

Liberty University Rawlings School of Divinity

**Discipling Leadership is Key to Church Revitalization:
A Revitalization Strategy for Declining Churches**

A Thesis Project Submitted to
the Faculty of the Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

by

Jerry Anthony Rhodes

Lexington, TN

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Liberty University School of Divinity

Thesis Project Approval Sheet

**Dr. Douglas Munton,
Online Instructor of Practical Studies
Rawlings School of Divinity**

**Dr. Mark Brown, Adjunct Instructor
Rawlings School of Divinity**

DISCIPLING LEADERSHIP IS KEY TO CHURCH REVITALIZATION: A REVITALIZATION STRATEGY FOR DECLINING CHURCHES

Jerry Anthony Rhodes

Liberty University Rawlings School of Divinity, 2022

Mentor: Dr. Douglas Munton

ABSTRACT

This thesis project is designed to help diagnose the spiritual condition of church leaders as well as to implement a plan to encourage biblical leadership development. Due to the lack of biblical leaders, churches across the country are declining and/or dying. The Southern Baptist Convention in 2019 reported more churches closed than opened. This is a trend that must change, and it starts with leadership. A major problem in our churches today is the leaders are not biblically disciplined. Without biblical leaders, the church will not be as Jesus intended.

This research project will focus on helping churches create leaders who will lead from a biblical point of view rather than men's point of view. It looks at studies of other churches, surveys of individual leaders, and previous scholarly literature. The research will show a lack of biblical leadership as well as the hope that abounds when churches raise up biblical leaders.

A plan is given to help develop leaders into ones using their God-given abilities to help move God's church forward. With the implementation of this plan, a church can get on the path to revitalization and begin making an impact as commanded in Acts 1:8, in their Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and The World.

Abstract Length: 206 words

Acknowledgments

I would like to dedicate this thesis project to the following people:

First and foremost, I would like to thank Jesus Christ for dying for my sins and giving me hope for eternal life in heaven. My relationship with Him has been the driving force for this project.

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One person who has played a role in this project is my mother. Mama, if you had never given birth to me, I would not be here to work on this project. You have always encouraged me through life and showed me your love in various ways.

To other members of my family, sisters, aunts, uncles, colleagues, friends, and professors. Thank you so much for your love and encouragement. You all will never know what it has meant to me along my journey.

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I have served with some great pastors and had some great mentors over the years. Thank you for not giving up on this hardheaded guy from Alabama. The information shared in this project is not just research from the last couple of years, it is research from the last 28 years.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis project to the one man whom I know would be so proud of me. This project is dedicated to the loving memory of my dad.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The Church is alive and well, or is it? This statement and/or question has been offered many times by various people. Research by Dr. Thom Rainer and Lifeway Research shows over half of American churches have either plateaued or are in decline;¹ Calvary Baptist Wetumpka is one of those churches. In Matt 16:18, Jesus claimed He would build His church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. If this is true, why are so many churches in decline or, worse yet, closing their doors at an alarming pace?

The church is in dire need of revitalization. Throughout history, there have been great revival movements that gave the church a boost. However, after time and the death of leaders in those churches, the church began to decline once again. This thesis project aims to formulate a plan to help churches develop biblically disciplined leaders. This plan will be based on interviews with successful church leaders, leaders from failed churches, interviews with national leaders in discipleship and church revitalization, and input from scholarly sources.

Ministry Context

Calvary Baptist Church of Wetumpka has a rich heritage within the community and a unique history. The church began in 1937 after a group of three ladies from the local Methodist church wanted to do Sunday School for the children of the “mill village.” On the first Sunday in June 1937, the Sunday School was started in a building owned by the local school system with fifteen members present. From that moment, God was moving in that location. In 1938, a Bible School was led by a Presbyterian Student Pastor with seventy-nine members attending. As the

¹ Thom Rainer, “Dispelling the 80 Percent Myth of Declining Churches,” ThomRainer.com, July 12, 2017, <https://thomrainer.com/2017/06/dispelling-80-percent-myth-declining-churches/>.

church continued to grow, the need for its own building would arise. Property for the first church building was donated by a Presbyterian lady who wanted to see the ministry continue. In 1938, the building was completed, and Union Chapel Church was formed. The church was originally established as what would be considered non-denominational by today's terminology, in 1941 it was named Second Baptist Church. This was in part because the majority of those attending were from the Baptist Faith. On August 8, 1976, Second Baptist Church officially changed its name to Calvary Baptist Church (Calvary). The church history states: "Calvary is a Baptist Church that was founded by Methodist and built on property contributed by a Presbyterian."²

Calvary members are hard-working, blue-collar people in a community just north of Montgomery, Alabama. Wetumpka could be considered a rural area by some or a suburb by others. Either way it is classified, Wetumpka is a growing town and therefore needs healthy churches to reach those moving into the area.

The church's rich history and heritage is a Southern Baptist Church full of traditions. Such traditions are the singing of hymns, fifth Sunday lunches, singing "Happy Birthday" in the services, and more. The traditions are closely held; it has been known to create quite the havoc in the church when they are altered.

One problem with the church has been the lack of spiritual growth over the years. It is included as a tradition is many of the older members habitually attend church because "it's what you are supposed to do." However, many of those same members are not spiritually mature, though several are in leadership. Many believe working in the church is the equal to or more important than serving Christ within the community. Ephesians 2:8-9 says serving God is not

² "Calvary Baptist Wetumpka about Us," Calvary Baptist Wetumpka, accessed October 3, 2022, <http://calvarybaptistwetumpka.org/about-us>.

about works, but rather about our faith in Jesus. Others believe the church is only what happens in the physical location. The church must realize what Christ calls the Church is not a building, but rather the body of believers as a whole.

Based on Matt 22:37-40, Calvary aims to “Loves God and Loves People.” It has reached out to the community and is now showing that love. However, it has been difficult because the church had to rebuild a reputation within the community. In 2004, the church was devastated, when the pastor was arrested for child molestation. The church had an abysmal reputation for years. There was a lack of trust toward the church as well as the church leaders. For the next seven years, the church went through pastor after pastor. There was no consistent biblical leadership nor any challenging biblical teaching to help disciple and challenge spiritual growth. The church became more of a meeting place rather than a place of spiritual growth, discipleship, mission, and ministry to the lost and hurting of the community. If they could meet three times per week, pay the bills, and be happy they were satisfied with their walk with Christ. The church continued several years without a consistent senior pastor committed to rebuilding the church and seeing it become a beacon within the community again.

In December 2012, all of that began to change for the most part when the researcher became the senior pastor of the church. It did not take long to realize the church had not healed from the hurt seven years earlier. During the rebuild of the church there truly is a need for solid spiritual and biblical leadership. The leadership structure consists of a senior pastor, worship leader, youth minister, and children’s director. The church also has a daycare which recently changed names from Noah’s Ark Daycare to Calvary Baptist Wetumpka Child Development Center. The Child Development Center is led by its own director, co-director, and a wonderful

group of teachers who love children and love investing in them. The Child Development Center is the healthiest of all the ministries at the time of this writing.

The rest of the leadership is the laity (church membership) of the church. The deacons act more as a governing board than the biblical term describes. There are committees and ministry teams set up like many churches across America. There is a church leadership team comprised of the committee chairpersons and team leaders of those areas of ministry. The spiritual development of this group of leaders is vital to the success of the revitalization efforts of Calvary Baptist Church. Therefore, this is the purpose of the author's research. This author believes biblically disciplined leaders are imperative to see the church become revitalized and relevant within the community again.

Statement of Problem

What issue has led to the decline in so many churches? Why has Calvary Baptist Wetumpka been in decline for almost twenty years? Several years of observation of factors led to the slow decline reveals the biggest issue is the lack of biblical discipleship among those in leadership. For the church to experience revival, the church must develop church leaders continually growing in Christ and making disciples of others.

Calvary has great men and women in leadership positions. However, many were placed in positions due to necessity and popularity rather than qualifications and abilities. There are great teachers who have made an impact on many lives through the years, but there are also those who seem to have no desire or understanding to make disciples who can step into leadership one day. Most of the leadership is supportive of the Great Commission if someone else is doing the work and the witnessing. The deacon body truly has a servant heart. However, although they are

very interested in coming to church and having a study, there seems to be very little interest in helping others grow.

People placed in leadership due to need or popularity rather than spiritual gifts and abilities include the church finance team. It was discovered about six months into my pastorate most of the finance team, mainly the chairperson and influential people on the team could not read the financial report. The church started a daycare about twenty years earlier. In many of the finance meetings, there was a belief the church was losing money because of the daycare. However, after the financials were carefully reviewed, it was revealed the daycare was not costing the church money; the daycare was helping to pay the bills of the church. During the time of this research project, if the church did not have the daycare, the church would have had to close due to lack of funding. Another issue with the finance team was several members of the team who did not believe in biblical tithing. The people tasked with the finances of the church did not believe the church should be supported according to Scripture.

Therefore, Calvary's decline can be attributed to lack of consistent development of biblical leaders. Over the years churches too concerned with numerical growth put spiritual growth on the back burner. Calvary is no different. As mentioned above, if they were meeting and paying the bills people in the church were happy. They would be thrilled when a visitor would happen through the doors of the church. Although the church claimed to be an outreach-oriented church during meetings with the pastor search committee, it was outreach oriented to the extent it did not cost them any of their comforts. It was outreach oriented if the people being reached looked and acted like the people in the church. Just as the issue with the finance team, just observing the church as a whole revealed that discipleship was the issue among the leaders. If the leaders were not being discipled, it should be no surprise the church members and

attenders were not being disciplined. It was during this observation that the lack of discipleship was not just apparent in the church, it was killing the church. There had to be a change soon for the church to survive. It is the writer's intent to demonstrate to Calvary Baptist Church the importance of fully disciplined lay leadership, as well as actively making disciples of those who come into the church from the community.

Another problem that needed to be addressed was, as Thom Rainer highlights in his book *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, that “the church refused to look like the community.”³ When Calvary Baptist Church was in its prime, the people who lived in the homes in the community around the church were the ones attending the church. However, over a period of several years the demographics changed within the community, but the inside of the church did not change with the demographics. As a result, many people in the church moved to churches where the communities looked like them rather than helping the church look like the community. During an attempt to relocate the church in the early 1990s, the pastor at the time shared, “We had several individuals who stated, ‘God placed this church here in the 1930s for the purpose of reaching this community. God’s purpose hasn’t changed.’” Although God’s purpose may not have changed for the church, if God intends for the church to reach a community, there must be leadership to lead the church to biblical maturity and to reach and love the community around the church.

The church lay leadership is not spiritually mature and therefore their leadership is not based on biblical wisdom but rather on the wisdom of men. This research intends to confirm this as an issue in the church as well as introduce a solution helping Calvary become spiritually healthy and become a church with biblically disciplined leaders leading the church rather than

³ Thom S. Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways To Keep Yours Alive* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 25-30.

people just filling spots out of necessity or popularity. With this strategy in place, the writer hopes this thesis project will ignite a passion for discipleship leading to revival and revitalization. The writer also hopes this thesis project not only helps Calvary but also other declining churches as they realize the need for true biblically disciplined leaders. Solid lay leaders who have been truly disciplined are the key to bringing revival to churches.

Purpose of this Project

“Why spend time researching, writing, and implementing change if a church is dying?” It is my desire that this church will not become a statistic by being one of the growing number of churches that are closing every year. A Lifeway Research article says 3700 churches closed their doors in 2014. That number grew to over 4500 in 2019.⁴ Churches are dying, and churches are closing more and more every year. It is the writer’s desire to stop the trend of dying and closing churches. It is more important to note he does not want to see the church he is currently serving or any of the churches served throughout his ministry to close. Therefore, the writer gladly put hours upon hours of time researching through books, studying other churches, analyzing data, and whatever else it might take to see declining churches get back on the path to becoming spiritually healthy as well as begin to experience revitalization within the church and the community.

Having been coached, mentored, and disciplined himself by some godly men over the years, opened his eyes to the lack of biblical discipleship that is happening within the leadership of today’s churches. Through observation, conversations, and research, this is proving to be what he believes to be one of the primary problems facing churches today. Therefore, another purpose

⁴ Aaron Earls, “Protestant Church Closures Outpace Openings in U.S.,” Lifeway Research, May 26, 2021, <https://research.lifeway.com/2021/05/25/protestant-church-closures-outpace-openings-in-u-s/>.

of this project is to help current leaders see the importance of being disciplined themselves and then following the example of Jesus discipling His leaders over time, it is hoped that as current leaders are disciplined, they will begin to invest in creating biblically disciplined leaders to carry on the ministry of the local church.

As John Maxwell stated, “Everything rises and falls on leadership.”⁵ A leader’s responsibility is to create an environment that trains leaders from a biblical point of view. As a person is disciplined to be like Christ, they learn to turn more and more from man’s and the world’s thinking toward God’s way. The Bible teaches this principle in Rom 12:2: do not be conformed to the way of the world. Those in leadership should not lead from a worldly point of view but as the verse continues, by renewing minds to the thinking of God and His will.

The purpose of this research project is to help struggling churches, and especially Calvary, become healthy, with leaders who have been biblically disciplined and are striving to create future biblically disciplined leaders.

Basic Assumptions

In a research project of this type, there are many assumptions to consider. The first assumption is that this project will “fix” the failing church. As a pastor and researcher, the writer is assuming that once this project is presented to the leadership, new leaders are biblically trained, and other suggestions implemented that the church would become one of the healthiest churches in the area.

⁵ Deborah Bowie, “Everything Rises and Falls on Leadership,” *Business in Greater Gainesville*, September 30, 2015, <https://businessmagazinegainesville.com/everything-rises-falls-leadership/>.

Another assumption is the church's will to be fixed. Often churches think everything is okay and nothing needs to change. That is the researcher's assumption of Calvary, though giving is down, attendance is down, baptisms are down, and the number of people serving is down. However, most of the church may be shocked when presented with the issues this research uncovers and the solutions presented. If the church does not see the problem, this information will not be received well, nor will the recommendations be implemented.

Another consideration is why the researcher chose to address these issues now. If he knew there was a problem several years ago, why did it take so long to bring up this information? It is possible the current leadership will not accept this research and its suggestions. It will lead either families, staff members, or the researcher to leave the church in the resulting turmoil.

An important assumption is that the church wants to grow spiritually and numerically. Sometimes while observing churches, it is hard to determine whether the church members want to grow spiritually. All churches will say they want to see more people active in their churches but may not demonstrate desire to grow spiritually. If a church wants to be revitalized and healthy, one must assume the people also want to grow spiritually and are willing work to discover and complete any changes needed.

There is one last assumption when considering this project. The researcher sometimes feels that this research will be a total waste of his time, the time of the church, and be an utter failure. There is an actual phobia that deals with this assumption. The fear of failure in a particular endeavor is experienced by most people one way or another. But irrational and

extreme fear of failing or facing uncertainty is a phobia known as atychiphobia.⁶ This fear has delayed this research process over the past year. Will this work? Will people follow it? Will it make sense? This assumption along with the other assumptions will only be proven true or false by implementing the research project.

To refute the last assumption, it is important to put biblical research into practice and stand on the Word of God. If God led to me do this project, which the writer fully believes He did, He will help me through this process. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths” (Prov 3:5-6).⁷ The researcher is going to lean on the understand of the Lord and let Him guide the implementation. In fact, it is His church and not anyone else’s church. If we remember to trust Him through all of this process, it will all be for His glory.

Key Terms to Consider

There are several key terms that must be understood to fully grasp the nature of this research project. While this is a summary list, it should be noted that other terms may appear in this thesis that are not in this list.

The first word to consider is *revitalization*. Derived from *revitalize*, it means “to give new life or vigor”⁸ Throughout this thesis project revitalization will be used to describe the desired action. It is the desire of this researcher to bring new life back into Calvary. It will be a long process, but it is possible with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the use of this research.

⁶ Kentucky Counseling Center, “How to Overcome Atychiphobia, Fear of Failure,” Kentucky Counseling Center, June 29, 2022, <https://kentuckycounselingcenter.com/fear-of-failure-atychiphobia/>.

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in English Standard Version Bible.

⁸ All definitions come from Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/>.

Another word or phrase used often is *lay leadership*. Webster defines leadership as “the office or position of a leader; capacity to lead; or the act or an instance of leading.” While this is the definition of leadership, in the church the phrase *lay leadership* is used to notate those who are volunteers in a leadership role.

Disciple is defined as one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another. Therefore, a disciple of Jesus is someone who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrine of Christianity. This is a follower of Jesus and who is obedient to the teachings of Christ laid out in the Bible. *Discipleship* is derived from the word disciple. It refers to the act of teaching or being taught the doctrines and beliefs in the Bible.

Another term is *plateaued* or *declining church*. The general definition for a *declining church* is a church that has experienced a decline of more than 10 percent over a five-year period. In the same manner, a church that has had more than a 10 percent increase over a five-year period is considered a growing congregation. Consequently, a congregation that resides somewhere in the middle is a *plateaued church*.⁹

Biblical church leadership is a phrase used often in this project, simply defined by what is laid out in Scripture. In 1 Tim 3, the Bible presents two offices for the local church. The office of elder/pastor and the office of deacon. These two offices should set the example for future leaders in the church. However, there are other gifts mentioned in the Bible, and should be others leading in the church as well. Churches have small group classes and studies; someone must teach and/or lead those classes. According to Eph 4:11-12, there are those in the church who have the gift of teaching. Therefore, teachers and group leaders leading in the church should be

⁹ Michael McCormack, “Study Updates Stats On Health of Southern Baptist Churches,” Baptist Press, November 15, 2004, <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/study-updates-stats-on-health-of-southern-baptist-churches/>.

biblically trained to lead. Not only do churches have group leaders, but they also have other staff members and ministry leaders. In the church studied for this project, the staff consisted of senior pastor, youth pastor, worship leader, and director of children's ministries. It also had ministry team leaders, committee chairpersons, and members serving on the various committees and teams. Anyone serving and helping lead the vision and mission of the church should be leading from a biblical point of view and, therefore, should be disciplined to lead like Christ led.

Spiritual gifts are important to biblical church leadership. If someone is not using the spiritual gift God has gifted to them, not only will they miss out on the blessings of God, but 1 Cor 12 also teaches the church will not function as it should. In 1 Cor 12 and Rom 12, there are numerous gifts God gives His children upon their salvation. Those gifts are bestowed on His children to carry out the work God has prepared for those who are saved, to be used to help lead and guide His Church to be what He desires it to be. Ephesians 2:10 explains, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." God created His people for His work, and they are to carry out the work that He has for them. The way they do this is by carrying out the gift that God has given them. For more on spiritual gifts, refer to Appendix 1 located at the end of this project.

While the researcher surveyed the participants on the spiritual gifts, they were also surveyed and evaluated as to their *Spiritual Maturity*. Throughout this project, the discussion of discipleship also implicates that a movement toward spiritual maturity is taking place. Spiritual maturity is what happens when the power of the Holy Spirit begins to transform an individual to becoming more Christlike. When does the process toward spiritual maturity begin? The path to spiritual maturity begins at salvation. When a person surrenders their life to Christ, they are making a commitment to follow Christ which in turn will lead to maturing like Christ.

One Christian website, gotquestions.org, has an interesting take on what is required for spiritual maturity to happen. No matter what an individual tries to do on their own, spiritual maturity will only happen when the Holy Spirit is at work within them. The article states,

Christian maturity requires a radical reordering of one's priorities, changing over from pleasing self to pleasing God and learning to obey God. The key to maturity is consistency, perseverance in doing those things we know will bring us closer to God. These practices are referred to as the spiritual disciplines and include things such as Bible reading/study, prayer, fellowship, service, and stewardship. No matter how hard we might work on those things, however, none of this is possible without the enabling of the Holy Spirit within us.¹⁰

In 1st Corinthian 3, the Apostle Paul shares with the people of Corinth they have not become mature yet. Paul confirms the above article by reminding the Corinthian people real growth only comes from God when he states; "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth" (1st Cor. 3:6-7). Spiritual growth toward becoming spiritually mature is a must if a church is going to develop biblically disciplined leaders who lead the church to become spiritually mature and healthy.

Statement of Limitations

While the overall goal for this research project is to see the local church revitalized spiritually, it should be noted that what might work at Calvary, may not work at other churches. The intention of this research is to highlight issues and how to resolve those issues, it is not intended to fix all of the church's problems or bring instant growth to the churches of people who read this research.

¹⁰ GotQuestions.org, "Home," GotQuestions.org, July 31, 2011, <https://www.gotquestions.org/spiritual-maturity.html>.

While many people believe a church that goes through the revitalization process will become a mega-church overnight, this is not always the case. Church revitalization expert, Brian Croft¹¹ at The Biblical Church Revitalization Conference, hosted by the Alabama State Board of Missions on August, 14, 2019, stated, “You probably think I preached to five to seven hundred people this past Sunday. You are wrong, we had seventy-five.” Church revitalization is about spiritual growth, which may lead to numerical growth. However, even if a church goes through revitalization, there is no guarantee it will ever become a large church.

There are limitations on the participants of this research as well. While it will be beneficial to survey and research the entire church, for the purpose of this thesis project, the church leadership team is the key factor for achieve revitalization. The research will be limited to the members of the leadership team: ministry staff, deacons, committee chairpersons, and ministry team leaders. While the writer will strive to get every person on the leadership team to participate, it is possible some will not participate, thereby affecting the accuracy of the results.

The researcher developed a spiritual maturity questionnaire to be answered by each participant. This survey help determine where the participant feels they are in their personal spiritual maturity. Each participant will also be given a Spiritual Gifts Inventory assessment created by Lifeway Christian Resources. These surveys will be examined by the researcher and a plan of action will be defined throughout the rest of this research project.

