance from God, isolation, relational conflict and tension, lack of effectiveness, and struggle to stay focused and motivated.²⁶

Transition is contrary to what is prescribed today in many leadership training manuals and programs. Reggie McNeal’s added insight to what is promoted as a fix-all for becoming a successful leader. He writes, “God uses a preparation model for developing leaders, not a planning model. Leaders who give their best effort to their current assignment from God are [preparing] for their next level of influence.”²⁷ As one moves through a time of transition, difficult questions arise that command deep inner reflection into one’s identity and purpose. This is reflected in the life of Paul and Moses

²³ Robert A. Fryling, *The Leadership Ellipse: Shaping How We Lead by Who We Are* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 11.

²⁴ Elizabeth O’Connor, *Journey Inward, Journey Outward* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 28.

²⁵ Walling, *Stuck*, 7.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁷ Reggie McNeal, *A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass 2000), 45.

who became successful leaders because of their understanding of the positive effect of transitions. The three Hebrew children walked in the fiery furnace, but they were not alone. Leaders walk through hardships but are never alone. The awareness of that truth is live changing.

Three elements contribute to the leader's development: people, events, and circumstances.²⁸ Moses grew up as a “child of two cultures [*people*], both of which he would need to understand in order to fulfill his unique role in history.”²⁹ The pivotal *event* was the killing of an Egyptian that precipitated his alone time in the desert, a time of solitude and reflection. Finally, the *circumstance* of the desert resulted in a face-to-face encounter with God. His identity was not to be found in his skills, gifts, or abilities but solely on ability of complete dependency on God.

Being shaped by the elements not under his control, lessons were learned that put him in a position for greater dependency on God. With a new level of dependency comes clarity and understanding of how he has been shaped for his contribution.³⁰ In the end a vibrant relationship is the purpose of God.

Although Moses had the upbringing and training of a prince, dependency on his talents would be counterproductive to the purpose of God. In order to lead the millions of ex-slaves through the desert without the essentials for survival, Moses would have to come to terms that his survival was dependent exclusively on God. His life experience with *people*, *events*, and *circumstances* re-enforced this situation. He was now ready for

²⁸ Walling, Curry, and Walling, *Awakening*, 50.

²⁹ McNeal, *A Work of Heart*, 5.

³⁰ Walling, Curry, and Walling, *Awakening*, 50.

complete dependency and obedience. His self-reflection revealed his inadequacies for the task. He realized he had no power but the power from God.³¹

In the life of Paul, “God secured the influences of three cultures in the heart-shaping of the apostle [Roman, Greek, and Jewish]. All three cultural streams converged in the home of Saul of Tarsus.”³² This environment clearly conditioned him for the purpose for which he was called. The person and the event of influence was Jesus, on the road to Damascus. Saul’s sudden encounter with Jesus quickly upended his theology. Arrogance in his persuasion was brought to an end. Having the sins of the past compounded with his consent in the death of Stephen surely weighed heavily on his heart. The three days of physical blindness in no way compared to the spiritual blindness that caused him to inflict so much harm on the church. It is the assumption of the research author that Paul carried a sense of guilt throughout life and was able to redirect that negative energy towards the advancement of the gospel with a sense of indebtedness: “The only credentials I brought to it were invective and witch hunts and arrogance. But I was treated mercifully because I didn’t know what I was doing—didn’t know Who I was doing it against” (1 Tim 1:13 MSG). Paul’s experience defined the rest of his life.³³ The lesson he learned is that remorse can serve as a positive component in one’s spiritual formation. What we gather from the life of biblical leaders is that the nature of the spiritual formation process (heart-shaping by God) can be severe. The common thread that affected and shaped their lives is the hardship, the struggles, and the failures

³¹ Ibid., 49.

³² McNeal, *A Work of Heart*, 37.

³³ Ibid., 41.

throughout life. This painful experience can be expected by all leaders who expect to be used by God.

The development of these leaders provides insight as to how God works in every leader in every era. Reggie McNeal writes, “Christian leaders who report blinding light Call experiences will often report dynamics similar to Paul’s. The Call encounter with God provides new clarity of previous efforts as unenlightened pursuits. Their view of God sometimes undergoes significant revision. They testify to being brought to a point of helplessness in their own strength.”³⁴ A crisis, a time of reflection, and the encounter with God appears to be a pattern among biblical and contemporary leaders.

What Reggie McNeal calls the “blinding light call experience” is a life-changing event. The research author felt a sense of God’s presence for some time before his conversion but because of his state of ignorance he did not understand. The sudden death of his 16-year-old sister who was a Christian, brought him to his knees. He understood this to be the strong voice of God. It initiated steps towards alignment to the purpose and kingdom contribution. It provided direction in life and a life of intentionality in obedience to the mission he would receive from God.³⁵

Biblical Foundation for Spiritual Formation

The concept of union with Christ is implied throughout Scripture. The Apostle Paul asserts to what it means to be in union with God. His writings not only instruct the church at-large but reveals the driving forces that shaped him: *people* he has encountered,

³⁴ Ibid., 40.

³⁵ Ibid., 41–42.

events that became points of transition, and *circumstances* that were constantly characterized by hostility contributed to his spiritual formation. Paul's writings are not the only New Testament texts that connect spiritual formation to such shaping forces. Editors Jeffrey Greenman and George Kalantzis make the following contribution in writing the introduction section to *Life in the Spirit*: "This emphasis on formation into mature conformity to Christ through cooperation with the work of the Spirit is not exclusive to Paul; the same basic claims are found throughout the New Testament in the varied language of the four Gospels, Peter's letters and John's epistles."³⁶

In writing to the Galatians, Paul becomes passionate in revealing the importance of spiritual formation: "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you" (Gal 4:19 NIV). The verb used (*morphousthai*) refers to the process whereby the fetus develops into an infant. The noun implied by the verb denotes "essential form [*morphe*] rather than outward shape [*schema*]."³⁷ Like childbirth, spiritual formation is a natural process. Its goal is to become Christlike: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:5 KJV). Spiritual formation is a prolonged journey and tailored to each individual accordingly. Consider the journey of the birth of a baby: normally nine months in the womb, growing to where it can come to full term and be born. The parallel is consistent with the stages of spiritual formation, solitude and self-reflection being major parts of spiritual formation. The Apostle Paul writes again, "I no

³⁶ Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis, "Introduction," in *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*, eds. Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 10.

³⁷ Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to The Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 203.

longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God” (Gal 2:20 NIV).

The Shaping Elements of Spiritual Formation

It has been the experience of the research author that leaders fail to recognize when God is highlighting a learning lesson in the conflict, for “God uses conflict to shape the leader’s heart.”³⁸ The moment of crisis is the opportune time to open one’s self to greater insight about the inner life. This is a critical time for character maturity. As is noteworthy in the lives of biblical leaders, pain has been a constant element in their spiritual formation. “Pain has been a master teacher for all effective spiritual leaders. Rather than running from it, the spiritual giants have embraced it to learn from it. They believe that God has purposes in pain.”³⁹

Conflict comes in many forms; in a family crisis, relational conflict, or a perceived ministry failure it is viewed as a negative element impeding one’s need to excel in a competitive endeavor as in planting a church. Godly success comes by allowing “God to carry on his heart-shaping activity in the pressure cooker of conflict.”⁴⁰ God sovereignly, from the beginning of a leader’s life and through the times of conflict, orchestrates and allows for adverse situations in one’s life. It develops character traits in leader’s lives that are developed in no other way. It is also an indication that God continues to work in his or her life, equipping the leader for the journey. The negative

³⁸ McNeal, *A Work of Heart*, 155.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

elements work to produce greater dependency and obedience to God. Humility became a trait Moses was able to embrace through his experience moving from the palace floors to the sandy floors of the desert. Concerning Jesus, Hebrews 5:8 (KJV) states, “Though he were a Son yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.”

Contemporary Leaders: Dallas Willard and Dan B. Allender

Gary Moon, writing about Dallas Willard, adds to the desert experience in the following statement: “Deserts—spiritually speaking, at least—are places of encounter. As we read Christian history, we see how the desert fathers and mothers found in the deserts a laboratory of the soul. We read the Bible and see how characters from Old and New Testaments go into the desert and encounter God. Things happen in a desert.”⁴¹ Troubles and hardship come in many forms. The experiences of Moses, Paul, (Gal 1:17) and Jesus in the desert give credence to the idea of a desert experience among today’s leaders. Dallas Willard was no stranger to a desert experience, having endured trouble and hardship. His young life is a story of loss and rejection which he appeared to battle throughout his life.⁴² A severe bout of vertigo and ongoing migraine headaches continued throughout his life and at times became particularly acute.⁴³ His struggle with loneliness and the constant thought of inadequacy may have contributed to his workaholicism.⁴⁴ Moon gives further insight in writing about Willard’s spiritual formation experience: “To

⁴¹ Gary W. Moon, *Becoming Dallas Willard: The Formation of a Philosopher, Teacher and Christ Follower* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 161.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 35, 46.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 97-98.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 138.

see actual invasions of human life by the presence and action of God...greatly encouraged him through his difficult time and...without knowing it, [he] stepped further into the disciplines of silence and solitude on a regular basis.”⁴⁵ Having experienced hardship and struggle caused him to gravitate to those experiencing pain and loss.⁴⁶ He remembers a time he was prayed for and “what followed was a deep experience with the vivid presence of God. It stayed with me for days, weeks. It never left me really... After that I never had the feeling that God was distant or had a problem hearing me.”⁴⁷ It is evident that a “blinding light call experience” did occur in the life of Dallas Willard, leading the way in his spiritual formation.

