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# FAITHFUL IS THE WORD: FORGING A PASTORAL MENTALITY BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF THE PHRASE “PISTOS HO LOGOS” AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS WHEN APPLIED TO PASTORAL SUCCESSION

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FAITHFUL IS THE WORD: FORGING A PASTORAL MENTALITY BASED ON AN  
ANALYSIS OF THE PHRASE “PISTOS HO LOGOS” AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS WHEN  
APPLIED TO PASTORAL SUCCESSION

A PROJECT DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF DIVINITY  
IN THE BARNETT COLLEGE OF MINISTRY AND THEOLOGY  
AT SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

Israel Sotolongo

Fall 2023

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE SIGNATURE PAGE

This dissertation, written by

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*under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Committee and approved by all members of the Committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the Barnett College of Ministry and Theology of Southeastern University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry.*

Date

December 1, 2023

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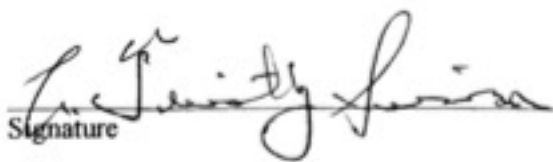
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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to develop a biblically grounded resource that will prepare incoming pastors who will succeed retiring pastors of local churches. Studies show that most church succession attempts are not deemed successful, which is concerning since, over the next ten to twenty years, the American church will experience the largest wave of retiring pastors it has ever seen. This work addressed two learning gaps, as little exists in the form of resources directed primarily at incoming pastors and research on the clause *Pistos ho Logos*. Therefore, the primary research questions were “What are the meaning and significance of *Pistos ho Logos*, and what principles might the clause suggest that could equip incoming pastors to take up their new positions faithfully?” Using a qualitative study of the lived experience of pastors who experienced succession, and a theological analysis of a unique Pauline clause that appears only five times in the Pastoral Epistles, *Pistos ho Logos*, the findings show applications with spiritual and organizational leadership implications. The significance of this study is that it provides a pastor mentality based on the faithfulness of the Word of God that will enable them to faithfully lead plateauing or declining congregations through the difficulties experienced in pastoral succession.

## *Dedication*

To my grandparents Elvia, Jose, Zoraida, and Israel,

This project's “revolutionary” element is a product of a different kind of revolution that you all faced, which changed the trajectory of our lives. You all bravely charted a new course into an unfamiliar country to rescue your families from the black hole of communist Cuba. You all endured so much trauma and adversity with such grit and grace, which taught me to give my best while entrusting the results to God. Each of you set such a high bar for me and the rest of your grandchildren. Your love of history, analytics, philosophy, culture, service, God, and family, as well as your charm, wit, and creativity, are woven all throughout this work, which I dedicate to you as an extension of your legacy.

As you all gave your lives as stepping stones for your families to move forward, I pray this work and my life may do the same for my family and many more. Although it saddens me that none of you were able to live long enough to read these words, I find consolation in knowing that this work will outlive us all and, hopefully, bring true freedom that the Gospel alone can give to those in our adopted home in America, our abandoned home in Cuba, and those around the world by the power of Christ’s faithful Word!

Te quiero. Nos vemos pronto

Tu Nieto

To my wife and best friend Alisha,

Thank you for praying for, encouraging, supporting, and keeping me grounded. You are the epitome of faithfulness. I would not be the man I am today, and I could not have completed my graduate studies the way that I did without you. I will never forget achieving my master's degree during my part-time job being your Uber Eats sidekick. Thank you for always sacrificing so much for our family, especially when it went unnoticed. Thank you for all those long nights in which we learned to fall in love all over again. Those conversations inspired this work and the practical tools you and I created. We crossed this finish line together and will move toward what's next together, better than ever.

I praise God for His faithfulness and thank God for being so good to me by placing you in my path. You are a wonderful wife, a sensational mother, a valued leader in our church, and an incredible role model to many. You have such an important place in the lives of so many. Lastly, thank you for honoring me with the privilege of loving and serving you as your husband. Apart from knowing Christ, it is the greatest joy of my life.

I love you, Always and Forever.

Tito

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*To my church:* I truly feel like we all have gone through this experience together. This includes current members and former members who have remained faithful to us despite having to move away for unrelated reasons. Over the years, your prayers and love for me, my family, and Christ have inspired me to find new ways to serve you better so that you may shine even brighter for God's glory. Thank you to our Church elders for modeling faithfulness to the Lord and His Word over the years. Your example has greatly contributed to this work. Thank you also to Guillermo Lima for your support, which removed stress and helped me to work with greater focus.

Even though I cannot thank you all by name, know that I sincerely love each of you and am so honored to be your pastor and friend. To *The Squad*, know that you each will always have a special place in my heart. You remained faithful to Alisha and me when few did. You may think we impacted your lives, but you all have equally impacted ours. Ashley and Emily, I am so amazed at how you both have grown to become such women who love God and others as you do. I admire your compassion, dedication, and service. Our church would not be the same without you. Mateo and Michael, it was impossible for me not to think of our relationship as I reflected on Paul's relationship with Timothy and Titus. Know that each conversation we have had that shaped you also shaped me and this project. Alisha and I would not be here without you. *Squad*, it has been an honor to go from being your leader to now a brother and co-worker in Christ. I pray that you all may continue to learn how to revolve your faith in Christ so that He may do revolutionary work in and through you all, bringing glory to His name!



*To my Dissertation Committee Members:* I cannot say how grateful I am to the Lord for His graciousness in planning each of you for such a time. Your prayers, advice, recommendations, and example have helped to shape me more than you know. Thank you, Dr. Wolf and Dr. Swinson, for sharing your scholarly knowledge and expertise that greatly influenced this work. Your encouragements and recommendations pushed me to be as faithful to the text and our Lord as possible. This work would not be the same had it not been for God's hand in your lives.

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*To my Cohort:* Thank you for your encouragement and friendship. Iron indeed sharpens iron, and our many interactions have sharpened me. Each day I drove home in week one of our on-campus engagement, I contemplated giving up. Yet, your kindness and interactions encouraged me to stick it out. A special thank you to Dr. Stephen, Dr. Dunn, and Dr. Jones. Our futile exercise in asking, "Where is the line?" taught me how to approach the debate surrounding *Pistos ho Logos* with greater scrutiny and curiosity. This work would not have been the same without you three.

*To the Pastors I Interviewed:* Thank you for sharing your stories. Each of you already had full plates, yet you took the time to talk to a stranger like me. I am humbled. Nathan, your story was my favorite. Because your church was the smallest of the participants, and most like mine, I was greatly encouraged. Seeing how God worked in you and New Wave Church gave me hope that our church, and many similar ones, could similarly experience God's faithfulness. I am so excited to see how God will continue using each of your testimonies for His glory.

*To Danny Esposito:* The first time you came to our church so many years ago revolutionized my life in more ways than one. You came alongside me, as well as my family and church, during my lowest. You were a key reason I chose to pursue graduate studies. I cannot wait to see the ramifications of our continual "Lewis and Tolkien" style coffee conversations.

*To my family:* It is impossible for me to fully express my gratitude each of you. Your work ethic, servant's hearts, ambition, dedication, accomplishments, and creativity have all shaped the man I am today. I love you all! A special thank you to my aunt Tati. Seeing you get your doctorate while encouraging me to get mine was a great inspiration and motivation. I am honored to have used your doctoral work in this project, which helped it become what exists today.

*To my in-laws and parents:* I could not have asked for a better set of parents to have or a family to belong to. I wish I could have done a better job of being more appreciative in the past. Yet, I thank you for your countless prayers for me and my family. To my in-laws, Maria and Jorge, thank you for modeling faithfulness, grace, and love in everything you do. I cannot thank you enough for the way you welcomed me into your family as one of your own from the start.

To my mom and dad. There is a saying that goes, “Great people stand on the shoulders of giants.” Thank you for being those shoulders on which I stand today. Your sacrifices and prayers that you have invested in me over the years have affected my life and that of the Church of our Lord Jesus, whom you both have loved so deeply for so long. Dad, thank you for holding fast to the faithful Word as a pastor for almost forty years! It has greatly contributed to my work. This project is part of Christ’s legacy through you both. Know that this work reflects how proud I am of each of you. Thank you! I love you.

*To my boys:* Thank you for being so patient with me. You will never know how hard I fought to read every book and write every paper to keep you from feeling I was personally absent even though I was physically present. You three were my biggest inspirations, because there is no better accomplishment I can think of that would compare to seeing the light of Christ in me shine in each of you. I am so proud, honored, and humbled to be your dad. And though your mom and I will always love you all, know that it is nothing compared to the faithful love of Jesus that He displayed by dying on the cross for your sins. I pray that you and your future families may experience the joyful results of trusting in Christ's faithfulness and His Word.

*To my God:* My mind and words fail me at the moment to describe how grateful I am for you. I deserve nothing, for you deserve all of the glory. Thank you for giving me an eternity to continually fail in giving you the praise you deserve.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## THE PROJECT INTRODUCED

### *Introduction*

Secular scholars have been puzzled by the ongoing growth and impact that the Church has had over the past 2,000 years as a “force to be reckoned with,” despite the lack of an overall hierarchal structure or formal succession roadmap.<sup>1</sup> A significant key to this consistency is the permanence of the primary pastor of the church: her eternal Shepherd-King, Jesus Christ. Although Jesus will always remain the head of the Global Church, the same cannot be said of His under-shepherds who temporarily preside as pastors over local churches. Relative to this reality, this project concentrates primarily on the critical issues incoming pastors face during leadership transition and the preparation they need to navigate the process.

### *Rationale for the Project*

One major looming crisis regarding pastoral succession involves the mass of pastors from an aging Boomer generation planning to retire over the next decade.<sup>2</sup> It is believed that around eighty percent of American churches are either declining or plateauing, suggesting that a large group of incoming pastors must be prepared to succeed a long-term pastor whose church might

---

<sup>1</sup> Karen Armstrong, *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence* (New York: Anchor, 2015), 149.

<sup>2</sup> Barna Group, *Leadership Transitions: How Churches Navigate Pastoral Change - and Stay Healthy* (2019), 10.

not be ready to survive the process.<sup>3</sup> There exists an additional concern as the potential vacancies appear to outnumber the pool of potential replacement candidates.<sup>4</sup> One possible reason is the numerically smaller Generation X compared to Boomers.<sup>5</sup> Another reason for the shortage of future pastors is the growing negative view of the pastorate.<sup>6</sup> Succession must be researched because a perfect storm seems to be brewing when combining this succession crisis with the following facts. First, 80% of American churches are either declining or plateauing.<sup>7</sup> Second, most pastoral successions are unsuccessful due to insufficient preparation.<sup>8</sup> Third, before COVID-19, approximately fifteen hundred pastors were estimated to leave the ministry each month, leaving experts to wonder what contributes to the lack of pastoral longevity.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, church planting efforts must increase to replace dead and dying churches that may end up as monuments to former pastors.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Robby Gallaty and Chris Swain, *Replicate: How to Create a Culture of Disciple-Making Right Where You Are* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishing, 2020), 111.

<sup>4</sup> Barna Group, *Leadership Transitions*, 7.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Taylor and George Gao, "Generation X: America's Neglected 'Middle Child,'" *Pew Research Center*, June 5, 2014, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2014/06/05/generation-x-americas-neglected-middle-child/>.

<sup>6</sup> "Pastors' Credibility Is in Question - Even Among Pastors," Barna, February 16, 2022, <https://www.barna.com/research/pastors-trustworthy-reliable/>.

<sup>7</sup> Gallaty and Swain, *Replicate*, 111.

<sup>8</sup> William Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2020), 30.

<sup>9</sup> Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2018), 12.

<sup>10</sup> Jim Ozier and Jim Griffith, *The Changeover Zone: Successful Pastoral Transitions* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2016), vii.

Unfortunately, the growing number of resources directed to retiring pastors are not being applied well. One reason is that no two successions are alike, making it impossible to create a foolproof plan for pastors to follow.<sup>11</sup> Second, many of those resources usually focus on the success stories of mega-churches that possess resources that most churches lack. Lastly, research shows a great need for resources primarily dedicated to the incoming pastor.<sup>12</sup> A common trend in pastoral succession involves outgoing pastors failing to prepare their replacements adequately, mainly due to outgoing pastors being preoccupied with addressing problems within their ministry or with preparing themselves for what is next for them.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the incoming pastor must make an extra effort to be spiritually and organizationally competent to resolve conflicts throughout the looming transition.<sup>14</sup>

### *Research Question and Thesis*

How the American church of the next ten to twenty years approaches pastoral succession, especially the support and preparation given to incoming pastors, will significantly affect how far the Kingdom of Christ will advance through the health of individual congregations. Consequently, this project is concerned with the spiritual and practical equipping of incoming

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<sup>11</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next*, 20.