Lastly, as Thom Rainer wrote in *Breakout Churches*,

I have attempted throughout this book to be very careful not to imply that the churches that moved to greatness did so with some magical, methodical, quick-fix formula. To the contrary, the opposite was true. Because we have been careful to note the unique characteristics of breakout churches, you may sometimes get the impression that these

¹¹ Brian Croft is the former Senior Pastor of Auburndale Baptist Church and Founder of Practical Shepherding. He is also Senior Fellow for the Mathena Center for Church Revitalization and an Adjunct Professor at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

unique issues explain the totality of the move to greatness and the momentum that followed. While I hope readers find these characteristics to be helpful and informative, I do not for one moment want to suggest that the basics of Christian ministry were abandoned.¹²

As the church leadership team works on these surveys, it is possible they will not answer truthfully but rather in a way that makes them look more spiritually healthy than they are. The spiritual maturity survey relies on how they see themselves. As a result, one limitation is there is no guarantee this survey will be helpful. However, the Spiritual Gifts Inventory will help address this limitation. The written answers will be considered but also the fruit (actions of the people) evident in their lives will also be considered. Matthew 7:15-20 teaches people will be known by their fruits; if they are spiritually healthy, they will exhibit spiritual fruit as well as help others bear fruit.

Every church has its own issues, and therefore, will have its own needed corrections. Therefore, this research project should only be used as a guide to churches beyond Calvary Baptist Church of Wetumpka.

Thesis Statement

The central problem in many declining churches is the lack of biblically disciplined leaders. Therefore, when churches are led by leaders who are true followers of Christ, disciplined to make disciples, desiring to see others grow in their faith, and guided by the Holy Spirit, only then will churches begin to experience revitalization. Without biblically qualified and developed leaders, the Church will never live up to its true purpose.

¹² Thom S. Ranier, *Breakout Churches* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 172.

CHAPTER TWO: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Throughout this research process, many books were read, churches studied, Bible passages reviewed, and people interviewed. There is a huge need for more literature from scholars to be written out of their experiences. There are many great resources available, however, the Bible is still greatest resource on creating disciplined leaders for the church today.

The literature can give insight into thoughts and ideas about developing biblically disciplined leaders, but the information must lead to transformation. D. L. Moody is credited with saying, “The Bible was not given for our information but for our transformation.”

¹ It is important to study the literature, review other churches, and talk to other leaders. However, to truly develop biblically disciplined leaders, one must teach and follow the Bible.

This chapter will discuss insights from reviewing previously written literature, the study of God’s word, and the theory behind the need for biblically disciplined leaders and the need to have a leadership structure to guide them and the church in carrying out God’s vision and plan for the Church.

Review of Literature

Church revitalization is a popular topic in church culture today. Many books, blogs, articles, interviews, and more are being written and produced to help the churches turn around and become healthy. However, church revitalization requires more than a mindset or an adjustment to programs; church revitalization is dependent upon the spiritual maturity of those leading the church. Many churches have seminary-trained pastors as well as other staff members.

¹ “D.L. Moody Quotes: The Bible Was Not given for Our Information but for Our Transformation,” Wise Famous Quotes, <https://www.wisefamousquotes.com/d-l-moody-quotes/the-bible-was-not-given-for-our-information-703846/>.

However, the lay leadership, such as deacons, committee and ministry teams, Sunday school teachers, and others, are equally crucial to the church's spiritual health.

Some lay leaders are not as spiritually mature enough to lead God's people into a deeper relationship with Christ. The researcher has observed, though twenty-five years of ministry, many people are in leadership roles out of necessity rather than their spiritual maturity and spiritual gifts. In *Church Revitalization from the Inside Out*, Robert Stuart discusses this idea. He states, "Too commonly, however, men are nominated for office because they are known businessmen or friends of the pastor, or because they have substantial influence in the congregation."² The Bible is very clear in 1 Tim 3:1-13 and Acts 6:1-7 what church leadership should look like. However, over time necessity, individual ambition, and popularity have crept in, leading to the downfall of the churches the researcher has served.

After looking at previous literature sources, it is evident that church revitalization requires the lay leadership to be spiritually mature and invest in the lives of future leaders who can continue to lead the church down a healthy path for generations to come. The writer desires to show the importance of lay leadership becoming more spiritually mature by growing in the Word of God, learning to use their gifts, and understanding biblical leadership.

The Need for Church Revitalization

Churches all over America are dying. Some churches will close their doors permanently within the next year. Thom Rainer, President of Lifeway Christian Resources, indicated between 6,000 and 10,000 churches will close within the next year; between 100 to 200 churches will

² R. D. Stuart, *Church Revitalization From The Inside Out* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2016), 22.

close this week.³ This should serve as a wake-up call for all church leaders. There is a need for the churches to be brought back to life. Just as Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead in John 11, with the help of the Holy Spirit the church can begin to live and thrive again. However, for this to occur, Rainer, in *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, gives practical insight into why many churches die and ways to overcome death.

Mac Brunson and Ergun Caner wrote a book entitled *Why Churches Die*. This simple yet profound book examines why many churches are declining and eventually will die. Many of the reasons mentioned in this book confirm what is presented in Rainer's *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*. An overlapping reason both books point out is that the members are more concerned with personal preferences than spiritual growth. Therefore, it is important church leaders grow spiritually, so they can help lead others to see the errors of their ways.

Along with personal preferences, in *Not a Fan* Kyle Idleman points the church back to Luke 9:23 and the importance of dying to self. When one truly dies to self, true spiritual growth can happen. Unless the church membership is becoming spiritually healthy, there can never be revitalization, and the church is headed toward death.

Often people will ask, "Is my church too far gone to be revitalized?" According to the research and various passages in the Bible, a church can always be restored to health. It might not be easy, but it can happen. In Bill Henard's book, *Can These Bones Live*, he uses Ezek 37 as a basis to show how God can revive a church, just as He raised the valley of dry bones to life.⁴

³ Thom Rainer, "Hope for Dying Churches," Facts & Trends, November 27, 2018, <https://factsandtrends.net/2018/01/16/hope-for-dying-churches/>.

⁴ Bill Henard, *Can These Bones Live?* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 1-2.

The Process for Church Revitalization

Church revitalization results from much prayer and seeking God's will and desire for His church. In his book *Biblical Church Revitalization*, Brian Croft points out that the key to leading a church in revitalization is to stop and pray. He states, "Sometimes the best thing to do to be faithful in a struggling church is to stop and pray and cry out to God for your church and your people. The despair of church revitalization can wire us to try and solve the financial crisis, instead of just praying for God to provide."⁵ The church's leadership must seek God through prayer rather than using their wisdom and power. Croft also indicates importance of the "power of God" in helping to lead a church into revitalization. It is essential to understand this principle for everyone involved in leading a church through this process.

Croft's guidance and emphasis on realizing God's power and the need for prayer is something that lay leaders of the church will come to understand as they are being developed into biblically disciplined leaders who will, in turn, help make disciples of others. This will only happen through the power of God.

Prayer, faith, and hard work are required to lead a church through revitalization. Therefore, the researcher believes spiritually healthy church leadership is essential to lead the church to become more spiritually healthy. The early church in Acts 2 demonstrate the formula for a healthy church. These early followers of Christ were devoted to the teaching of God's Word, devoted to prayer, and unified in all they did. This is what is lacking in many churches today.

⁵ Brian Croft, *Biblical Church Revitalization: Solutions for Dying & Divided Churches* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2016), 45-46.

In his doctoral thesis project, “An Effective Strategy for Church Revitalization through a Case Study of Hosanna Church,” Hyung Woo Park says, “The foundation of successful change and of a healthy church is based on changed congregation to be healthy. Without a healthy congregation, a church cannot be successfully revitalized into a healthy or influential church. The church has to pour its energies into becoming a healthy church.”⁶

Mark Dever, in his book *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, puts discipleship just before leadership as important mark of a healthy church. Dever addresses the biblical principle of church growth through discipleship. He states, “A healthy church is characterized by a serious concern for spiritual growth on the part of its members. In a healthy church, people want to get better at following Christ.”⁷ For Calvary to become a healthy church, the leadership must first have deep concern for their own spiritual growth but also for the spiritual growth of those they are leading. Dever furthermore addresses ways to create a leadership team that will lead the church to become healthier, and revitalization can begin.⁸

Leadership is important as a church strives to be revitalized and become effective again. In his book, *Revitalize*, Andrew Davis highlights the importance of raising up men and developing them into the spiritual leaders of the church. Davis states, “No one can revitalize a church alone. God must raise up godly men to strive together in the work, or it will inevitably fail.”⁹ Without the assistance of godly men and women working together to help bring the church to spiritual health, the church will never recover what God truly intended from the beginning.

⁶ Hyung Woo Park, “An Effective Strategy for Church Revitalization through a Case Study of Hosanna Church” (DMin thesis, Liberty University, 2009), 47.

⁷ Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 198.

⁸ *Ibid.*, ch. 9.

⁹ Andrew M. Davis, *Revitalize: Biblical Keys To Helping Your Church Come Alive Again* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017), 175.

Church leadership must not only be growing in the knowledge of the Word of God, but also learning how to apply the teaching from God’s Word into their leadership styles. Stuart believes it is important leaders not only be trained in doctrine but also in how to treat others. He states, “Doctrine is important, but churches are also encouraged to train leaders as shepherds who demonstrate love, care, and discipline”¹⁰ While leading a church into and through revitalization one must truly love and care for the members who are there.

Robby Gallaty, in *Rediscovering Discipleship*, identifies the first step that must be taken by every church leader who wants to see the church return to greatness and the purpose God intended. He states, “The first step we must take is to repent. We must repent for being disobedient in the mission of the church—making disciples.”¹¹ This has caused many churches to need revitalization. They have moved from disciple-making to church attendance making. When the church leadership grows spiritually, they will lead a church to make disciples, reach the lost, encourage one another, and love one another.

Once the church leadership has repented, Gallaty says, they are ready for serious spiritual growth. In *Growing True Disciples*, George Barna posits the best strategy for church growth and revitalization is to “[i]gnite people’s passion for God and get out of their way.”¹² He says one cannot restrain themselves from sharing about the greatness of the Lord and serving Him when one is truly on fire for God. Therefore, it is so crucial for churches needing

¹⁰ Stuart, *Church Revitalization From The Inside Out*, 22.

¹¹ Robby Gallaty, *Rediscovering Discipleship: Making Jesus Final Words Our First Work* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 24.

¹² George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2001), 3.

revitalization to have leaders growing in Christ with a heart and passion for the church's ministry.

To succeed in church revitalization, the church must overcome fear of change. It is necessary to see the church return to the purpose that God has intended. It not only takes personal change through discipleship, but Lee Kricher shares how some churches need to change in the leadership. Kricher believes churches must put people in a position that can set aside their own ideas and ego to focus on the purpose and work God has in store.¹³

It is no surprise that the church leadership plays such a vital role in the growth of the church as well as the revitalization of the church. As leaders continue to accept the Great Commission in Matt 28:18-20, The Great Commandment found in Matt 22:37-40, and the Acts 1:8 challenge to be a mission-minded church starting with the local church, the church will return to her mission of making disciples who will make disciples.

In *What Is a Healthy Church Member?*, Thabiti Anyabwile states, "The most chronic problem facing churches and Christians is the lack of consistent spiritual growth and the progress in discipleship."¹⁴ He says many churches are not healthy because there has been this lack of discipleship. This is especially true if there is a lack of discipleship among the church's leadership. To revitalize a church into a vibrant, healthy, growing church, the leadership must be spiritually healthy. Discipleship is the key factor; if people are not growing spiritually in the church, there is little hope for the revitalization process. Anyabwile continues by arguing many people in churches do not even know what true spiritual growth looks like. How can there be

¹³ Lee Kricher, *For A New Generation: A Practical Guide for Revitalizing Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 41-42.

¹⁴ Thabiti M. Anyabwile, *What Is A Healthy Church Member?* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2008), 83.

spiritual growth if the average Christian does not know what it is? This is causing many churches to lose ground, becoming stagnant or dying.

Other key factors are discussed in John Koessler's book *True Discipleship*. He says there are several aspects that keep us from growing. He addresses each point from Scripture. His basis is the argument found in Heb 5:11 that some are "slow to learn." The Greek adjective translated for slow can also mean neglect.¹⁵ He says, "[The] primary hindrance to spiritual growth, then, is the aspect of our nature that the Bible refers to as the 'flesh.'"¹⁶ The main thing that prevents one from growing spiritually is oneself. Using this reasoning, many churches need revitalization because individuals have not grown spiritually, leaders have not grown spiritually, due to the sinful nature born into each person as a result of the fall from grace found in Gen 3.

The driving force for church revitalization must be striving for spiritual health, and the leadership must be true disciples, growing in their faith to lead the church as God intends. Dave Early and Rod Dempsey address this. They state, "The starting point in Christian leadership is the health of the individual. It is not the health of the organization, but the health of the organism. Nevertheless, a true Christian leader is still concerned about the health of the organization, though it is not the primary motivation."¹⁷ This is a key point for the leadership to remember as they lead the church. If they are not healthy themselves, the church will not be spiritually healthy. The driving force for the lay leadership must be, first and foremost, their own spiritual growth so they can lead others to be spiritually mature. Early and Dempsey explain, "As disciples grow and develop within the body, the natural progression is that Great Commission

¹⁵ John Koessler, *True Discipleship The Art of Following Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003), 75.

¹⁶ Ibid. 77.

¹⁷ Dave Early and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is--: How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013), 195.

leaders will begin emerging.”¹⁸ This should be the goal of every believer. It should also be the goal of every church. A church wanting to experience revival should be striving to make disciples and cultivate disciplined leaders.

Biblically disciplined leaders are important, as are leaders who can put the teachings of Christ into practice. Adam Copeland writes, “We need leaders with a passion for the gospel, with Bibles that are worn, with ears to hear and with communities to support them. We need leaders drawn to the work of building God’s kingdom instead of building their résumés. We need leaders with admirable ethics and deep faith foundations. We need leaders who follow.”¹⁹ Biblical leadership is more than taking a position or being elected based on popularity; biblical leadership should always be based on a love for God and His people. In Matt 22:37-40, Jesus says these are the two most essential things believers are to carry out in their lives. They are to love God with everything and love people as they love themselves. It all starts with a love for Jesus and a willingness to follow Him.

In his thesis project, Daniel Smith presented a belief on leadership and discipleship, using Bill Hull’s book *The Disciple Making Pastor: The Key to Building Healthy Christians In Today’s Church*. Smith states, “In the concept of discipleship, it is the pastor’s responsibility to make discipleship a priority within the church.” In his book *The Disciple Making Pastor*, Bill Hull addresses the issue of creating a space for discipleship within the church. He gives three key steps to achieving this goal. First, the pastor must preach the concept of discipleship, which is the formation component of discipleship. Second, the pastor must write down the concepts of

¹⁸ Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is--: How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence*, 195.

¹⁹ Adam J. Copeland, “Why Lead?: Discipleship as Leadership,” *The Christian Century* 130, no. 23 (2013): 11-12.

discipleship for all to understand within the church. This is also the component of formation. Third, the pastor must model the lifestyle of a true disciple, which is the application component of discipleship.²⁰

The pastor is responsible for leading the church in discipleship. However, Eph 4:11-13 teaches the responsibility of the pastor is to train the membership to carry out the work of ministry. Therefore, the pastor discipled leaders who will, in turn, disciple others, who will eventually become strong leaders within the church. When people are biblically discipled, the Great Commission will be fulfilled in the local church.

Pastors are responsible for creating a disciple building culture in our churches. Mike Breen's *Building A Discipling Culture* is full of practical information for creating a culture in a church in which people are not only being discipled, but are also discipling others. Breen uses all types of geographical shapes to point out the discipleship process. He also believes Jesus led a discipleship culture with his disciples. Breen states, "Jesus believed so powerfully in discipleship that he basically put all of his eggs into that basket. (It's worth noting that it paid off)."²¹ To create biblically discipled leaders, churches must be making disciples who will become leaders, not leaders who will become disciples. Many churches have reversed the process, and, in turn, created a biblical leadership deficiency in churches today.

²⁰ Daniel Smith, "A Pastor's Approach to Discipleship and Its Effect on the Local Church: A Three-Step Approach to Biblical Discipleship" (DMin thesis, Liberty University, 2014), 20.

²¹ Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture: How to Release a Missional Movement by Discipling People like Jesus Did* (Greenville, SC: 3DM Publishing, 2017), 35.

Developing Biblical Leaders

There is a difference between developing leaders and developing biblical leaders. For this thesis project, the researcher studied books on developing biblical leaders and found that many resources are available to help the church develop and train leaders for today's church.

Mike Breen's *Multiplying Missional Leaders* is a great tool to help transform leaders "from half-hearted volunteers to a mobilized Kingdom force."²² He discusses the idea of a leadership pipeline. Churches must recruit leaders, train leaders, deploy leaders, and review their impact as leaders. This is the same idea that will be addressed in Chapter 3 of this thesis project. If churches do not have a plan to develop biblical leaders, it will not happen by accident.

Dr. Johnny Hunt, former senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodstock, GA, wrote a book every leader should read; but even more importantly, it should be read by every church leader. Dr. Hunt addresses what leaders need to understand in *Building Your Leadership Resume*. They must have a clear vision from God as to where God wants the church to go. He says, "We cannot challenge others to embrace a mission we don't personally possess and embody."²³ Here lies a major issue in developing biblical leaders. If the current leaders do not have a clear vision from God to develop leaders of where God wants His church to go, how can future leaders learn how to lead and where to lead? Dr. Hunt further says the church's current leaders are not developing more biblical leaders because they are too focused on themselves and do not want to "share the spotlight with anyone."²⁴

²² Mike Breen, *Multiplying Missional Leaders: From Half-Hearted Volunteers to a Mobilized Kingdom Force* (Pawleys Island, SC: 3D Ministries, 2012), Front Cover.

²³ Johnny M. Hunt, *Building Your Leadership Resume: Developing the Legacy That Will Outlast You* (Nashville: B&H Books, 2009), 4.

²⁴ Ibid.

This is a major issue in many churches, especially smaller churches that are single-staffed or small-staffed. For churches with only one full-time staff member, the pastor is expected to have all of the answers and be responsible for all of the church's guidance. While that is not the biblical model of a leader, it is the realistic view of leadership in many churches. There have been times leadership should have been handed off to others, but that would have meant sharing the glory with someone else. However, God is the one to receive the glory in everything. John 15:8 teaches God receives the glory when we bear much fruit. If leaders are too self-centered to allow someone else to perform a task, they want the glory and do not want God to get the glory. Hunt's book moves this discussion forward and helps the reader become a more biblical leader rather than just a leader in the church.

Ken Blanchard, Bill Hybels, and Phil Hodges wrote a book that points leaders to the true example of a servant leader, Jesus Christ. The front flap of the book states:

Leadership by the Book is an exceptional new book, brimming with insights, ideas, tools, and tactics for becoming a successful leader.... Using the example of Jesus Christ, the book explores the concept of "servant leadership" and offers simple strategies for bringing vision and values to any organization.²⁵

If corporate America has a leadership training book pointing to Jesus's leadership style, how much more should the church look to Jesus for leadership development?

Paul David Trip's *Lead* is a book that outlines twelve principles leaders must embrace to lead well. He discusses everything from the role of leaders to servant leadership, to the character of a leader, to understanding that leaders may fail, but it is our job to see them as Jesus sees them. He addresses a significant issue in many churches, one of the primary purposes of this research project. He states, "We don't have just a pastoral crisis; I am convinced from having

²⁵ Kenneth H. Blanchard, Bill Hybels, and Phil Hodges, *Leadership by the Book: Tools to Transform Your Workplace* (London: HarperCollins, 2001), Inside Front Flap.

conversation after conversation with pastors and their leadership that we have a *leadership crisis*.”²⁶ He further says leadership structures in many churches could be setting up the church leaders for failure. Each one of these principles helps develop the leader but also helps the church understand and see the leaders as Christ sees them.

Theological Foundations

While numerous books and articles are written about leadership and discipleship, the most important resource for the church is the Word of God. Multiple passages in the Bible point toward leadership and the importance of following the Lord’s guidance as a leader to help sustain growth in the church and make disciples of others.

From the very beginning, God enabled man with the ability to lead. He entrusted Adam with the Garden of Eden, all the animals, and his wife, Eve. God gave Adam the orders to work and care for those who were given unto him in Gen 1-2. However, Adam failed in the assignment given to him by God. Throughout the rest of the Bible, God’s plan of redemption helps guide back to an authentic relationship with Him.

The first passage concerning making disciples is the Great Commission found in Matt 28:18-20: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” This is important for not only church leaders, but also all Christians. Further it is important for the leadership to model this so the other church members can follow their example. The *Holman New Testament Commentary* says, “The central command is **make disciples**. At the heart of our mission is the

²⁶ Paul David Tripp, *Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), 17.

reproduction in others of what Jesus has produced in us: faith, obedience, growth, authority, compassion, love, and a bold, truthful message as his witnesses. They were learners commanded to produce more learners.”²⁷

The learners were commanded to produce more learners. This would, in turn, become leaders creating leaders. Acts 9 describes Saul’s conversion, who later became known as Paul. After being turned away by the current disciples, Barnabas took him under his wing. Warren Wiersbe, in *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, takes the discussion back to when Barnabas first appears in Acts 4:36-37 and points out his name means “son of encouragement.”²⁸ He further says, “Barnabas “took hold” of Saul, brought him to the church leaders, and convinced them that Saul was both a believer and a chosen apostle. He had indeed seen the risen Christ (1 Cor. 9:1).”²⁹

Another example is 1 Tim 4:11-12. This passage is important for young people who might be part of the leadership team. As with many other passages in the Bible referring to leadership, it is important to lead by example. The passage states, “Command and teach these things. Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.” Paul is telling young Timothy to teach the things passed down to him, but, more importantly, teach the doctrine of Christ.

Considering the importance of leadership in Scripture, one must study the life of Moses. In Exod 3, God calls Moses to an important leadership role delivering God’s people out of the bondage of slavery in Egypt. This was not only a call upon Moses for the moment, but also a

²⁷ Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, vol. 1, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 484.