Spiritual Formation for Today

To misunderstand the positive outcome of spiritual formation may expose one to the present-day challenges that are both physical and emotional. What appears to be the challenge in ministry today is dealing with frustration, stress and prolonged bouts of depression that may lead to dire consequences. Recently, the suicide among those in ministry has been publicized at a growing rate. The general cause has been attributed to depression, and suicide was viewed as the only solution. “What demons torment us? The struggles in spirituality that are more unique to our age might be named as follows: Naïveté about the nature of spiritual energy, pathological busyness, distraction, and

⁴⁵ Gary W. Moon, *Becoming Dallas Willard: The Formation of a Philosopher, Teacher and Christ Follower* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 64-65.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

restlessness, and a critical problem with balance, leading to a bevy of divorces.”⁴⁸ These elements affect leaders and bring them to a defining moment.

In the case of Dallas Willard, his rise to prominence was a direct result of *people*, *events*, and the *circumstance* in which he was raised. “Dallas’s young life is a story of loss and rejection, but also of sacrificial love and kinship. The loss of his mother and rejection from his stepmother left Dallas with a fear that he was not good enough, that he would not be wanted. He thought that his sister-in-law would want him to leave after her baby was born.”⁴⁹

His life is a contemporary demonstration of how God allows negative elements of life to shape one’s journey in whatever *circumstance* they find themselves. Being shaped in pain allowed him to be empathetic in ministering with great compassion for others. This was a positive result of a difficult time. The research author, sitting in the classroom as Dallas Willard taught on spiritual formation, was amazed at his humble demeanor and sense of compassion as he made time to sit down with each student. His level of education, wisdom and stature did not get in the way of being compassionate with the younger developing leaders. The God-shaping journey of Dallas Willard resulted in a Christlike compassion for others.

Dan B. Allender had a unique spiritual formation story that was his own to tell. His journey opened his eyes to a greater awareness for a more intimate dependency in God. His alarming confession: “if you’re a leader, you’re in the battle of your life.”⁵⁰ His

⁴⁸ Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 22, 31-33.

⁴⁹ Moon, *Becoming Dallas Willard*, 35.

leadership experience in the establishment of a graduate school proved to be the most costly thing he could ever do.⁵¹ Reflecting on the experience, he was asked if he would ever do it again, “Never, I don’t hate myself that much.”⁵² In spite of the grief and brokenness, he had no regrets. The reward was a wakeup call to being more intentional in his intimate relationship with Jesus. The awareness of greater dependency in God always comes at great cost, a time of spiritual formation. Becoming a God-shaped leader comes through extensive spiritual formation which can be the costliest thing in life.

But if you want to live life for the sake of others, then nothing is better than being a God-shaped leader.⁵³ In the case of the research author, early in his conversion, he was encouraged to read *Through the Gates of Splendor* and *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians*, which serve as models to pursue. They were influential in his spiritual formation and leadership development.⁵⁴ Through the years, reading biographies of people in leadership has proven to be a significant source of reinforcement of the value of spiritual formation in leadership development. The recent biography readings of Adoniram Judson and Dallas Willard has continued to contribute to his God-shaping spiritual formation journey.

⁵⁰ Dan B. Allender, *Leading with a Limp* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2006), 1.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 2

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵⁴ Elisabeth Elliot, *Through the Gates of Splendor* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957); James Gilchrist Lawson, *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians* (Anderson: Warner Press, 1911).

Accepting the Elements of Spiritual Formation

Extracting lessons out of a negative crisis is what distinguishes a leader from a follower. To understand the issue at hand and ask the right question. Where is God in all this takes great insight that is cultivated in one's spiritual formation. "Leaders create meaning out of events and relationships that devastate non-leaders."⁵⁵ This level of maturity comes through a long process of spiritual formation. Kent and Barbara Hughes write of their church planting experience that the church plant never seemed to grow: "There were only twenty-five in attendance, half of whom were children, four of whom were our own."⁵⁶ It was a struggle, and what appeared to be a failed attempt in planting a church was actually a God-shaping spiritual formation journey, a lesson that faithfulness was the real success in the eyes of God. In the words of Dallas Willard, "The most important thing God gets out of your life is the person you become."⁵⁷ Kent and Barbara Hughes describe the pain and hardship that contributed to their Christlike spiritual formation: "He has afflicted me, yes! But he has never done me evil even when I lost my father as a four-year-old, even when disappointed and hurt by close friends. Even in difficulties in child-rearing, *even in professional failures*."⁵⁸ Similarly, Sheryl Brady records the pain of defeat in planting a church:

We were going for broke, and broke is exactly what we got. Our bank account was broken. Our confidence was broken. Our spirits were broken. Our pride was

⁵⁵ Warren G. Bennis and Robert J. Thomas, *Leading for a Lifetime* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2007), 17.

⁵⁶ Kent Hughes and Barbara Hughes, *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 105.

⁵⁷ Moon, *Becoming Dallas Willard*, 257.

⁵⁸ Hughes and Hughes, *Liberating Ministry*, 121.

broken. Our vision was broken. My heart was broken...we were passing through a training season. At the time I told God, "You brought us here to build a successful church." Later I realized He was saying, "No, I brought you here to build a successful leader."⁵⁹

Had they not been in intimate relationship with God, it is unlikely they would have heard the voice of God amidst such circumstances

⁵⁹ Samuel R. Chand, *Leadership Pain: The Classroom for Growth* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 231.

PART THREE
MINISTRY PLAN

CHAPTER 4

MINISTRY PLAN

Chapter 4 articulates a ministry plan that introduces sustainable practices in the God-shaping spiritual formation journey among the LeaderImpac Network. Before spiritual formation can become a sustainable part of ministry, over committing the mindset of “Doing” ministry must be addressed. Identifying self and how self is shaped will reveal the workings of one’s inner life as a leader/church planter. Ideally, the leader/church planter will see the value of developing the inner being and cultivate the inner life with the full understanding of the process. Ultimately, *being* and *doing* comes together in a holistic manner. What is envisioned is team members impacting the larger community of leaders and church planters. The principal architect, the research author will provide the pathway, the means and sponsorship to accomplish the preferred outcome.

The theological implication of the writings of Paul are conclusive: his ultimate goal is that followers of Christ become Christlike. This involves more than the initial acceptance of Christ. It involves a process of maturing into a healthy, intimate relationship with Christ. The hardship in Paul’s life factored into his spiritual formation is well documented. His life reveals people, events, and circumstances that contributed to

his resolve as a leader. His life is a prime example of spiritual formation in the development of a leader. Without his intimate relationship with Christ, it is doubtful he would have survived the many challenges he faced in planting churches throughout the known world. Paul's commitment to the Call was a source of motivation to endure the hardships that were elements of his spiritual formation. The constant persistence in preaching the gospel highlights the importance of effort to pursuing Christlikeness. His struggles had a profound effect on his development as a leader. For him to utter "Follow me as I follow Christ" (Phil 3:17 NIV) gives a window into his inner self to work through adversity and encourage others to follow the same path, recognizing that when one is weak, one is strong.

Emerging among the various core themes of the Bible is what has become known as spiritual formation. The theological understandings of spiritual formation has been revitalized by prominent scholars such as Dallas Willard and Richard Foster. They have highlighted spiritual formation with widespread acceptance. However, spiritual formation continues to be overshadowed by the pursuit of success defined by the number of church attendees one gathers. Spiritual formation is not considered a key ingredient for attracting attendees. Marketing has been the strategy, and a performance-based model has become the medium to attract and maintain a large crowd.

Spiritual formation is often interpreted as a time of prayer for answers to a specific problem. Leaders and church planters fail to understand spiritual formation as a process of being God-shaped into the leader to be and whom the people follow into Christlikeness. Spiritual formation is recognized as an essential part of leadership but fails to generate sufficient interest to the point of intentional effort to embrace the

process.¹ In one's effort to plant a Christlike church, one tends to rely on one's skill and talent and fails to take into account the words of Christ, "without me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5 NIV).

Spiritual Formation as Being

In the process of spiritual formation there is a point when the leader must come to terms with the real self who lives within and accept and submit to the orchestrating hand of God. Too often the outward self is promoted, and the leader fails to realize how one has been shaped and for what purpose. "Some Christians speak of a personal encounter with Jesus as if this were a one-time matter—something that happens at conversion. This is a tragic confusion of an introduction and a relationship... what God longs for us to experience is intimate knowing that comes by means of an ongoing relationship."² Being in an intimate relationship with Christ is not an option, but essential. "Too often we think of God's call (or our vocation) solely in terms of what we do. People speak of being called to the ministry.... However, while doing will always be involved, vocation is much more than our occupation. It is the face of Christ we are called from eternity to show to the world. It is who we are called to be."³ It is apparent in the present culture the demands of a busy life work contrary to cultivating a deeper relationship with Christ. Eugene Peterson makes the following observation: "we know, from long experience, how easy it

¹ Ronald Rolbeiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York: Doubleday 1999), 32.

² David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2004), 36.