<sup>12</sup> Glen Wolf, “A Strategic Plan to Assist Pastors in the Succession between a Mentoring Lead Pastor and His or Her Mentee” (DMin diss., Southeastern University, Lakeland, 2020), 105.

<sup>13</sup> Richard A. Danielson, “Beating the Odds: Successfully Following a Longterm Pastor” (DMin diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY, 2001), 91.

<sup>14</sup> W. David Lee, “Conflict Resolution in Pastoral Succession” (DMin diss., United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH, 2001), 2.



pastors. This work will focus on Paul's instructions to two of his proteges and co-workers, Timothy and Titus, in the Pastoral Epistles (PE), giving special attention to Paul's use of the clause *Pistos ho Logos (PhL)*, which occurs five times within the PE. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study examined the significance of *Pistos ho Logos* in relation to equipping incoming pastors to faithfully lead plateauing or declining congregations through the difficulties experienced in pastoral succession.

Accordingly, the primary research question is two-fold: "What are the meaning and significance of *Pistos ho Logos*, and what principles might the clause suggest that could equip incoming pastors to take up their new positions faithfully?" This question was worth researching for the following reasons: (1) the spiritual health of the church and its leaders has proven to be one of the fundamental causes of a successful leadership succession;<sup>15</sup> (2) there is a lack of resources and literature specifically tailored for the incoming pastor; (3) there is a lack of research and exegetical study regarding the clause *Pistos ho Logos* and its significance in the Pastoral Letters;<sup>16</sup> and (4) the clause's sole presence in the PE could suggest an affirmation directed to church pastor-elders that would enable them for the faithful execution of their calling.

First, this paper will argue that the clause *Pistos ho Logos* appears to translate to "Faithful is the Word" in reference to the trustworthy Gospel testimony that reveals the finished work of Christ on the cross and through the grave, which reflects His faithful character. Second, the five instances in which *Pistos ho Logos* is found suggest examples in which Paul used to emphasize

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<sup>15</sup> Glen Wolf, *Switch Point: The Effective Transfer of Church Leadership* (Atlanta, GA: Dream Releaser Publishing, 2023), 139-145.

<sup>16</sup> George W. Knight III, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Biblical Monograph, 1979), 9.

the important implications of the faithful Word, showing why both Timothy and Titus were to trust in it. Therefore, the substance of the clause *PhL*, along with four principles uncovered in human subject research, can equip incoming pastors with a spiritual and leadership framework that will empower them to faithfully lead their congregations through the succession process so that the faithful Word is preserved and passed along to the next generation.

This research is unique because, by filling different learning gaps, a new wave of incoming pastors will be encouraged and empowered to continue the Lord's work faithfully, modeling a more faithful way to lead. The hope is to prevent plateauing and declining churches from permanently closing their doors unnecessarily.

#### *Relationship of the Project to the Researcher's Ministry*

I am greatly concerned with equipping incoming pastors because I am one. My father is the founding pastor of an almost forty-year-old independent church in Tampa, Florida. My primary motivation for continuing my education was because of a conversation that involved my taking over for him when he retires. At the time of this writing, he is sixty-four years old. Tabernacle of God Church is a midsize, multi-cultural church of around 350 members. Its present attendance is less than half of what it was before COVID-19. All efforts have been directed at returning the church to where it was in the past without considering how present decisions impact where it needs to be.

Presently, the church lacks a formal emergency plan and has not discussed establishing a proper succession plan. Seeing how most successful change efforts take roughly three to five years to materialize, my father would retire close to age seventy, assuming a plan was

established in the near future.<sup>17</sup> Any delay in preparing for his inevitable retirement, without considering unexpected crises that may occur, will put the church at risk of not surviving the succession.

With the present condition of the church and growing health concerns with my father, there is a strong likelihood that I will have to enter as the next lead pastor with much work, for which I am unprepared. In my reflections on the Pastoral Epistles, I stumbled across *Pistos ho Logos*. What I encountered impacted me significantly as I saw how Paul ministered holistically to Timothy and Titus. Thus, my curiosity led me to research the clause's context further. As a result, I was amazed at the lack of scholarly sources available. Because research shows that a healthy pastoral succession is more an art than a science,<sup>18</sup> I desire to see if the clause and the surrounding expressions can create a pastoral paradigm that could empower me spiritually and practically to navigate the unexpected faithfully.<sup>19</sup>

### *Scope and Limitations of the Project*

The object of this project was centered more on establishing a paradigm of thinking rather than a plan of action for incoming pastors. Much research has been done on the latter, which this work avoided prioritizing. Although such action plans have shown to be effective, they cannot factor in the unexpected.<sup>20</sup> The hope was to equip incoming pastors with a spiritual foundation to

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<sup>17</sup> John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2012), 13.

<sup>18</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next*, 21.

<sup>19</sup> Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains*, 34.

<sup>20</sup> Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains*, 13-23.

support the practical applications that will mark their ministry from their start up to their inevitable succession.

As stated, this project hoped to fill two known knowledge gaps. The first is the lack of dedicated resources for incoming pastors experiencing succession. The second is the lack of research regarding the clause *Pistos ho Logos*. These two aspects limited the work of this project. Participants in this research project were pastors who have experienced a form of succession that resulted in retirement or resettling to a different church. The goal was to learn from their experiences to uncover potential lessons from their successes or failures.

The following criteria were considered:

- outgoing pastors from churches they helped found or revitalize
- outgoing pastors who have experienced at least one succession in the past
- incoming pastors who felt unprepared for their transition into the new position
- whether the church was autonomous or affiliated with a denomination
- the impact that the succession had on the church
- the impact that the succession had on the relationships between pastors and leaders
- the time each succession or transition took

Twenty interviews previously approved by Southeastern University's Internal Review Board were conducted, representing twenty-eight churches. Even though participating pastors had experience in multicultural settings, including Anglo, African American, Korean, Hispanic, and Brazilian churches, those who participated in the interviews were either Anglo or Hispanic, causing another limitation to this work. About seventeen churches in the study had a weekly attendance of less than 500. Four churches had an average of five hundred to one thousand,

seven averaged between one and five thousand, and two averaged between seventy to one hundred thousand in weekly attendance, including their online audience.

The interviews aimed to discover if there is a correlation between the result of the succession and the spiritual and practical principles that emerged from the research involving the clause *Pistos ho Logos*. All information will be kept secure by the researcher alone.

### *Definition of Terms*

- Succession: the process of leadership transition within an organization or church
- Incoming Pastor (IP): the pastor who replaces the present pastor
- Outgoing Pastor (OP): the pastor being replaced by a future pastor
- *PhL*: an abbreviation for *Pistos ho Logos*
- PE: an abbreviation for the Pastoral Epistles

### *Project Goals and Objectives*

The universal goal for this project was to develop a spiritual paradigm through the clause *Pistos ho Logos* that can equip the incoming pastor to navigate a problematic succession or any unforeseen issue successfully. This goal was accomplished through a qualitative study of multiple churches that have experienced at least one leadership transition. These interviews involved both outgoing and incoming pastors. The research sought to discover any natural correlations between the case studies, the literature, and biblical reviews that could further aid the incoming pastor.

The first goal was primarily concerned with the further examination of the clause *Pistos ho Logos*. The few scholarly resources were examined with a verse-by-verse study of the Pastoral Epistles to discover the intent behind such a unique clause and its practical implications for Timothy and Titus as incoming pastors. The clause was evaluated as a stand-alone statement while separately considering the five specific contexts in which it is found. Attention was given to see if there is any significance to the sequence in which it is mentioned in hopes of gaining a greater understanding of Paul's intentions through his instructions.

The second goal was to adapt relevant best practices of succession specifically for the incoming pastor, considering the various requirements unique to the position. Such resources could benefit church planters, as they can begin with the end in mind by establishing a healthy environment that is prepared for their inevitable succession.

The third goal was to discover a practical decision-making tool that could assist the incoming pastor in making necessary adjustments at the proper times throughout the transition process. This tool was created by accurately assessing successes and failures during the qualitative interviews that showed any correlations with the principles found in the relevant literature research and biblical studies.

### *Methodology Overview*

The qualitative research used a phenomenological study of the lived experience of pastors who have gone through a personal succession. As a phenomenological study, this project examined the lessons learned by the incoming pastor to identify effective spiritual best practices that reinforce available practical advice.

The first stage of this study utilized primary and secondary sources to gain a solid biblical foundation of the topics of succession and *Pistos ho Logos*. Relevant resources included the Bible, biblical commentaries, published books, internet search engines, academic articles, related dissertations, and the Southeastern University Library databases.

The second stage was the execution of the phenomenological case study of churches that have experienced at least one pastoral succession. The pastors were interviewed through open-ended questions to reevaluate their previous experience when they transitioned into their present position and how that affected their preparation for their succession. The Internal Review Board approved two rounds of interviews.

The third stage was to discover relevant themes from the research that could help incoming pastors develop a pastoral paradigm that would aid them in faithfully executing their new role. This framework and other vital resources can be found in the Appendix section of this project. Recommendations for further study in this academic area were also included.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE PROJECT IN PERSPECTIVE

#### *Introduction*

Like many present incoming pastors today, Timothy and Titus were commissioned by the Apostle Paul to serve two pre-existing church communities. Their responsibilities entailed confronting false teachings and practices relative to the true Gospel of Christ, while appointing faithful men to lead the churches forward.

<sup>1</sup> This task also entailed pastoring those within the church who were negatively affected by those false teachers. All three letters directed to these two individuals share common themes of encouragement, instruction, and admonition. However, one additional point of similarity is unique to these letters. It consists of the mysterious clause *Pistos ho Logos*, which roughly translates to “Faithful is the Word.” At this point, an examination will be conducted to determine whether there was any significance to Paul’s use of *PhL* as he prepared Timothy and Titus, and whether it has any relevance today regarding pastoral succession.

This chapter presents a biblical and theological review of the clause, its surrounding context, its interrelationship with the meta-narrative of Scripture, and its historical use in Greek culture.<sup>2</sup> This chapter also includes a relevant literature review that examines any connection with pastoral succession, including leadership and spiritual development.

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1988), 15.

<sup>2</sup> Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2006), 113.



*Theological and Biblical Review*

Problems with Pistos ho Logos

The presence of *PhL* in the PE has caused more confusion than encouragement because of how Paul used the term, causing scholars to adopt one of two positions.<sup>3</sup> The first is held by those who believe *PhL* acted as a “quotation-commendation formula” pointing away from itself to what is believed to be the faithful saying Paul is referring to.<sup>4</sup> This theory has led to an English translation of the Bible in which the apparent faithful saying follows the clause *PhL*, even though a debate exists among proponents regarding the third, fourth, and fifth use of the clause because the surrounding statements lack the condensed quality that the 1 Tim 1:15 and 1 Tim 3:1 have. This theory has also inspired translators to vary the phrase slightly each time Paul referred to it, even within its own translation, to better fit the context.<sup>5</sup> Opponents of the quotation-commendation formula have taken issue with the existence of varied translations of a clause that Paul repeated five times exactly.<sup>6</sup>

The opposing view regarding *PhL* is held by those who believe the clause acts as a stand-alone statement that should be translated, “Faithful is the Word,” referring to the apostolic Gospel of Jesus Christ. Rendall argued for this position in 1887, expressing his opinion that

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<sup>3</sup> J Van Bruggen, “Vaste grond onder de voeten. De formule pistos ho logos in de Pastorale Brieven,” In *Beziel verband: opstellen aangeboden aan prof. J. Kampuis bij gelegenheid van zijn vijfentwintig-jarig ambtsjubileum als hoogleraar aan de Theologische Hogeschool van De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland te Kampen*, op 9 April 1984 (Kampen: Uitgeverij Van den Berg, 1984), 40.

<sup>4</sup> R. Alistair Campbell, “Identifying the faithful sayings in the Pastoral Epistles,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 16, no. 54 (October 1994), 77.

<sup>5</sup> TC Lawson, “The Faithful Sayings,” *Churchman* 47, no. 2 (1933): 115, <http://churchsociety.org/churchman/archive/>.