²⁸ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1996), 442.

²⁹ Ibid.

“life-changing encounter with God”³⁰ This encounter with God was when God commissioned him to deliver His people from Egypt (vs. 10). The *Bible Knowledge Commentary* says, “Aware that it was **God** who was calling him, **Moses** responded, **Here I am**. The same response was given to God by Abraham (Gen. 22:11), Jacob (Gen. 46:2), and Samuel (1 Sam. 3:4).”³¹ This is how biblically disciplined leaders should respond when God calls them to serve and lead His people as well. Leaders must be growing closer to God through spiritual development and learning to trust God to develop them to be the leader He desires them to become. In this passage, God reminds Moses, He will give him the words to say to Pharaoh. This is something that all church leaders need to understand and apply. When serving the Lord, they must rely on the power of God to work through them.

Nehemiah is another strong leader found in Scripture. In Neh 1, a key component to leading is brokenness and prayer. Nehemiah was so broken over the condition of the walls in Jerusalem he called out to God to be used to rebuild the walls and revitalize his homeland. Nehemiah not only led the rebuilding of the walls in Jerusalem, but he also set an example for all biblical leaders. His brokenness led him to talk to God. Church leaders must talk to God and rely on His leading in their lives. Prayer must be very prevalent in the lives of biblical church leaders. *The Believer’s Study Bible* highlights, “Nehemiah combined active and determined leadership with a commitment to confession and prayer as he led the people in the aftermath of the cruel exile in Babylon.”³² The church needs leaders who are broken over the condition of the church

³⁰ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 108.

³¹ John D. Hannah, “Exodus,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1985), 111.

³² W. A. Criswell et al., eds., *Believer’s Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), Nem 1:6.

and will seek and submit to the will and authority of God. Just as Nehemiah asked to be used by God, church leadership who are biblically disciplined and growing in Christ will call out to be used by God as well.

Nehemiah also teaches another aspect that must be present in the lives of biblical leaders. He humbled himself by praying, fasting, weeping, and realizing the only help for his beloved homeland was the hand of God. The CSB Study Bible Notes says, “Nehemiah’s response was like that of his predecessor, Ezra (Ezr 9:3–5), who humbled himself before God.”³³ If church leaders humble themselves as Nehemiah humbled himself, by turning to and trusting God, leaders will then begin to learn that everything they do is by the authority of God, and their actions will reflect this principle.³⁴

The life of David in 1 and 2 Samuel is important for leaders to study. At a young age, David relied on God to help him overcome obstacles and showed others how to trust God. In 1 Sam 17:37, David says, “The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.” He further states:

David said to the Philistine: “You come against me with a dagger, spear, and sword, but I come against you in the name of Yahweh of Hosts, the God of Israel’s armies—you have defied Him. Today, the LORD will hand you over to me. Today, I’ll strike you down, cut your head off, and give the corpses of the Philistine camp to the birds of the sky and the creatures of the earth. Then all the world will know that Israel has a God, and this whole assembly will know that it is not by sword or by spear that the LORD saves, for the battle is the LORD’s. He will hand you over to us” (1 Sam 17:45-47, Holman Christian Standard Bible).

³³ Carl R. Anderson, “Nehemiah,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 720.

³⁴ Kenneth A. Mathews, “The Historical Books,” in *Holman Concise Bible Commentary*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 185.

When leaders trust in Christ, they must realize, as David did, the battles they must fight are not only theirs; the Lord will guide them and help them overcome.

Being in leadership can be discouraging. However, one must realize God will continue caring for those He places in leadership, just as He did for David. Long before David, there was a leader named Joshua. Joshua 1 is a passage of encouragement for the young leader:

Be strong and courageous, for you will distribute the land I swore to their fathers to give them as an inheritance. Above all, be strong and very courageous to carefully observe the whole instruction My servant Moses commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right or the left, so that you will have success wherever you go. This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth; you are to recite it day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do. Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go (Josh 1:6-9).

God is sharing with Joshua an important aspect to being a leader, remaining true to the Word of God and staying in a continual pattern of growth in the Word. It is very important that church leaders become spiritually mature so they can help others become spiritually mature.

The Word of God is very clear about the types of leaders God desires. The Bible says the church should choose leaders who have “a good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit, and wisdom” (Acts 6:3). If a leader is focused on their own good, they will only hurt the church. Paul shares how Christ set the example of a leader in Phil 2:1-11. Humility is a key component to Christian leadership in the local church. Therefore, one must have a good reputation of following the Holy Spirit and having wisdom.

Furthermore, the characteristics of solid Christian leaders are found in 1 Tim 3:2-7 as well as Titus 1:7-9. Titus 1:7-9 summarizes these characteristics:

For an overseer, as God's administrator, must be blameless, not arrogant, not hot-tempered, not addicted to wine, not a bully, not greedy for money, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, righteous, holy, self-controlled, holding to the faithful message as taught, so that he will be able both to encourage with sound teaching and to refute those who contradict it.

A spiritually mature church leader must grow in the Word of God while also being faithful to the Word and living a life that exhibits the life of Christ. When others notice this type of lifestyle, it can help them see the importance of living in such a way to be an example faithful to the Word. In the Titus passage, these verses point to humble leaders who want what is best for others and not themselves.

In Luke 9:23, the marks of a disciple are presented. True disciples of Christ will deny themselves. They will lay down their wants and desires for the sake of Christ. True disciples will take up their cross. They are willing to make sacrifices for the sake of Christ. And finally, true disciples will follow Christ no matter the cost. There are times when sacrifices must be made for the betterment of the church. Sometimes following Christ might cost the leaders friendships, jobs, and more.

The Book of Acts is in some ways a training manual for church leaders. In Acts 2:42-47, Luke writes about the early church and their devotion to the teaching of the Word of God, to prayer, and to each other. The example set by the early church leaders will help drive and develop a stronger church today if it returns to the truths of God's Word. In Acts 16 and other passages in Acts, the Apostle Paul demonstrates how leaders should respond to adversity. In Acts 16:16-34, Paul and Silas are placed in prison. However, rather than complaining about their situation, they began to praise God. When leaders are growing spiritually, they will not only lead in happy times, but also in tough times. Leadership is not easy, and church leadership seems even harder than the world's leadership at times. Therefore, it is important for the leadership to grow in Christ and lead in Christ. Without a positive attitude always, like Paul and Silas, there will be no revival in the church because they will flee when tough times come.

Romans 12:1-2 are important in the life of the growing leader. This thesis project will show where there needs to be change in the thinking of the leadership. Not only should leaders make sacrifices, but their thinking must be renewed to become more Christlike in their lives.

Every leader can learn from Peter. In the Gospels, Peter declares nothing will ever happen to Jesus and he would fight for him (Matt 26:31-35; Mark 14:31; Luke 22:1-38; and John 13:31-38). However, Jesus tells Peter He knows Peter will flee from Him in difficulty. Peter did as Christ predicted, but thankfully this was not the end of the story for Peter. In John 21, Jesus restores Peter and calls him to feed Christ's sheep and spread the message of Christ; in Acts 2, it is Peter preaching when three thousand people were saved (Acts 2:41).

Finally, it is imperative for church leaders to understand the principle in John 15. Leaders must remain close to Christ and realize that apart from Him, they can do nothing (John 15:5). It is also important to realize that when a church experiences revitalization, God may prune bad limbs from the church so it will experience growth. The church may need to replace some in leadership to experience spiritual and numerical growth in the church.

Theoretical Foundations

Disciple-making is one of the final commands given by Jesus in Matt 28:19-20. The purpose of disciple-making is to continue the message of Christ throughout generations until the return of Christ. Believers should be a witness for Christ, continuing His mission from the days of the apostles until the day of Christ's return, every day.³⁵ The more important picture this thesis project aims to portray is the importance of lay leadership's personal discipleship and their influence on making disciples at Calvary. The biblical model of this idea is found in the Gospels.

³⁵ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Acts 1-12* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 22.

Throughout the ministry of Jesus, He was a servant leader who continued to grow His disciples for the work of the church. This discipleship model is a model still relevant today. The writer of this thesis will show church revitalization will happen, when the lay leadership is disciplined as Jesus modeled.

John MacArthur notes, “A commitment to the apostle’s teaching is foundational to the growth and spiritual health of every church.”³⁶ The idea presented within the scope of this thought is that the leadership must teach the Word of God to those in the congregation to have a healthy church. When leaders live out the teachings of Christ in their everyday lives, others in the church will take notice and follow their lead.

Disciples strive to be obedient to Christ and bring others to a complete understanding of Christ. Mark Devers says, “Disciples disciple.”³⁷ This is a key aspect to this thesis project. If the lay leaders are not true disciples themselves, then they will not be making disciples of others. As a result, there will not be consistent or sustained spiritual or numerical growth in the body.

In the writer’s observation of many churches, it is apparent that numerous members of the leadership have been appointed based on merit and popularity rather than being placed there by the Spirit of God. Church leaders are to be people of wisdom, people of great character, people who are full of the Spirit of God, people who are respected, people who have been tested and proven, and people grounded in the Word of God (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim 3:1-13). In order to see the church experience revival, Calvary Baptist Church needs to develop the lay leadership into people of faith who fall within the characteristics mentioned throughout the New Testament and modeled by Christ.

³⁶ MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Acts 1-1283*.

³⁷ Mark Dever, *Discipling: How To Help Others Follow Jesus* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 16.

Becoming a true biblical disciple is not something that happens quickly. Disciple-making is a lifetime process that begins with salvation and ends when a person's life ends. When studying the apostle Peter, it is noted that his calling and discipleship came in stages.³⁸ Jesus called Peter's brother Andrew, then after some time, called Peter. He walked with Christ, studied under Christ, and led people to Christ. However, Peter's discipleship process was not easy. He denied Christ three times, which might make one claim that Peter was not worthy of being a disciple of Christ. However, in John 21, Jesus restores Peter and gives him the responsibility of feeding Jesus' sheep.

The same is true for those in leadership for Calvary. Some have been Christians for many years, but like Peter, they seem to have strayed at times and need assistance returning to the focus of the Great Commission. All Christians are called and commissioned to make disciples. However, it takes leadership to set the example for those in the church, just like the apostles did in Acts.

Discipleship is a commitment. Being a leader in the church is a commitment. Luke describes a true disciple of Christ: "And he said to all, 'If anyone would come after me, *let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.*'" (Luke 9:23; italics added). Being a follower of Christ is not easy and requires sacrifice, as does being a leader in the church. The sacrifice is great, but the rewards are many.

Leadership Structured for Success

Once a church understands the need to develop biblically disciplined leaders, it must create a leadership structure that helps the church understand the leadership roles. There are multiple

³⁸ John Koessler, *True Discipleship The Art of Following Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003), 138.

styles of leadership structures in churches throughout the country. Some are pastor led, some are deacon-led, some are elder-led, and some do not know who is leading the church. It is very important to define the leadership structure as a church is creating biblical leaders but also as a church moves into and through the process of revitalization.

Every organization has a leadership structure. Some have them printed; others have a leadership structure that is understood in which those in charge know who is in control, whether anyone else knows it or not. For example, World Changers Student Missions, a student missions ministry, has a leadership structure printed in the front of their coordinator notebooks each year. This structure is to help everyone understand their position and help others know whom to address for specific issues.

Calvary has a leadership structure that is understood. The church bylaws list the leadership positions, but for the most part, there are no printed guidelines for decision-making. This is both good and bad. When decisions must be made, the pastor and staff know which committee or ministry team to reach out to for guidance. However, there are other times when decisions must be delayed because a business meeting is required. When there is a leadership structure that allows everyone to know exactly how decisions are made, and a structure that allows the Holy Spirit to guide each decision, the church move forward in a healthier way.

In *Return to Me: God's Plea and Promise to His Church*, Claude King tells a story about an organization he and Henry Blackaby were asked to speak at several years ago. This organization had a reputation for fighting and disagreeing so much that the keynote speakers usually did not get a chance to speak. The keynote speakers went before the business meeting that year. King spoke about remembering whose business they were doing:

I explained that it wasn't their business. It is Christ's business. Consequently, their opinions don't count. Only Christ's opinion counts because He is head of His church.

They needed to agree with one another that they wanted Christ's will in every matter. When they sought the Lord's will in a matter, they prayed. Then they shared what they sensed the Lord would have them do. But then they needed to step back emotionally and watch to see if the Holy Spirit convinced the others. If He didn't, it wasn't their job to try. They just needed to pray and ask the Lord to reveal His will to someone else. God could guide them to function in unity.³⁹

Correct Biblical Leadership Model

When thinking about the proper leadership structure in the local church, one must look no further than the Bible. In Col 1:15-20, Paul reminds the church at Colossae that Christ is the head of the Church. He also reminds them this structure has been in effect since the beginning of time. Another place Paul talks about this is in Eph 5:23-24. He reminds them there is a proper structure of biblical leadership in the home, based on the leadership structure for the home God initiated in Gen 1. Christ is the head of all things in creation; therefore, He must be the head of the Church.

This example must be followed when thinking about proper leadership structures in the church. The issue with many churches people leading out of their abilities and their desires show Christ is not the head of the Church as the Bible says. Then there is conflict in leadership, which in turn hinders the growth of the church in all areas. In his book, *Church Revitalization from the Inside Out*, Robert Stuart explains how the health of the church relates to the health of the leaders in the church. He says, "Doctrine is important, but churches are also encouraged to train leaders as shepherds who demonstrate love, care, and discipline."⁴⁰

The idea presented by Stuart is the example set forth by Christ Himself. Leaders in the church must first be followers of Christ, but they must also know how to demonstrate love, care,

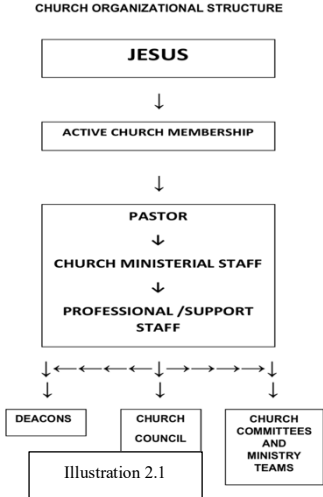
³⁹ Claude V. King, *Return To Me: God's Plea and Promise to His Church* (Nashville: Lifeway Press, 2020), 65.

⁴⁰ Stuart, *Church Revitalization from the Inside Out*, 21-22.

and discipline in their everyday lives. When a church has leadership structure with men and women trained to be biblical leaders, the church will be more prepared for church revitalization.

Calvary did not have a set structure for leadership.

One common factor in healthy churches is their leadership structure published for everyone to access. First Baptist Church of Lexington, Tennessee, has its leadership structure listed on its website (See Illustration 2.1). Senior Pastor, Dr. Clay Hallmark, believes having a clear-cut leadership structure and the leadership roles defined are all key factors to the health of their church.



As one studies the Church Organization Structure chart, it is clear that Jesus is the head of the church at the church. Jesus is the head of the church not because they chose for Him to be, but rather because the Bible teaches this principle. In *Who’s in Charge of the Church?* Sam Emadi states, “Jesus is in charge of your church.... Jesus sets the rules. He orders our life together. Scripture is the voice of the King governing his subjects and calling his people according to his commands. So, who runs the church? Jesus does. He’s the King—The Lord of the church.”⁴¹

Sadly, this is where many churches decline in their spiritual health. They have leaders trying to lead the church through a selfish thought process rather than asking, “What does God want?” or “What would Jesus do?” For a church to grow spiritually, Christ must be the head of the church and at the top of the leadership structure.

⁴¹ Sam Emadi, *Who’s in Charge of the Church?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2022), 14-15.

As shown in the organizational chart above, the next tier of the leadership structure is the “Active Church Membership” congregation. This model is called congregational church polity.

The website, Got Questions, discusses congregational polity and how it works. It states:

In congregational churches, the final authority rests with the congregation. This polity takes various forms. In some churches, there are almost no designated leaders (or, as some might say, except the Holy Spirit), and the congregation is involved in virtually every decision that has to be made—from the color of the carpet to the support of missionaries. In other churches, the congregation elects the primary office holders (pastor, elder, deacons). They will then make decisions, only consulting the congregation on major issues such as incurring debt to build a new building or calling a new pastor. However, in congregational churches, if a majority of the congregation objects to any decisions or believes that a leader should be removed from office, they have the authority to take action. Most churches with congregational rule are also independent, as they believe strongly that final authority resides with the local congregation. (For instance, Baptist churches may be part of a denomination—Southern, American, etc., but the “denomination” has no authority over the decisions of those local churches. The strongest action that could be taken by the denomination is that the individual church would no longer be received in fellowship; likewise, any individual church can withdraw at any time. In this case, the denomination is more of a voluntary, cooperative fellowship).⁴²

Following down the flow chart, although the church chooses the Pastor and other leaders of the church, they then hand off leadership to them.

The Bible calls the Pastor/Elder the overseer of the church. There are very specific instructions in God’s Word for the role of the pastor in the church. He is to oversee everything that happens in the church. First Peter 5:1-4 gives the Pastor/Elder specific guidelines. They are to “shepherd the flock of God.” This means to love and care for the church in which God has placed them. Just as a shepherd would care for the flock of sheep, God has placed the Pastor/Elder in the place of service to care for God’s people in the congregation. Peter would have understood this command because it is what Jesus told him to do in John 21:15-17. Jesus told Peter to care for his sheep by feeding them and tending to them. As a Pastor/Elder, one of

⁴² “What Are the Different Forms of Church Polity?” GotQuestions.org, October 6, 2016, <https://www.gotquestions.org/church-polity.html>.

the primary responsibilities is to feed and care for God's people. The next guideline given by Peter is "exercising oversight". The Holman New Testament Commentary states:

Since the pastor is the leader of a church, one commentator suggests the following functions of the pastor: '(They) had charge of the financial administration of the church ... they were the counselors and administrators of the church. They oversee all the activities of the church and are defenders of the faith. They are also called rulers and teachers and were the paid leaders of the church' (William Barclay, *The Letters of James & Peter*, Daily Study Bible [Toronto: G. R. Welch Co., 1976], p. 264).⁴³

This is a heavy job for the Pastor/Elder because they bear the burden of leading.

However, they must realize they are not ruling on their own and that the power of the Holy Spirit is living in them and guiding them to what God wants for the church. As a pastor there are times when having to oversee the finances, deal with issues in the church, and oversee the direction of the church can be challenging. The final guideline is that Pastors/Elders are to be an example to the church. First Peter 3:3 says elders should not lord over their congregants, but rather be an example of how to live as Christ in everyday life. In *Who's in Charge of the Church* by Sam Emadi says, "The elders model obedience to the Bible."⁴⁴ He highlights how 1 Tim 3 lays out the qualifications for being an elder. Those who serve in this capacity should not only live up to these characteristics, but this list should characterize every Christian. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Pastor/Elder to be an example of Christian living to those in the congregation.

After the Pastor/Elder leadership step, churches have the option to move on to various other leadership positions under the leadership of the Pastor/Elder. One of these leadership positions is the office of deacon. Following the characteristics and qualifications a Pastor/Elder

⁴³ David Walls and Max Anders, *I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude*, vol. 11, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 89.

⁴⁴ Emadi, *Who's in Charge of the Church?*, 31-34.

must-have, Paul gives qualifications for those who serve as deacons. The office of deacon is misunderstood in many churches. Although some churches believe the elder model of church leadership is not biblical, many deacons operate as elders in their churches. Elders have authority and are involved in decision making; the biblical office of deacons is one of service. The Greek word for deacon is *diakonos*, which means servant.⁴⁵ Anthony Hilder addressed deacons in a series of church leadership articles. He stated the role of deacons, according to Scripture is:

Scripturally, deacons were people who served the church elders in addressing administrative, pastoral, or practical roles. Acts 6 shows us the first deacons, their selection, and what they did. Tasked by the apostles, these servants addressed a pastoral need (food for widows) and coordinated resources to care for the people. This released the apostles, who led the early church, to focus on what God has called them to do, which was prayer and the study of scriptures.⁴⁶

A deacon is one who serves the body of Christ, the local church. Scripturally, they have no authoritative role in the church. However, through the years, many churches have handed over authority to deacons. For a church to be led by biblical leaders, the church should make very clear what the role of the deacon is, which may require them to shift to an elder-led church rather than a congregationally led church. First Baptist Church Lexington's bylaws state deacons serve the church, and the deacons are not a governing body of the church.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Henry George Liddell, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 398.

⁴⁶ Anthony Hilder, "What Are Deacons?," AnthonyHilder.com (blog), October 10, 2019, <https://anthonyhilder.com/deacons/>.

⁴⁷ "In accordance with the meaning of the Word and the practice of the New Testament, deacons are to be servants of the church. The task of the deacons is to serve with the pastor and staff in performing pastoral ministries and duties; proclaim the gospel to believers and unbelievers; care for church members and other persons in the community; lead the church to engage in a fellowship of worship, witness, education, ministry, and application; and to lead the church in performing its tasks. Because it is the desire of the Deacon Body of First Baptist Church, Lexington that they do not want to govern the business of the church, that they not become a "board of approval" for business matters of the church and that they maintain the Biblical role of servant ministry, it is recognized that the Deacon Body of the church has determined that the business of the church shall not become the major concern of deacon meetings and the Deacons of the church have determined that they will not bring recommendations as a Body to church business meetings. It is further recognized that any individual deacon has the right to bring a motion before the church in a business session." FBC, Lexington, TN Bylaws, 2017 update, <https://www.fbclexington.com/bylaws>.

The church will also have other positions deemed necessary by the church. Churches have ministry teams, teachers, and different staff positions. The primary considerations when adding positions into the church's leadership structure should always be to define the added leadership role clearly and concisely. The second consideration to be addressed must be if the church is being led by biblically disciplined leaders.