³ *Ibid.*, 101.

is to get interested in ideas of God and projects for God and gradually lose interest in God alive, deadening our lives with the ideas and the projects. This happens a lot. Because the ideas and projects have the name of God attached to them, it is easy to assume that we are involved with God.”⁴ This is the urgency of discovering one’s self, and “We do not find our true self by seeking it. Rather, we find it by seeking God.”⁵ Peter came to this realization through many difficulties and disappointing experiences. These difficulties and disappointments are major factors contributing to the leader’s spiritual formation.

Spiritual Formation is Leadership Development

The failure and the diminishing practice of spiritual formation as a vital part of leadership has led to the unsuccessful effort of a number of leader/church planters. If leader/church planters are to succeed in fulfilling their call and taking the church on a spiritual journey, it will be attributed to their ability to endure spiritual formation as a leader which will move them toward success. Without understanding how life experience translates into spiritual formation, the journey as a leader will be short-lived. “I am convinced a key to effective leadership is our personal, intimate, ongoing, and ever deepening relationship with God.”⁶ The ability to lead others into a deeper walk with Christ is the result of his or her relationship with Christ. “At the heart of spiritual

⁴ Eugene H. Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 31.

⁵ Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself*, 11.

⁶ Chuck Miller, *The Spiritual Formation of Leaders: Integrating Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2007), 11.

leadership is the capacity to notice the activity of God so we can join him in it.”⁷ A relationship is an ongoing journey filled with challenges that reveal the inner workings of self. “It is the call to be who we are and at the same time to become more than we can yet envision. God called Moses to be who he was, but he was also calling him to become something that he was not yet—a leader.”⁸ In order to be what God would have one be, one must discover who one is. Moses was talented and skillful but unaware of who he was and who he could be.

Spiritual Formation is a Lifelong Journey

The common thread of the lives of Moses and Paul is the duration of their development. The process predates their awareness of God’s intent. The God-shaping experience continued throughout their life. Kenneth Boa calls it a step-by-step journey. “To follow Christ is to move into territory that is unknown to us and to count on his purposeful guidance.”⁹ He affirms that the process “is gradual, and we become more substantial and real as we cooperate with the process by years of small choices in favor of God’s purpose.”¹⁰ Terry Walling describes it as a move “to take us deeper into our pursuit of Him.”¹¹

⁷ Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry* (Downers Grove: IVP Books 2008), 68.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁹ Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 257.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 258.

¹¹ Walling, *Stuck*, 10.

The journey is lifelong because of the changing of self, the culture, and the ego of self-reliance. It is not a product we pursue. It is not to make one a better person. It is understanding the purpose of God and the ability to see beyond the situational context and focus on the world from a sovereign perspective.¹² “Spiritual formation is the lifelong process of becoming in our character and actions the new creation we already are in Christ.”¹³

Goals

The goal of this new ministry initiative is to bring spiritual formation awareness to the leader/church planter. It has been the research author’s experience minority leader/church planters tend to be ill-prepared for the church planting journey. The second part of the goal is to bring awareness to how he or she is God-shaped for the God-shaped journey. For the leader/church planter to understand the dynamics of the negative and positive elements that make up spiritual formation will contribute to his development as a spiritual influence to the church planting community.

The Leadership Purpose of Spiritual Formation

The principle part of this project is to bring attention to the purpose of spiritual formation in leadership. Through the experience of the research author and illustrated in the lives of biblical leaders and the writings of contemporary scholars, there is ample evidence to corroborate the premise that godly character emerges from an intimate relationship with God. The process of spiritual formation sustains one’s leadership

¹² Ibid., 106.

¹³ Boa, *Conformed to His Image*, 257.

resolve and commitment in the lifelong journey. Without the God-reshaping of the heart, leadership will lack sustainability and will remain fragile and vulnerable to a crisis that is certain to come. Transformation of the self must occur. “The goal of the spiritual journey is the transformation of self.”¹⁴ The task for which Moses was called was sustainable only because of his intimate relationship with his Creator. Similarly, Paul endured a life continually exposed to *people* of alternative views in life, *events* that were public uproars, and *circumstances* that exposed him to death encounters. As the leader considers his or her life, it is noteworthy that the common thread among leaders and church planters called of God is that transformation is not solely for his or her survival, but as stated by Ruth Haley Barton, “Our transformation is never for ourselves alone. It is always for the sake of others.”¹⁵ It is rewarding to know the leaders and church planters will continue to influence emerging leaders along the way throughout their journey.

Spiritual Formation, Yes. Doing Ministry, No.

In the research author’s sixty years of ministry, he has identified a mindset that is duplicated among leader/church planters: “Doing” at the expense of one’s own spiritual development. It is as if the church planter has been given an ultimatum: If you do not get busy, then the church plant will not grow. More often than not, the leader chooses to get busy. Urgency in “doing” the work with all the other demands of life has limited the church planter’s ability to engage the disciplines that contribute to one’s spiritual formation as an intricate part of his or her leadership development. Failure to recognize

¹⁴ Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself*, 15.

¹⁵ Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, 74.

its vital place in leadership development adds to the increased possibility of failure when hardship arises in planting the church. The leader/church planter will be susceptible and tend to rely on skill and talent in accomplishing the task. What occurs is an increase of self, and “more of self means less of God.”¹⁶ The journey towards dependency on God is overshadowed by one’s own efforts. This is a continual challenge among leaders who are predominantly type A individuals. “Doing” becomes the principle obstacle in nurturing the “being” state of an intimate relationship with God and moving towards increasing dependency in God. The struggle to slow down in “doing” ministry and eliminating busyness is a mindset difficult to break.

Leaders and church planters tend to emulate what they are familiar with, their comfort zone. The denomination, generational, or cultural environment has significant influence in how “doing” church planting is to be accomplished. Jeffrey P. Greenman posits that “the unchallenged assumption [is] that genuine fellowship with Christ is meant to find active expression in God’s service through some form of personal engagement in evangelism or social involvement.... evangelical activism poses a threat to spiritual formation when energetic service is emphasized at the expense of prayer, solitude and meditation.”¹⁷ A natural instinct is to emulate the strategy of the biggest churches.

¹⁶ Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*, 335.

¹⁷ Jeffrey P. Greenman, “Classic Issues, Contemporary Challenges,” in *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*, eds. Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 31.

“Applying a one-size-fits-all method to ministry” is a major stumbling block for many church planters.¹⁸

Spiritual Formation is a Process, Not a Product

Ruth Halley Barton writes, “Spiritual transformation is the process by which Christ is formed in us for the glory of God, for the abundance of our own lives and for the sake of others.”¹⁹ Kenneth Boa describes it as a step-by-step lifelong process of “gradual conformity to the image of Christ.”²⁰ From what these writers describe one can assume “something about God [is revealed] through their life message.”²¹ “The best thing any of us have to bring to leadership is our own transforming selves.”²² God-shaped leaders bring their own personal story, a story that evolves throughout life, filled with conflict, hardship, and struggles. Some they have overcome, and others they have failed. But the story of the leader/church planter is theirs to tell and only they can tell it. In many cases their story is what motivates them. Prime biblical examples are Moses, Jacob, and Paul.²³ In the end their lives serve as models for leadership. Their experience is their story. “There is no substitute for experience,”²⁴ and “the things we know from experience we

¹⁸ Gary L. McIntosh and Samuel D. Rima, Sr., *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership: The Paradox of Personal Dysfunction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 20.

¹⁹ Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, 15.

²⁰ Boa, *Conformed to His Image*, 255.

²¹ Reggie McNeal, *A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass 2000), 97.

²² Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, 19.

²³ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁴ Tony Horsfall, *Mentoring for Spiritual Growth: Sharing the Journey of Faith* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire, UK: The Bible Reading Fellowship, 2008), 46.

know beyond belief.”²⁵ The process of spiritual formation is a journey of life experiences intertwined with the hand of God. The leader does not lose his identity but realizes his true identity in Christ: “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal 2:20 KJV). His identity is no longer contingent on performance or productivity but on knowing he or she is becoming more Christlike.²⁶

LeaderImpac Team Strategy

The development of the leadership team is a key strategy for addressing the frustration and sense of failure among leader/church planters. This project proposes a training process to further spiritual formation among leaders and church planters in their leadership development through the efforts laid out in this project. Mentorship and coaching are developed through trust, and trust comes by way of relationships. Therefore, relationships will be cultivated in a community of peers. To reach the level of spiritual commitment in a community requires emphasis on the development of the immediate team. Through relationships we built trust and grow in spiritual formation. The following is an effort to create an environment to foster trust and openness among the initial team members that will be implemented among team members. This is a pilot plan in which feedback will be critical in our effort to be more effective.

²⁵ Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself*, 25.

²⁶ Horsfall, *Mentoring for Spiritual Growth*, 23.

Community: Cultivate Relationships

In today's whirlwind of busyness, little attention is given to spiritual relationships among leaders.²⁷ "No matter how committed we are to *being* a community and allowing our *doing* to flow out of our *being*, the demands of ministry always seem to want to squeeze out the time it takes to cultivate the community from which we want our leadership to emerge."²⁸ Leadership communities are a high priority in addressing perceived failures in church planting. Such a community must provide a safe place and an opportunity for leaders and church planters to connect with likeminded peers. "True community in Christ is not a collection of lonely or isolated individuals but a dynamic interaction of people who know they are accepted."²⁹ Added is the realization that "no one grows to maturity alone."³⁰

"Let him who is not in community beware of being alone."³¹ Living outside of a community of peers puts him or her at risk in their effort to plant a church. "The spiritual life cannot be lived in splendid isolation. It needs to be grounded in the reality of relationships with others."³² Being in community affords an opportunity for accountability, encouragement, and camaraderie.