<sup>6</sup> F. Rendall, “Faithful is the Word,” *Expositor* 3/5 (1887), 314.

clause acted as an “abrupt outburst” by Paul.<sup>7</sup> Others, such as J.G. Duncan, claimed that the formula neither can introduce nor follow any subject matter, but rather affirms Paul’s general message.<sup>8</sup> Lawson believes that a critical factor for the struggles in understanding the clause is the presence of *ho*, which can equally point outside the clause to a faithful saying or directly to *logos* describing it as faithful.<sup>9</sup> Lawson also observed that one could remove *PhL* from Paul’s sentences and not affect the construction of the context or thought.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, scholars like Hanson argue against using *PhL* to introduce or follow a faithful saying because its varied uses prove that no single idea can be applied unilaterally to justify that approach.<sup>11</sup> Current scholars such as Timothy Swinson have furthered this single-statement claim, believing that *PhL* serves as an affirmation of the trustworthiness of the apostolic gospel proclamation, which embodies the Gospel’s essence.<sup>12</sup> If so, its various uses could show the clause’s capacity for wide application within Christian ministry and life.<sup>13</sup>

According to Knight, it was believed that the clause did not exist outside of the PE.<sup>14</sup> Research revealed at least two early church fathers used *PhL* as a single statement, in line with Rendall’s theory noted above. One of the Cappadocian Fathers, Gregorius Nazianzus, used

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<sup>7</sup> Rendall, “Faithful is the Word,” 317.

<sup>8</sup> J.G. Duncan, 'ΠΙΣΤΟΣ Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ', *Expository Times* 35 (1923), 141.

<sup>9</sup> Lawson. “The Faithful Sayings,” 121.

<sup>10</sup> Lawson. “The Faithful Sayings,” 126.

<sup>11</sup> A.T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles* (London, UK: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1982), 64.

<sup>12</sup> L. Timothy Swinson, “Πιστός ὁ λόγος: An Alternative Analysis,” *STR* 7.2 (Winter 2016): 60.

<sup>13</sup> Campbell, “Identifying the Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Epistles,” 85.

<sup>14</sup> Knight, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters*, 4-7.

*PhL* in his published work, *Invectives*, between 362 and 363 AD. He wrote the work in response to Emperor Julian's rejection of Christianity, describing how sincere Christian faith and love will always overcome opposition from rulers such as Julian.<sup>15</sup> Gregorius wrote, “Εἰ δέ τω πιστὸς ὁ λόγος, καὶ τοῦτο διεδόθη ταῖς τῶν πολλῶν ἀκοαῖς.”<sup>16</sup> This use of *PhL* acts as a signal statement rather than a quotation from the PE. This passage from Gregorius translates into English: "And the word is faithful, and this was given to the many to hear" in a context speaking about the spread of the Gospel and how it gives hope to believers even when faced with death.

Also, John Chrysostomus used *PhL* as a single statement in his works on the PE. He wrote, "Πιστὸς ὁ λόγος, ὅτι ὁ ζωῆς οὐρανίου τυχῶν, καὶ αἰωνίου τεύξεται. Πόθεν πιστός; Εἰ γὰρ συναπεθάνομεν, φησὶ, καὶ συζήσομεν," connecting *PhL* with the hope of eternal life that empowers believers to live and die together.<sup>17</sup> The Apostolic Fathers regularly confronted the false teachings of their time by reminding their readers of the faithfulness of the Word of God, calling people to place their trust in the Gospel above all.<sup>18</sup> Although the use of *PhL* outside of quoting Scripture is rare, the combination of Nazianzus's and Chrysostom's use of the clause as a single statement could suggest a common utilization of it in the fourth-century church.

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<sup>15</sup> John McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, NY: 2001), 115-121.

<sup>16</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *Contra Julianum Imperatorem* 2, orat. 5, line 30. <https://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu>

<sup>17</sup> Joannes Chrysostomus, *In Epistulam ii ad Timotheum (homiliae 1-10)*, line 13. <https://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu>

<sup>18</sup> Mark A. Frisius, *Tertullian's Use of the Pastoral Epistles, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, and Jude* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2011), 22-23.

Despite the need for more consensus on approaching *PhL* and possible correlations from the Apostolic Fathers, this research delves into the historical and biblical study of the single statement and its surrounding context to uncover any importance for pastoral ministry.

### Historical use of “pistos” and “logos”

Because Paul’s use of *PhL* in the PE appears to be the first use of the clause in Hellenistic Greek literature, a study of each word was done to comprehend the possible meaning better.<sup>19</sup> *Pistos* (πιστός) has its root in the word *pistis*, which translates to “trust” or “faith.”<sup>20</sup> *Pistos* was first used to describe the faithfulness of a belief, which is why someone would place their faith in it.<sup>21</sup> Traditionally, *pistos* was used in Ancient Greek to convey a level of faithfulness that came with a sense of duty and contractual relationship.<sup>22</sup> It describes a “state of being someone in whom complete confidence can be placed.”<sup>23</sup> One was assured of the reliability of the person or principal due to existential evidence. *Pistos* was also used to describe an attitude toward oneself. Being faithful to one’s convictions, which shapes one's integrity, makes healthy relationships with others possible.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2018), 64.

<sup>20</sup> H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1996), 1408.

<sup>21</sup> James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

<sup>22</sup> Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds, Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 175-176.

<sup>23</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 376.

<sup>24</sup> Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 182.

The future tense of *pistos* meant “to make trustworthy” or “to trust, feel confident in, or confirm,” suggesting an effect experienced by those who trust in something considered *pistos*.<sup>25</sup> Lastly, there have been some additional historical uses of *pistos* to refer to liquid medicine.<sup>26</sup> Specifically, it relates to safe and trustworthy substances one can drink and consume for medical and culinary purposes.<sup>27</sup>

Like *pistos*, the Greek word *logos* has been widely used with varied connotations.<sup>28</sup> For example, *logos* was used to describe a statement, the act of speaking, or even to address the overall content of what was said. The widespread use of *logos* in the New Testament refers to the Gospel of Christ as Good News from God based on the Old Testament.<sup>29</sup>

Philosophically, the Stoics used *logos* to describe the order and nature of existence, which can be revealed through people.<sup>30</sup> Neo-Platonists debated with the Stoics, claiming that

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<sup>25</sup> H.G. Liddell, *A Lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996), 642.

<sup>26</sup> Liddell, *A Lexicon*, 642.

<sup>27</sup> Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 1408.

<sup>28</sup> James A. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)*, 2nd ed. (Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2001).

<sup>29</sup> Lawson. “The Faithful Sayings,” 120.

<sup>30</sup> Gottlob Schrenk, et al., “Λέγω, Λόγος, Ῥῆμα, Λαλέω, Λόγιος, Λόγιον, ἄλογος, Λογικός, Λογομαχέω, Λογομαχία, Ἐκλέγομαι, Ἐκλογή, Ἐκλεκτός,” ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 84.

*logos* was a power that “lends form and life to all things.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, *logos* could represent the thesis or reason behind universal truths.<sup>32</sup>

Regarding religion, *logos* was used to refer to the holy mysteries of divine doctrine that had to be revealed by the gods or the response of praying to the gods.<sup>33</sup> Both *logos* and *pistos* share a relationship in that the *logos* must first be revealed before one can respond in faith that the truth is trustworthy.<sup>34</sup> Paul confessed this desire by adding an extension to *PhL* in 1 Tim 1:15 and 4:9, saying, “and deserving of full acceptance.” Walter Grundmann explains, “Probably we have here a kerygmatic expression which is strongly influenced and characterized by Hellenism. The word (*sc.* of proclamation) is sure and is therefore worthy of approval and high estimation.” Thus, that extension to *PhL* contains a Hellenistic characterization of a secondary expression that implies that because the Word of God is faithful, it should be held in the highest esteem among Christians in the church.<sup>35</sup>

A third word not found in Paul’s use of the clause *PhL* was analyzed as it appears in two variations of the clause found in the book of Revelation.<sup>36</sup> New Testament writers often used the Greek word *alēthinós* as a synonym for *pistos* and *logos*. *Alēthinós*, related to the word *alētheia*, means actual, truth, and truthful. It also describes a genuine or authentic truth, person, or

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<sup>31</sup> Schrenk et al., “Λέγω, Λόγος, Ῥῆμα, Λαλέω, Λόγιος, Λόγιον, ἄλογος, Λογικός, Λογομαχέω, Λογομαχία, Ἐκλέγομαι, Ἐκλογή, Ἐκλεκτός,” 85

<sup>32</sup> Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 778.

<sup>33</sup> Schrenk et al., “Λέγω, Λόγος, Ῥῆμα, Λαλέω, Λόγιος, Λόγιον, ἄλογος, Λογικός, Λογομαχέω, Λογομαχία, Ἐκλέγομαι, Ἐκλογή, Ἐκλεκτός,” 86.

<sup>34</sup> Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 38.

<sup>35</sup> Walter Grundmann, “Accors” ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 55–56.

<sup>36</sup> Rev 21:5, 22:6 (CSB)

product, such as something made of high-quality purple fabric.<sup>37</sup> The word also means a non-concealment of truth that “comes into relation with *dýnamis* (power) and then with the *gnósis* (knowledge) that it mediates and the *zōé* (life) and *phōs* (light) that it gives.”<sup>38</sup> To summarize, the Word (*logos*) can be considered faithful and trustworthy (*pistos*) if it is of genuine divine origin (*alēthinós*), which then becomes a form of knowledge (*gnósis*) that enlightens (*phōs*) and empowers (*dýnamis*) the believer to reflect a faithful (*pistos*) life (*zōé*) in response.

New Testament authors used *pistos* and *logos* consistent with the Greek usages, especially when addressing Christ or Christians. This understanding will be further explored by analyzing the Apostle Paul’s usage of *PhL* to best understand his intent.

#### Paul’s use of *Pistos* ho *Logos*

Despite the debate over what exactly equates to the faithful saying, Rendall believes that Paul’s repetitive use of *PhL* reveals how emphatic he is that the leaders of the church prioritize the faithful Word above worldly wisdom or strategies so that God’s purpose may be fulfilled through the church as a whole.<sup>39</sup> The concept of passing down the revelation of God through “redemptive relationships” is a theme that permeates both the Old and New Testaments, including the PE.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Liddell and R. Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 64.

<sup>38</sup> Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 38-39.

<sup>39</sup> Rendall, “Faithful is the Word,” 316-318.

<sup>40</sup> Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament: A Christian Survey*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2008), 100.

Lawson believes this approach toward *PhL* has led some scholars to consider whether the clause acted as an early proverb within the church community.<sup>41</sup> Although this clause is not found written before the PE, no evidence can affirm whether *PhL* is an original Pauline creation or a primal creed in the early church. Regardless, Yarbrough stated that *PhL* is believed to be a fundamental Christian expression that more than likely originated among believers in the first century.<sup>42</sup> First-century research does show a movement toward summarized formations of truth in the early church.<sup>43</sup> If *PhL* is to be considered this way, it should reflect the characteristics of primal creeds, as defined by Pelikan, acting as a compact statement that encases sound doctrines that the believing community ought to trust.<sup>44</sup>

Lawson thought that the uniqueness of the clause, considering its isolated locations in the PE, appears to be an early Christian catchphrase or slogan that could have been rehearsed within church circles, communicating a significant truth so that foundational biblical doctrines could be easily retained and preserved in a pre-canonized age.<sup>45</sup> Knight believed the context surrounding *PhL* possibly acted as self-conscious creedal expressions of the early church's faith and life,<sup>46</sup> possibly revealing how the oldest Christian community found a balance between Canon (Principles) and Creed (Practice).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Lawson, "The Faithful Sayings," 116.

<sup>42</sup> Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 64.

<sup>43</sup> J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London, UK: Longman, 1960), 13.

<sup>44</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 80.

<sup>45</sup> Lawson, "The Faithful Sayings," 116.

<sup>46</sup> Knight, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters*, 3.

<sup>47</sup> Bruggen, "V Aste Grond Onder de Voeten," 41.



Paul's tone toward Timothy and Titus clearly shows his concern that the next generation of pastors and parishioners genuinely grasp the concept of the faithfulness of the Gospel so that they can avoid shipwrecking their faith due to false teachings like others had done.<sup>48</sup> This reason is why Cummings describes how much Paul's writings emphasized the revelation of the faithfulness of God, as well as what a believer's faithful response should be as a result.<sup>49</sup> One example is found in the first chapter of 1 Tim, where Paul said, "I am giving you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies previously made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the good fight, having faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and have shipwrecked their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme."<sup>50</sup> Paul also mentioned in Titus 1:11 that the same destructive instructions of the false teachers in the Ephesian church are also "ruining entire households" in Crete. Thus, Timothy and Titus were equally charged to silence false teachers who were peddling "demonic doctrines" so that the church may be sound in the faith, holding to the faithful Word.<sup>51</sup>

A comprehensive study of Paul's writings shows that he saw a direct relationship between the results of one's faith and the object of one's faith. He wrote in Titus 1:9 that only those who believe in the faithful (*pistos*) word (*logos*) of the Gospel would be able to encourage and refute those who contradict the sound teachings of Christ. This understanding could imply why Paul's sole use of the clause in the PE is directed to church leaders who are to pastor the

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<sup>48</sup> Knight, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters*, 149.