An example of the need for clear leadership structures is Spring of 2020. In March 2020, many churches were forced to shut down for some time due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Governmental and health leaders suggested people not gather in groups during this time because this virus spread so fast, and little information was known about the virus. The Centers for Disease Control reported Covid-19 was the third leading cause of death in 2020, behind heart disease and cancer.⁴⁸ During this time what had become a standard operating procedure in churches (meeting together, having committee/ministry team meetings, church staff meetings, business meetings, and other leadership meetings in the church) all stopped because the buildings were closed.

However, with the church buildings closing, church ministry never stopped. Churches moved to online services, and church meetings began using online meeting platforms. However, churches with regular business meetings had no way to get everyone together to make decisions. Calvary had some meetings through text messaging to vote on specific procedures that must be changed. The bylaws gave no instructions to make certain decisions without business meetings. This would have been much simpler if the church had a structured leadership plan.

⁴⁸ Sherry L. Murphy, Kenneth Kochanek, Jiaquan Xu, and Elizabeth Arias, "Mortality in the United States, 2020," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, December 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db427.htm>.

Churches have since begun adding provisions to their order of operations and/or bylaws to prevent this from happening again. One such church is West Bradenton Baptist Church in Bradenton, Florida. Their pastor, Dr. Sam Rainer, shared a copy of their bylaws. The very last statement of their bylaws states, “Force Majeure Event: In the case of a force majeure event, the lead pastor will work with the church council on making decisions on behalf of the church.” Merriam-Webster defines *force majeure event* as “superior or irresistible force; an event or effect that cannot be reasonably anticipated or controlled— compare.”⁴⁹ For church business, Covid-19 would be considered a force majeure event because it was not something planned and beyond the churches’ control. Churches had to maneuver through 2020-2021, and similar circumstances could happen again. It would be wise for a church to follow the lead of West Bradenton Baptist Church and place provisions into their leadership structure to help the church move forward in the instance of another force majeure event.

⁴⁹ *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v. “Forced Majeure”

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The Process of Creating Biblically Discipled Leaders

Church leadership attend conferences throughout the year and read dozens of books searching for the way to create and recruit the proper leaders for their church. This researcher has read many books on church leadership over the years as well as attended numerous conferences, met with colleagues, mentors, denominational leaders, and tried many other ways to create the best strategy for creating discipled leaders in the church. In all the books, conferences, and countless hours of research, the one place that gives the answer to creating biblically discipled leaders is the Bible.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus gave the example churches should be following to raise up leaders, already discussed in the theological aspect of this research project. Acts provides insight for putting leaders in position, and Paul addresses leadership in 1 Timothy and Titus. The next few pages will examine the process based on research and Scripture this writer found effective as implemented in the local church.

How Not To Recruit Leaders

There are many ways churches choose leaders. However, most of them are not the correct way or the biblical way. As discussed in Chapter 2, churches should have an organizational chart of leadership. Many of the churches this researcher served and observed have either a Nominating Committee or Committee on Committees. The Southern Baptist Convention uses these committees to select most of the leadership for the convention. Understanding how most churches select their leaders is important in understanding the right and wrong way of installing biblically discipled leaders.

In 2002, this researcher was on staff of a church in which the nominating team came out of a meeting and was asked by the researcher, “Who is the Vacation Bible School Director?” Their response was, “You are!” The committee selected leaders in August for the upcoming year. However, by March nothing had been done for Vacation Bible School scheduled for June. When asked about Vacation Bible School Director nominating team members answered, “We told you that you were in charge this year.” This was a surprise. It had been said the previous year in a joking manner and nothing else was said until the question. Vacation Bible School that year took place but was not nearly as effective as it should have been.

The researcher could share countless stories of the same observations over the years. Many times, a church may need to look at the bylaws to determine if it is set up to put biblically disciplined leaders in positions or if it dictates how many people are required to serve in leadership roles, and in turn the selection committee/team must fill spots on a page rather than enlisting leaders to serve in their gifted areas. A bylaw change was made removing the number of people required to serve on a particular leadership team which opened the door to enlist three solid leaders to serve on that team rather seven people. This process began to help the church, but it still did not ensure biblically disciplined leaders were being recruited to serve.

How To Recruit Leaders

The first step in recruiting leaders is to identify people who have leadership skills as well as have a gift for leadership. Lifeway Christian Resources released a “Spiritual Gifts Inventory” many years ago. This inventory document was used to assess the leaders of Calvary for this project. One of the spiritual gifts mentioned on this inventory analysis is leadership. First Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 talk about spiritual gifts every disciple of Christ possess. *Discovering your Spiritual Gifts* says, “Leadership aids the body by leading and directing

members to accomplish the goals and purposes of the church. Leadership motivates people to work together in unity toward common goals (Rom. 12:8).”¹ In this document, leadership is the very first gift mentioned. According to the above definition, it is vital for moving the church forward to have people who are biblically qualified for this position. As the researcher began to develop the recommended solution for helping our churches develop biblically qualified leaders, the starting place was to identify people who have the gift of leadership. Once identified, the current church leaders need to invite them to become part of the leadership training network. This training should last as long as needed to help future leaders understand their potential and helping them grow spiritually. Once they have accepted the invitation to become part of the leadership training network, the current leaders must invest in them. The current leaders are making an investment in the future leaders of the church. Investing in potential leaders is discipling them or instructing them how to be leaders that lead from a biblical perspective rather than a worldly perspective. Finally, the process ends when they are placed in full leadership and, begin making an impact in the church and the Kingdom of God. This strategy is called “What can ‘I’ do for the church?”

Identify

The first step is to identify potential leaders. This can be done in several ways: spiritual gifts assessments, watching them over a period, or let them naturally come forward to show interest in leadership. A true leader will exhibit leadership qualities and have a desire to lead. As mentioned before, someone should never be put in leadership simply to fill a spot. It should also be noted that this research discovered corporate leaders do not always make good church leaders

¹ “Spiritual Gifts Survey,” Lifeway, June 2010, <https://youngadults.lifeway.com/2010/06/spiritual-gifts-survey/>.

because they are being driven from a different point of view. Corporate leaders are trying to make a profit for their companies and therefore they may not always do what is best for the people. Many corporate leaders are trying to climb the ladder of success, whereas a church leader will humble themselves as a servant and serve simply because they know that is what God desires for them. Mark Devers in *Nine Marks of A Healthy Church* points out there has been a secularizing influence in our churches and this is affecting the way they choose leaders. He writes, “Instead of searching for leaders with secular qualifications, we are to search for people of character, reputation, ability to handle the Word, and who display the fruit of the Spirit in their lives. Those are the kinds of people we should recognize and into whose hands we should commit the responsibility of leading a congregation.”² The church cannot afford to have nonbiblical leaders in charge. Church leaders have more concerns than the finances, the condition of the building, and the number of people in the pews; church leadership has been set forth by God to serve His people and care for their needs.

In *Leadership by The Book*, the authors indicate there are two types of leaders. They are “People who are leaders first” and “Leaders who are servants first.” People who are leaders first will strive for control, try to make decisions, and give orders. They are driven to lead—they want to be in charge. And they’re possessive about their leadership position, - they think they own it.”³ The authors contrast this type of leader with that of a servant leader: “Leaders who are servants first will assume leadership only if they see it as the best way they can serve. They’re ‘called’ to lead, rather than driven, because they naturally want to be helpful.”⁴ As a church is identifying

² Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 231-32.

³ Kenneth H. Blanchard, Bill Hybels, and Phil Hodges, *Leadership by the Book: Tools to Transform Your Workplace* (London: HarperCollins, 2001), 42.

⁴ Ibid.

potential leaders, it must look for those with the heart of a servant rather than the desire to be in control.

In Acts 6:3, the apostles tell the church to pick men based on reputation and wisdom, but one clear requirement is that they are full of the Holy Spirit. Why is it important to be full of the Holy Spirit to be a church leader? Simply said, because they are leading God's people to be the people that God wants them to be. The only way for that to happen is by being led by the Holy Spirit as one leads others. Another passage that points to what is required of a leader is in 1 Tim 3. Regarding the two offices of the church, pastor and deacon, it begins by instructing that a leader must be "above reproach." The *New American Commentary* says:

To be "above reproach" demanded that the overseer be a man of blameless character. The same word (*anepilēmpton*) is used of widows in 5:7 and of Timothy in 6:14. It may serve as a general, covering term for the following list of virtues that should distinguish a church leader. The etymology of the word suggests the meaning *not to be taken hold of*. It describes a person of such character that no one can properly bring against him a charge of unfitness.⁵

This first characteristic will help create stronger leaders. A leader above reproach is a leader in whom no one can find any fault. This means that they are a true follower of Christ and not a follower of self. They do not have their own agenda but rather a Kingdom agenda. The qualification of being above reproach and the other qualifications found in these verses make it clear a man will exhibit the traits of a biblical leader; people will be able to see it through his life. The research has often been told that churches are struggling to find leaders. However, the reason many churches struggle to find leaders is because the current leaders are not looking at people as potential leaders because of mistakes in their past. If mistakes in the past disqualified men and women from serving, no church would have leaders. There are all types of men and

⁵ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, vol. 34, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 109.

women in the church who are natural leaders God has gifted, but they are not leading. Many factors are possible.

First, they may not know that they are a natural leader. The church must come alongside them and help them identify their gift of leadership. It may be that they grew up in the church and people remember their past rather than their present. Ephesians 2:8-10 teaches all are saved by grace through faith. This means it is God who does the cleaning up of lives and helps them become what God intends them to become. The key verse says, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” God prepared us for good works. For some, good work is leading His church, and when they were saved, they were put on the path to carry out that good work. Current church leaders should never let someone’s past keep them from carrying out God’s intended plan for them. However, there are consequences to pasts as well; the person must be above reproach throughout his or her Christian life.

The idea of watching people is not only laid out in Acts and 1 Timothy, but also in John’s Gospel. Jesus set the example of watching people before calling them to a leadership role. John 1 tells the story of Nathanael being called out by Philip to come and see Jesus. Nathanael was skeptical because of his views about people from Nazareth. Though the conversation, Philip says “come and see,” which Nathanael eventually did. When he finally made that decision to come and see, he has an encounter with Jesus. It was during this encounter that Jesus informed him that before Philip ever approached him Jesus had already been watching him (John 1:47-48).

As the church is seeking to raise up new leaders, along with observing, it is vital that the church be praying for leaders in the church. Luke 10:2 states, “And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send

out laborers into his harvest.” Jesus Himself tells the church how to raise up leaders. The church is to pray for people to be willing to go do the work that God has prepared ahead of time. Dr. Mark Gainey, Lead Pastor of Fultondale First Baptist Church, wrote the book *Four Invitations*. He states, “Before jumping into serving, have you taken the time to pray for, listen to and eat with these people?”⁶ Once one begins to identify potential disciples, one must take time to pray for them, observe them, and spend time with them before ever calling them to rise up and lead.

For a church struggling to find leaders to serve the church, it is imperative to pray for God to raise up leaders. God will send leaders within the church that is seeking to do His Will. As current leaders must be on their knees asking God to show and send those leaders.

God will reveal the character of the individuals. Through prayer, God will reveal His desire for that person’s leadership role. The leadership of the church must be willing to seek God’s direction and be willing to accept the ones God raises up to lead. When God’s leaders lead in the church, the church will accomplish God’s will.

Invite

In following the example of Christ, once a leader has been identified, the next logical step is to invite them to become part of the leadership training network. The Bible calls this discipleship. This is what Jesus did when He called His twelve disciples. He called them to be in His leadership training network. He called them to follow Him, learn from Him, imitate Him, and carry on His mission for the rest of time. That is what the church must do as well. They must identify those leaders, but they must invite those leaders to join them in leading.

⁶ Mark C. Gainey, *Four Invitations* (Birmingham, AL: Incite Ministries, 2021), 32-33.

The principle of inviting people into leadership has long been called recruiting leaders to serve. In *Multiplying Missional Leaders*, Mike Breen reminds churches the first thing Jesus did after He came out of the wilderness, led by the Holy Spirit, was call (invite) twelve disciples to learn to be and do all of the Kingdom things that Jesus himself was able to do and would continue to do.⁷ If a church is not willing to invite new people into leadership then they will never have enough leaders to carry out the mission Jesus has for them. As soon as Jesus came out of the wilderness in the Matt 4, He immediately began calling/recruiting/inviting men to join Him in His mission. Jesus had already been watching these first disciples, so naturally these were the very first ones He called.

When inviting people to join the leadership training network, one must realize there will be fear, reluctance to serve, questions, and other obstacles. However, if you are inviting those God has revealed through prayer and observation, it will be possible to address their concerns. The first concern many people express is how they are not prepared to be in leadership. They need to be assured through training and leaders walking alongside them. Jesus told His disciples in Matt 28:20 that He will be with them as they lead.

Next, the leadership can then address their reluctance to serve, reminding them the Bible is clear about serving God and His People. God has gifted every one of His followers to serve the Body of Christ (the Church). If the church has gone through the Spiritual Gifts Survey mentioned earlier, it would be helpful to go over the individual's gifts to share with them how they should use those gifts. The current leaders must be in constant prayer for the individuals as well. It should be the desire of the current leadership to always have gifted to leaders who serve and

⁷ Breen, *Multiplying Missional Leaders*, 60.

understand their gifts. The Holy Spirit is the One who will do the work to recruit biblically disciplined leaders. Leadership must be praying often.

This is one area the church is lacking. Consequently, it has been forced to place people in leadership roles who are not qualified, leading to issues within the church, divisions within the church, and a lack of biblical discipleship. A church must be willing to invite potential leaders to join the leadership training network and train them to use the gifts God has given them.

Invest

Once a leader has been identified and accepted the invitation to join the leadership training network, it is vital not to abandon them. Following the servant leadership, Jesus invested in His disciples for a period of at least eighteen months before He was crucified, resurrected, and ascended back to Heaven.

The Bible teaches Jesus saw the disciples whom He would call and after a time of watching, He called them to come follow Him.⁸ After Jesus called them, throughout the synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, they follow Jesus almost everywhere He goes. Jesus used all types of opportunities to teach them about the Kingdom of God. Jesus did not only call His disciples to come and follow Him, but He also invested in them so that they would be able to fulfill the calling He gave them.

Jesus spent day and night with them. He travelled with them, slept with them, and spent time with their families. The model Jesus set for making disciples and creating leaders for the church investing in their lives. This is the exact model was used for creating biblical leaders for this project.

⁸ Matthew 4:19 is the first occurrence in the Gospels of Jesus calling Peter as well as the other disciples.

As leaders were identified and accepted the calling, the researcher spent many hours with them. There were Bible studies, Scripture discussions, accountability for their living, and guidance on leading once they were put into leadership positions. The investment of time also turned into a lifelong friendship. Many have become more like family during this research project.

The research for this project shows the importance of investing in potential leaders, George Barna gives the same insight in his book *Growing True Disciples*. He states, “Most of the highly effective disciple-making churches integrate mentoring or coaching into their process.... Some churches raise up future leaders and teachers by having them serve as apprentices to church staff.”⁹ Churches must be investing in future leaders by being willing to give their time to help others grow. Discipleship leader and pastor Robby Gallaty often alludes to the fact that disciple-making is like a crock-pot and not a microwave.¹⁰ It will take time, it will take energy, but it will be all worth it in the end.

Dann Spader explains the idea of investing in potential and future leaders as a biblical teaching for successful ministries in his book, *4 Chair Discipling*. He believes the results of Jesus’s investment into the disciples is clearly chronicled in the Acts. In Acts 1, there are eleven men committed in Jesus and by Acts 28, these original eleven disciples have helped lead the

⁹ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2001), 123.

¹⁰ Robby Gallaty is the author of many books on discipleship as well as host of a well-known podcast, Replicate. One of his most used phrases in articles, conferences, podcasts, and in his books is “discipleship is a crock pot recipe and not a microwave recipe.” He is alluding to the fact that it will not happen overnight but rather over time.

church all over the world. Jesus's model works and church leaders must be investing in potential leaders for the future of the church.¹¹

Paul was also a leader who invested in future church leaders. In *Mentor*, Dr. Chuck Lawless discusses how Paul invested in the lives of several leaders.¹² One of those leaders was young Timothy. Lawless says Paul initiated the relationship, took the lead, and allowed Timothy to travel with him on his journeys. Paul did not only invest in Timothy in person; after Timothy became a church leader, Paul wrote him letters to encourage and mentor him as well. Timothy was more than likely the pastor of a church in Ephesus during the writings of the letters. Jesus set forth the plan for creating disciples who make disciples. Paul and Timothy's relationship followed the example of Christ. Paul identified, invited, invested, and as discussed later, instructed his mentee.

The researcher considers Dr. Robert Mullins, Lead Pastor of Crossroads Community Church in Elmore, AL, and Founder/Director of PassionTree Disciple Making Pastors Network to be a mentor like Paul. The researcher met with him on a weekly basis to discuss life and church ministry. Dr. Mullins challenged the researcher to always look at the next steps leading the church and helping the church create a disciple making culture. Dr. Mullins instructed the researcher to invest in others in the same way. This reflects the model Jesus used. Jesus invested in His followers those followers of Christ invested in others. If those followers/disciples would not have made an investment in others as Jesus instructed them, where would the church be today?

¹¹ Dann Spader, *4 Chair Discipling: What He Calls Us to Do* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2019), 147.

¹² Charles E. Lawless, *Mentor: How along-the-Way Discipleship Will Change Your Life* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2017), 44-49.

The researcher often asked Dr. Mullins how he transitioned and revitalized his church into a disciple-making church. He always answered, “he, as the pastor, disciplined people who in turn began discipling others.” To serve in leadership at Crossroads Community Church one must have completed a discipleship group or currently be going through a discipleship group. Dr. Mullins believes investing in others was the key to the turnaround of their church. Now they are a leader in the discipleship movement throughout the Alabama State Board of Missions.

During the process of this research, the researcher often evaluated what Calvary is doing to raise up leaders. On several occasions in deacons’ meetings, the discussion was about how the church needs more deacons but has not been able to find any. The researcher asked them, “What are you all doing to raise up future deacons? Who are you investing in that can become a deacon someday?” There was no plan in place nor were the current deacons actively investing in potential leaders in the church. This is a key factor to the turnaround at Dr. Mullins’s church; the deacons have been disciplined and are making disciples. This is one aspect the researcher strived to implement. It is not easy, however; Robby Gallaty is correct, it takes a lot of time. Getting current leadership on board has been a “crock pot recipe.” It has taken years and is still taking place. However, as more investment is being made into the lives of leaders and potential leaders, the stronger the leadership of the church is becoming.

Instruct

Many people believe the first step for creating biblical leaders is to teach how to become a great leader. However, people will be more willing to listen after a leader invests in them, rather than just teach them. The best teachers and professors are those who invest in their students rather than just lecture. The same is true in the church. Churches that are not willing to

invest in the lives of future leaders will never be able to instruct to be the biblical leaders God desires.

In *Designed To Lead*, Eric Geiger presents the Great Commission as God's only plan for creating disciples to lead His church. He believes God had no plan but "Go ... make disciples."¹³ This is exactly the plan God put in place through His Son Jesus, and it is still the plan God has for the church today. It should be noted that following the words "Go and make disciples" Jesus says, "teaching them all that I have commanded you" (Matt 28:19-20). The plan for disciple making has always been to teach what Jesus has taught. Therefore, investing in potential leaders must include teaching them the ways of God.

Robert Stuart believes, "Doctrine is important, but churches are also encouraged to train leaders as shepherds who demonstrate love, care, and discipline."¹⁴ Most people believe the only thing a church should teach is the Bible. Yes, that is a very important aspect of creating biblically disciplined leaders, but the church must also realize people need to be taught how to lead. This can be done using scriptural giants such as Moses, David, Peter, Paul, Elijah, who set an example to follow. However, churches must instruct how to lead with the heart of a shepherd, not a dictator. Stuart furthermore discusses how sheep must be led rather than driven. If leaders are not acting as a shepherd, the sheep will stray and create conflict within the church body.¹⁵

In Matt 4:19, Jesus called Peter to come follow Him. Over the next year or so Jesus taught His followers He is the Good Shepherd. He cared for His sheep and prepared for His sheep to be cared for after His death, burial, and resurrection. In John 21:15-17, Jesus instructed

¹³ Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead* (Nashville, Broadman and Holman, 2016), 155-156.

¹⁴ Stuart, *Church Revitalization from the Inside Out*, 22.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

Peter on how to be a shepherd. In the restoration of Peter in John 21, Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved Him. Every time Peter responded with a form of yes. Following Peter's response, Jesus gave him instruction for what he must do as a leader. He must feed the lambs, tend the sheep, and feed the sheep. Peter is to care for the very being of the Lord's people. That is exactly what biblical leaders are called to do. Therefore, churches must teach doctrine but that cannot be the only thing; they must instruct potential leaders to care for God's people.

Shepherding is an important aspect of leading a church and as Stuart believes, it is imperative to helping create solid leaders in today's churches. However, more discussion is needed on doctrinal teaching. To fully understand doctrine, one must understand what the word doctrine means. According to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, *doctrine* is simply what is taught and or instructed. Another definition applicable to the church is "a principle or position or the body of principles in a branch of knowledge or system of belief, or a principle of law established through past decisions."¹⁶ For the church, doctrine is essentially teaching the church belief system and instructing potential leaders regarding the beliefs, procedures, and teachings of the church.

The churches of the Southern Baptist Convention, the researcher's denomination, are encouraged to follow The Baptist Faith and Message as their statement of faith.¹⁷ Through the process of preparing potential leaders, the mentor/disciple maker must spend ample time helping the leaders understand what beliefs they will be expected to hold as they lead. Without a clear

¹⁶ Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. "Doctrine,"

¹⁷ The current version of the Baptist Faith and Message (BF&M) is the 2000 version. Throughout the history of the Southern Baptist Convention, there have been two other versions. The previous versions were adopted in 1925 and 1963. With each update, the writers made every effort to solidify the teachings and belief of the church. The most recent update consisted of a desire to clearly state the doctrine of the church on the sufficiency and inerrancy of the Bible. This update helped to strengthen the doctrine of the Southern Baptist Convention. The current Baptist Faith and Message can be found at <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/>.

understanding of the positions of the church, the leaders will not protect the unity of the church but could very well create conflict and division in the church. The Baptist Faith and Message clearly states what Southern Baptist churches believe about the Bible, Salvation, God, and other important theological issues. Why is this important? A pastor of a church would not want other leaders teaching something that does not line up with the teachings of the church, nor living in such a way that causes others in the church to misunderstand the teachings of the church. This is what leads to an unhealthy church, church conflicts, and many times a church split.