²⁷ Martin Sanders, *The Power of Mentoring: Shaping People Who Will Shape the World* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 2004), 69.

²⁸ Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, 180.

²⁹ Boa, *Conformed to His Image*, 419.

³⁰ Dan B. Allender, *Leading with a Limp* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2006), 155.

³¹ Boa, *Conformed to His Image*, 418, 444.

³² Horsfall, *Mentoring for Spiritual Growth*, 106.

Relationships: Open Doors for Mentoring and Coaching

Relationships are built upon trust. “Mentoring depends upon friendship and the creation of a safe environment where it is easy to be open and vulnerable.”³³ Cultivating the relationship allows the conversation to move deeper into areas of personal struggles and challenges. The trust factor is vital to the whole process of a mentoring or a coaching relationship. The common experience “allows them to be more relaxed, relevant, and open with one another. It is precisely these qualities in the relationship that enable peers to stimulate, interact, and hold one another accountable at a more personal level.”³⁴

When the community is able to cultivate a safe environment, opportunities to address common issues related to leadership will be forthcoming. Informal surveys reveal the following: “Two out of ten males seem to have a meaningful, open, and safe relationship where both parties share a trust and commitment to mutual responsibility for one another.”³⁵ The fact that there are so few man-to-man relationships may contribute to the loneliness many male leaders experience in their journey. Being able to address issues of conduct, finances, and relationship in all areas of life will go a long way in sustaining his or her success. Peer mentoring and coaching brings clarity in areas that are difficult to decipher. “You do not get to clarity alone.”³⁶

³³ Ibid., 15.

³⁴ Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs: Navpress 1992), 166.

³⁵ Ibid., 167.

³⁶ Terry B. Walling, Zack Curry, and Kyle Walling, *Awakening: Awakening to the Call of God* (Chico, CA: Author, 2014), 10.

Mentoring and Coaching Leads to Spiritual Formation

Peer mentoring and coaching is a timely opportunity to engage one another in developing one's inner self. The dynamics of spiritual formation among team members will be a learning experience and an encouragement as part of their training. The team presently is undergoing the TRAC training model with Terry Walling, which will be explained in detail in chapter five. Communal change requires personal renewal.³⁷ Efforts to provide that personal experience include a two-year training experience of which they are at the conclusion.

LeaderImpac: A Life Together

The research author leads the effort in reaching out to leaders and church planters in their kingdom effort. The training is currently under the auspices of Dr. Terry Walling. The research author facilitates a community environment where relationships among peers can be developed. "It takes a lot of time to develop meaningful friendships and a lot of grace to sustain them over the years."³⁸ It is for this reason the LeaderImpac Network is promoting quarterly gatherings and yearly retreats. The process begins with the formation of a leadership team. In the words of Dr. Terry Walling, mentoring involves the act of "pouring in" to someone's life. Subsequently, coaching becomes essential in the integration of spiritual formation in the continual development as the leader. Coaching is the process of "pulling out,"³⁹ thereby giving insight as to where the leader is

³⁷ Ibid., 66.

³⁸ Horsfall, *Mentoring for Spiritual Growth*, 35.

³⁹ Terry Walling, *IDEA Coaching Pathway: Coaching the Person (Instead of Just the Problem)* (Chico, CA: Author, 2015), 34.

in his or her development. Without the process of mentoring and coaching, there is a greater risk for disappointment in achieving one's ultimate potential.

In addition, Will Mancini's book *Church Unique* will supplement the development of a strategy for the church plant. The overall vision is the personal spiritual development of the leader and his or her understanding of their unique contribution as a church planter and as a church. Because of the constant demands involved in church planting, a network of peers is a meaningful and necessary addition. Robert Clinton writes, "Every leader that we studied had a *network of meaningful relationships* and several important mentors during their lifetime."⁴⁰ Clinton adds, "To have a close buddy in your relational network brings tremendous blessing and strength not found in any other relations;" it is "a special gift from God."⁴¹

A Life of Being

"*Being*" is not only a practice for a select few, or for the "the more reflective people towards prayer and spirituality. We end up forcing people to make an unnecessary choice between spirituality and leadership."⁴² The failure to integrate spiritual formation as a shaping of one's inner being is to fail to understand that one's outward influence is a direct reflection of one's inner life. It is an ongoing incorporation of an intimate relationship with Christ. The constant awareness of His presence in one's daily affairs can ultimately bring transformation to others. The importance of being with Christ is

⁴⁰ Stanley and Clinton, *Connecting*, 223.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁴² Chuck Miller, *The Spiritual Formation of Leaders: Integrating Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2007), 5.

essential to the effectiveness of developing leaders who succeed. Lives are affected by words, actions, and behavior. This is the reason for advancing spiritual formation in the lives of the team leaders, which will filter down throughout the Network. Lessons to be learned must be ingrained within the heart and spirit of the team members. Since this is a lengthy process, it is incumbent that a curriculum be provided for the team development.

A Life of Doing

Doing is the result of “*being*.” It is a reflection of one’s inner self. Too often the leader/church planter is consumed in “*doing*” ministry. “A full 65 percent of pastors (right up there with lawyers, managers and nurses) are among the most likely to rush from task to task in a way that interferes with their relationship with God.”⁴³ Moses sought out a way to aid his people without having an intimate relationship with God. Paul lashed out based on head knowledge. He only knew about God, but he did not know God. “Personal knowledge is never simply a matter of the head. Knowing God is rooted in experience; it is grounded in the deep places in one’s being. Paul’s failure to know God through personal experience resulted in the loss of life, namely Stephen’s. The act of doing in itself is not enough to accomplish God’s calling. Deep spiritual values are threatened by the pressures of “*doing*.” At some point in the process of spiritual formation a leader arrives at a place where dependency in God becomes most obvious. Moses knew so well: “If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here” (Ex 33:15 NIV). It all starts with an intimate relationship with God. Scripture reveals leader after leader acting solely out of skill, talent, and ability. Their lack of *being*

⁴³ Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, 118, 119.

produced a *doing* that had to be undone. The leader's intimate relationship with God is where character and self are transformed. A transformed self makes all the difference. Scripture does not hesitate in highlighting the transformation leaders go through. "God called Moses to be who he was, but he was also calling him to become something that he was not yet—a leader who would bring God's people out of bondage."⁴⁴ Benner clarifies the relationship of outward action and relationship with God: "We do not find our true self by seeking it. Rather, we find it by seeking God. For as I have said, in finding God we find our truest and deepest self."⁴⁵

A Life of Being and Doing

"We cannot successfully separate or isolate our interior life from our exterior life. Both are part of who we truly are."⁴⁶ The goal is to find a balance. Balance is not about 50 percent *Being* and 50 percent *Doing*. "Spiritually minded people, however, know that the real action takes place in the unseen realm in which prayer is offered, faith is exercised and God is at work."⁴⁷ In other words, "*the inner life sustains the outer life.*"⁴⁸ One can easily go from one extreme to the other. Achieving a balance of *being* and *doing* is paramount to Christlikeness and finishing well. It comes as part of the process of spiritual formation. Robert A. Fryling writes, "Early in my career one leader candidly

⁴⁴ Ibid., 77.

⁴⁵ Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself*, 91.

⁴⁶ Robert A. Fryling, *The Leadership Ellipse: Shaping How We Lead By Who We Are* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 19.

⁴⁷ Horsfall, *Mentoring for Spiritual Growth*, 23.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 22

told me that leading is like riding a bike. Once you get on you have to keep pedaling or you will fall off.”⁴⁹ The journey of balancing *being* and *doing* is a lifelong journey and the accumulation of experience matures into a level of spiritual authority. When Jesus addressed Martha, who was busy *doing*, he told her, “Mary has chosen what is better” (Lk 10:42 NIV). One must ask, in what way is it better? Intimacy gained over time results in having the mind of Christ. Very few people reach this stage of spiritual authority,⁵⁰ which may contribute to the absence of a mentor and or a coach.

To address the situation, the project proposes a pathway to alignment with Christ, the transformation of the self. Spiritual formation is that step by step God-shaping process. Knowledge is important, but without implementation it avails minimal results. Mentoring or coaching without a relationship falls short. Understanding the components that make up spiritual formation, the negative and positive factors will allow the leader to navigate the God-shaping journey. The contribution of the leader and church planter is vital to the accomplishing the goal. Their ability to create an environment conducive to greater intimacy with God is of the utmost importance.

The pilot plan will be introduced in chapter 5. The plan will include the following components: coaching, (IDEA PATHWAY) leadership, (TRAC) vision casting (Church Unique) and spiritual formation (Renovation of the Heart).

⁴⁹ Fryling, *The Leadership Ellipse*, 29–30

⁵⁰ Horsfall, *Mentoring for Spiritual Growth*, 74.

CHAPTER 5: IMPLEMENTING PROCESS

The spiritual formation project is a lengthy undertaking. Members of the team are in various stages of development, and their participation is not guaranteed to endure until the end. Since the effort is to introduce spiritual formation as a God-shaping journey of the leader/church planter, a dimension in life that is spiritual in nature, the task involves penetrating some areas of life more difficult than others. “Ultimately, of course, the very existence of anything is mysterious in the sense that it rests on the mystery of God.”¹ Misunderstood and underestimated as a source of strength and divine power, the project endeavors to emphasize spiritual formation as integral in the leader’s development. In order to lead others into Christlikeness, it is imperative the leader experiences Christlikeness. As the development of the team continues to unfold, the anticipated result is a dedicated group of leaders with the capability of integrating spiritual formation in their leadership capacity and finishing well in their effort to plant a church.