<sup>49</sup> George M. Cummings, "Paul's Doctrine of the Logos," BSAC 71:283 (July 1914), 387.

<sup>50</sup> 1 Tim 1:18-20 (CSB)

<sup>51</sup> 1 Tim 4:1 (CSB)

church by preaching the faithful Word so that God's people will live out the faithful Word. This concept is reflected in Thomas Manton's assessment of the purpose of preaching when he wrote, "Doctrine is but the drawing of the bow, while the application is hitting the mark."<sup>52</sup>

#### Pastoral succession and *Pistos ho Logos*

Four of the thirteen letters traditionally attributed to the Apostle Paul are directed to three individuals. One is a personal letter to Philemon, while the others make up what is considered the PE. Those letters directed to Timothy and Titus are unique because they are the only New Testament books written directly to church leaders concerning the preservation of the apostolic message of the Gospel within the church. It is here where *PhL* is found, suggesting it has inherent value specifically for coworkers who are leading churches, as Paul never used the phrase in his other writings. Each use of the clause is surrounded by doctrines that leaders are to believe and deeds to be done. Therefore, each context of the clause *PhL* uncovered apparent evidence of a correlation between the divine revelation of the Word that requires a faith response, which results in one being made faithful to the Word.

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<sup>52</sup> Thomas Manton, *A Practical Commentary, or an Exposition, with Notes, on the Epistle of James* (London, UK: James Nisbet, 1871), 357.

*The First Occurrence of PhL*

I give thanks to Christ Jesus our Lord who has strengthened me, because he considered me faithful [*pistos*], appointing me to the ministry—even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an arrogant man. But I received mercy because I acted out of ignorance in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. “This saying is trustworthy [*pistos ho logos*] and deserving of full acceptance: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—and I am the worst of them. But I received mercy for this reason, so that in me, the worst of them, Christ Jesus might demonstrate his extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in him for eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” Timothy, my son, I am giving you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies previously made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the good fight, having faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and have shipwrecked the faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme. (1 Tim 1:12-20 CSB)

The first time *PhL* is found is in 1 Tim 1:15, surrounded by Paul’s exaltation of the power of Christ to save sinners, including himself. Knight claimed that each use of *PhL* has a strong soteriological theme.<sup>53</sup> Swinson also points out the overall salvific essence in the five occurrences.<sup>54</sup> Evill believed this first occurrence is the central clause to which other mentions refer.<sup>55</sup> If true, then the essence of *PhL* could possibly be pointing to the sanctifying work of the Spirit through the revelation of the knowledge of Christ.

When thinking about what Christ has done for sinners, Paul cannot contain himself, and he bursts into praise in 1 Tim 1:17 after declaring *PhL*.<sup>56</sup> The importance of including the clause

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<sup>53</sup> Knight, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters*, 152.

<sup>54</sup> Swinson, “Πιστός ὁ λόγος: An Alternative Analysis,” 75.

<sup>55</sup> W.E. Evill, “The Faithful Sayings”, *ExpTim* 29 (1918), 442.

<sup>56</sup> Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 123.

at this moment is also amplified when contrasted with how the unfaithful message of the false teachers has robbed the listener of the joy of the Gospel. Even after all those years, Paul's Damascus Road experience was as fresh as ever, giving him the desire to see more sinners saved by the same faithful Word.<sup>57</sup> Also, before declaring *PhL* in verse fifteen, Paul described himself as "faithful" (*pistos*), which parallels a similar self-description in 1 Cor 7:25 when he wrote how he is "one who by the Lord's mercy is faithful (*pistos*)."<sup>58</sup> By Paul's admission, he was considered faithful (*pistos*) to be appointed to the ministry (verse 12), even though he was an unfaithful sinner (verse 13), as a consequence of God's overflowing grace through the revelation of the love of Christ (verse 14). Then, in verse fifteen, he declared, "Faithful is the Word!" following it with the proclamation of the power of the Gospel to save sinners such as himself. Interestingly, Paul understood that the revelation of the power of the Faithful Word was then to be reflected in his life so that others could believe. This revelation-response connection seems present in every other occurrence of *PhL* in the PE.

The process of God working in and through the life of a believer is embodied in each of Paul's prayers in his epistles to churches and to Philemon.<sup>59</sup> In each one, he prays that Christians may continually be filled with the knowledge of the love of Christ so that the love of Christ may overflow through every area of their lives. Paul's letters to various churches also adopted this regarding the revelation the Gospel gives, before explaining how the belief should produce

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<sup>57</sup> George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 97.

<sup>58</sup> Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 121.

<sup>59</sup> 1 Thess 3:11-13; 2 Thess 1:11-12; 1 Cor 1:3-9; 2 Cor 1:3-11; Gal 6:18; Rom 15:13; Phil 1:9-11; Eph 1:15-19, 3:14-21; Col 1:9-14; Phil 4-7 (CSB).

specific behaviors.<sup>60</sup> This conclusion is seen in Paul’s statement in 1 Tim 1:5: “Now the goal of our instruction is love (*agape*) that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith,” which are all results when the listener trusts in the faithful Word with which Timothy is to instruct others. Thus, the faithful Word is to act as his primary weapon,<sup>61</sup> which can effectively demolish strongholds built on arguments that conceal and corrupt the knowledge of the faithful nature of Christ in the minds of others.<sup>62</sup>

Paul concludes his opening section of 1 Timothy by reiterating in verse eighteen the instruction he gave Timothy in verse three: to rebuke false teachers in Ephesus and restore shipwrecked souls with the faithful Word that reveals the *Agape* love of Christ. This Word alone can produce a pure heart and good conscience through sincere faith in the Word. Paul’s emphasis on instructing others in the faithful Word at the beginning of 1 Timothy comes full circle as Paul begins to conclude 2 Timothy with the charge to “Preach the Word (*logos*).”<sup>63</sup> Paul preached a summarized sermon in verse fifteen right after his first use of *PhL*, encouraging IPs to prioritize instructing their people in the faithful Word that exalts Christ, as opposed to preaching sermons that aim to please the ear or impress the mind through worldly philosophy or human wit.<sup>64</sup> The latter reflects much of what passes for preaching in America today, which Smith and Denton

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<sup>60</sup> Bruce Wilkinsons and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible: A Quick Guide to Help You Get More Out of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 379.

<sup>61</sup> Eph 6:10-18 (CSB)

<sup>62</sup> 2 Cor 10:3-5 (CSB)

<sup>63</sup> 2 Tim 4:2 (CSB)

<sup>64</sup> Joel R. Beeke, “A Historical Pedigree: Sixteenth-Century Reformed Preaching,” in *Pulpit Aflame* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016), 48.

describe as “Moral Therapeutic Deism.”<sup>65</sup> Therefore, faithful is the Word to confront false teachers, correct false doctrines, and save souls.

### *The Second Occurrence of PhL*

Therefore, I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument. Also, the women are to dress themselves in modest clothing, with decency and good sense, not with elaborate hairstyles, gold, pearls, or expensive apparel, but with good works, as is proper for women who profess to worship God. A woman is to learn quietly with full submission. I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; instead, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and transgressed. But she will be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with good sense. This saying is trustworthy [*pistos ho logos*]: ‘If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble work... (1 Tim 2:8-3:1 CSB)

The second time *PhL* is found is in 1 Tim 3:1, preceded by instructions given to men and women in the church regarding orderly worship. The clause then proceeds with Paul’s instructions regarding the character that leaders within the church must possess. Scholars have debated whether *PhL* concludes Paul’s address to women or is used to shift the attention of the reader toward how leaders must conduct themselves within the church. A further examination of the context was conducted to possibly gain an understanding as to why Paul would declare, “Faithful is the Word” when he did.

Yarborough writes that from the end of 1 Tim 1, Paul expounds on how the previous revelation of the faithfulness of Christ and the Gospel should be evident in the life of those who trust in it.<sup>66</sup> Chapter two of 1 Timothy involves instructions about corporate worship, as well as

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<sup>65</sup> Christian Smith and Melina Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 125-126.

<sup>66</sup> Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 137.

character descriptions of men and women within the church. Here, Paul showed how the vertical worship of God intersecting with the horizontal life of believers should characterize the love of Christ.<sup>67</sup> These instructions are meant to correct the poor practices of congregants while also opposing the false teachers with a list of qualifications for leadership that ought to disqualify them from teaching authoritatively, as they had departed from the Gospel for personal gain rather than sincere faith.<sup>68</sup> The differing lists of qualifications for church leaders in the PE show that Paul prioritizes testimony over talent<sup>69</sup> in identifying the right type of faithful person who will guide the church rather than govern it.<sup>70</sup> Köstenberger's observation of Paul's concern regarding the impact of the faithless leaders in the PE could be why *PhL* tends to be associated with Paul's admission that "If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble work."<sup>71</sup> Yet, some studies show an alternative connection.

In his book *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters*, Knight discusses the debate regarding whether Paul is addressing women at the end of chapter two or church leaders at the beginning of chapter three when he writes *PhL* for the second time.<sup>72</sup> One major reason scholars have chosen to link *PhL* to 3:1b is that the verse appears to act as a saying. Yet, scholars such as Bover, Parry, and Von Sudan argue that *PhL* concludes Paul's advice to women in chapter two

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<sup>67</sup> Hulitt Gloer, *1 & 2 Timothy - Titus* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing Inc., 2010), 148.

<sup>68</sup> 1 Tim 1:5-7, 6:5 (CSB)

<sup>69</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 153.

<sup>70</sup> Benjamin K. Forrest and Chet Rosen, *Biblical Leadership: Theology for the Everyday Leader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publishing, 2017), 303.

<sup>71</sup> Andres Köstenberger, *1-2 Timothy and Titus* (WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 123-124.

<sup>72</sup> Knight, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters*, 50-54.

because they believe each mention of *PhL* should have a soteriological connection, which verse 3:1b lacks.<sup>73</sup>

In 2 Tim 3:6-7, Paul is aware that false teachers in Ephesus have wormed their way into households, deceiving “gullible women overwhelmed by sins and led astray by a variety of passions, always learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth” found in the faithful Word. This problem was also evident in the church of Crete, according to Titus 1:11. The false teachers, fueled by selfish desires for financial gain, were preying on the selfish desires of certain women who sought a different type of gain, which Paul appears to address in 1 Tim 2:9-15. Paul’s desire that women learn in peace and quiet with full submission to the faithful Word, free from obstruction or strife, is immediately proceeded with a restriction that has a connection to Gen 3. Paul’s rehearsal of the garden account could suggest that, like Eve, women in Ephesus were listening to an unfaithful word, which caused them to seek affirmation and authority outside of the Gospel that they were to learn and submit to.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, the presence of *PhL* could suggest that women who profess to worship God, saved in the spiritual sense, ought to reflect a lifestyle and attitude that rejects validation according to the world’s standards in favor of continuing to trust the faithful Word, producing the fruits of “love, holiness, and good sense” in their lives as to avoid repeating Eve’s mistake.<sup>75</sup>

Knight suggests that Paul had Gen 2 in mind when referring to the accounts in chapter 3.<sup>76</sup> Other scholars, such as Swinson and Susan Foh, suggest that Paul could have also been

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<sup>73</sup> Knight, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters*, 53.

<sup>74</sup> Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 171.

<sup>75</sup> Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible: Matthew-Revelation* (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company, 1985), 779.

<sup>76</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 131.



referring to chapter four, as structurally Gen 2:4-4:26 is typically treated as a single literary unit.

<sup>77</sup> The Hebrew word for “desire” in Gen 3:16b regarding Eve (“Your desire will be for your husband, yet he shall rule over you”) is paralleled in Gen 4:7 involving her son Cain (“If you do what is right, won’t you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”). Both negative connotations of the Hebrew word stand in contrast to the only other use of the word in the Old Testament, found in Song 7:11, which is used in a positive sense to communicate a loving, humble, and selfless affection between lovers. Therefore, the Hebrew word for desire could reflect Paul’s focus on the negative passions and desires of certain men and women within the church, which are then contrasted by a positive desire held by the few who ought to be considered faithful leaders in 1 Tim 3:1b-13. One example could be found in the way the word “aspires” Paul used in 1 Tim 3:1b is the same word that is translated to “longing” in 1 Tim 6:10, when referring to unfaithful desires which have led some to wander away from the faith, causing them to pierce “themselves with many griefs,” reflecting the argument he is making in 1 Tim 2:8-15.