While the Baptist Faith and Message is the adopted statement of faith of the researcher's church, it is a secondary document because the true statement of faith for the church is God's Word. The Bible is clear that sound doctrine should be taught in the church. As Paul mentored young Timothy to become a church leader, Paul taught Timothy sound doctrine, but he also urged Timothy not to allow bad doctrine taught in his church. In 1 Timothy, Paul warns Timothy there will be false teachers with a different doctrine and some people who will depart from the faith. However, he urges Timothy to stay true to his teaching. One of the warnings Paul issued is found in 1 Tim 1:3: "As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine." Paul charged Timothy to confront those who taught wrong doctrine and instructed him to refute their teachings.

In another of Paul's letters, he encouraged Titus to teach a sound doctrine and expel those who not teaching the biblical truth. In Titus 1:9, Paul states, "He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it." This is the task to train leaders: teach them sound doctrine but also rebuke those not teaching the truth found in God's Word. Tony Evans says:

Elders are to encourage with sound teaching or refute those who contradict it (1:9). This is a weighty responsibility. It takes men of integrity to submit faithfully to their King's

agenda, to teach others to do likewise, and to correct those who oppose it. That's why Paul gave Titus such high expectations for elder candidates. Character is everything. Because many false teachers are outside the church, elders must equip Christians with sound, biblical teaching to help them discern truth from lies. But should false teachers try to operate inside the church, elders must silence them (1:11).¹⁸

The process includes identifying potential leaders, inviting them into the leadership development process, investing in them and instructing them. The question potential leaders might ask when being recruited is, "How long is this process?" The honest answer is, "As long as it takes to help you be the leader God wants you to be." That may be a vague answer, but it is the truth. Some people are further along in their understanding of Christ; some are still spiritual babies and have a lot to learn.

There are many different thoughts on how long a discipleship process should last. Jesus spent years with His disciples. Robby Gallaty recommends groups to plan on a twelve-to-eighteen-month process. He states, "Always begin with the end in mind. Your group should meet for 12 to 18 months, and they should expect that final date from the very beginning. Some groups develop a closer bond, which results in accelerated growth; others take longer. We do not recommend meeting for longer than 18 months."¹⁹

Although Gallaty recommends up to eighteen months, Doug Burrier recommends a longer process. Burrier believes it takes up to four years to fully train people to be leaders. He presents an argument that after a disciple has been trained their training continues, helping them disciple others. The reasoning for this is found in his book *How To Make Disciples*. He writes, "Leading others reinforces what they have learned. It causes them to integrate, and better understand the truths of following. Leading others also supercharges their journey through the

¹⁸ Tony Evans, *CSB Tony Evans Study Bible* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2019), Kindle, 5879.

¹⁹ "Questions about D-Groups," Long Hollow Church, <https://longhollow.com/questions-about-d-groups>.

discipleship three.”²⁰ Burrier further says more time allows them to prove themselves to be ready to lead. How many people would turn a multi-million-dollar company over to a CEO who has never led a company or has just graduated college?²¹ The truth is churches want to put people who are successful and proven into a position of leadership. This happens by the current leadership investing and instructing potential leaders to be prepared to successfully lead from biblical position and one that is discipleship orientated.

Impact

Once leaders have been identified, invited to leadership training, invested in and instructed/discipled, it is time to do as Jesus did with His disciples: send them out to make an impact to the world. In Matt 28:19-20 Jesus commissioned His disciples to make disciples of all nations. They should be making an impact for the Kingdom of God everywhere they go. Making impact does not start after the other steps have been completed. Jesus told them that if they followed Him, they would impact those they encounter. In Matt 4:19, Jesus calls this fishing for men.

Mike Breen indicates successful discipleship/leadership training is when “members of your Huddle start their own.”²² This is one of the ways to know trained leaders are making an impact: they are identifying potential leaders, inviting them to come join them, investing in their lives, and instructing them to become the person God has called them to be.

All leaders, no matter their position, must rely on the Holy Spirit leading them in everything they do. Paul writes in Gal 5:16-17, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not

²⁰ Doug Burrier, *How To Make Disciples* (Cave Spring, GA: Diferent.ly Publishing, 2019), 93-94.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 94.

²² Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 55.

gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.” The only way to not fall into leading from a self-motivated aspect or wanting to make a name is to continually walk by and with the Spirit of God.

What if a biblically trained leader comes to the pastor and says, “I know I’m supposed to do such and such, but I am not sure how to do this or that I can do this?” First, the pastor should remind them they are correct; they cannot do what God is calling them to do on their own. The only way to make an impact for the Kingdom is to trust God. A verse of Scripture that all leaders should memorize is Prov 3:5-6. It states, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” Another way to encourage leaders is to remind them of Jesus sending out His disciples out. The Bible teaches in Matt 10:1 that Jesus sent out His disciples and gave them authority to carry out their task: “And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.” As followers of Christ, church leaders have been given the same assurance. If God calls someone to lead, gifts them to lead, and sends them out to lead, He will also give the authority and power to lead in an impactful way.

Summary of the Process

Churches all over America are struggling to find leaders. It is not an issue of being unable to find leaders but rather an issue of raising up leaders. Conversations with church leaders neighboring Calvary revealed many people are afraid to pass leadership to new people because they have been hurt in the past or they would rather do it themselves. This is not what biblical church leadership should look like; God intends all of His followers to serve.

Many churches lack leadership but do not realize there is a lack of leadership. Many churches and especially the church studied for this project felt their leadership was solid. However, after interviewing, looking at their spiritual gifts, having discussions about discipleship and making disciples, they determined the church did not have biblical leaders. This led to the “I” strategy.

Once churches realize they have a leadership problem they must start raising up leaders. The first step is to *identify*. It may take time to identify potential leaders. But when God leads the church to the people He wants in leadership, it will help the church onto the path to revitalization and church health. The next three “I” s coincide with each other. Those identified must be talked to or *invited* to become part of the leadership structure of the church. They may be scared to take that step. However, the current church leadership must have a plan in place to train/disciple them to become a true follower of Christ and the leader God wants

them to become. After they accept the invitation, the work of the current leadership begins. Someone or several people must be willing to invest time, energy, knowledge, and other aspects into the potential leader’s life. Investing and instructing go hand in hand during this process. All those in

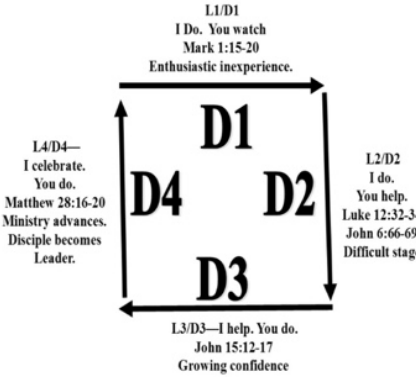


Illustration 3.1

leadership training to help in this process as well. Mike Breen explains it using a square box.²³ It begins by doing the work, letting the potential leader watch and help. Once they become more confident, they are allowed to lead with help. At the final stages of investing and instructing, the potential leader will lead, and leadership will celebrate them.

²³ Breen, *Building a Discipleship Culture*, 139-55.

This leads to the final “I.” The leader has been identified, invited, invested in, and instructed begins to make an *impact* and the process will begin all over. It is an ongoing process. If a church really wants to see revitalization and become a healthy church again, the current leadership must ask themselves two questions. The first question is, “Am I a biblically disciplined leader?” If not, they need to find someone to disciple them on that path. An unhealthy leader will not be able to produce healthy leaders. The second question is, “What am I doing to raise up future leaders?” Church leaders should all be asking these two questions regularly. Dr. Mullins shared with the researcher something his mentor asked him often: “Are you being disciplined and who are you discipling?” Discipleship never ends for the leader or the potential leader. Once someone feels that they have learned everything they need to learn to be an effective leader, the health of the church will decline. A true leader never stops learning. Dr Rick Warren writes, “‘Wise men and women are always learning, always listening for fresh insights’ (Proverbs 18:15 The Message). All leaders are learners. There are no exceptions. If you’re teaching in a classroom, caring for kids as a stay-at-home parent, or serving in a customer service role, you’re leading someone. And to do that more effectively, you need to keep learning. When you stop learning, you start dying. It’s that simple.”²⁴

²⁴ Rick Warren, “Disciples of Jesus Never Stop Learning,” PastorRick.com (blog), October 4, 2017, <https://pastorrick.com/devotional/english/full-post/disciples-of-jesus-never-stop-learning/>.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE RESULTS

The Research and Results

After hours of reading, surveying, analyzing, and observing people in the leadership of the project church, and observing churches that are growing in spiritual health and numerically, numerous ideas were gathered, implemented, and evaluated. Throughout this chapter, the process of data collection, evaluation, and results will be discussed. What has been learned from talking to other pastors, denominational leaders, members from other churches, and personal reflection will also be discussed. The biggest takeaway from this process has ultimately been that it is hard to believe that some churches are still open and hanging on.

As discussed in the limitations section, spiritual growth is not something that can be easily evaluated. When someone is on a path of discipleship, some will grow quickly, some will grow slowly, and some may not grow at all. There must be a desire to grow spiritually. If someone truly has the desire to grow spiritually it will happen; however, it might take years before there is any fruit. The process of evaluating spiritual growth was mainly one of observation. Did the participants show a deeper hunger for God and His word? Did the participants show a change in their willingness to serve from the heart rather than from obligation? Did the participants begin sharing their faith? These questions will be addressed based on the surveys participants submitted and how they view their spiritual maturity at the beginning of the process. Some of growth was very positive, while others in leadership in the church for over thirty years appeared to move backward rather than forward. This will be addressed later in this section.

Tools used for evaluation is something that must be considered. After looking for spiritual maturity surveys and tools to evaluate leadership qualities, the researcher determined to create his own survey. This survey had the subjects evaluate their own spiritual maturity and how

they viewed their spiritual growth. The survey led them to look at their relationship with the church, the Bible, and the community. This survey also caused them to evaluate the importance of the Great Commission and evangelism for them and whether are they practicing it on a regular basis. Also included in this survey was an evaluation of the fruits of the Spirit in their lives. They were asked to evaluate what fruits are evident in their lives and which ones they need to work on. Two key topics the subjects were asked to evaluate were their willingness to love others and how they saw themselves regarding serving and leading the church. They were asked frankly, “If someone has wronged you, how difficult is it to forgive them?”¹ Some of the answers to this question were very eye-opening and explanatory. Finally, there were some miscellaneous questions dealing with prayer and worship styles. These questions were to determine if they were more interested in the traditions of the church than the overall spiritual health of the church. The question on prayer measured how often the church leadership was praying.

As mentioned in the above paragraph, the participants were asked about their spiritual gifts. The researcher was shocked that most of the participants did not know what their spiritual gifts were nor how to use them once discovered. Each leader took the spiritual maturity survey developed by the researcher and was also asked to take the spiritual gifts inventory created by Lifeway Christian Resources. This survey asks a series of questions answered on a scale of 1-5. Once the survey is completed, it is tallied to determine the participant’s spiritual gifts and what that means within the context of their spiritual growth toward becoming biblically disciplined leaders.

Gene Wilkes describes the spiritual gifts survey and the meaning of each gift. Wilkes gives a general idea of what spiritual gifts are and where they are found in the Bible:

¹ See Appendix 1 for blank surveys used in the research.

Ken Hemphill defines a spiritual gift as “an individual manifestation of grace from the Father that enables you to serve Him and thus play a vital role in His plan for the redemption of the world.” Peter Wagner defines a spiritual gift as “a special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the Body of Christ according to God’s grace for use within the context of the Body.” I like to use this definition: A spiritual gift is an expression of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers which empowers them to serve the body of Christ, the church. Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30; Ephesians 4:11; and 1 Peter 4:9-11 contain representative lists of gifts and roles God has given to the church. A definition of these gifts follows.²

There are sixteen different gifts on this survey: leadership, administration, teaching, knowledge, wisdom, prophecy, discernment, exhortation, shepherding, faith, evangelism, apostleship, service/helps, mercy, and hospitality. Each gift is important to the life of the church. If they were not important to the life of the church, then they would not be presented in Scripture.

The researcher felt it was vital for the leaders of the church to know their gifts and how to use them serving God’s church and His people. Although all the gifts are important, for the purpose of this research project the focus is on the gifts that are of a leadership nature. Those gifts include leadership, administration, and shepherding. The website www.spiritualgiftstest.com states, “The spiritual gift of leadership is closely related to the gift of administration and, interestingly, the spiritual gift of pastor/shepherd.”³ This article also confirms these three as the primary leadership gifts. Wilkes’s description⁴ of the gift of leadership and the description found on www.spiritualgiftstest.com indicate the gift of leadership is to help the congregation accomplish the goals and vision for the church.

² “Spiritual Assessment Tool: Discover Your God-Give Spiritual Gifts,” Lifeway, September 10, 2015, [https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/women-leadership-spiritual-gifts-growth-service#:~:text=\(Discovery percent20Tool\)-,Spiritual percent20Gifts percent20List,-\(List percent20of percent20Gifts](https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/women-leadership-spiritual-gifts-growth-service#:~:text=(Discovery%20Tool)-,Spiritual%20Gifts%20List,-(List%20of%20Gifts).

³ “Spiritual Gifts,” Spiritual Gifts Test, 2020, <https://spiritualgiftstest.com/spiritual-gifts/>.

⁴ Gene Wilkes’s *Discover Your Spiritual Gifts* article can be found in Appendix 1.

Leadership is key; if a church does not have people with the gift of leadership serving in leadership, it makes it more difficult for the church. However, all spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit. No one simply decides to have the gift of leadership. Romans 12:8, 1 Cor 12:28, and 1 Tim 5:17 all teach about the gift of leadership.

The next gift the researcher feels is important is the gift of administration. The articles mentioned above teach that the gift of administration is similar to leadership but is more related to helping others stay on task. They are vital in helping the organization of the purpose and goals of the church. For the church to effectively carry out its purpose, it needs organization. Someone needs to keep the records of meetings, organize membership records, and help organize the work of other members of the leadership team.

The third gift is shepherding. According to www.spiritualgiftstest.com, “The spiritual gift of pastor or pastor/shepherd is one that carries many different responsibilities. This gift is closely related to the spiritual gifts of leadership and teaching. The Greek word for pastor is *poimen* and simply means shepherd or overseer.” Therefore, most people think the primary person in the church with this gift is the pastor. Wilkes asks to consider that though the pastor is the shepherd of the church, a person with this gift is not necessarily a pastor; but rather someone in the flock God has gifted to help care for the congregation.

The final vital gift is teaching. Although there are often many people in the church who do not have this gift, it is imperative to have God-gifted teachers rather just someone filling a spot. If a church is based on the Word of God and developing biblically based leaders, the church needs solid biblical teachers in small groups.

Next the study will examine and evaluate the gifts of those serving in the leadership of the project church. As mentioned above, there are sixteen different gifts, this project will focus on the those vital to healthy, biblically based leadership in the church.

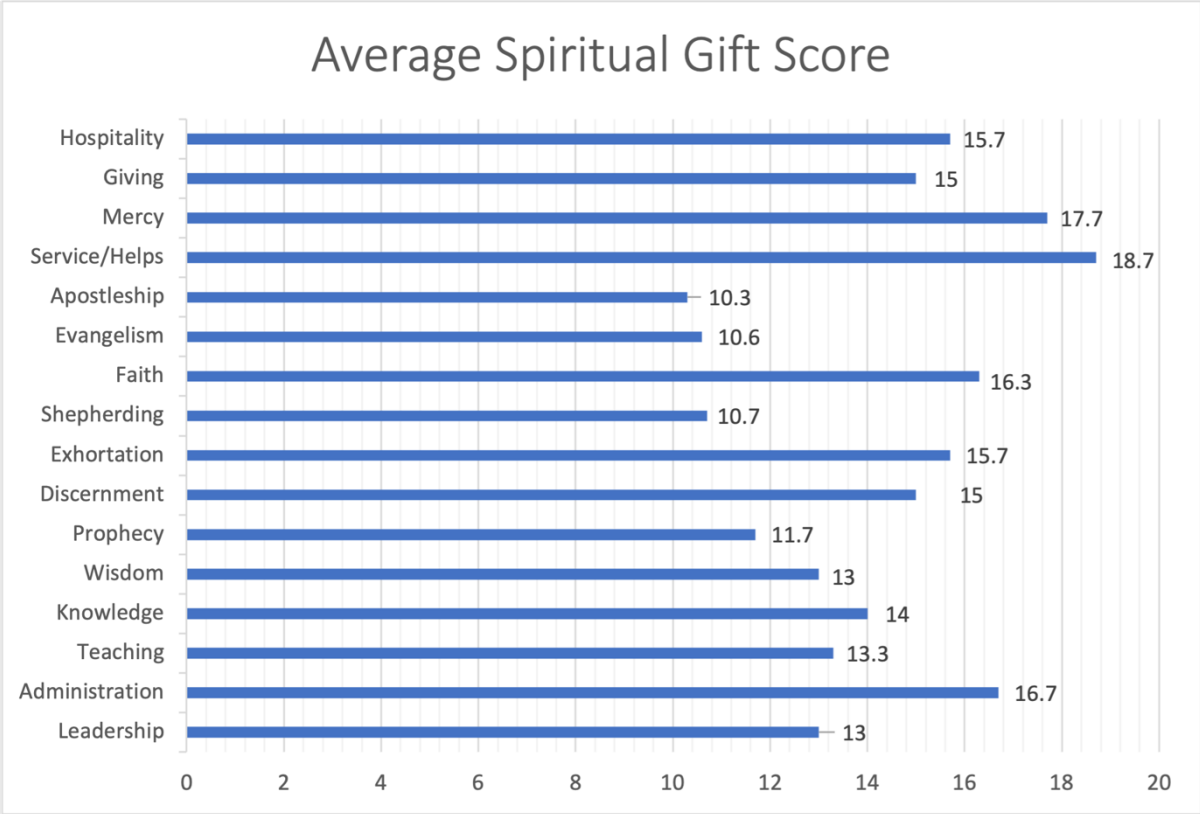
Evaluation of Leadership Team's Spiritual Gifts

One of the analytical tools used to survey the leadership team was a spiritual gifts survey. In the returned surveys, representing 62.5 percent of the leadership team, no person on the leadership team had the gift of leadership as one of their top three gifts. This is not surprising because the church lacked leadership. The researcher observed that no one other than the pastor of the church seemed to have the ability to lead from a biblical point of view.

Two of the leadership team members are very influential in the church. Their influence is more due to popularity than spiritual influence within the church. Without biblical leadership a church will either not grow or will decline. Biblical leadership is the key to moving forward to become all God has in store for the church. Upon evaluating the leader's spiritual gifts, changes and teaching were needed to help them realize how to use their gifts or that they may be better suited in other service areas.

Understanding of the importance of the role of leadership and the gift of leadership within the church, it should be noted this is the group that leads the church toward its goals, vision, and purpose. What are the goals, vision, and purpose of the church? Based on Matt 22:37-40, the church loves God and God's people. Based on Matt 28:19-20, the church makes disciples who will become disciple-makers. If the church was not moving forward in what God has called it to be, the researcher looked for a leadership problem. The research clearly showed there is an issue.

Below is a chart of the average score for each spiritual gift. As mentioned above, leadership, administration, shepherding, and teaching are the primary gifts concerning leadership. The chart shows these four gifts are lacking among the leadership team. While the gift of administration is the third highest score, the low scores for leadership and shepherding could hurt the church.



The Gift of Leadership

Although there was an average score of thirteen for leadership, it should be noted that no person serving on the leadership team had the gift of leadership in their top three. This is not only reflected in the paper surveys, but also the researcher’s evaluation. People with the gift of leadership can take an idea and lead people to carry out that idea. During the assessment of the church, everyone looked to the pastor for ideas and on how to implement the ideas within the

congregation. The pastor is the church's leader, but they cannot accomplish every task on their own. There must be other leaders within the church who can lead people.

The Gift of Administration

The next gift was administration. In looking at the above chart, administration was the third highest gift among those on the team. Although no one had the gift of leadership on the team, 60 percent of the leadership team listed the gift of administration in their top three. The physical evaluation of the researcher also confirmed this. Those with this gift are very helpful because they can help organize the plans to be implemented once discussed in leadership team meetings.

As a pastor, this group of people is beneficial. They take the church calendar, determine what is needed to carry out a particular task and run with it. One instance to exemplify how those with this gift helped lead the church was during the Covid-19 crisis. The church was shut down, people were out of work, schools were out, and the community around the church was poverty-stricken; the leadership team decided to develop a plan to distribute food to those in need. Those who helped coordinate and organize this ministry effort were those who exhibited the gift of administration.

Is the gift of administration more important than the gift of leadership? It should be noted that no gift is more important than others. Paul addressed this in 1 Cor 13. Although Paul specifically criticized the actions of the Corinthians by mentioning the gifts of tongues, prophecy, and faith, he affirmed each gift is not any more important than the other gifts. He tells them the most important thing is that they love one another and serve the Lord and His people with love. The gift of leadership is no more important than the gift of administration. However,

without people exercising this gift, there will be much disorganization within the body as they try to carry out the vision and purpose God has for them.