¹ Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 31.

LeaderImpac Journey

The LeaderImpac journey had its initial beginning in 1960 at the conversion of the research author, who was mentored in those early days by a missionary and a church planter. The missionary emphasized the study of Scripture, and the church planter emphasized prayer as a vital component in ministry. These emphases became the foundation in the research author's development. In 1969, he moved to Fort Worth, Texas to plant a church with no known contacts. The experience of struggle and hardship, without a mentor, coach, or someone to befriend was a major shaping process. The personal experience has enabled him to relate with leaders and church planters in their God-shaping journey. This would be a God-shaped journey towards his "unique and ultimate contribution."² This would set the stage for a formalized effort in a leadership training ministry.

Leadership Team Selection, November 2017

LeaderImpac began to take shape as an organized effort in 2017. The formation of the LeaderImpac team came together, and the training process was initiated in February 2018. It is imperative that those called and chosen to be part of the initial group be willing to sacrifice and commit to the two-year training process. The lengthy process has proven to be a difficult journey and has served to define the stamina, endurance, and heart of the participants. In some cases, it will define their ultimate contribution to the kingdom of God. It is the vision of LeaderImpac that those involved in the training will

² Terry B. Walling, Zack Curry, and Kyle Walling, *Awakening: Awakening to the Call of God* (Chico, CA: Author, 2014), 49.

embrace the value of their training and nurture the spiritual insights it brings to their leadership effort for the long journey ahead.

Coaching Certification

The process of the coaching certification was initiated in February 2018 under the auspices of Leader Breakthru. The team began its training in Dallas, Texas. The training continues throughout the year and will culminate in February 2020. Being fully certified as a coach will enable each member of the team to utilize the IDEA Pathway (Identify, Discover, Evaluate, Act) coaching model provided by Leader Breakthru. The certification allows the LeaderImpac team members the opportunity to expand their reach with the full support of LeaderImpac resources and oversight. Having the liberty to expand in the end will impact the kingdom of God as each one makes their contribution.

TRAC Leadership Training

While in the Fuller DMin program, the research author was required to be mentored under Dr. Terry Walling for two years. Subsequently, in 2016 the research author was enrolled in the four-day training session and certified to use the IDEA Pathway coaching model. In 2017, LeaderImpac contracted with Leader Breakthru to a two-year training course for leaders and church planters. LeaderImpac selected a group of leaders and church planters to undertake the training. Under the guidance of Dr. Terry Walling, the two-year leadership development training will be finalized in February 2020. This will certify each team member to facilitate the TRAC (Trajectory, Replenishment, Awareness, Choices) training in their individual ministries and be part of the LeaderImpac effort in reaching the greater community of leaders. This will also

culminate the IDEA Pathway coaching certification. Members will work closely with the LeaderImpac director who has been certified as the Hub director with Leader Breakthru. The TRAC leadership training will serve as an on-ramp to coaching, which will provide a more effective approach to an extended coaching relationship with developing a leader.

Quarterly Replenishment and Yearly Retreat

A major obstacle that stands between a leader and his or her intimacy with God is what Ronald Rolheiser states in his writings: “Among the many things that work against interiority today...[are] excessive forces on work, achievement, and the practical concerns of life; and restlessness means an excessive greed for experience, an over eating, not in terms of food but in terms of trying to drink in too much of life.”³ For this reason, the LeaderImpac Network strives to have a quarterly gathering to afford leaders and church planters a time of spiritual replenishment. The time together will include small group discussion, spiritual formation exercises, leadership development, and an opportunity to cultivate “buddy friends.”⁴ There is a broad consensus that “spiritual life cannot be lived in splendid isolation. It needs to be grounded in the reality of relationships with others.”⁵ Efforts will be coordinated to coincide with the yearly retreat to cultivate relationships among participants. Martin Sanders quotes Patrick Morley’s *The Man in the Mirror* to list discussion topics related to the key areas in which all of us need

³ Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 32.

⁴ Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs: Navpress 1992), 180.

⁵ Tony Horsfall, *Mentoring for Spiritual Growth: Sharing the Journey of Faith* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire, UK: The Bible Reading Fellowship, 2008), 106.

accountability: 1) Relationship with God, 2) Relationship with [spouse], 3) Relationship with kids, 4) Use of time and money 5) Moral and ethical behavior, and 6) Areas of personal struggle.⁶

Small group mentoring will allow for greater spiritual formation and accountability if the group is a safe place for discussing these six areas. Attention will be taken that “the group needs to be small in size” and “diversity is to be encouraged, [including] differences of age, personality, social standing.”⁷ Tony Horsfall outlines descriptors that need to be true of the experience. The first is “sharing spiritual experiences:” “to share about how they perceive God to be working in their lives.” The second is “a climate of support and acceptance: Members are not there to offer advice but to listen and give encouragement.”⁸ The diversity of the participants and the size of the group lends itself to listening and asking the difficult questions. A safe community renders an open door for peer mentoring and a coaching relationship.

Integrating Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development

Spiritual formation and leadership development are processes God implements in shaping a leader. As stated by Don Simpson and Dallas Willard, “There are no formulas in the spiritual life because it is not a life that runs on its own. It runs on interaction with God.”⁹ Leaders and church planters fail to recognize how extensive one’s relationship

⁶ Martin Sanders, *The Power of Mentoring: Shaping People Who Will Shape the World* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 2004), 36.

⁷ Horsfall, *Mentoring for Spiritual Growth*, 109.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁹ Dallas Willard, and Don Simpson, *Revolution of Character: Discovering Christ’s Pattern for Spiritual Transformation* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress), 93.

should be. Without divine interaction, fulfilling the calling would be impossible. Fulfilling God's call was never meant to be accomplished on one's own strength but accomplished through the power of God. It is not possible to separate one's personal spiritual life and the ability to lead. Robert A. Fryling underscores this idea: "We cannot successfully separate or isolate our interior life from our exterior life. Both are part of who we truly are."¹⁰ In Scripture many of the leaders who failed had failed to develop an interactive relationship with God. However, once an interactive relationship was developed, the leader was empowered to accomplish his or her calling. Transformation of the self becomes a key element in becoming a God-shaped leader for a divine purpose. Efforts will be made to address the transformation of the self in the monthly and quarterly gatherings. The yearly retreats will consist of peer mentoring, coaching, and continual development among the leaders. The team will be available to mentor and coach in the gatherings and retreats.

Information to Transformation

"The goal of the spiritual journey is the transformation of self."¹¹ The transformation of the self is a deep journey inward that must occur before the leaders' influence can affect others.¹² The journey of self-discovery begins with a relationship with God. "Knowledge of God comes only through devotion to God."¹³ To know about

¹⁰ Robert A. Fryling, *The Leadership Ellipse: Shaping How We Lead by Who We Are* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press 2010), 19.

¹¹ David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2004), 14.

¹² Elizabeth O'Connor, *Journey Inward, Journey Outward* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 28.

God is not the same as to know God.¹⁴ A leader can be “stuffed with knowledge about God that does nothing to help us genuinely know either God or self. Having information about God is no more transformational than having information about love.”¹⁵ If change is to take place, then a personal encounter must occur. “Transformational knowledge is always personal...and it is always relational. It grows out of a relationship to the object that is known—whether this is God or one’s self.”¹⁶ The success of leaders throughout Scripture was due to their relationship with God. Leaders must maintain an intimate relationship with God. Information cannot take the place of a personal, relational experience with God.

A deep personal knowing “is never simply a matter of the head. Because the [relationship] is rooted in experience, it is grounded in deep places in our being. The things we know from experience we know beyond belief.”¹⁷ Knowledge of God is not enough; the information of God must lead to a relational experience of God that is transformational. “We must constantly be reminded that spiritual formation is not about learning more information.”¹⁸ It is about becoming Christlike in life and in one’s leadership development.

¹³ Keith R. Anderson and Randy D. Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide for Seeking and Giving Direction*. (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 1999), 80.

¹⁴ David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself*, 23.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 24–25.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁸ Kent Carlson and Mike Lueken, *Renovation of the Church: What Happens When a Seeker Church Discovers Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2011), 121.

Being and Doing: Two Sides of the Same Coin

“The great illusion of leadership is to think that man can be led out of the desert by someone who has never been there.”¹⁹ People metaphorically wandering in the desert need a desert-experienced leader. Through his personal experience in the desert, Moses became a person worthy to follow. “The answer to all of Moses’ concerns about why anyone would follow him was simple: *The people will follow you because you have met me. Because you know my name deep in your being. That is what qualifies you to be a spiritual leader, and that is why people will be willing to follow you right out of the place they have known for so long to a place that is brand-new.*”²⁰

An argument can be made that the people followed Moses because of the miracles he performed. Undoubtedly, some did. However, the research author highlights the point that his personal relationship with God added extensive credibility as to his leadership ability. Moses had the attention of God. Too often leaders lean on their performance ability to engage a following. It is one thing to follow a leader because of his personality, his ability to speak or sing and another thing to follow because of his or her Christlikeness. Christlikeness is the handprint of God on the leaders’ life. “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20 KJV).

¹⁹ Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2008), 87.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 81.