One last consideration with understanding the second occurrence of *PhL* could possibly be found when examining the overall context of 1 Tim 2:1-3:16, which scholars such as Fee believed acted as an expounding argument from Paul regarding faithful praying and participation in the worship settings that ought to be grounded in the faithful Word.<sup>78</sup> The unfaithful characteristics of the false teachers in 1 Tim 1:9-10, which appear to reveal how the supposed experts of the law had violated the Ten Commandments,<sup>79</sup> had fueled unfaithful tendencies in

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<sup>77</sup> Timothy Swinson, “Saved by Means of Childbearing: 1 Tim 2:15 as a Reflection of Paul’s Reading of Genesis 3-4” (Nov. 15, 2012), 9.

<sup>78</sup> Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 61.

<sup>79</sup> Swinson, “Saved by Means of Childbearing,” 2-4.

both men and women within the church.<sup>80</sup> Thus, the practical instructions to follow in the letter, including the previously mentioned reference to prioritizing prayer,<sup>81</sup> were needed so that Timothy would “know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household.”<sup>82</sup> Paul’s use of the Greek word translated into “therefore” in verse eight happens to show his intent to continue the lesson on prayer when addressing how men ought to pray without wrath and doubt, which could be byproducts of listening to false teachers. Similarly, Paul’s use of the Greek word translated into “also” in verse nine gives reason to believe that the following instruction towards women is a continuation of the lesson on prayer, “suggesting that unity and freedom from contention are again the overriding concern” Paul is addressing.<sup>83</sup>

Paul’s concluding statements in 1 Tim 3:14-16 suggest a shift in focus, thus concluding a single idea regarding how congregants ought to conduct themselves in fellowship. The negative desires and characteristics of men and women in 1 Tim 2:8-15 stand in opposition to the positive desires and characteristics of certain men and women found in 1 Tim 3:1-13, who are all to be “self-controlled, faithful in everything.” The presence of *PhL*, which emphasized the need for men and women not to deviate from the faithful Word, is followed by a comparison of the nature of the leaders who have adhered to the faithful Word. Paul then gives a reason for why every member of the church should know how they should conduct themselves by reminding the church in 1 Tim 3:15b that it is “the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.” Mounce believes that this section suggests an alignment between the motivation of the

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<sup>80</sup> Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 163.

<sup>81</sup> Köstenberger, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, 91.

<sup>82</sup> 1 Tim 3:14, CSB.

<sup>83</sup> Köstenberger, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, 107.

church and the message of the church.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, faithful is the Word to produce the fruits of the Spirit that reflect a Christ-like character that ought to be evident in the lives of those within the church.

### *The Third Occurrence of PhL*

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, since it is sanctified by the word of God and by prayer. If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished by the words of the faith and the good teaching that you have followed. But have nothing to do with pointless and silly myths. Rather, train yourself in godliness. For the training of the body has limited benefit, but godliness is beneficial in every way, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. This saying is trustworthy [*pistos ho logos*] and deserves full acceptance. For this reason we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone despise your youth, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. Until I come, give your attention to public reading, exhortation, and teaching. Don't neglect the gift that is in you; it was given to you through prophecy, with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. Practice these things; be committed to them, so that your progress may be evident to all. Pay close attention to your life and your teaching; persevere in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers. (1 Tim 4:4-16 CSB)

The third time *PhL* is found is in 1 Tim 4:9, with the only remaining command Paul uses, implying that the faithful Word should be widely accepted within the church. The context of this usage and the remainder of the letter highlights the theme of “training in godliness” and the outward expression of faith in the believer who possesses Christ-like character.<sup>85</sup> According to 1

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<sup>84</sup> William D. Mounce, *World Biblical Commentary: Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 167.

<sup>85</sup> 1 Tim 2:2, 3:16, 4:7-8, 6:3-11 (CSB).

Tim 3:16, godliness is a mystery that God can only reveal and that others should receive. The Word of God is meant to continually shape the leader's character and those they lead by grace through faith. Paul declared in 1 Tim 4:8-10 that this habit is worthwhile work done by those who have put their hope in Christ, revealing that being faithful to the Lord results from placing one's faith in the Word, which is worthy of one's confidence and trust.

Mounce believes Paul's focus on godliness directly connects the immediate context with *PhL*.<sup>86</sup> Paul extends the clause by including "and deserves full acceptance" among the church because seeing believers walking worthy of the calling of the faithful Gospel is the focus of his missionary labors.<sup>87</sup> This desire parallels the Great Commission in Matt 29:19-20 as Jesus commanded the Apostles to make disciples by teaching others what Christ revealed. Similarly, Timothy is charged with continually growing in his understanding of the knowledge of Christ so that he can adequately instruct others, equipping the many to do the work of ministry, just as Paul outlined in Eph 4:11. Thus, Timothy is tasked to be continually trained by the Word he is to preach, by allowing it to rebuke, correct, and encourage him. Although developing self-discipline may be rigorous, according to Paul in 1 Tim 4:16, it is beneficial, because the mental exercise of growing in the knowledge of the faithfulness (*pistos*) of Christ is an essential way to remain faithful (*pistos*) to Christ.<sup>88</sup>

Paul's purpose for training oneself in godliness contrasts the presence and activity of the false teachers in the Ephesian Church. His analogy of physical exercise and training is given in

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<sup>86</sup> Mounce, *World Biblical Commentary: Pastoral Epistles*, 255.

<sup>87</sup> Mounce, *World Biblical Commentary: Pastoral Epistles*, 254.

<sup>88</sup> Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 240-256.

response to Timothy’s opponents, whose worldly teachings promised a spiritual experience in this age rather than seeing training in godliness as “the true path of eschatological existence.”<sup>89</sup> These false teachers rejected the faithful Word in favor of “silly myths” that were more concerned with hedonistic materialism than experiencing the joy of knowing Christ.<sup>90</sup> Thus, Timothy is charged in 1 Tim 6:20 to guard the deposit of the Gospel against “false knowledge,” which concluded the section of this letter starting in chapter two, which focused on how those within the church should conduct themselves.<sup>91</sup> A greater emphasis was given in chapters four through six on how Timothy is to conduct himself, which includes the command in 1 Tim 4:12 not to be influenced by the low view of him that some may have within the Ephesian Church. Instead, Paul encourages Timothy in 1 Tim 4:13-16 not to neglect his private and public spiritual disciplines, so that he and others may avoid departing from the faith, as Paul declared in 1 Tim 4:1 some people will do in later times. Paul also suggests to Titus in Titus 2:8 and 2:15 this attitude towards basing his teachings and thoughts of himself in the faithful Word.

Pastoring, especially during the process of succession, is very demanding. But according to Paul in 1 Tim 4:10, every aspect of pastoring requires “laboring and striving” in prayer and study of the Word of God so that each pastor can faithfully testify to the unbelievers of the love of Christ. IPs can apply this principle to their circumstances by reminding themselves that developing a Christ-like character and a heart of worship is not an accident. It requires personal vigilance of one’s spiritual condition and ongoing development by intentionally resubmitting oneself to the faithful Word continually.

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<sup>89</sup> Dillon Thornton, *Hostility in the House of God: An Investigation of the Opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 139.

<sup>90</sup> Köstenberger, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, 146.

<sup>91</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 113.

According to Paul, setting one's hope in the living Savior and His Word ought to produce a growing desire to teach and be taught. Therefore, faithful is the Word to train in godliness those who humbly return to it as a part of their personal spiritual disciplines.

#### *The Fourth Occurrence of PhL*

Remind them to submit to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to slander no one, to avoid fighting, and to be kind, always showing gentleness to all people. For we too were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, detesting one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, he saved us—not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy—through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit. He poured out his Spirit on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior so that, having been justified by his grace, we may become heirs with the hope of eternal life. This saying is trustworthy. I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed God might be careful to devote themselves to good works. These are good and profitable for everyone. But avoid foolish debates, genealogies, quarrels, and disputes about the law, because they are unprofitable and worthless. Reject a divisive person after a first and second warning. For you know that such a person has gone astray and is sinning; he is self-condemned. When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me in Nicopolis, because I have decided to spend the winter there. Diligently help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey, so that they will lack nothing. Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works for pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful. (Titus 3:1-14 CSB)

The fourth time *PhL* is found is in Titus 3:8, the lone reference to the clause in this letter. Many of the previous themes portrayed in 1 Tim, of Christ's saving work, the quality of the leader's character, and the importance of a life of godliness, are also found in this lone letter to Titus.<sup>92</sup> In this context, *PhL* is primarily concerned with good works, which is the theme of the letter.<sup>93</sup> Paul

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<sup>92</sup> Titus 1:1, 2:1-15 (CSB)

<sup>93</sup> Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 215.

repeats the theme one last time in Titus 3:14: “Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works for pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.” According to Yarborough, the Greek word for “learn” (*manthanetosan*) that Paul uses is a cognate in Greek for disciple (*mathetes*), implying in this verse that “sound doctrine involves living out the truth in everyday lives.”<sup>94</sup> This understanding that learning the truth ought to yield living the truth is what Paul is concerned with in Titus 3:1-7, which parallels Jesus’ teaching in John 13:34-36 where He states that the love between believers will confirm the testimony of the Gospel in the eyes of outsiders. Paul references this link between being filled to overflow in each of his other Epistles outside of the PE.<sup>95</sup>

This fourth use of the clause follows a powerful declaration of God’s redeeming and sanctifying work toward believers,<sup>96</sup> which is preceded by the description of Spirit-empowered works done by Christians before non-believers.<sup>97</sup> This focus toward those outside the church contrasts the third use of *PhL* in 1 Tim, which has many instructions on how the overflow of one’s faith should look among the believing community. For Paul, the outpouring of the Spirit in the life of believers is another example of God’s faithfulness, which does a righteous work in them and produces results of righteousness through them.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 558.

<sup>95</sup> Rom 15:13 (CSB)

<sup>96</sup> Titus 3:7 (CSB)

<sup>97</sup> Titus 3:1-3 (CSB)

<sup>98</sup> Titus 1:4-8 (CSB)

Paul's argument regarding how Christians should consider their testimony before non-Christians is rooted in their past experiences of once being lost but now redeemed by Christ.<sup>99</sup> This argument reinforces the argument that *PhL* is connected with the saving work of the Gospel. Paul appealed to the Ephesian church similarly in Eph 2:1-10 so that they would be encouraged to fulfill the good works that God had prepared beforehand for them to do. According to Gloer, Paul's use of the phrase "good works" is shorthand for the Christian life.<sup>100</sup> Köstenberger believes Paul emphasized the connection between the Christian mission and witness in this chapter of Titus, in that those whom the faithful Gospel saves ought to live faithfully, especially among non-believers.<sup>101</sup> His conclusions seem to concur with Paul's practice of using *pistos* as an adjective for true believers living out the Gospel.

Once again, the idea of *PhL* in Titus is contrasted with foolish debates, genealogies, quarrels, and disputes about the law that are "unprofitable and worthless." These arguments would cause a Christian to be unfruitful, as Paul mentions in chapter three, verse fourteen, and was a great concern of Christ, as mentioned in John 15:8: "This glorifies My Father: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples." The historical and cultural analysis of *pistos* showed that it was often used to prove the authenticity of objects and people. Thus, fruitful Christians are genuinely being discipled by the faithful Word and not a false Gospel, producing in them a Christ-like character and a heart of worship for the Lord that compels them to minister to the needs of others to know Christ.<sup>102</sup> Likewise, IPs experiencing pastoral succession ought to

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<sup>99</sup> Daniel M. Doriani and Richard D. Phillips, *2 Timothy & Titus* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2020), 243-246.

<sup>100</sup> Gloer, *1 & 2 Timothy - Titus*, 95.

<sup>101</sup> Köstenberger, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, 354.

<sup>102</sup> Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 215.



practice the very faithful Word they are entrusted to preach in every aspect of their lives, so that their testimonies may act as a model to other believers, in hopes that the faithful Word will be reflected through faithful works that lead outsiders to experience the same saving knowledge of the Gospel.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, faithful is the Word to produce faithful works through those when applied.

### *The Fifth Occurrence of PhL*

You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in the concerns of civilian life; he seeks to please the commanding officer. Also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer ought to be first to get a share of the crops. Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and descended from David, according to my gospel, for which I suffer to the point of being bound like a criminal. But the word of God is not bound. This is why I endure all things for the elect: so that they also may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. This saying is trustworthy: For if we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself. Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to fight about words. This is useless and leads to the ruin of those who listen. Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth. (2 Tim 2:8-15 CSB)

The fifth and final time *PhL* is found is in 2 Tim 2:11. Many of the themes in Timothy's first letter are repeated in the second as an encouragement not to neglect past instruction.<sup>104</sup> This letter

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<sup>103</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 333.