The Gift of Shepherding

The third lowest average score of all the gifts was that of shepherding. The gift of shepherding is caring for the spiritual welfare of others, specifically, the congregation of the church. Sadly, some deacons who participated in this study did not score well on caring for the church's spiritual welfare. Of the leaders who participated in the study, only one had the gift of shepherding in their top six gifts. Some church leaders might not consider this detrimental to the church and its revitalization process. But every church needs people who can encourage people in their walk with Christ, help them grow in their walk with Christ, and help them discover and begin using their own spiritual gifts. This role is usually done by the pastor, but the pastor cannot carry out everything in the church. Especially as the church begins to grow, people's own spiritual welfare and health will suffer if no one else exhibits and uses this gift.

The Gift of Teaching

While some might not consider this an important leadership gift, this researcher believes teachers are key leaders in the church. Those teaching in the church should have the gift of teaching. Another consideration when discussing the importance of the gift of teaching in leadership is found in Eph 4:11-12: "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." Teachers have a specific job in this passage. Teachers equip the saints for the work of ministry and build up the body. If people serve as teachers but are not gifted as teachers, will they equip and encourage God's people for all that God has for those in the congregation?

Like the other gifts, while the overall score for teaching seems to be low. However, 40 percent of those surveyed have the gift of teaching. While there are those teaching in the church who do not have the gift of teaching, and they will say they do not have the gift of teaching, one person who does not have the gift of teaching scored high on the gift of encouragement. They are building up the body by encouraging them, but they are not fully carrying out the role of those called to be teachers. Equipping the saints must be taking place in the church's discipleship process.

Of the 40 percent in leadership with the gift of teaching, the researcher also determined these led the most effective small groups in the church. Their groups were the highest attended, most active within the membership, and served in many of the ministry teams of the church. These leaders are not only equipping the saints for the work of the ministry but also encouraging them to use what they were learning.

Summary of Spiritual Gift Surveys

Every believer in Christ is given spiritual gifts to help the body of Christ function properly. Paul uses the analogy of the human body to describe the role of every individual. God places people within the church and gives them gifts to equip them to carry out His plan for that church (1 Cor 12:12-31). Churches should not mimic other churches, but rather look at how God has gifted their church to carry out His plan for them.

The project church is lacking in the key gifts for leadership. However, the people in leadership do use the gifts God has given them. The teacher who has the gift of encouragement helps lead a group in which every person who attends leaves the group each week encouraged to live for Jesus. Others have the gift of service and helps. The highest average score was for this gift. These leaders are always looking for something to do for the betterment of the church. One

must be careful with the gift of service and helps though. Many people try work their way to heaven rather than being saved by grace through faith (Eph 2:8-9).

The most disappointing result of the survey was the lack of people with the gift of evangelism. A church trying to carry out the Great Commission found in Matt 28:19-20 is going to suffer because people are not actively telling others about Jesus and bringing new people into the church who will, in turn, be potential leaders in the church. Pastor Steve Stringer says, “The way we solve the issue of leaders and volunteers in the church is to see more people get saved and commit their lives to Christ.” He is correct. If a church is not reaching new people with the gospel of Christ, the church is failing to develop new leaders to serve the church.

Evaluation of Spiritual Maturity Survey

The researcher developed a spiritual maturity survey to evaluate key areas of spiritual maturity for those in leadership. This survey examines numerous areas of the leader’s spiritual life. This section will discuss the findings of this survey and evaluate the overall spiritual health of those in leadership during this project.

The first section of the spiritual maturity survey assessed the leadership team’s thoughts and patterns regarding church attendance and biblical study. Most of the leadership team attends church regularly. They attend church more than the national average. In 2018, Christianity Today published an article discussing active church attendance. It said, “According to Thom Rainer, ‘About 20 years ago, a church member was considered active in the church if they attended three

times a week. Today, a church member is considered active in the church if they attend three times a month.’ In many places, it’s even lower than that.”⁵

According to Rainer’s reporting, Calvary’s leadership team members are above average in their church attendance. Eighty percent of those in leadership said they attend church at least three times per week. The final 20 percent reported attending at least two times per week. This sets a solid example to other leaders and attendees in the church. If the leadership feels it is essential to have regular attendance, others in the congregation will become more regular in their attendance as well.

The survey asked why they attend church. The results varied, though 80 percent gave an answer related to spiritual growth: to grow in my faith, worship God and fellowship with other believers, to further my walk with God and to serve Jesus, worship Jesus, etc. This is an example of most of the responses given. Spiritual growth is the primary reason most of the leaders attend church. The surprising answer came from one of the key leaders in the church: “I love to go to church.” This was a disheartening answer in the researcher’s opinion. This answer presents the idea this leader comes to church to be at church. Spiritual growth is not a primary reason for attending, but rather a habit.

Church attendance patterns speak volumes about church leadership. If a church strives to have biblically disciplined leaders, the reason they come to the church must be discovered and possibly addressed. Being in church is not what is important in itself; the reason is important. For many years, people went to church because it was part of the culture and there was nothing else

⁵ Karl Vaters, “Church Attendance Patterns Are Changing and We Have to Adapt,” Pivot: A Blog by Karl Vaters, May 2, 2018, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/karl-vaters/2018/may/church-attendance-patterns-are-changing-we-have-to-adapt.html>.

to do on Sundays. However, today many things compete for an individual's and a family's time. This is probably led to lowering what is considered an active member.

The survey also asked about the importance of attending. Some said attending church was a "pleasure," while others said it was "essential to their well-being." Others described how attending keeps them from falling back into a sinful lifestyle and spiritual deterioration. Better stated, attending church holds them accountable and responsible for their spiritual growth. Just as the "why" of attending shows the importance of church attendance on spiritual growth, participants felt it is important to be around fellow believers to encourage their own spiritual growth. This can best be described by Prov 27:17: "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another." People need other people to help them grow. Attending church, Sunday school or small groups, and any other gatherings where the Bible is studied are vital to the spiritual growth of God's people. This is especially important to be a biblically disciplined leader.

Another aspect addressed in this survey is the importance of Scripture in leaders' lives. Each leader was asked, "On a scale of 1-10, how important is the Scripture in your life?" Everyone answered eight, nine, or ten. This is encouraging. However, later in the survey, they were asked about their study patterns, the importance of memorization, and how obedient to God's Word they feel they are daily.

The researcher became discouraged but also understood why there is a lack of biblically disciplined leaders within the church. They had not been biblically disciplined nor were actively studying God's Word to grow more spiritually mature. While the average score on the importance of the Bible in their lives was high, the average score on the importance of memorizing God's Word was only 5.6 out of 10. The Bible is clear about memorizing God's Word. Psalm 119:11 states, "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against

you.” The Psalmist says memorizing Scripture helps to protect from sin. In Matt 4, Satan quoted Scripture to Jesus. However, Jesus had the Scripture in His heart to defend Satan’s attacks. Finally, Paul encourages, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Col 3:16).

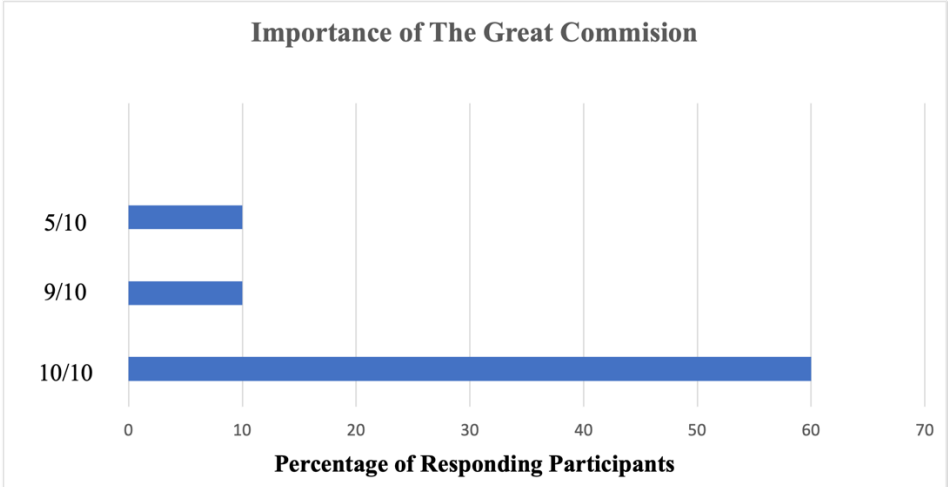
To be a biblically disciplined leader, one must not only see the importance of the Word of God but also make it a priority to know it. If a person is unwilling to memorize key Scriptures for living a biblical life, how can they know how to respond as leaders when certain situations arise? More emphasis needs to be placed on memorizing Scripture, not only among the leadership but also within the entire congregation.

Further evaluation of the importance of the Word of God in the lives of the leaders determined there is not a consistent pattern or length of personal Bible study outside of the church. Only 20 percent of those surveyed reported studying the Bible daily for thirty minutes or more. Another 20 percent reported studying the Bible at least three times per week for thirty minutes or more. Finally, the other 60 percent only reported a weekly or occasional personal Bible study time. This evaluation explained lack of spiritual development among the leadership. If one wants to be a biblical leader, then they must be committed to studying the Word of God regularly.

One question the researcher regrets not asking is, “When you study, do you journal what God is saying to you through the passage?” Gallaty encourages his D-Groups to keep what he calls a H.E.A.R. journal. First, (H) *highlight* the passage. In this part of the journal, they write down key aspects of the passage and what the verse is specifically speaking. The (E) *explains* what the text means in the original context: why, when, where, and to whom was it written.

Every passage in the Scripture has an original meaning for the people to whom it was written and meaning for those reading it today. This leads to (A), *apply* the passage. How does it help? What is God saying? Finally, the (R) is *respond*. One writes how they are going to respond to what the Holy Spirit is saying.⁶

As the spiritual gifts survey showed, evangelism is lacking among the leadership team. The spiritual maturity survey confirmed the results. As part of the spiritual maturity survey, the participants were asked about the importance of the Great Commission. They were asked to respond not only about the importance, but also whether they were actively sharing their faith. The chart below shows 60 percent of the responding participants reported the importance as 10/10, while 10 percent reported a 9/10. The shocking response was 10 percent of the respondents said they feel the Great Commission is only 5/10 in importance to them. There are people in church leadership who do not think the Great Commission is very important in their lives.

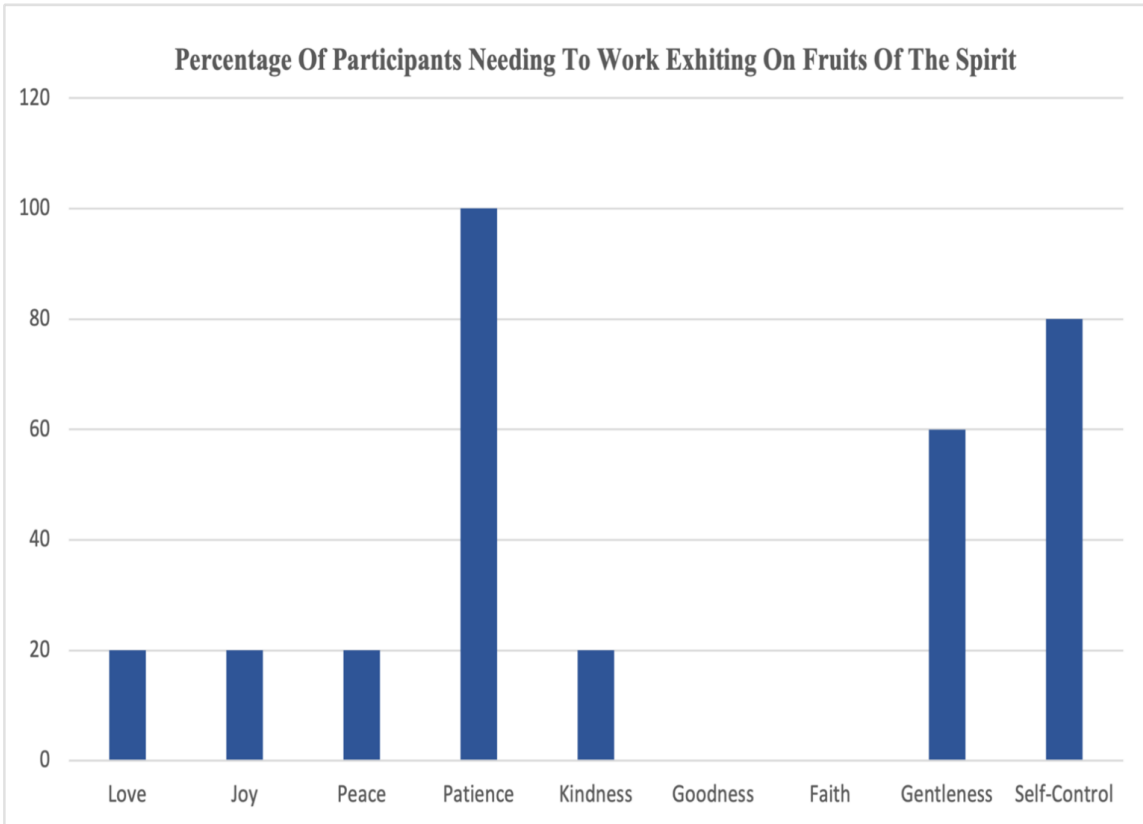
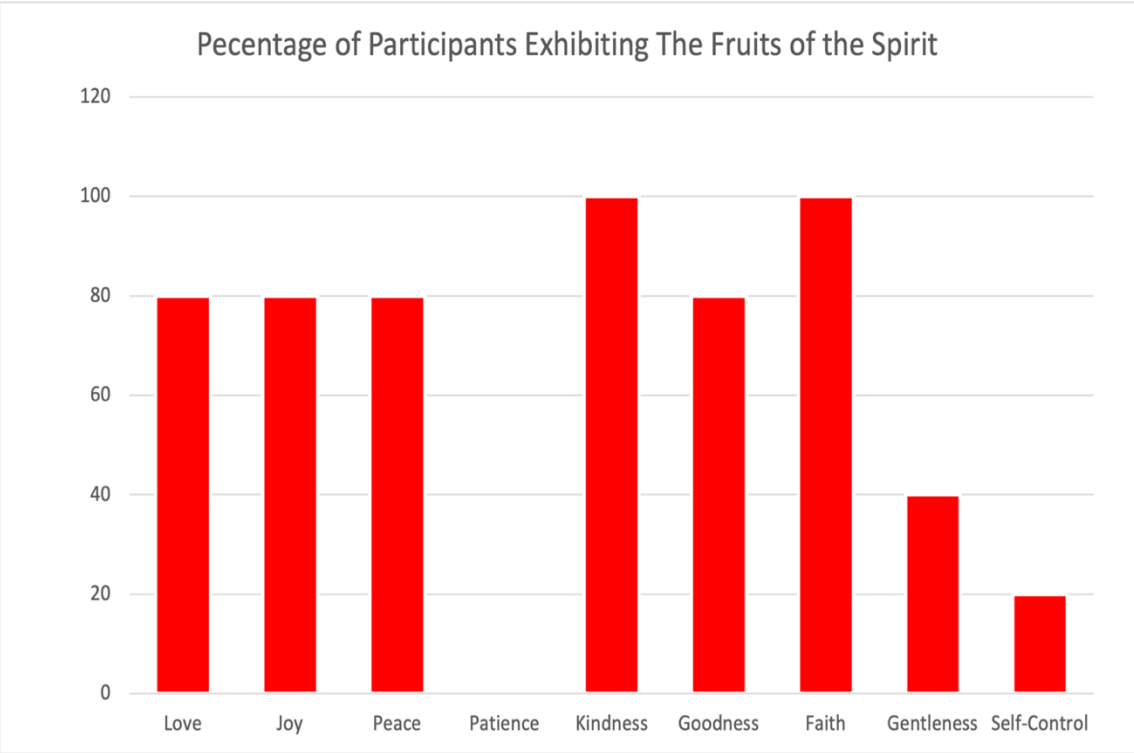


⁶ Robby Gallaty and Chris Swain, *Replicate: How to Create a Culture of Discipline-Making Right Where You Are* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2020), 75-80.

As part of this evaluation, the participants were asked to share how many times they shared their faith over the previous week, month, year, and decade. Only one responded they shared their faith during the survey week. The rest of the respondents reported not sharing their faith at all during the week. Within a month of the survey, the entire leadership team only shared their faith less than twenty times. Further, one person on the team reported sharing their faith “a dozen plus” times leading up to the survey.

The survey also examined their beliefs about serving the church and others. They were all in agreement that everyone, from the pastor to the individual members of the church, should serve in the church and the community. Some reported serving as an act of worship, and others said serving helps them grow. One encouraging response was serving allows them to share their beliefs and help others to know God. This is no surprise when considering the spiritual gifts survey. Service/helps had the highest average score of all spiritual gifts.

Lastly, the participants were asked about the presence of the fruit of the Spirit according to Gal 5:22-23. The participants were asked to identify the fruits present in their lives and those they needed to work on. Below are two charts showing the percentage of fruits exhibited and that participants need to work on.



The one fruit of the Spirit that should be present in the lives of leaders is the one none of the current leaders exhibited. Patience was the one fruit every person stated they needed to work on. This shows a common issue among leaders. When leaders introduce a vision, strategy, program, or any other change., they want it to be successful immediately, or they want others to accept it immediately. The only way to overcome lack of patience is by relying on the Holy Spirit. Other fruits needed work by a few of the participants. All the fruits exhibited now, or those that need work, will get stronger and help the participant become more spiritually mature by being part of a discipleship group and growing in the knowledge of God and His Word.

Summary of Spiritual Maturity Survey

While this survey is not scientific, it helped diagnose the lack of biblical leadership and develop a plan to alleviate the issues. This survey showed what the researcher predicted. Significant spiritual growth must take place for the church to be revitalized and led by biblically disciplined leaders. Although the leaders faithfully attending church, they lack individual spiritual development. Their spiritual growth and health must increase for the overall church to become spiritually healthy.

The “I” recommendations in Chapter 3 will be implemented first among the current leaders of the church. As the current leaders of the church begin to grow spiritually, the necessary changes should begin from the top down within the church’s leadership. The next section of this project will address the effects of the implementation on the leaders and the church.

The Negative Effects of Implementation

This was more difficult than expected. The church repeatedly stated they wanted to be a biblically based church with biblically based leadership. This, in some ways, was not true. In Chapter One, the assumption was made that implementation might lead to turmoil and sadly, that is what happened.

The assumption was that some people would not accept needed changes to see the church turn around. The assumption was that some members and leaders might leave the church during the implementation phase, which occurred. It was surprising that some of the people who seemed to be the strongest leaders became the most vocal and upset when change began.

The most spiritual leaders in the church outside of pastors and staff should be the deacons. However, in several deacon meetings, there were times of conflict because of the direction of the church. One example is when a sermon series was presented on worship. The sermon series taught that the heart of worship is a relationship with the Lord. It discussed how many people claim to worship God but only want one hour per week, and do not want to be challenged then. In “Practical Shepherding Cohorts,” Brian Croft says one of the primary ways to revitalize the church is by preaching the Word of God. The Word will convict the people to get right with God or move on. He was right. People left the church because of emphasizing what the Bible states rather than what had always happened in the church. The current youth pastor said, “I refuse to let this church be tradition-centered when Scripture calls us to be gospel-centered.”

During this process, one leader commented, “It’s time for me to resign and find another church. There’s about to be things happening around here that I can’t agree with.” Others who left the church claimed there was too much emphasis on the Bible. Staff members left the church because they were being held responsible and accountable for the church’s spiritual growth or

lack thereof. It challenged them to grow spiritually themselves. This was an issue because, in their minds, they knew all they needed to know. To learn how serious a church is about being a Bible-focused, Bible-centered church, start teaching the Bible and standing on decisions based on what the Bible says.

Another negative effect on the implementation process was some leaders still could not recognize a problem in the church. They thought everything was going well. However, when people began to leave the church because of the changes, they began to see it in a limited way. They were losing long-time friends and family. Some blamed the young people, while others blamed the older people. Paul taught about church unity; Jesus prayed in John 17 that the future disciples would be one with each other as Christ is One with the Father. Unity may be taught in the Bible, but often when teaching the Bible unity is challenged.

Many more negative effects can be discussed. However, as Mullins reminded the researcher during this process, the vine must be pruned to bear healthy fruit.⁷ After some of the leaders left the church, the church began to grow more spiritually healthy.

The Positive Effects of Implementation

Although the spiritual gifts survey showed a lack of gifted leaders, with vision, strategy, investing, and instruction, those leaders began to grow and mature in their faith. As the researcher spent time individually with some of them, the conversations turned to reaching more people in the community or what types of ministries to start to see more people saved. Bible

⁷ Dr. Robert Mullins, Lead Pastor of Crossroads Community Church, Elmore, AL, is very vocal about John 15 and bearing fruit to glorify God. He firmly believes that pruning must take place in churches to help them become healthy and revitalized. He led his church through the revitalization process and even went through a name change. When he started implementing change many people got upset, left the church, and slandered the leadership. However, his church is one of the leading disciple-making churches in AL. They regularly lead conferences to help other churches make the same shifts they made, and those conferences are being endorsed and sponsored by The Alabama State Board of Missions.

studies began outside the usual church times, there was more fellowship among the members, and many members became more loving. The church started to become a different church.

Through this process, one of the greatest accomplishments was watching God raise new leaders. For the first few years, several people in the church warned that a particular person should never be placed in leadership. However, as this revitalization process began to take shape, she was *identified* as a potential leader. This young lady had potential and a love for children. One of the positions needed was a children's director. She was invited to begin working in that role under the supervision of the student pastor. After a period of investing in her and instructing her, she began making an impact within not just the church but the entire community. One leader said, "She's not doing it right; she's not doing it the way it is supposed to be done." The researcher responded, "You're right; she's not doing it as I would, but it's working, and she's making disciples." Someone people thought should never be in leadership became one of the strongest leaders in the church, and while serving at another church today, she is still impacting the lives of children around the community.