“The research suggests that people follow people of character, people who are credible. Leadership is a relationship in which the character of the leader elicits the behavior of the followers. The character of the leader shapes leadership because, as Harvard psychologist Daniel Goleman notes, leaders are the most watched people in any group.”²¹ The biblical leaders leave us with a life example of character, of Christlikeness. The character of the inner self is what commands attention. “Leading people is a demanding responsibility. Following Jesus requires total commitment. This is nonnegotiable.”²² The heart of spiritual formation is about “*being*” and leadership development is about “*doing*,” they are interactive and inseparable, and in order to accomplish a journey of Christlikeness and finish well, they must remain.

Resources

Resources are provided to address essential areas in the church planter’s leadership development. The church planter’s spiritual formation throughout the journey will be the strength of his or her leadership. Understanding the purpose and how God shapes the leader is the expected outcome. Implementing a rhythm of spiritual practices and utilizing the resources available will ensure one’s ability to finish well. The following resources have been made available throughout the training journey. It has been the goal of the research author to bring high quality leadership resources to the Network leaders and church planters who have not been able to access resources of higher education.

²¹ Walter C. Wright, *Mentoring: The Promise of Relational Leadership* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2006), 4–5.

²² Fryling, *The Leadership Ellipse*, 11-12.

Mentoring and Coaching Oversight

Dr. Terry Walling's oversight and training are a major resource for the team. It has added confidence and stability to the LeaderImpac team. The research author has been through the training process and has been in a mentoring relationship with Dr. Walling since 2014. This will ensure the implementation of the leadership insights and the lessons learned thus far.

Coaching Certification Via Leader Breakthru University

Leader Breakthru University has made a coaching certification available to members of the team. It is a unique opportunity for the team to be trained in the IDEA Pathway coaching model. This will increase their effectiveness in developing leaders and at the same time increase the team's effort in reaching more leaders and church planters with leadership resources. This training will position the team for greater success in developing leaders.

Portal and TRAC Teaching Materials

The team is projected to complete the TRAC leadership development training and IDEA Pathway coaching model in October 2020. The team members will then have access to the visual and media resources that have been produced by Leader Breakthru University. Included is a personal portal with recorded sessions that can be used in their effort to continue the development of leaders. The training is based on the acronym TRAC, which stands for Trajectory, Replenishment, Awareness, and Choices.²³ In

²³ Terry Walling, *TRAC: Personalizing Personal Development* (Author: 2019).

completing the training, members will be certified coaches and licensed facilitators to lead TRAC training seminars.

Church Unique, a Strategic Course

Church Unique, authored by Will Mancini, will be a cornerstone in setting a foundation for the church planter's vision casting. The book sets a step-by-step process to understand how God has shaped him or her and the church for the task. Too often church planters are unclear as to who, what, and how to proceed in planting a church. Mancini points out having clarity as to what God is up too is vital. Understanding the immediate and the long-term issues allows one to reach each level of the journey with minimal difficulties. The material has been presented to Network members in monthly sessions.

Renovation of the Heart

Dallas Willard's book *Renovation of the Heart* has served as an important part of the curriculum. The in-depth insights have made a deep impact on leaders and members of the Network. It will continue to have an integral part in the development of the Network. The book outlines the journey of spiritual formation. As the cornerstone resource of spiritual formation, it continues as a resource for the lifelong journey. It guides not only the individual leader but also the development of the community, as the Network travels together with purpose of mind, heart, and spirit.

In covering the positives and negatives of spirituality, it becomes clear how spirituality should be understood. Willard proposes the implementation of the VIM: Vision, Intent, and Means. How do you in-*Vision* yourself in the Kingdom? What is your

Intention, and what *Means* will be employed?²⁴ Three areas of insight are revealed in this book as it brings an in-depth understanding of the nature of spirituality and the dynamics of spiritual formation. The book has been used in our small group sessions and continues to be a valuable and a highly recommended resource.

More than a formula or a physical modification of self, the transformation of the self is a divine work of the Spirit as one is progressively transformed into Christlikeness. As Christ was subjected to the human hardships of life, it is inevitable that church leaders should experience a similar pathway.

Resource Contribution

The resources mentioned in this chapter will be implemented to address the overall God-shaped journey of the leader/church planter. The *TRAC* process will focus on the leader's development as a leader, defining the direction in ministry, steps of sustainability, self-awareness as to who he or she is and is not, and ultimately distinguishing between the good and best choice in their journey. The *TRAC* process will be bolstered by a coach that will come alongside the leader/church planter. The model of choice for coaching is the *IDEA PATHWAY*. In providing the leader added support, the *IDEA PATHWAY* allows the leader/church planter to be in control of setting the agenda. The coach, in building a relationship with the leader/church planter, opens the way for discovery of any issues that might need to be addressed. As a result, the evaluation of relevant details surrounding the issue may bring about action steps in resolving the issue.

²⁴ Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 85.

Secondly, implementing the approach presented in Will Mancini's writings, *Church Unique* and *God Dreams*, fills a void among leaders/church planters in processing his or her approach in leading the church. The absence of clarity is always a detriment in formulating one's contribution to the Kingdom. This is a probable cause of leaders/church planters duplicating the model of the larger churches as opposed to coming to clarity as to their own God-shaped journey. This research project brings to the forefront the lack of clarity as an emerging major cause of failure in knowing self and in knowing the task one is called to (church planting). A step-by-step plan for spiritual formation will need to be shared in a timely manner to inspire followers. A great deal of the church planting success will be determined by the leader/church planter's ability to inspire his or her potential and real followers. Again, clarity as it pertains to self-identity will impact the identity of the church and the vision it is called to. Clarity will pave the way for an in-depth study of spiritual formation as a God-shaped journey.

Thirdly, the contribution of Dallas Willard's extensive writings on spiritual formation has given this research project an ample, in-depth understanding of the subject. *Renovation of the Heart* and *Spirit of the Disciplines* are two of Willard's major texts on the subject. His writings address in detail the components of spiritual formation, the positive and negative elements, and their results. In addition, he provides practices and disciplines to help sustain a healthy inner being throughout the God-shaped journey. The writings provide a theology for greater integration in the life of all followers and is needed among those in the God-shaped journey of the church planter.

This proposed model has yet to be fully implemented; however, it is being implemented as a pilot plan with the core LeaderImpac team. Assessment of the pilot will

determine the model's feasibility and effectiveness in the overall goal of integrating spiritual formation in leadership development. The input from the survey assessment will provide further direction and possible adjustments needed to assure the model's effectiveness in its application moving forward with the extended community of leader/church planters.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 describes the diversity of the LeaderImpac Network composed of emerging leaders and church planters of various ethnicities and traditions. The various ethnic backgrounds and traditions continue to have an influence on how they perceive spiritual formation, leadership development, and their approach to church planting. This project is an effort to develop a workable strategy in addressing the diverse and complex issues therein. The challenge is a localized issue that mirrors a larger problem in the greater minority church community. The one-size-fits-all approach no longer serves as a practicable strategy.

The overall conclusion and summary of this research underscores the difficult and complex challenge the leader and church planter will face in church planting. The failure to recognize spiritual formation as a vital part in his or her development is the primary reason for his or her failed effort. Because of the rate of failure among leaders and church planters, it is the assumption of this research that the hardship, struggles, and failure are intricate experiences that are misunderstood as the cause of the failed effort in church planting. This occurs when the dynamics of spiritual formation are not understood. Miles Anthony Smith concludes such in his book on leadership, *Why Leadership Sucks*.¹ Leadership is messy with the elements of pain, struggle, and hardship. The sense of failure can have a lasting effect without a sustainable understanding of spiritual formation as it relates to hardship, struggles, and failure.

¹ Miles Anthony Smith, *Why Leadership Sucks, Volume 1: Servant Leadership Fundamentals and Level 5 Leadership* (Author, 2018).

The research focuses on the related issues that have been determined to be contributing factors in the failure of church planters such as the perceived concept of success. The general consensus is that success is defined by the number in attendance, budget, and building. Anything less is to be considered unsuccessful. This faulty pretense can be attributed to one's reliance on a personality or performance-based ministry which is susceptible to failure. The failure to understand spiritual formation as foundational in ministry is evident when considering the rate of failure among many church plants. Spiritual formation as an integral part of leadership development is established by the example set forth by biblical leaders and the personal experiences of scholars and the life experience of the research author. An intimate relationship with God provides clarity as to the direction of God. Without that intimate relationship it is doubtful clarity can be reached. A sovereign perspective is a distant thought. Unless the church planter has clarity as to the divine direction, failure is to be the expected result. The examples of Moses, Paul, and Joseph exemplify a life with no clarity and in absence of divine direction that comes only through an intimate relationship with God. Transformation allows the leader/church planter to be in alignment with the sovereign perspective. The spiritual formational journey is a God-shaping process at the hand of God. The purpose is to prepare the leader/church planter for the task that is yet to be revealed. Spiritual formation starts with God, who uses spiritual formation to shape the character of the leader/church planter and his or her inward being so that ministry will flow as designed from the inside out. In covering the negative aspect of the journey, one realizes that without the difficulties of the journey, Moses, Paul, Joseph, and others would not have been leaders of great godly influence. The value of a personal experience brings

credibility to the premise of the spiritual formation journey. Herein the personal experiences of Dan Allender, Dallas Willard, and the research author give credence to the premise of hardship, struggles, and pain as valid elements of the spiritual formation journey among today's leaders. Busyness continues to contribute in denying the leader/church planter quality alone time with his or her Creator.