<sup>104</sup> Köstenberger, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, 204.

is considered to be the last one that Paul penned. If so, it would explain the vulnerability and sense of urgency with which he wrote.<sup>105</sup> In this letter, he detailed examples of how much he had suffered for the Lord and how Christ had empowered him to persevere. Before writing *PhL*, Paul encouraged Timothy to find his strength in the Lord to commit faithful (*pistos*) men to advance the Gospel as he was, and to share in Christ's suffering like a good soldier as he did.<sup>106</sup>

For Timothy to suffer faithfully, he is told to develop the mentality of a faithful soldier, athlete, and farmer. These themes were also present in Timothy's previous letter. All three individuals are prepared to adjust intentionally in response to unexpected moves by the opposition. The soldier and athlete face off against opponents, while the farmer is pinned up against the unpredictability of nature. Another common theme is how all three occupations faithfully work hard and sacrifice by faith, hoping for a desired result. Soldiers hope to win the battle, athletes hope to be declared the champion, and farmers hope to reap a harvest. Likewise, Timothy is encouraged to faithfully work hard and endure hardships by faith, believing that Christ has won the battle over sin, that He has championed death, and that He will one day harvest souls from every tribe and tongue for His glory. Thus, *PhL* is a reminder that enables a mentality which empowers the believer to act faithfully according to the faithful Word.

Timothy is expected to follow the example of Paul, who was willing to suffer so that others could be saved, as he trusted in the faithfulness of Christ.<sup>107</sup> The apparent hymn in 2 Tim 2:11b-13 that Paul quotes after his final declaration of *PhL* embodied this theme. Timothy is to be faithful by dying to himself, living for Christ, and enduring until the end, with a solemn

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<sup>105</sup> Mounce, *World Biblical Commentary: Pastoral Epistles*, lxiii.

<sup>106</sup> 2 Tim 2:1-3 (CSB)

<sup>107</sup> 2 Tim 2:10 (CSB)

warning that God will hold him accountable for his actions.<sup>108</sup> In verse thirteen, Paul then adds a surprising couplet, stating that even though a believer may be faithless or unbelieving (*apisteō*), Christ will remain faithful (*pistos*).

Unlike the example in the previous verse about denying Christ, it appears that Paul refers to any Christian's faults as deriving from faithlessness or unbelief. If so, this final statement echoes Paul's famous declaration in Romans chapter eight that there is "no condemnation in Christ" for believers, to the point that our earthly failed attempts to follow Christ are powerless to turn God against us, separate us from His love, or derail the execution of His sovereign plan of redemption and restoration of all things. Thus, Christians can serve the Lord confidently, knowing their faults will never keep Christ from being faithful to them in the present or the future.<sup>109</sup> This conviction should be a source of great hope for any IP experiencing succession. The reality is that mistakes will occur throughout the process and long after the establishment of the lead pastor. Yet, church leaders and congregants can be encouraged to persevere faithfully through any difficulty, trusting God's mercy and grace to accomplish the mission through their lives.<sup>110</sup>

Gloer believes that the overall tone of Paul's final instructions in 2 Timothy is in keeping with the cultural nature of a last testament from a dying father to a son.<sup>111</sup> Conscious that he is nearing his death, Paul contrasts the faithfulness of many believers against those who refused to

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<sup>108</sup> 2 Tim 2:11-12 (CSB)

<sup>109</sup> Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 249.

<sup>110</sup> Doriani and Phillips, *2 Timothy & Titus*, 39-42.

<sup>111</sup> Gloer, *1 & 2 Timothy - Titus*, 218.

believe in the faithful Word.<sup>112</sup> He even connects the past, present, and future by showing Timothy that in the same way that the faithful Word was passed down from Timothy's grandmother and mother, as well as from Paul himself, he is to entrust the faithful Word to other *pistos* leaders so they can do the same.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, IPs are to honor the OP and those from whom they have received the faithful Word by entrusting it to other leaders and those they are to lead.

In concluding his letter in 2 Tim 4:1-2, Paul gives the most strongly worded charge that exceeds anything he had ever written.<sup>114</sup> He said, "I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and because of his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup>Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and teaching." This last epistle crescendos at this point as Paul's sense of urgency is fueled by a sense of his impending death and his passion that Timothy understands the gravity of the moment. He is not just to guard the deposit of the faithful Word, but he is to preach it faithfully.<sup>115</sup> Titus is given a similar charge in Titus 2:13, yet not as strongly worded.

Paul adds four imperatives to that command to give Timothy direction on preaching the *logos*, which includes being prepared by *logos* so that he may rebuke, correct, and encourage others in response to the onslaught of false teachers and the apathy of those who will entertain

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<sup>112</sup> 2 Tim 1:3-18 (CSB)

<sup>113</sup> 2 Tim 2:2 (CSB)

<sup>114</sup> Köstenberger, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, 271.

<sup>115</sup> 2 Tim 1:14, 4:2 (CSB)

their words.<sup>116</sup> This imperative is connected to the final use of *PhL* in chapter two, verses eight through fifteen, where Paul tells Timothy to remember Jesus Christ and His faithfulness in his studies so that he may remind the church “of these things” by “correctly teaching the word (*logos*) of truth (*alētheia*).” Paul's challenge to the preacher is based on the hope that the faithful Word still speaks and remains powerful enough to save and sanctify souls.<sup>117</sup> Similarly, IPs can be encouraged to know that they will be able to persevere in the noble yet demanding task of pastoring by the same faithful Word they are to preach, pray, process, and practice. Therefore, the Word is faithful to sustain those who persevere in it.

The research suggests that *PhL* acts as a call-and-response statement that declares “Faithful is the Word,” with the hope that the listener responds to the revealed *logos* of God’s love by accepting the Gospel by faith. Mounce states that *love (agape)* is always paired with *faith* in the PE, showing the interrelationship between the two and that the authentic Christian life overflows from one's persistent faith in the Word.<sup>118</sup> Yarborough also notes how Jesus referred to *agape* more as a verb than a noun. That use is opposed to Paul’s, who primarily used the word as a noun rather than a verb, saying that *agape* “is a reality rooted in God and Christ that transforms believers’ lives when they receive the gospel and progressively marks their lives as they live that gospel out.”<sup>119</sup> Thus, applying one’s faith in the faithful Word, which reveals the faithfulness of God, is how the believer is empowered to act as a faithful witness by God’s grace. Thus, *PhL* acts as a compact reminder that faith in the faithful Word is how one is made faithful.

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<sup>116</sup> 2 Tim 4:3 (CSB)

<sup>117</sup> Rom 1:16 (CSB)

<sup>118</sup> Mounce, *World Biblical Commentary: Pastoral Epistles*, 23.

<sup>119</sup> Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 106.

Therefore, faithful is the Word to empower those who trust in it to persevere through any adversity that they may experience or encounter.

## Summary

The research concerning the historical and scriptural use of *pistos*, *logos*, and other related words reinforces the argument that *PhL* is acting as a stand-alone statement used by Paul in the PE. Moreover, it affirms that *PhL* is working as a call-and-response or revelation-response expression that declares the faithfulness of the Word of Christ in such a way that the recipient is to respond by trusting in the Word concerning the finished work of Christ, enabling each recipient to be faithful to the Word and Christ by God's grace. Therefore, *PhL* informs the listener and "in-forms" the believer, conforming them to the image of Jesus.<sup>120</sup> This mentality shaped by Christ's faithful Word and character can enable IPs to lead their congregations faithfully throughout the succession and beyond if the Lord allows.

Secondly, *PhL* could be considered a "revolutionary statement" as it is something that believers should repeatedly revolve their faith in as the truth revolutionizes their lives through the power of God. John Ortberg once wrote, "The soul must orbit around something other than itself."<sup>121</sup> He also claimed that the soul is a ship that needs an anchor.<sup>122</sup> Rendall believed that

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<sup>120</sup> Caridad M. Gibson, "From Practitioner to Scholarly Practitioner: Exploring the Perceptions of EdD Students' 'Becoming,'" (EdD diss., The University of South Florida, Tampa, 2022), 165.

<sup>121</sup> John Ortberg, *Soul Keeping: Caring for the Most Important Part of You* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 85.

<sup>122</sup> Ortberg, *Soul Keeping*, 187.

Paul's outbursts of *PhL* were meant to emphasize that the Word is faithful to anchor the soul.<sup>123</sup> Thus, *PhL* seems to act as a war cry from an aged apostle to Christian soldiers who are given the noble task of rallying the Church to trust in the faithful Word so that they are enabled to advance the kingdom of Christ faithfully.<sup>124</sup>

Lastly, research suggests that the clause *PhL* does not point to five different sayings, but rather emphasizes the same point in five different ways that have implications for pastoral ministry.<sup>125</sup> Each of the five instances was examined independently within its own context, assuming that Paul did not intentionally write the PE as a single unit. Rather, it appeared Paul meant to accentuate one thing, "Faithful is the Word," when discussing different effects that prove to the faithful effects the Word can have on those who trust it. In summary:

#### Faithful is the Word

1. To save souls when preached.
2. To produce the fruits of Christ-like character when received.
3. To train those who humbly return to it in godliness.
4. To produce faithful works through those when applied.
5. To empower believers to persevere through adversity.

In conclusion, these developments would greatly benefit any IP involved in pastoral succession by promoting a revolutionary pastor mentality with the conviction that "Faithful is the Word" to address any needs or concerns they will have to experience internally or encounter

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<sup>123</sup> Rendall, "Faithful is the Word," 317.

<sup>124</sup> Rendall, "Faithful is the Word," 319.

<sup>125</sup> Swinson, "Πιστὸς ὁ λόγος," 71.

externally throughout their ministry as long as they hold fast to the Scriptures with a sincere conviction.

The evidence uncovered during the cultural and biblical uses of *PhL* will now be scrutinized alongside a literature review regarding pastoral succession to expose any correlations between the two topics.

### *General Literature Review*

#### Leadership in pastoral succession

The purpose behind the PE was to encourage and equip Timothy and Titus to personally hold onto the faithful Word (*PhL*) so that they may silence the false teachers in their respective churches to preserve and continually promote the faithful Word as true witnesses of Christ. This task included appointing other faithful (*pistos*) leaders to oversee the churches and remain vigilant over the apostolic message. Both 2 Tim 4:9-13 and Titus 3:12 suggest that Paul expects Timothy and Titus to rejoin him elsewhere. These verses mentioned how Paul sent other faithful leaders to help those churches deal with the departure of Timothy and Titus. Thus, this section of the general literature review will examine fundamental principles of succession found in recent research, emphasizing the IP, while considering any potential parallels between modern IPs and Timothy's and Titus' experiences that can uncover a modern application of the clause *PhL*.

*The purpose of pastoral succession.* Research concerned with pastoral succession reveals fundamental goals with an underlying principle. One primary goal is for the OP and IP to enter



their new positions as seamlessly as possible. Tom Mullins emphasized this point in his 2015 book *Passing the Leadership Baton*, in 2015. He portrayed this pastoral transition as an opportunity to pour into one another so that participants can rise to faithfully fulfill their calling.<sup>126</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird shared this view in their book *Next*, published in 2020. Their goal was to equip churches to face a change in pastoral leadership so that the church could maintain ministerial momentum for years to come.<sup>127</sup> The underlying principle found in the research shows a primary concern for continuing the Gospel above all, which Ozier and Griffith emphasized all throughout their 2016 work *The Changeover Zone*.<sup>128</sup> In his work on pastoral succession, published in 2023, Glen Wolf echoes this same sentiment in viewing the pastoral succession's primary concern, which should be the Great Commission, more than the actual leadership position in question.<sup>129</sup> These findings coincide with the purpose of the PE and *PhL*, as Paul hoped that Timothy and Titus would also emphasize the faithfulness of Christ and the Gospel to the church so that they could become faithful witnesses of Christ.

*Participants in pastoral succession.* Ozier and Griffith explained the roles of those typically involved in pastoral succession, such as the OP, IP, other church leaders, and supervisors.<sup>130</sup> This

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<sup>126</sup> Tom Dale Mullins, *Passing the Leadership Baton: A Winning Transition Plan for Your Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 197.

<sup>127</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next*, 24.

<sup>128</sup> Ozier and Griffith, *The Changeover Zone*, 7-9.

<sup>129</sup> Wolf, *Switch Point*, 18.