Chapter 3 explored the "I" strategy for developing biblical leaders within the church. As exemplified above, the process will and does work. Johnny Hunt stated at various "Who's Your One" rallies and during the 2020 fall convocation at Liberty University: "We see people in their actualities, and it scares us, but we need to see them in possibilities. Jesus Christ sees us not for who we are, He sees us for who we can become."⁸ This idea is hindering churches. Churches are looking for the educated, those who are financially successful, and those with lots of influence.

⁸ Ryan Klinker, "Longtime Ministry Leader Johnny Hunt Encourages Students to Be 'Others-Centered' as They Spread the Gospel," Liberty News, September 4, 2020, <https://www.liberty.edu/news/2020/09/04/longtime-ministry-leader-johnny-hunt-encourages-students-to-be-others-centered-as-they-spread-the-gospel/>.

In his book, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, Dr. Robert Coleman discussed Jesus' plan was unlike today's church plan for selecting leaders. Coleman states:

What is more revealing about these men is that at first they do not impress us as being key men... They had no academic degrees in the arts and philosophies of their day. Like their Master, their formal education likely consisted only of the synagogue schools. Most of them were raised in the poor section of the country around Galilee... They were impulsive, temperamental, easily offended, and had all the prejudices of their environment... Yet, Jesus saw in these simple men the potential of leadership for the Kingdom. They were 'unlearned and ignorant' according to the world's standard (Acts 4:13), but they were teachable.⁹

Based on Dr. Coleman's description of Jesus' first disciples, none of them would be considered for leadership in most churches today. However, when God called these imperfect men, He made them into the leaders who would impact the World with the gospel of Christ. Many people like the young lady who became Calvary's children's director could be great leaders in today's church if the current leadership saw them as God sees them, recognized their potential, and disciplined them to be leaders. Ultimately, it is God who calls them, develops them, and sends them to carry out His purpose. Today's churches must stop seeing people as they are, start living out Luke 10:2 by praying for God to raise up laborers and send them out to make disciples themselves.

Another positive effect of implementation was new leaders had a hunger and desire for God's Word. Bible studies began outside the church. Discipleship strategist and pastor Robby Gallaty is a proponent of Discipleship Groups (D-Groups). He regularly states during conferences, rallies, sermons, podcasts, and in his books that every person should be in a D-Group. A D-Group consists of four to five people of the same gender for the purpose of

⁹ Robert Emerson Coleman. *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. (Grand Rapids: Revell, 2008), 22-23

becoming more like Christ.¹⁰ After presenting this idea to some leaders and others potential leaders, and a D-Group was born. The group began by studying biblical manhood. Each person in the group was married and either had children or was about to have children. The impact of the weekly meetings helped these men become what God wants them to be. Two of the men began the watch care process to become deacons in the church.

New people started attending the church, became members of the church, and in time became biblically growing leaders in the church. One family had been out of church for years. They visited the church a few times and they were plugged in within months. The wife became part of the leadership team, while the husband was willing to help in any way possible. It is amazing what happens when the Holy Spirit begins to work in people's lives. Their godly potential begins to shine, rather than their past.

The Rest of The Story

On his long-running radio program Paul Harvey would say, "Now, for the rest of the story." This research project is no different; there is more to the story that must be shared. Every person who was a part of the leadership development plan is still active in their respective churches. However, there were a few other consequences during this process. As the church settled into a new way of operating and positive changes were made, the critics became vocal. The Covid-19 pandemic closed the church down for a couple of months. This was very damaging to the progress the church was making. While the D-Group continued to meet, all other discipleship ceased. Members began to settle back into the old way of doing church. Some of the changes had not yet been made. The leadership team was about to recommend a new staff

¹⁰ Robert Gallaty, "Why Disciple in Groups?," 9Marks, August 26, 2014, <https://www.9marks.org/article/why-disciple-in-groups/>.

position, partnerships with church plants, and start another service focused on discipleship. The bylaws were about to be updated to reflect the new way of operating; new deacons were about to be presented and ordained. Things were moving, but there had not been enough foundation for it all to continue.

Those who were biblically disciplined were making an impact in their respective churches. However, none are still in the church this research project was designed to revitalize. Giving to the church was dropping before the pandemic. Some members were not financially supporting the church. Some were leaders of the church who withdrew because they disagreed with its current vision. Due to the downturn in giving, the negativity, and the stress it was causing, the researcher also left the church for a new place of service.

Following the exit, former leaders returned to the church, stepped back into leadership, and undid everything that had been implemented. They began to go against those who had been biblically disciplined, causing them to be discouraged and quit. Those who bought into the process left the church as well. However, it seems sad to think about the potential and the efforts being made; it is encouraging to see every person who was developed to be a biblical leader not only serving in another church but also becoming leaders in those congregations.

This process works. It is not something special created through this research process. It is simply turning the process back to what God intended from the beginning of His church: loving God, loving People, and making disciples. When people are biblically disciplined, they will, in turn, begin disciplining others. The result will be leaders also biblically disciplined through the process.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This project revealed many things discussed in this last chapter. It showed there is a lack of biblically disciplined leaders in many churches and that churches are dying every day. Sadly, without the shift to biblical discipleship in our churches, the decline and demise of churches will continue. Therefore, change must happen in several aspects of the church to become biblically healthy and experience revitalization. Current church leaders trying to lead church revitalization and developing biblically disciplined leaders alone. There are several resources available, people willing to coach pastors and leaders, and some healthy churches to evaluate from all aspects. Finally, there is hope for the declining church. This final chapter will summarize what the researcher learned through this process.

There Is a Lack of Biblically Disciplined Leaders

If John Maxwell is correct that “[e]verything rises and falls on leadership,” it also applies to what is happening in churches. As Rainer reports, more than half of American churches are plateaued or declining.¹ It is the opinion of the researcher that decline is a result lacking biblical disciplined leaders and disciple making ministry in the church. It has been the researcher’s experience that when a church begins to struggle, the blame is usually placed on the pastor. When people start leaving a church and going somewhere else, it is blamed on the pastor. However, the pastor is not the only person who serves in the church’s leadership.

In Chapter 2, there was a discussion on the importance of churches having an official leadership structure to help the church make the proper decisions and let the church body know

¹ Thom Rainer, “Dispelling the 80 Percent Myth of Declining Churches,” ThomRainer.com, July 12, 2017, <https://thomrainer.com/2017/06/dispelling-80-percent-myth-declining-churches/>.

who is leading the church. First and foremost, Jesus is to be the Head of the Church. The Bible makes this clear in numerous passages. However, too many people in churches, especially in church leadership, forget this biblical principle.

In *Biblical Church Revitalization*, Brian Croft says, “When leadership fails to follow a biblical model, a church cannot move towards church health. Church health, as well as a church for that matter, will rise and fall on its leaders, their roles, and a church’s willingness to follow them.”² Croft agrees with John Maxwell about the importance of leadership. God’s Word explicitly indicates who is supposed to lead and train the church to carry out its task. Ephesians 4:11-12 states, “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” Pastors and teachers have the responsibility to equip God’s people for the work God has for every person. This includes helping them understand God’s leadership model in the church.

Throughout this research process, it has been clear that the project church had been lacking leadership for several years. As the pastor of the church, the researcher takes responsibility for the lack of biblical discipleship in the leaders. He did not always lead from the biblical perspective and found himself striving to please man rather than God in some situations. It was revealed, this is a recipe for disaster. He also discovered that he was not biblically discipling the leaders within the church because as it turns out, he had never been biblically disciplined. Sunday school, seminary, sermons, conferences, meetings, etc., are not sufficient for thorough biblical discipleship. It takes someone to intentionally invest in the lives of others and disciple them to become more like Christ. After someone began investing in the researcher’s life

² Brian Croft, *Biblical Church Revitalization: Solutions for Dying & Divided Churches* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 2016), 36.

and teaching him how to use his spiritual gift of leadership, he began to see things differently and rely on God's guidance. Through the discipleship process, he realized it was never his church to lead. It was always God's church He entrusted the researcher to lead for Him. The pastor will give an account³ for his actions early on in his ministry there because the revitalization process and turning to the Bible as the guide for every decision should have started on day one.

However, even though the researcher takes responsibility for his lack of leadership during the first few years of the ministry at Calvary, there are others responsible for the lack of biblical leadership. As discussed in Chapter Four, there were people not willing to do church God's way. There were people who do not want to be challenged to lead God's way or follow the Bible and Holy Spirit's guidance. This only confirms Luke 9:23, that a true disciple must first and foremost deny self if to follow Christ.

Calvary is not the only church that needs biblical revitalization within the leadership before it can experience revitalization. There is a movement in the Southern Baptist Convention's North American Mission Board to revitalize and replant churches. One of the first steps when a church enters the official replant process is usually a replacement of primary leadership in the church. This is one of the main reasons people will not submit to the replanting process; leadership are afraid they will lose control of the church. This is why the church is struggling in the first place and in the need of revitalization. Associational Missionary, Dr. Ray McKenzie shared a few years ago that he had met with a church about the replanting process. The leadership was not willing to have any part of a replant partnership because it would require

³ Hebrews 13:17 teaches that those in authority, in the case of the church, pastors, and elders, will be held responsible for the spiritual growth or lack thereof in the churches they serve. Therefore, pastors should be striving to teach and lead God's people exactly as God desires in every instance. If pastors and/or elders are not focused on this task, there will be judgment before God one day.

them to give control to another church. That church is still struggling today and continues to decline. It will most likely not survive the next ten years unless a serious revitalization and replant occurs.

Change Must Happen

As mentioned above, for a church to be revitalized, there are necessary changes to make. Too many churches keep doing the same things they were doing twenty, thirty, or forty years ago. Society is not the same as it was in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. It is not the same as it was just last year. Change is inevitable in the church. The only question is, "Are we willing to change to become what God desires us to become?" "According to Albert Einstein, churches must be insane. He is credited as saying, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results."⁴ Churches are known for keeping traditions and never being willing to shift their methods to become more effective.

In his book, *The Unstuck Church*, Tony Morgan addresses the idea of change. He points out several aspects that must be considered. He states:

When it comes down to it, none of us really likes change. Our natural tendency is to drift to that which is comfortable. That's why we tend to get bent out of shape when someone challenges our thinking. Our personal preferences are sacred. But the Lord says: Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. (ISA. 43:18–19 NIV)⁵

⁴ Frank Wilczek, "Einstein's Parable of Quantum Insanity," *Scientific American* (Scientific American, September 23, 2015), <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/einstein-s-parable-of-quantum-insanity/#:~:text=percentE2%20percent80%20percent9CInsanity%20is%20doing%20the%20same,usually%20attributed%20to%20Albert%20Einstein.>

⁵ Tony Morgan, *The Unstuck Church: Equipping Churches to Experience Sustained Health* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2017), 108.

No one likes change. However, the very nature of becoming a follower of Christ requires change. Luke 9:23 says, “And he said to all, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.’” To be a follower of Christ, one must change their old way of living and begin following Christ in every aspect of their life. Another passage that points to changing at salvation is 2 Cor 5:17: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” If someone is not willing to accept change in their church, perhaps they should be challenged to examine if they have allowed God to change their lives.

Morgan continued his discussion on change by addressing the changing music in the church. He highlights Ps 96:1. It says, “Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth!” The Bible tells the church the songs it sings in the worship of God must change over time. As a former worship pastor, the researcher has seen worship wars in the church. Some like the old songs, some like the new songs. However, church attendees need to realize the songs are not for them but for Almighty God in heaven. Psalm 96:1 reminds the church to whom they are to sing in worship.

The final aspect of Morgan’s discussion on change is central to why so many churches and church leaders refuse to change: “New things require me to give up control”⁶ This is a key issue church leaders must realize. To be a biblically disciplined leader is not about their own desires and wants; rather, it should always be about what God wants. The question that came out of this research is “What does God want?” This is not only the question other leaders are asking the leadership. This is also the question the leaders are asking God through prayer. Matthew 16:18 confirms the church belongs to Christ because He built it. Chapter 2 of this thesis project

⁶ Morgan, *The Unstuck Church: Equipping Churches to Experience Sustained Health*, 108

discusses Christ as the head of the church. If it is His church and He is the head of the church, the church leadership logically should ask, “God, what do You want?” Sadly, without biblically disciplined leaders, this will not be the first thought. Therefore, this project shows a lack of biblically disciplined leaders in the church and changes that must take place to revitalize the church.

Much prayer must occur while leading change in the church and implementing the changes recommended in this project. Rainer discusses how one pastor moved the pulpit and caused a church conflict in *Who Moved My Pulpit*. This pastor admits his first mistake was not praying about moving the pulpit. He shares:

I can tell you easily what my first mess-up was,” he began. “Every other time I have led change in this church, I have initiated it with prayer.” We asked him to elaborate. “In all the other changes,” he told us, “I spent about two weeks praying about it before I even mentioned it to someone else. This time I acted without prayer.” Derek was not done explaining. “I then asked a few of the true prayer warriors in the church to put it to prayer,” he continued. “There are about eight of these men and women who have a heart and passion for intercessory prayer. I skipped over them this time.”⁷

Prayer is the most important step leading to change in the church. This will be no different when implementing a process of biblically developing disciplined leaders and a biblical leadership model in the church. God must be sought in prayer. Before a pastor takes the changes to the church, they should first bring it to some trusted leaders and expand from there. If it is not God’s will God will reveal it to the leaders. Another aspect of seeking God’s guidance in leading change is discerning whether it is a change they want to make rather than a change God wants in His church.

The final thought to discuss is that nothing ever stays the same. Churches and their leaders may not want to realize it; however, things will always change. While working on this

⁷ Thom S. Rainer, *Who Moved My Pulpit?* (Nashville: Lifeway Christian Resources, 2017), 10-11.

project, things changed after the project started. As discussed in Chapter 4, some people left the church. Whether the church wanted to realize it or not, that was a change. People who were in leadership at the beginning of the project passed away before this project could be finished. Changes happen whether people want them or not. The television show *Little House on the Prairie* show people riding in wagons and walking to church. During this research, the researcher did not see one instance of people driving to church in horse-drawn wagons. One of the churches the researchers served in the past was the first church to have an air-conditioned sanctuary in Anniston, Alabama. Churches change more than they realize, and most of the changes are for the betterment of the church.

If nothing ever stays the same, change is always happening and there is nothing anyone can do to stop it. Some changes will be good, and some will be bad. However, it will happen regardless of anyone's feelings. If nothing ever stays the same in life, why do many people think churches should stay the same and expect to move forward? To alleviate this thinking, the church must be led by biblically disciplined leaders.

There Is Hope

Turning a declining church around and making the necessary changes will not be easy. There will be times of discouragement, times that leaders will want to quit, and times that people may feel like it is a waste of time. The researcher felt this way many times throughout this process. Sometimes he thought, "This cannot be done," or "This is a waste of time." However, every time those thoughts came up, he was reminded that pastoring and shepherding a church was not something he decided to do. It is a calling from God, and he is responsible for obeying that calling by carrying out the tasks He sets before him. Church leaders are not alone in this

process. The Holy Spirit is the one leading the leaders in the church. The researcher was reminded throughout this process to stand on Bible passages to help in this process.

Proverbs 3:5 is an excellent reminder for church leaders trying to revitalize a church. It states, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.” As church leaders are led to revitalize a church and develop biblically trained leaders, they must trust God and what He is doing in their life, the lives of leaders, and the life of church. If the pastor is not leading with the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, how can he teach other leaders to be biblical leaders and follow God’s wisdom rather than man’s?

Another passage of encouragement is Josh 1:5. Moses was tasked with what seemed like an impossible task. He was commissioned to lead the Hebrew nation out of Egypt and into the promised land. After the death of Moses, the task was passed to Joshua. God told Joshua He was with Moses during the task and that he would be with Joshua as well. God promised Joshua, “I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.” Throughout this process, this is something that I had to be reminded of many times. God commissioned me to lead a church into and through revitalization; therefore, He was with me as well.

Finally, in 2 Tim 4:2, Paul charges his disciple Timothy to “preach the Word.” As church leaders trying to create a culture of biblical church leadership, there must be a dependence and trust in the Bible. Brian Croft shares:

Preach The Word... It is tempting for many pastors to look to modern gimmicks and pragmatism for the answer to bring life back to their struggling church. But the answer is the same as it was when Paul instructed Timothy to ‘Preach the word’ (2 Tim. 4:2). Only God by His Spirit through His word can breathe life into deadness. It is the same for the old, historic, established church about to close its doors. Pastors must preach and teach the word in such a way that they believe it is the only way God can breathe life back into

a struggling congregation. A pastor must trust the power of the word in the preaching of the gospel to breathe life into the church.⁸

Croft teaches pastors and church leaders there must be trust in God's Word. If a church wants to be revitalized, it must realize the only way is to teach and preach what God said. This translates to developing biblically disciplined leaders as well. Mullins who coached me to be a disciple-making pastor. He shared that when leading a church through the revitalization process, every decision must be backed up with Scripture. This is a great concept, and throughout this process, and even beyond the official research phase of this project, when decisions need to be made, the researcher has often asked the church leadership, "What does the Bible say?" This has prevented the church from making some mistakes because the decisions have been based on God's Word rather than man's wisdom. Trusting God and His Word is one of the biggest lessons from this process.

Never Stop Learning

One might read this project and think, "Once I have been disciplined and placed in leadership, I can stop learning." This could not be further from the truth. Even as this research project was taking place, the researcher, continued to learn from the resources being studied. Learning should never stop, and this is even more critical in the life of a follower of Christ. The very words "follower of Christ" should point to the fact that learning never stops. A Christian is not called a "followed of Christ" but rather a "follower of Christ." The process is ongoing. When people stop learning, they start going backward in their walk with Christ and their ability to lead.

One might also say, "I am too old to learn." That may appear to be the truth. However, many senior adults now have smartphones rather than still using a rotary dial phone. Many older

⁸ Croft, *Biblical Church Revitalization*, 44.

adults use a Bible application on their smartphones in church rather than bringing their Bible.

When people have the desire to learn, they will continue to learn. In an interview with a potential staff member, he shared he felt he was a follower of Christ but later in life realized he was not.

He said he casually read his Bible before, but after he genuinely surrendered his life to Christ, he could not get enough of God's Word. He constantly wanted to read and learn.

Faithful followers of Christ will continue seeking God's will for their lives and the positions they may serve throughout the church. This means they will actively seek opportunities for spiritual growth and personal development. There have been times in the researcher's churches leaders claimed, "I have been a leader for years; I do not need to attend more training." Someone who is a biblically disciplined leader will realize discipleship never ends. Spiritual growth is an ongoing process as followers of Christ, and the church must have leaders willing to grow and implement the lessons they are learning continually.

When a church implements the process of developing biblically disciplined leaders, they not only ask their leaders to commit to a life of learning, but the church is also commits to continue offering training to enhance and encourage spiritual growth among the leadership. This can be done in various ways: discipleship groups, leadership clinics, or regular training conducted by other leaders within the church. As part of the implementation of this research, it is recommended to enter a leadership covenant between the church and its leaders. This covenant should outline the commitment the leader is making with the church and the commitment the church is making with the leaders. One commitment that the leadership team members should make is a commitment to attend training. If a leader is unwilling to continue growing, they should not be in leadership.

There are many tools available to help develop leaders. The Lifeway Christian Resources spiritual gifts survey and the spiritual maturity survey used in this research can be found in Appendix 1. Lifeway has links to the spiritual gifts survey on their website; however, it is included in Appendix 1 as well. These are excellent beginning resources to help develop biblically disciplined leaders within the church.

Another great tool discovered throughout this research process is the multiplication pipeline available through the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. This tool has an in-depth survey that goes much deeper than the one created for this research project. It covers topics ranging from personality types, leadership levels, strengths, and weaknesses to help them determine where they are in the multiplication process. This survey will determine if they are learners, leaders, or multipliers. This tool is being implemented in the church I currently serve in the leadership development process.

There are many, many other tools available to help develop leaders in the church. State Conventions offer events throughout the year to encourage spiritual growth and discipleship among leaders. Several parachurch organizations offer more conferences to assist churches in developing biblically disciplined leaders. Many disciple-making pastors offer to partner with other pastors to assist them in developing disciplined leaders within their church. Numerous podcasts were discovered that assisted the researcher not only with this research project but also as a disciple-making pastor developing leaders in the church he currently serves.⁹

⁹ See Appendix 2 for recommended podcasts.

Final Warnings and Encouragement

Church leaders are always looking for the silver bullet in revitalizing a church. One thing church leaders should always remember: there is no such thing as a silver bullet to fix a church's problems. The only thing that can fix the church's problem is not a thing at all but rather a Who. The only hope for the church is Christ. Church leadership should never lose sight of the fact that man cannot accomplish the impossible, but God can.

Another consideration for church leaders to realize and understand is, though the researcher fully believes the recommended process will work in any church, current church leaders must prayerfully seek out which parts to implement and when. A survey of the church body may find everyone in leadership is already gifted to serve in that area. The researcher has learned throughout years of ministry, that everything taken from a conference might work in his church, but only after it is adjusted for the people in the church. Something a megachurch is doing might not work the same way in a rural church. Something a rural church is doing might not work the same way in an inner-city church. While the principles are proven to work, it should be noted that the principles must be adjusted to fit the individual church wishing to experience revitalization and develop biblically disciplined leaders.

Aside from the warnings, there is an encouragement to be taken from this research. While the process is no longer active at the project church, the processes recommended in this project have been implemented at other churches already with positive results. The researcher changed churches in late 2020. Upon arriving at the new place of service, this process was implemented and is showing success within the church. As mentioned in the warnings above, the principles work, but they have had to be adjusted to fit the new church.

Overall, the thesis is proven. Without leadership is focused on God and growing in the knowledge of God and His Word, there cannot be revitalization in the church. Therefore, it is

important to have biblically disciplined leaders leading the unhealthy as well as healthy churches. The final command of Jesus found in Matt 28:19-20 must be accomplished: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Appendix 1

Leadership Development Surveys

Spiritual Maturity Survey **Created By Anthony Rhodes**

A church is only as healthy as the church leaders. If we are not where we need to be spiritually then the church will never be where it needs to be. Please evaluate where you are in your Spiritual Walk by answering this short survey. Please answer these honestly and from the heart.