Chapter two relates the continual disarray and failure of church planters because of unfamiliarity with the dynamics of spiritual formation as it occurs in his or her life journey. The literature in this research underscores the following elements of spiritual formation as negatively understood. The struggles, failures, and misunderstanding of success have led to the downfall of many emerging leaders/church planters. However, the principal contributor to a failed church plant is the leader/church planter's failure to understand the lessons to be extracted from each problem he or she encounters.

The literature presented in chapter two supports the project premise. Pain, struggles, and failure are part of the spiritual formation journey. Added to this is the misunderstood concept of success. They are major elements that should be understood as contributing factors in the development of the leader/church planter. Suffering refines the leader/church planter rather than destroying him or her because God walks with the leader/church planter in the fire. In the end the positive conclusion is that "suffering is at the very heart of the Christian faith."²

The insight from the literature review gives a broader perspective to the issue of pain, suffering, and failure. The process illustrates how spiritual formation occurs as a

² Timothy Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering* (New York: Riverhead Books 2013), 163.

- fiery furnace experience. As the leader/church planter experiences hardships, the leader comes to terms that he or she is fundamentally “not in control,”³ and therefore a “deep, personal and abiding relationship”⁴ and dependency in God becomes a positive option.

Because of the widespread lack of information on spiritual formation, something must be done to educate leaders as to the causes, results, and potential preventive measures of these failures.⁵ Pain comes to all, and Timothy Keller argues that adversity must be addressed spiritually.⁶

What appears to be overshadowing spiritual formation is the desire to obtain quick-fix success. Meeting the status quo and going over and above is considered success. Nothing less is acceptable. Formulas are promoted to guarantee success as Kent and Barbara Hughes mention: marketing, sociology, stewardship, godliness, and preaching.⁷ Formulas can never take the place of the sovereign perspective which is available when the leader is in alignment with God. Alignment comes through a continual, intimate relationship with the Creator.

All is lost in the maze of church planting when expectations are beyond the leader/church planter’s ability and he or she disconnects from his or her Creator. God shapes the leader/church planter to accomplish a particular purpose. However, without “a

³ Dan B. Allender, *Leading with A Limp* (Colorado Springs: Waterbook Press, 2006), 29.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵ Gary L. McIntosh and Samuel D. Rima, Sr., *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books), 9.

⁶ Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*, 3.

⁷ Kent Hughes and Barbara Hughes, *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books), 28-29.

strategy to build character, his or her inner life and external life will eventually fall to pieces.”⁸ The call to become God-formed leaders, to minister from a place of spiritual health with the Creator comes at a great price of pain, hardship, struggles.⁹ The writers arrives at the conclusion the difficulties of the journey are a positive element in the development of the leader.

Chapter three explores the theological premise for spiritual formation as it relates to leadership development. Spiritual formation begins with God in His sovereignty. He allows leaders to be shaped by their exposure with people, events, and circumstances.⁸ However, there comes in the development of every leader/church planter, as observed by Terry Walling, a time of transition: “transitions are often the defining moments where Godly character is forged.”¹⁰ It has been the experience of this research author that leaders fail to recognize when God is highlighting a lesson in the conflict: “God uses conflict to shape the leader’s heart.”¹¹ The moment of crisis is the most opportune time to open one’s self to the hand of God.

The concept of union with Christ is implied throughout Scripture. The Apostle Paul asserts what it means to be in union with God. His writings not only instruct the

⁸ David Brooks, *The Road to Character* (New York: Random House, 2015), xiii.

⁹ Chuck Miller, *The Spiritual Formation of Leaders: Integrating Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2007), 3.

⁸ Terry B. Walling, Zack Curry, and Kyle Walling, *Awakening: Awakening to the Call of God* (Chico, CA: Authors, 2014), 50.

¹⁰ Terry Walling, *Stuck: Navigating the Transitions of Life & Leadership* (Bloomington, MN: ChurchSmart Resources 2008), 7.

¹¹ Reggie McNeal, *A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 155.

church but reveals the driving force that shapes him. “Pain has been a master teacher for all effective spiritual leaders. Rather than running from it, the spiritual giants have embraced it to learn from it. They believe that God has purposes in pain that he does not always share with us.”¹²

The ability to extract lessons out of a negative crisis is part of the leader’s spiritual formation process. “Leaders create meaning out of events and relationships that devastate non-leaders.”¹³ This level of maturity comes through a life-long process.

Chapter 4 articulates a ministry plan that introduces a number of ways to provide opportunities for engaging in serious conversation and teaching moments. Spiritual formation requires a solemn environment for maximum results. The theological implication of the writings of Paul are that followers of Christ become progressively more Christlike. Before spiritual formation becomes an accepted, sustainable part of ministry, the leader/church planter must identify his or her inner being, how they have been shaped, and ultimately the need for an intimate relationship with their Creator. This will allow for understanding the spiritual formation journey and alignment with the sovereign perspective.

Through the experience of the research author and as illustrated in the lives of biblical leaders and the writings of contemporary scholars, ample evidence corroborates the premise that godly character emerges from an intimate relationship with God. This intimate relationship is often a result accelerated by pain, hardship, and failures the

¹² Ibid., 180

¹³ Warren G. Bennis and Robert J. Thomas, *Leading for a Lifetime* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press), 17.

leader/church planter has experienced. The negative components of spiritual formation become positive in that the leader/church planter becomes stronger and increasingly dependent on the Creator.

Apart from the inward journey is the over-committing state of *doing* ministry. In the research author's sixty years of ministry, he has observed a pattern among present day church planters: "*Doing*" ministry at the expense of his or her own spiritual development. "Devoid of a growing, personal, dynamic relationship with God spiritual leaders become casualties."¹⁴ Urgency in *doing* the work with all the other demands of life has reduced the quality time the church planter has taken to notice how he or she has developed in their inward journey. There is a point at which the leader/church planter must come to terms with the real self who lives within and submit to the orchestrating hand of God. This takes time and reflection.¹⁵ Too often the outward self is promoted, and the leader/church planter fails to realize how he or she is being God-shaped inside. The research author has restated the findings of this project, aptly summarized by Ruth Haley Barton: "Spiritual transformation is the process by which Christ is formed in us, for our own lives and for the sake of others. The best thing any of us have to bring to leadership is our own transforming selves."¹⁶

This project has proposed a training process to further the awareness of spiritual formation among leaders/church planters. The key to this project is developing trust

¹⁴ Ibid., 139.

¹⁵ Ibid., xv.

¹⁶ Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2008), 19.

which comes through relationships that open doors of opportunity for mentoring and coaching.

In today's whirlwind of busyness, little attention has been given to spiritual relationships among leaders. "No matter how committed we are to '*being*' a community and allowing our '*doing*' to flow out of our '*being*,' the demands of ministry is always seem to want to squeeze out the time it takes to cultivate the community."¹⁷ The research author has facilitated a community environment where relationships among peers can be developed. "It takes a lot of time to develop meaningful friendships and a lot of grace to sustain them over the years."¹⁸

Mentoring and coaching depends on friendship and the creation of a safe environment where it becomes natural to be open and vulnerable.¹⁹ Cultivating relationships allows the conversation to move deeper into areas of personal struggles and challenges. The trust factor is vital to the whole process of a mentoring and coaching relationship. The mentoring and coaching experience opens the way for a spiritual formation conversation.

As relationships continue to mature, peer mentoring and coaching become opportunities to engage one another in developing one's inner self. The dynamics of spiritual formation among team members at this time will be a learning experience.

¹⁷ Ibid., 179.

¹⁸ Tony Horsfall, *Mentoring for Spiritual Growth: Sharing the Journey of Faith* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire, United Kingdom: The Bible Reading Fellowship, 2008), 35.

¹⁹ Keith R. Anderson and Randy D. Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide for Seeking and Giving Direction* (Downers Grove, ILL: IVP Books), 77.

It is important to understand that *being* is not only a practice for a select few but is to be embraced by all leaders. The overall goal is to integrate spiritual formation into leadership development, thereby becoming more Christlike. The lifelong process begins to reflect in the leader/church planter's increased influence for the greater good of the church. It is worthy to remember spiritual formation is a process, not a product. Kenneth Boa describes it as a step-by-step lifelong process and "gradual conformity to the image of Christ."²⁰ The interior life cannot be separated from the exterior life. The exterior life is a reflection of the leader's inner self.

The development of the leadership team is the first major step in addressing the challenges leaders/church planters face on a day-to-day basis. This project has proposed a training format to further the integration of spiritual formation in the leadership development among church planters. Mentoring and coaching are major parts of the process.

Chapter 5 describes spiritual formation as vital to the church planter's ability to lead. Members of the team are in various stages of development, and their participation is not guaranteed to endure until the desired goal. Since the effort is to introduce spiritual formation as a reflection of how God shapes a leader, a dimension in life that is spiritual in nature, the task involves penetrating areas of life only known to the leader/church planter.