<sup>130</sup> Ozier and Griffith, *The Changeover Zone*, v.

transition team could also include coaches and consultants. Mullins and others showed the importance of including church members and volunteers.<sup>131</sup> Research uncovered that the common sports metaphor of passing the baton in a relay race best describes the involvement of those in pastoral succession. Vanderbloemen, Mullins, Ozier, and Griffith referenced the sports analogy in their books. Yet, the presence of various participants shows that this transition is more complicated than simply passing a baton from one person to another.

Ozier and Griffith referred to the difficulties produced by having many moving parts in pastoral succession.<sup>132</sup> Although passing the baton is effective in illustrating the relationship that the OP and IP have in pastoral succession, the analogy fails to paint a holistic picture of what is required in such a transition. The researcher believes that a ship navigating open waters provides a better illustration for pastoral succession. A ship requires a crew composed of different levels of participation that must collaboratively work together to navigate the turbulent and unpredictable waters of change. A more detailed explanation will be presented later in this work.

*Problems found in pastoral succession.* Pastoral succession has garnered increasing attention in recent years, due to the upcoming retirement of boomers in the pastorate. Much of the present resources are directed to OPs because of their importance.<sup>133</sup> They have a pivotal responsibility to ensure their successor does not inherit a mess.<sup>134</sup> Another responsibility is to help the

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<sup>131</sup> Mullins, *Passing the Leadership Baton*, 60-61.

<sup>132</sup> Ozier and Griffith, *The Changeover Zone*, 92.

<sup>133</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next*, 151.

<sup>134</sup> Mullins, *Passing the Leadership Baton*, 137.

congregation embrace the IP by communicating confidence in the candidate, which helps to establish trust between all parties.<sup>135</sup> This healthy relationship is critical because of each congregant's intimate connection with their pastor.<sup>136</sup> Danielson addresses the need to resolve conflict during pastoral succession because a church will inevitably go through a sense of loss, especially when a founding or long-term pastor transitions out.<sup>137</sup>

Ozier and Griffith confirmed the OP's importance in pastoral succession, as they have observed a trend showing how often OPs downplay their role in preparing themselves, the church, and the next leader for the change.<sup>138</sup> This way of thinking hinders a church from adequately preparing for the inevitable because they fail to see succession planning as something to be done from the start, as Vanderbloemen and Bird suggest, rather than leaving it for the last minute.<sup>139</sup>

Another hindrance for the church and the IP is when the OP struggles to leave, out of fear related to finances or the anxiety of leaving the role in which his identity is so deeply rooted.<sup>140</sup> These reasons, along with a failure to establish a culture of leadership and pastoral development, appear to be the chief causes of many of the problems that churches face during succession,

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<sup>135</sup> Wolf, *Switch Point*, 129-132.

<sup>136</sup> Ozier and Griffith, *The Changeover Zone*, 50.

<sup>137</sup> Danielson, "Beating the Odds," 27.

<sup>138</sup> Ozier and Griffith, *The Changeover Zone*, 26.

<sup>139</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next*, 20.

<sup>140</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next*, 64.

which ultimately compound, making participants more susceptible to spiritual attacks.<sup>141</sup> The end result is a church that becomes a monument to the former pastor.<sup>142</sup>

*Planning for pastoral succession.* Research shows that no two pastoral successions are alike.<sup>143</sup>

This fact is why experts such as Glen Wolf have attempted to organize the process of pastoral succession into phases, rather than a step-by-step plan. The phases tend to be pre-succession, succession, and post-succession. The first phase concerns establishing and maintaining a spiritually and organizationally healthy church culture. Once this objective is achieved, Vanderbloemen and Bird believe the church should begin succession talks around five years before the transition date, which ought to include deciding on the IP and discerning what adjustments need to be made in the church overall to prepare both for the change.<sup>144</sup>

Research reveals that most OPs believe that conversations on succession, whether planned or due to emergencies, would cause problems within the church. But Mullins and others show that planning for the inevitable through clear and consistent communication gives the congregation more stability and security regarding the future.<sup>145</sup> Churches that were more calculated in preparing the church for the transition, which included knowing how they planned

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<sup>141</sup> Robert Wayne Vestor, "First Succession: From Founding Long-Term Pastor to Second Pastor" (DMin diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY, 2016), 19.

<sup>142</sup> Ozier and Griffith, *The Changeover Zone*, vii.

<sup>143</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next*, 20.

<sup>144</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next*, 34.

<sup>145</sup> Mullins, *Passing the Leadership Baton*, 50.

to manage the process in an effective manner, avoided the chaotic consequences of those churches that did not approach succession with the same care. Many resources regarding pastoral succession directed toward OPs included a small section addressing IPs. The following comprises lessons gleaned from the advice usually given to OPs that addresses the needs of IPs to help them become better prepared for the change to come.

The IP can prepare by learning to understand himself better. Maintaining long-term vigilance over one's spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical state is essential to any Christian, especially the pastor.<sup>146</sup> The demands of pastoral succession will tempt the IP to compromise in those areas, which will result in creating new problems rather than solving old ones. This dilemma occurs when the IP succumbs to the pressure to perform in a way that resembles the OP. Usually, this accommodation is done out of either one's insecurity or the fear of losing people. The latter is unavoidable, as Ozier and Griffith confirm that a turnover within an organization is typical when there is a turnover in leadership.<sup>147</sup> The hope is that this fluctuation is minimized and only involves the exodus of problematic individuals, thus leaving behind a committed core willing to embrace changes.<sup>148</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird reiterate that churches that stay the course during fluctuations in church membership tend to rebound at about six months.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Mark Rutland, *Relaunch: How to Stage an Organizational Comeback* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook), 203.

<sup>147</sup> Ozier and Griffith, *The Changeover Zone*, 83.

<sup>148</sup> Rutland, *Relaunch*, 174.

<sup>149</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next*, 241.

The IP's emotional capacity to avoid personal affront when others prefer the OP over him is subject to their spiritual maturity. Paul encouraged both Timothy and Titus not to allow the attitudes of others toward them to influence how they saw themselves in Christ.<sup>150</sup> The only way to keep that from happening was for them to focus on the faithful Word of the Gospel, which, by God's grace, was able to train and equip them to remain faithful.<sup>151</sup> Spiritual activities like prayer, worship, study, and service ought to shape one's attitudes by grace through faith with "the goal of being, not doing."<sup>152</sup>

The IP can learn to lead from a place of vulnerability and humility by looking at the example Jesus modeled.<sup>153</sup> Doing so involves learning to be "humble and fearless" when following a founding or long-term leader.<sup>154</sup> The first involves the IP's character, and the second involves his actions. Nothing can guarantee that the IP will be the next legacy leader; chances are the IP might act as a turnaround leader who positions the church for another IP who will become the next legacy pastor.<sup>155</sup> This scenario is precisely the expectation that Paul gave both Timothy and Titus as they were to appoint pastors of their respective churches who would be equipped to do the same.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> 1 Tim 4:12, Titus 2:15.

<sup>151</sup> 1 Tim 4:8-16, Titus 2:11-14.

<sup>152</sup> Chuck Miller, *The Spiritual Formation of Leaders: Integrating Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development* (US: Xulon Press, 2007), 30

<sup>153</sup> Forrest and Roden, *Biblical Leadership*, 350.

<sup>154</sup> Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't* (London: Random House Business, 2001), 22.

<sup>155</sup> Rutland, *Relaunch*, 82.

<sup>156</sup> 2 Tim 2:2, Titus 1:5.

Being kind, humble and fearless when dealing with the flock entrusted to one's care is critical, mainly due to the tendency of the founding and second-generation leaders to differ in specific values and styles of leadership, which is acceptable if the IP shares the church's and the OP's core values.<sup>157</sup> Any expression of change will be seen as an assault on the church's shared history and established culture if it is not reflective of the church's core values. Leading people involves dealing with adversity. Just as in bodybuilding, resistance turns stress into strength when managed well. Likewise, the leader can grow and develop by remaining calm and focusing on the mission.<sup>158</sup> Balancing the heart of a dove and the shrewdness of a serpent can aid the IP when forced to make difficult decisions wisely.<sup>159</sup>

Chuck Miller believes leaders need healthy rhythms that help improve their soul's condition, directly influencing their leadership quality.<sup>160</sup> These rhythms can assist the IP in being comfortable dealing with uncomfortable situations that succession produces because much of their leadership will involve managing tension, more than anything else.<sup>161</sup> The ability to manage others results from each IP's personal spiritual and physical health, including the health of their marriage and family.<sup>162</sup> Personal disciplines such as daily time spent in God's Word, weekly sabbaths, and occasional sabbaticals appear to be effective practices.<sup>163</sup> Other examples

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<sup>157</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next*, 84.

<sup>158</sup> Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains*, 145-148.

<sup>159</sup> Matt 10:16.

<sup>160</sup> Miller, *The Spiritual Formation of Leaders*, 30.

<sup>161</sup> Rutland, *Relaunch*, 57.

<sup>162</sup> Ozier and Griffith, *The Changeover Zone*, 39-40.

<sup>163</sup> Wolf, *Switch Point*, 140-143.

include exercise, diet, and time spent with family and close friends. According to Bolsinger, aspiring leaders continually invest in personal development and organizational capacity to grow and mature.<sup>164</sup> Leadership personality tests can help IPs better understand their strengths and weaknesses, but no test can be compared to knowing Christ through His revealed Word.

Aside from healthy rhythms, leadership requires healthy relationships, especially when the IP has roles and responsibilities as a spouse or parent. Attending to such relationships will help protect the family from becoming collateral damage in a difficult season of succession and ministry. Aside from family, successful IPs surround themselves with encouraging communities within and especially outside their church settings.<sup>165</sup> These relationships could include other pastors, coaches, consultants, or close friends. In tough situations, a third party can help provide guidance or support free from bias. Paul acted as Timothy's and Titus' support consultant, reminding them of the faithfulness of God (*PhL*) and encouraging them to remain faithful to the Word (*PhL*), which is the power of God to form them into leaders who will be faithful to the Lord (*PhL*).

The IP can prepare by understanding the situation. Wolf believes that IPs should maximize each moment throughout the succession process because they get only one chance to do so as the new lead pastor.<sup>166</sup> Setting a good first impression involves working with the OP as much as possible to determine if the church and the OP are spiritually healthy to endure the journey.<sup>167</sup> Ideally, the OP should do everything possible to help the IP avoid inheriting a mess

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<sup>164</sup> Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains*, 51.

<sup>165</sup> Wolf, *Switch Point*, 152.

<sup>166</sup> Wolf, *Switch Point*, 156.

<sup>167</sup> Ozier and Griffith, *The Changeover Zone*, 13-14.



he did not create.<sup>168</sup> Similarly, any new vision that the IP is to champion should be seen as an extension of the existing mission of the church.<sup>169</sup> OPs can help by leveraging their influence to support the IP in the eyes of the congregation, just as Paul's letters gave Timothy and Titus the authority to operate.<sup>170</sup>

Though it would be ideal for all OPs to fulfill their necessary requirements during the succession, Reese and Crabtree show that most do not, at some point, due to personal reasons that could be financial, spiritual, emotional, or physical.<sup>171</sup> While this scenario could likely occur in the life of any IP, research shows that effective IPs tend to honor and serve the OP, who is also navigating a tough season of life. Timothy and Titus modeled this in the ways they served. Titus had to complete his task to rejoin Paul in Nicopolis.<sup>172</sup> Likewise, Timothy was asked to bring Paul's cloak and his parchments to prison.<sup>173</sup> As Paul provided support by sending other faithful men to Timothy and Titus, the OP should similarly support the IP as much as possible by providing mentorship, support, and assistance.<sup>174</sup>

The IP's spiritual health is necessary to assist in the congregation's transition. Churches with long-tenured pastors have developed deep and personal ties, although the OP might not know everyone personally. This reality contributes to the fear of not finding such a similar

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<sup>168</sup> Mullins, *Passing the Leadership Baton*, 137.

<sup>169</sup> Mullins, *Passing the Leadership Baton*, 113.

<sup>170</sup> Wolf, *Switch Point*, 73.

<sup>171</sup> Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken about Pastoral Transitions* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2012), 14-15.

<sup>172</sup> Titus 3:12.

<sup>173</sup> 2 Tim 4:13.

<sup>174</sup> 2 Tim 4:12, Titus 3:12.

relationship elsewhere for both OP and the congregation.<sup>175</sup> Each will most likely go through stages of denial, anger, resignation, and other forms of anxiety.<sup>176</sup> Spiritually healthy participants can process these emotions faster and more efficiently, which enables them to help those who cannot.