Importance of Church In Your Life

1. Why do you attend church?

Acts 2:42----Hebrews 10:25

2. How Often Do You Attend Church? Once/Twice/Three Times Per Week, 2 Times per month, occasionally
3. How Important Is It To Attend Church On A Regular Basis? (Define Your Answer)

-
4. Do You Attend Sunday School And Why? If you do not attend Sunday School, Please Explain Why You Do Not Attend?

Importance of Scripture In Your Life

Matthew 28:19-20-----1st Corinthians 3:2-----Hebrews 5:12

5. On A Scale of 1-10, How Important Is Scripture In Your Life? 1.....5.....10
 6. On A Scale of 1-10, How Obedient Are You To God's Word? 1.....5.....10
 7. On A Scale of 1-10, How Important is Scripture Memorization?
1.....5.....10
 8. How Often Do You Thoroughly Study Your Bible? Daily, Weekly, Only Occasionally
 9. On Average, How Long Do You Study Your Bible When You Study?
-
10. When You Attend Church, Do You Bring Your Bible With You? (yes) (no)

Importance of Serving

1st Corinthians 12-----Romans 12:6-8

11. Why do you serve around the church? If you are not serving then what is your Biblical basis for not serving?

12. What Do You Consider Serving God? Church Only, Community Only, Members Only, Other _____

13. I Am Fully Aware Of My Spiritual Gifts and I Know How To Use Them. (Yes) (No)

14. My Spiritual Gifts

Are _____

15. On A Scale of 1-10, How Would You Rate The Importance Of Using Your Spiritual Gifts? 1.....5.....10

What Do You See The Role As Pastor, Teacher, and Staff Being To The Church?
Ephesians 4:11-16

16. Who is to do the work of the Lord in, around, and through the church?

- a. Pastor
- b. Staff
- c. Deacons
- d. Sunday School Teachers
- e. Committee Members
- f. Other? _____

Importance of Great Commission

17. How many people have you shared your faith with in the last...

- a. Week? _____
- b. Month? _____
- c. Year? _____
- d. Decade? _____

18. Do You Look For Opportunities To Share Your Faith With Others? (YES) (NO)

19. How Often Are You Thinking About The Great Commission? Daily, Weekly, Occasionally, Never

20. On A Scale Of 1-10, How Important Is The Great Commission To You?

1.....5.....10

21. Do You Attend Discipleship Classes and Encourage Others To Attend As Well? (Yes) (No)

22. Do You Look For Opportunities To Teach Others About Christ? (Yes) (No)

Importance Of Loving Others

23. How many people other than family have you shown unconditional love to over the past ...

- a. Week? _____
- b. Month? _____
- c. Year? _____
- d. Decade? _____

24. How Often Do You Make Sacrifices For The Sake Of Others? Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Sometimes, Never

25. If Someone Has Wronged You, How Difficult Is It To Forgive Them?

Other Questions

26. What is the purpose of prayer and how often do you pray from the heart?
Communication with God

27. What are your favorite hymns/praise songs and why?

28. Do You Exhibit The Fruits Of The Spirit In Your Life? Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faith, Gentleness, Self-Control (Underline the ones that are present and circle those that you need to work on)

SPIRITUAL GIFTS SURVEY

DIRECTIONS

This is not a test, so there are no wrong answers. The *Spiritual Gifts Survey* consists of 80 statements. Some items reflect concrete actions; other items are descriptive traits; and still others are statements of belief.

- Select the one response you feel best characterizes yourself and place that number in the blank provided. Record your answer in the blank beside each item.
- Do not spend too much time on any one item. Remember, it is not a test. Usually your immediate response is best.
- Please give an answer for each item. Do not skip any items.
- Do not ask others how they are answering or how they think you should answer.
- Work at your own pace.

Your response choices are:

- 5—Highly characteristic of me/definitely true for me
 - 4—Most of the time this would describe me/be true for me
 - 3—Frequently characteristic of me/true for me—about 50 percent of the time
 - 2—Occasionally characteristic of me/true for me—about 25 percent of the time
 - 1—Not at all characteristic of me/definitely untrue for me
-

- _____ 1. I have the ability to organize ideas, resources, time, and people effectively.
 - _____ 2. I am willing to study and prepare for the task of teaching.
 - _____ 3. I am able to relate the truths of God to specific situations.
 - _____ 4. I have a God-given ability to help others grow in their faith.
 - _____ 5. I possess a special ability to communicate the truth of salvation.
 - _____ 6. I have the ability to make critical decisions when necessary.
 - _____ 7. I am sensitive to the hurts of people.
 - _____ 8. I experience joy in meeting needs through sharing possessions.
 - _____ 9. I enjoy studying.
 - _____ 10. I have delivered God's message of warning and judgment.
 - _____ 11. I am able to sense the true motivation of persons and movements.
 - _____ 12. I have a special ability to trust God in difficult situations.
 - _____ 13. I have a strong desire to contribute to the establishment of new churches.
 - _____ 14. I take action to meet physical and practical needs rather than merely talking about or planning to help.
 - _____ 15. I enjoy entertaining guests in my home.
 - _____ 16. I can adapt my guidance to fit the maturity of those working with me.
 - _____ 17. I can delegate and assign meaningful work.
-

- _____ 18. I have an ability and desire to teach.
- _____ 19. I am usually able to analyze a situation correctly.
- _____ 20. I have a natural tendency to encourage others.
- _____ 21. I am willing to take the initiative in helping other Christians grow in their faith.
- _____ 22. I have an acute awareness of the emotions of other people, such as loneliness, pain, fear, and anger.
- _____ 23. I am a cheerful giver.
- _____ 24. I spend time digging into facts.
- _____ 25. I feel that I have a message from God to deliver to others.
- _____ 26. I can recognize when a person is genuine/honest.
- _____ 27. I am a person of vision (a clear mental portrait of a preferable future given by God). I am able to communicate vision in such a way that others commit to making the vision a reality.
- _____ 28. I am willing to yield to God's will rather than question and waver.
- _____ 29. I would like to be more active in getting the gospel to people in other lands.
- _____ 30. It makes me happy to do things for people in need.
- _____ 31. I am successful in getting a group to do its work joyfully.
- _____ 32. I am able to make strangers feel at ease.
- _____ 33. I have the ability to plan learning approaches.
- _____ 34. I can identify those who need encouragement.
- _____ 35. I have trained Christians to be more obedient disciples of Christ.
- _____ 36. I am willing to do whatever it takes to see others come to Christ.
- _____ 37. I am attracted to people who are hurting.
- _____ 38. I am a generous giver.
- _____ 39. I am able to discover new truths.
- _____ 40. I have spiritual insights from Scripture concerning issues and people that compel me to speak out.
- _____ 41. I can sense when a person is acting in accord with God's will.
- _____ 42. I can trust in God even when things look dark.
- _____ 43. I can determine where God wants a group to go and help it get there.
- _____ 44. I have a strong desire to take the gospel to places where it has never been heard.
- _____ 45. I enjoy reaching out to new people in my church and community.
- _____ 46. I am sensitive to the needs of people.
- _____ 47. I have been able to make effective and efficient plans for accomplishing the goals of a group.

- _____ 48. I often am consulted when fellow Christians are struggling to make difficult decisions.
- _____ 49. I think about how I can comfort and encourage others in my congregation.
- _____ 50. I am able to give spiritual direction to others.
- _____ 51. I am able to present the gospel to lost persons in such a way that they accept the Lord and His salvation.
- _____ 52. I possess an unusual capacity to understand the feelings of those in distress.
- _____ 53. I have a strong sense of stewardship based on the recognition that God owns all things.
- _____ 54. I have delivered to other persons messages that have come directly from God.
- _____ 55. I can sense when a person is acting under God's leadership.
- _____ 56. I try to be in God's will continually and be available for His use.
- _____ 57. I feel that I should take the gospel to people who have different beliefs from me.
- _____ 58. I have an acute awareness of the physical needs of others.
- _____ 59. I am skilled in setting forth positive and precise steps of action.
- _____ 60. I like to meet visitors at church and make them feel welcome.
- _____ 61. I explain Scripture in such a way that others understand it.
- _____ 62. I can usually see spiritual solutions to problems.
- _____ 63. I welcome opportunities to help people who need comfort, consolation, encouragement, and counseling.
- _____ 64. I feel at ease in sharing Christ with nonbelievers.
- _____ 65. I can influence others to perform to their highest God-given potential.
- _____ 66. I recognize the signs of stress and distress in others.
- _____ 67. I desire to give generously and unpretentiously to worthwhile projects and ministries.
- _____ 68. I can organize facts into meaningful relationships.
- _____ 69. God gives me messages to deliver to His people.
- _____ 70. I am able to sense whether people are being honest when they tell of their religious experiences.
- _____ 71. I enjoy presenting the gospel to persons of other cultures and backgrounds.
- _____ 72. I enjoy doing little things that help people.
- _____ 73. I can give a clear, uncomplicated presentation.
- _____ 74. I have been able to apply biblical truth to the specific needs of my church.
- _____ 75. God has used me to encourage others to live Christlike lives.
- _____ 76. I have sensed the need to help other people become more effective in their ministries.

- _____ 77. I like to talk about Jesus to those who do not know Him.
- _____ 78. I have the ability to make strangers feel comfortable in my home.
- _____ 79. I have a wide range of study resources and know how to secure information.
- _____ 80. I feel assured that a situation will change for the glory of God even when the situation seem impossible.

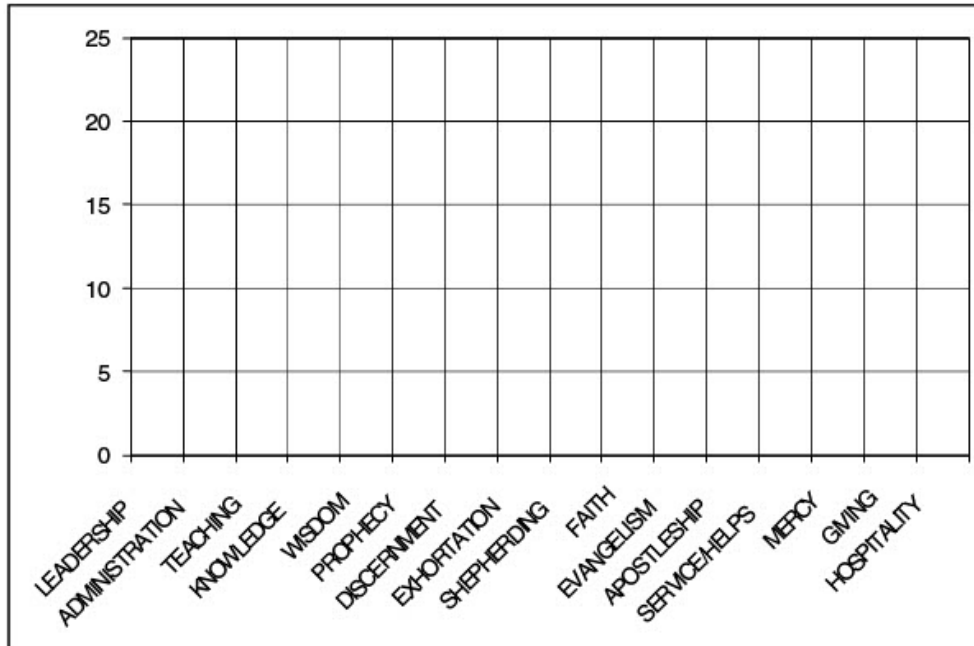
SCORING YOUR SURVEY

Follow these directions to figure your score for each spiritual gift.

1. Place in each box your numerical response (1-5) to the item number which is indicated below the box.
2. For each gift, add the numbers in the boxes and put the total in the TOTAL box.

LEADERSHIP	+	+	+	+	=	
	Item 6	Item 16	Item 27	Item 43	Item 65	TOTAL
ADMINISTRATION	+	+	+	+	=	
	Item 1	Item 17	Item 31	Item 47	Item 59	TOTAL
TEACHING	+	+	+	+	=	
	Item 2	Item 18	Item 33	Item 61	Item 73	TOTAL
KNOWLEDGE	+	+	+	+	=	
	Item 9	Item 24	Item 39	Item 68	Item 79	TOTAL
WISDOM	+	+	+	+	=	
	Item 3	Item 19	Item 48	Item 62	Item 74	TOTAL
PROPHECY	+	+	+	+	=	
	Item 10	Item 25	Item 40	Item 54	Item 69	TOTAL
DISCERNMENT	+	+	+	+	=	
	Item 11	Item 26	Item 41	Item 55	Item 70	TOTAL
EXHORTATION	+	+	+	+	=	
	Item 20	Item 34	Item 49	Item 63	Item 75	TOTAL
SHEPHERDING	+	+	+	+	=	
	Item 4	Item 21	Item 35	Item 50	Item 76	TOTAL
FAITH	+	+	+	+	=	
	Item 12	Item 28	Item 42	Item 56	Item 80	TOTAL
EVANGELISM	+	+	+	+	=	
	Item 5	Item 36	Item 51	Item 64	Item 77	TOTAL
APOSTLESHIP	+	+	+	+	=	
	Item 13	Item 29	Item 44	Item 57	Item 71	TOTAL
SERVICE/HELPS	+	+	+	+	=	
	Item 14	Item 30	Item 46	Item 58	Item 72	TOTAL
MERCY	+	+	+	+	=	
	Item 7	Item 22	Item 37	Item 52	Item 66	TOTAL
GIVING	+	+	+	+	=	
	Item 8	Item 23	Item 38	Item 53	Item 67	TOTAL
HOSPITALITY	+	+	+	+	=	
	Item 15	Item 32	Item 45	Item 60	Item 78	TOTAL

GRAPHING YOUR PROFILE



1. For each gift place a mark across the bar at the point that corresponds to your TOTAL for that gift.
2. For each gift shade the bar below the mark that you have drawn.
3. The resultant graph gives a picture of your gifts. Gifts for which the bars are tall are the ones in which you appear to be strongest. Gifts for which the bars are very short are the ones in which you appear not to be strong.

Now that you have completed the survey, thoughtfully answer the following questions.

The gifts I have begun to discover in my life are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

- After prayer and worship, I am beginning to sense that God wants me to use my spiritual gifts to serve Christ's body by _____.
- I am not sure yet how God wants me to use my gifts to serve others. But I am committed to prayer and worship, seeking wisdom and opportunities to use the gifts I have received from God.

Ask God to help you know how He has gifted you for service and how you can begin to use this gift in ministry to others.

Discover Your Spiritual Gifts!

By Gene Wilkes

Ken Hemphill defines a spiritual gift as "an individual manifestation of grace from the Father that enables you to serve Him and thus play a vital role in His plan for the redemption of the world."¹ Peter Wagner defines a spiritual gift as "a special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the Body of Christ according to God's grace for use within the context of the Body."² I like to use this definition:

A spiritual gift is an expression of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers which empowers them to serve the body of Christ, the church.

Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30; Ephesians 4:11; and 1 Peter 4:9-11 contain representative lists of gifts and roles God has given to the church. A definition of these gifts follows.³

- **Leadership**—Leadership aids the body by leading and directing members to accomplish the goals and purposes of the church. Leadership motivates people to work together in unity toward common goals (Rom. 12:8).
- **Administration**—Persons with the gift of administration lead the body by steering others to remain on task. Administration enables the body to organize according to God-given purposes and long-term goals (1 Cor. 12:28).
- **Teaching**—Teaching is instructing members in the truths and doctrines of God's Word for the purposes of building up, unifying, and maturing the body (1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:7; Eph. 4:11).
- **Knowledge**—The gift of knowledge manifests itself in teaching and training in discipleship. It is the God-given ability to learn, know, and explain the precious truths of God's Word. A word of knowledge is a Spirit-revealed truth (1 Cor. 12:28).
- **Wisdom**—Wisdom is the gift that discerns the work of the Holy Spirit in the body and applies His teachings and actions to the needs of the body (1 Cor. 12:28).
- **Prophecy**—The gift of prophecy is proclaiming the Word of God boldly. This builds up the body and leads to conviction of sin. Prophecy manifests itself in preaching and teaching (1 Cor. 12:10; Rom. 12:6).
- **Discernment**—Discernment aids the body by recognizing the true intentions of those within or related to the body. Discernment tests the message and actions of others for the protection and well-being of the body (1 Cor. 12:10).
- **Exhortation**—Possessors of this gift encourage members to be involved in and enthusiastic about the work of the Lord. Members with this gift are good counselors and motivate others to service. Exhortation exhibits itself in preaching, teaching, and ministry (Rom. 12:8).
- **Shepherding**—The gift of shepherding is manifested in persons who look out for the spiritual welfare of others. Although pastors, like shepherds, do care for members of the church, this gift is not limited to a pastor or staff member (Eph. 4:11).
- **Faith**—Faith trusts God to work beyond the human capabilities of the people. Believers with this gift encourage others to trust in God in the face of apparently insurmountable odds (1 Cor. 12:9).
- **Evangelism**—God gifts his church with evangelists to lead others to Christ effectively and enthusiastically. This gift builds up the body by adding new members to its fellowship (Eph. 4:11).

- **Apostleship**—The church sends apostles from the body to plant churches or be missionaries. Apostles motivate the body to look beyond its walls in order to carry out the Great Commission (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11).
- **Service/Helps**—Those with the gift of service/helps recognize practical needs in the body and joyfully give assistance to meeting those needs. Christians with this gift do not mind working behind the scenes (1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:7).
- **Mercy**—Cheerful acts of compassion characterize those with the gift of mercy. Persons with this gift aid the body by empathizing with hurting members. They keep the body healthy and unified by keeping others aware of the needs within the church (Rom. 12:8).
- **Giving**—Members with the gift of giving give freely and joyfully to the work and mission of the body. Cheerfulness and liberality are characteristics of individuals with this gift (Rom. 12:8).
- **Hospitality**—Those with this gift have the ability to make visitors, guests, and strangers feel at ease. They often use their home to entertain guests. Persons with this gift integrate new members into the body (1 Pet. 4:9).

God has gifted you with an expression of His Holy Spirit to support His vision and mission of the church. It is a worldwide vision to reach all people with the gospel of Christ. As a servant leader, God desires that you know how He has gifted you. This will lead you to where He would have you serve as part of His vision and mission for the church.

Download the *Spiritual Gifts Survey* at <http://www.lifeway.com/downloads>

Gene Wilkes is pastor of the Legacy Drive Baptist Church, Plano, Texas. This article was adapted from *Jesus on Leadership* by Gene Wilkes (LifeWay Christian Resources 1998).

¹ Ken Hemphill, *Serving God: Discovering and Using Your Spiritual Gifts Workbook* (Dallas: The Sampson Company, 1995), 22. This product is distributed by and available from LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, and may be purchased by calling toll free 1-800-458-2772.

² *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* by C. Peter Wagner, Copyright © 1979, Regal Books, Ventura, CA 93003. Used by permission, 42.

³ These definitions exclude the "sign gifts" because of some confusion that accompanies these gifts and because they are difficult to fit into ministries within a typical church's ministry base.

Miscellaneous Permissions Request

Email Address:

anthonyrhodes1973@gmail.com

Organization Name:

Individual for Liberty University

Physical Address of Organization:

personal address 88 Stonehedge Drive Lexington TN. 38351

Contact Person:

Anthony Rhodes

Contact Email Address:

anthonyrhodes1973@gmail.com

Please describe the product or portion of product you wish to use/publish.

Spiritual Gifts Inventory pdf Discover Your Spiritual Gifts by Gene Wilkes pdf

How is the material going to be used?

I am a Doctor of Ministry student at Liberty University. I'm in the final stages of my thesis project and will be defending it in next 4-6 weeks. As part of my research I used Lifeway's Spiritual Gifts Inventory survey to evaluate our church leaders and identify their gifts. I also used Gene Wilkes Discover Your Spiritual Gifts as an explanation of the gifts. I included these documents in my appendix for my defense purposes. The final step will be publishing the final project in Liberty's Library to be assessed by people searching for information on Developing Biblically Discipled Leaders. Liberty requires copyright approval for any copyrighted materials used as part of the project. Therefore, I'm asking for permission to include these documents in my final submission to the library.

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Appendix 2

Recommended Podcasts

There are a lot of podcasts available in helping revitalize churches, make disciples, and develop leaders. Below are just a few of the ones which were helpful in this research process. Thom Rainer offers several podcasts on his website. Listed below are two that were helpful with this research process. The descriptions for each podcast were taken from Church Answers website.¹

Rainer on Leadership

Rainer on Leadership is your online home for leadership lessons for the local church. This weekly podcast provides practical training on important issues for church leaders and pastors.

Revitalize and Replant by Thom Rainer

Featuring Thom Rainer, Mark Clifton, and Kevin Ezell, Revitalize & Replant is presented by the North American Mission Board. Revitalize & Replant is a weekly discussion on church revitalization and replanting.

Trenchtalk by Practical Shepherding

Dr. Brian Croft also offers a podcast to help pastors grow and develop leaders. His podcast can be found at www.practicalshepherding.com/trenchtalk.

¹ “Podcasts for Church Leaders,” Church Answers, September 1, 2022, <https://churchanswers.com/podcasts/>.

Replicate Podcasts Network

Dr. Robby Gallaty and his Replicate Ministries have several podcasts for disciple-making and leadership development on their website. These podcasts can be found at replicate.org/podcasts/.

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May 27, 2019

Anthony Rhodes

IRB Approval 3663.052719: Discipling Lay Leadership is Key to Church Revitalization:
A Revitalization Strategy for Calvary Baptist Church

Dear Anthony Rhodes,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. [45 CFR 46.101\(b\)\(2\)](#) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project. Sincerely,



G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office



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