The research has revealed extensive insight on spiritual formation as it relates to the leader/church planter and his or her effort to lead in a church plant. The research

²⁰ Boa, *Conformed to His Image*, 255.

coupled with the LeaderImpac Network church planter milieu has revealed a dominant view of spiritual formation among its leaders. That is, spiritual formation is important but not urgent. It is this atmosphere that prevails, coupled with a flawed understanding of success and a failure to understand the positive outcome of pain, struggles, and failure as contributing factors in his or her inner character development. No matter how passionate the leader/church planter is, the pain, struggles, and sense of failure can seem to be more than he or she can overcome. Failure does not have to be final. Understanding the God-shaping process (spiritual formation) can make the difference. For this reason, the research highlights a mentor and/or coach as a valuable asset.²¹ “The strongest always goes first.”²²

Secondly, the research has underscored busyness in ministry as a major blind spot in the leader/church planter because of his or her relentless passion to build God’s Kingdom, or rather, the leader/church planter’s kingdom. In this situation the act of *being* closely dependent on God is not as vibrant as it should be. Busyness in ministry in search of success as defined by budget, members, and a building they can call their own dominates his or her every thought. Leaders have unknowingly relegated the spiritual aspect to a team of prayer warriors while the church planter is busy building the kingdom. Expediency at the expense of one’s inner relationship and dependency on God further

²¹ Dino Senesi, *Sending Well: A Field Guide to Great Church Planter Coaching* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2017), 51.

²² Walter C. Wright, *Mentoring: The Promise of Relational Leadership* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2006), xix.

exposes the leader to pain, struggles, and failure in his or her own life and in the public domain.

In an effort to move forward, involvement of the team and the immediate LeaderImpac Network will be essential. The development of its leaders will be essential in accomplishing the ultimate outcome. The frequent interaction with the leaders and the assessment survey will be reviewed and input will be instrumental in forming the vision and the process toward the preferred future. LeaderImpac will develop the “The Vision Frame,” as outlined in Will Mancini’s book, *Church Unique*.²³ Secondly, the steps moving forward will follow the steps outlined in Mancini and Bird’s *God Dreams*.²⁴ The journey will focus on a step-by-step format: 90-day, 1-year, and 5-year goals.

The integration of spiritual formation in leadership development will be a lengthy process. The process of spiritual formation is orchestrated by God is ongoing in the life of the leader. Moses and Paul were unaware of God’s involvement in their lives. It is quite probable LeaderImpac leader/church planters have been undergoing this God-shaped journey. They are subjected to pain, struggles, and failure, which are major elements in spiritual formation. Leaders in our context are representative of the overall state of the leadership community. Unawareness of pain, struggles, and failure being major elements of their spiritual formation is a major setback for many. Plans for the future of the ministry are therefore focused on awareness of the work of God in one’s life. Some alternative options in raising awareness include studying components of spiritual

²³ Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement* (San Francisco: Leadership Network Publication, 2008), 113.

²⁴ Will Mancini and Warren Bird, *God Dreams: 12 Vision Templates for Finding and Focusing Your Church’s Future* (Nashville: B&H Publishing), xxiii, 56.

formation as a major part of the God-shaping journey and studying the various levels of leadership (Moses and Paul as catalysts, Joshua as a builder, etc.).

The LeaderImpac context is a reflection of the leadership environment that prevails in the larger Christian community. This is not the layman's responsibility. It is a leadership responsibility. It therefore is incumbent upon leaders of influence to engage their area of responsibility with the awareness in how God shapes leaders. In order to make an ongoing and lasting impact, teaching on the pastoral and leadership level is critical. And to do so, a nucleus of leaders needs to be trained. The issue of spiritual formation starts with God, and subsequently God moves as in the cases of Moses and Paul. Spiritual formation is not a formula but the realization that without God we can do nothing. The process is definitely a step-by-step process. In order to expand, educating pastors is vital. This research is a step in that direction.

The one thing that is out of our control is control itself. The realization that spiritual formation begins with God proves to be a mysterious event. Leaders on occasion come to this realization while in the midst of the transformation. If the leader is to survive the journey, it will be by his or her greater dependency of God. There is no shortcut in developing inner character without exposure to the elements of spiritual formation. However, like the three Hebrew children, the leader/church planter will not walk in the furnace alone.

Resources are an important asset in addressing the essential areas in the leader/church planter's development. The leader/church planter's spiritual formation throughout the journey will be the strength of his or her leadership. Access to coaching and leadership materials is a pathway to equipping leaders/church planters with a greater

possibility to succeed. It will also give the team a greater sense of accomplishment in reducing potential church planting closures.

To further address issues of leadership development among church planters, the TRAC leadership development will give insight into all areas of his or her leadership development. For the team leader to be equipped with coaching skills will help the team's effort to serve alongside the church planter's development. In the development of the individual church planter, the Church Unique course will help the leader/church planter understand their identity, God's purpose for the community, and their contribution to the Kingdom. To address these areas, the curriculum will include the following: IDEA Pathway coaching, TRAC leadership development, *Church Unique* (Church DNA), and *Renovation of the Heart* (spiritual formation). The data uncovered in this research is sufficient proof to continue to completion.

A Closing Thought

Reflecting on the early days of this sixty-year journey, I am reminded of the confusion I felt in a very troubled time in my life when I reached out to God and uttered in my thoughts, "You aren't going to let me die are you?" In this season of life, I am again asking that question with so much to be done and so little time. I realize my place in life is that of a catalytic leader. My kingdom contribution is to sow, and another will reap.

APPENDIX: LEADERIMPAC ASSESSMENT

As LeaderImpac continues to expand, the assessment will be of great value and contribute in growing an effective training process. The ultimate goal is to improve the awareness of spiritual formation as an essential part of the church planter in his or her leadership development, thereby accomplishing the purpose for which he or she has been shaped. You will be asked to retake it as a post-assessment to measure your transformation and growth regarding this competency. Your positive and negative input are an important source of information. It enables LeaderImpac to upgrade the process and address areas of concern among church planters.

This survey will help address issues in the context of a leader or church planter. Many are the issues of a leader in planting a church, therefore be as direct as possible. Nothing is too insignificant and nothing is too big that we cannot face the challenge. If we are to improve, it will be the result of your valuable insight.

The following questions constitute a survey of each of the following facets of the training:

IDEA
Coaching

TRAC
Leadership Development

Curriculum
Spiritual Formation

E=Exceptional

G=Good

A=Average

W=Weak

P=Positive

Y=Yes

N=No,

NA=Not Applicable

IDEA COACHING PATHWAY

1. How would you rate the training in the IDEA PATHWAY coaching model? ____
2. Have you been able to implement IDEA PATHWAY? ____
3. Has IDEA PATHWAY been helpful? ____
4. Has IDEA PATHWAY been effective in your ministry? ____

Discuss the following to the best of your knowledge.

In your usage of the IDEA PATHWAY what has been your greatest challenge?

How can LeaderImpac assist you more effectively?

How can LeaderImpac add to your coach training process?

TRAC LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

To increase the effectiveness in leadership development the following training model has been implemented. The acronym **TRAC** represents T-Trajectory, R-Replenishment, A-Awareness, C-Choices.

The answer to the following questions will help to refine the effort.

1. Have you been able to implement TRAC? _____
2. Has TRAC been helpful? _____
3. Have you integrated TRAC into your ministry? _____
4. Has TRAC been effective in your ministry? _____
5. How do you rate the TRAC experience? _____

Discuss the following to the best of your knowledge.

1. How can LeaderImpac address any challenge in your TRAC experience?

2. How can LeaderImpac improve the training process?

COMMUNITY

In an effort to be mindful and well-informed of the concerns among leaders in this Network, the answers to the following questions will be helpful in developing a relational community that serves its participants.

1. Is a safe place among peers important? _____
2. Would a community of peers be helpful? _____
3. Have you ever had a peer buddy (a close friend in ministry)? _____

What do you perceive as your greatest challenge?

What do you perceive as a workable answer to your greatest challenge?

SCHEDULE

In view of the busyness in ministry and the demands placed on leaders, your input as to the scheduling of meetings and retreats is important. It will help in scheduling future meetings and retreats.

Monthly and or both Quarterly meetings and Yearly Retreats

1. How can the LeaderImpac best schedule meetings?

Monthly ____ Quarterly ____ Yearly ____ Retreat ____

How can LeaderImpac improve its schedule?

How can LeaderImpac improve our time together?

SPIRITUAL FORMATION CURRICULUM

In order to address the failures and setbacks among leaders in their efforts to plant churches, emphasis on spiritual formation becomes a major topic to be considered. The writing of Dallas Willard deals extensively with the subject and provides a theological analysis and a step-by-step approach to adjusting to one's spiritual formation.

Renovation of the Heart

1. Has this book been helpful in your spiritual formation? _____
2. Do you think you understand spiritual formation better now? _____

How can LeaderImpac address any spiritual challenge?

Discuss what you would add to this subject.

CHURCH PLANTING CURRICULUM

The spiritual health of the church planter will impact the church planting efforts. The ability to understand the sovereign perspective as it relates to the church plant requires clarity. With clarity comes vision. To implement that vision is the subject of the book. *Church Unique* sets forth a step by step approach to accomplishing that vision.

Church Unique, God Dreams

Has this book helped in the vision of your church? _____

What insight have you gained?

How can LeaderImpac bring more clarity to this insight?

Discuss what you would add to this subject.

DISTRIBUTION OF QUESTIONNAIRE

The following schedule will be followed closely to determine the results and evaluate possible steps for improvement. This process will serve as a format to be duplicated on a bi-yearly basis. A continual review will contribute to the necessary upgrades and adjustments in each aspect of the leadership development process.

Review results

Overview of results with response and conclusion.

Presentation and analysis of results.

Analyze results and steps to implement improvement.

Report on results

My ultimate conclusion and how to address results at the end by-yearly.

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