Paul warned the Ephesian church and the leaders of the influx of “wolves” that would attempt to do damage as he transitioned away from his prominent role within the community.<sup>177</sup> One way churches can navigate the storm of succession is through intentional relationships.<sup>178</sup> Forging new communication and collaboration habits would create a form of accountability that will help all parties involved remain on the same page.<sup>179</sup> Likewise, establishing a culture of evaluation, celebration, and clarification throughout each step will help the congregation and the OP live out their God-given mission.<sup>180</sup> This team will have a greater chance of beating the odds if their trust in each other is combined with mutual trust in the mission, which for the Church is advancing the Kingdom of Christ by the proclamation of the Gospel.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Vestor, “First Succession,” 2-3.

<sup>176</sup> Henry A. Virkler, *Choosing A New Pastor* (Nashville, TN: Oliver Nelson Books, 1992), 65.

<sup>177</sup> Acts 20:28-36.

<sup>178</sup> Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains*, 65-71.

<sup>179</sup> Robert C. Crosby, *The Teaming Church: Ministry in the Age of Collaboration* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012), 59.

<sup>180</sup> Rutland, *Relaunch*, 155.

<sup>181</sup> *Tribal Leadership*, 218-245.

Leadership transitions within an organization take anywhere from three to ten years.<sup>182</sup> Churches take roughly three years, with the last year being the toughest.<sup>183</sup> Around this time, the tension between new and old habits is at its peak, and without perseverance, the church will default back to previous operating patterns. Ken Sande believes all forms of tension are opportunities to glorify God rather than a nuisance to be dealt with.<sup>184</sup> Thus, wise leaders strive to please the Lord by holding to His faithful Word rather than trying to please others. One way an IP can avoid people pleasing is by embracing Heifetz and Linsky's definition of leadership as "disappointing your own people at a rate they can absorb."<sup>185</sup> Another best practice to help the IP avoid disappointment is to assume that the situation is neither as good nor as bad as it seems.<sup>186</sup>

The IP can prepare by defining success. When reading Paul's PE, he appeared most apprehensive that his proteges and the congregations under their care remain faithful to God and His Word. If so, that should be the standard for measuring succession. The overall process of pastoral transitions is very complex. It requires so much attention that churches often become primarily concerned with succession at the expense of the great commission.<sup>187</sup> Rutland believes leaders should intentionally demonstrate to the church how leadership succession should express

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<sup>182</sup> Kotter, *Leading Change*, 13.

<sup>183</sup> Wolf, *Switch Point*, 175.

<sup>184</sup> Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 30-31.

<sup>185</sup> Ronald Heifetz and Mart Links, "Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading," *Working Knowledge: Harvard Business School Blog*, May 28, 2002, <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/2952.html>.

<sup>186</sup> Ozier and Griffith, *The Changeover Zone*, 83.

<sup>187</sup> Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 59.

the Church's mission, just like every other ministry aspect.<sup>188</sup> This approach also helps congregations and OPs embrace the change, especially when churches sense that they are commissioning their former pastor into the next season of ministry.<sup>189</sup>

Defining a successful succession requires focus. Paul helped Timothy and Titus by giving them a simple framework in which they were to evaluate their efforts, which included “winning the lost, teaching the saved, and defending the faith” against false doctrine.<sup>190</sup> A team's ability to do more of what matters is often done by doing less of what does not.<sup>191</sup> Enough cannot be said on the demands that succession requires. Thus, it is essential to address unnecessary and unfruitful systems that would drain the church's energy or distract them from being faithful witnesses of Christ. Examples include the OP making necessary structural and organizational changes, such as revamping, renewing, or removing fruitless ministries, which could be done through the IP's vision for the church and should be seen as an extension of the church's current mission. This partnership will help the church embrace the IP by believing that much about their church is not changing, although much will, because nothing changes a church more than changing the pastor.

The Scriptures are rich with examples of great and poor leaders and provide many lessons from which an IP can learn. In Wolf's book, he provides a concise study on leadership transitions

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<sup>188</sup> Rutland, *Relaunch*, 23.

<sup>189</sup> Ozier and Griffith, *The Changeover Zone*, 26-30.

<sup>190</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: The Pentateuch - Genesis to Deuteronomy* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2001), 214.

<sup>191</sup> Doug Fields, *NO: Banish Busyness and Focus on What Matters Most* (Rancho Santa Margarita: Soul Hydration Books, 2019), 78-89.

within both the Old and New Testaments.<sup>192</sup> One of the most essential habits observed was that of honoring predecessors, which Jesus modeled by honoring John the Baptist, building on the faithful words of previous prophets, communicating that His purpose was an extension of the past promises of God toward the world, and then entrusting the apostles to repeat the cycle.<sup>193</sup> Barnabas did the same with Paul, who did the same with Timothy and Titus, who were to follow his example in entrusting other faithful believers to follow suit. A pastoral succession with a culture of mutual honor and collaboration between the OP and IP over time tends to end successfully.<sup>194</sup>

Each IP must view himself as an eventual OP, which could help the IP define success with such an end in mind. There is no guarantee just how long an IP will remain in his new post. Vanderbloemen and Bird emphasize that new leaders should plan for short-term emergencies while considering a long-term strategy to prepare them for their inevitable transition.<sup>195</sup> This goal involves creating a culture of equipping and empowering, which is at the heart of Christ for His Church. Paul charged Timothy and Titus multiple times to entrust others with the faithful word, just as he did with them.<sup>196</sup> This principle can be seen in Num 8:15-16 when God instituted a forced retirement age for priests, which included intergenerational mentorships as retired priests were still expected to assist the younger ones.<sup>197</sup> Prioritizing people development is a proven

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<sup>192</sup> Wolf, *Switch Point*, 31-54.

<sup>193</sup> Wolf, *Switch Point*, 46-47.

<sup>194</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next*, 53.

<sup>195</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next*, 46-51.

<sup>196</sup> Beth Armknecht Miller, *Replaceable: An Obsession with Succession* (US: Authors Unite Publishing, 2021), 2-3.

<sup>197</sup> Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: The Pentateuch*, 324.

strategy for ensuring a strong leadership pipeline,<sup>198</sup> while also affirming that leadership requires fellowship.<sup>199</sup>

Vanderbloemen and Bird believe that succession cannot be considered effective if a successor has not been established.<sup>200</sup> Although true, success should not be so simplified. Instead, success could be measured by the successor's faithfulness to God, His Word, and his people. This example can be shown through mutual commitment to the Gospel and is embodied by the planning process, which helps IPs and OPs be faithful when faced with the unforeseen.<sup>201</sup> One unexpected aspect could be the extent to which the church and its leaders may slowly change along the way.<sup>202</sup> Osborne believes leaders should balance planning in pencil while carving their commitment to the Gospel in stone.<sup>203</sup> Whether the church and the IP can continue into the next season, or whether the IP acts as a turnaround leader for another to move the church forward, the ultimate goal is to be viewed by Christ as "good and faithful" (*pistos*) servants.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Ram Charan, Stephen Drotter, and James Noel, *The Leadership Pipeline: How to Build the Leadership-Powered Company* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2001), x.

<sup>199</sup> Leonard Sweet, *I am a Follower: The Way, Truth, and Life of Following Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 23.

<sup>200</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next*, 39.

<sup>201</sup> Tim Hurson, *Think Better: An Innovator's Guide to Productive Thinking* (USA: McGraw-Hill Education, 2018), 198-199.

<sup>202</sup> Wolf, *Switch Point*, 166.

<sup>203</sup> Larry Osborne, *Sticky Leaders: The Secret to Lasting Change and Innovation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 80.

<sup>204</sup> Matt 25:23.

*Parallels with pastoral succession.* The process of pastoral succession that many experts have written on reflects the general principles of change that William and Susan Bridges describe in their book *Managing Transitions*. They describe any transition as going from the phases of letting go of the past, entering into the “neutral zone” where change occurs, and finally arriving at the desired destination where the change has taken hold.<sup>205</sup> This explanation reflects Kurt Lewin’s change theory that involved unfreezing, moving, and then refreezing so that individuals and organizations avoid regressing into old behavior patterns.<sup>206</sup> As previously mentioned, much of the illustration given for pastoral succession tends to be sports-related. Theories presented by experts such as Bridges and Lewin could provide an alternate illustration for pastoral succession, that being naval navigation.

A ship sets sail by leaving the confines of a port attached to solid land and then traversing a liquid stage containing many variables until it arrives at another port. Tristram Korten describes the delicate nature of the ocean by saying, “But the weather and water make no distinction between the rich and poor, and the best engineering and electronics matter little against waves that can break with thousands of pounds of pressure per square foot, or winds that can blow so hard they’ll lift a man off the deck. The ocean is, and always has been, the great equalizer.”<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> William Bridges and Susan Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change* (Boston, MA: DaCapo Press, 2016), 5.

<sup>206</sup> Bernard Burnes, “The Origins of Lewin’s Three-Step Model of Change,” *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 1, no. 56 (2020): 34-35, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0021886319892685>.

<sup>207</sup> Tristram Korten, *Into the Storm: Two Ships, A Deadly Hurricane, and An Epic Battle for Survival* (New York, NY: Ballentine Books, 2018), 15.

In his book *Into the Storm*, Korten gives a well-researched account of two cargo ships caught in a deadly hurricane in the Bahamas in 2015. The ship and crew more equipped to survive did not, while the crew of the less-equipped ship survived, even though the cargo ship was lost. This story resembled the personal account that Tom Mullins gave when he described why the Crystal Cathedral did not have a healthy pastoral succession, but Christ Fellowship did.<sup>208</sup> Common themes from succession stories and those found in the narrative of the cargo ships include the importance of training, preparation, communication, humility, teamwork, execution, ongoing evaluation, and effective decision-making. Similar results also resurfaced in the interviews presented in chapter three of this work.

There appear to be four general themes that can help groups and individuals navigate the instability stage in transitions, which could determine why some succeed and others do not.<sup>209</sup> These themes, explained in the following section, provide a framework for strategic thinking that can equip IPs with applying the faithful Word so that they may act as faithful ministers of the Lord.

#### Themes in pastoral succession and change leadership

Glen Wolf conducted a qualitative survey of OPs and IPs who experienced pastoral succession, in which many participants described how the transition felt longer and more difficult than previously expected.<sup>210</sup> In particular, the IPs expressed how their character was tested quickly

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<sup>208</sup> Mullins, *Passing the Leadership Baton*, 8-15.

<sup>209</sup> Danielson, "Beating the Odds," 4.

<sup>210</sup> Wolf, *Switch Point*, 82.



and often, especially around the third-year mark when the transition was struggling to solidify.<sup>211</sup> Like a ship at sea, churches are vulnerable to many factors over the extended time it takes to transition leaders. Because of the unpredictability of the process, Ozier and Griffith believe that leaders must prioritize being spiritually equipped for the journey so that they will be able to better manage their emotions and beat the odds in succession.<sup>212</sup> Paul also emphasized the importance of spiritual health in leaders in the *PE* for similar reasons.

According to Vanderbloemen and Bird, succession is an art more than it is a science.<sup>213</sup> As an art, transition team members must attain a certain level of preparation to “improvise” well together. Tim Hurson calls this ability “strategic thinking.” This skill can help individuals and organizations make effective decisions according to the uniqueness of their circumstances and challenges.<sup>214</sup> Research regarding pastoral succession, and change leadership theories, provided four themes in strategic thinking that can help IPs in their spiritual development while equipping them with a decision-making model to ensure the church's continual faithfulness.

*Listen.* In chapter one, verse nineteen, James said that Christians must be quick to listen, referring to how Christians should respond to God’s spoken Word. This is contrasted with speaking and reacting presumptuously. This same encouragement is echoed throughout the *PE* as Paul desired that Timothy and Titus understood what he was saying regarding what God had

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<sup>211</sup> Ozier and Griffith, *The Changeover Zone*, 89.

<sup>212</sup> Bridges and Bridges, *Managing Transitions*, 5.

<sup>213</sup> Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next*, 21.

<sup>214</sup> Hurson, *Think Better*, 199.

revealed through His spoken Word, so that they may better serve those who would listen to them. The repetitive nature of Paul's use of *PhL* could suggest his desire that Timothy and Titus retain the essence of what he was trying to communicate.

In leadership resources, listening is a vital skill that must be developed.<sup>215</sup> Honing this ability involves valuing the input of others, even if the feedback is not what one hopes to hear.<sup>216</sup> Establishing a culture of listening requires participants to feel that they have a “green light” to express a bad idea while pursuing the best idea.<sup>217</sup> Listening also involves honest observation.<sup>218</sup> Hurson believes leaders will not know what to do unless they know “what’s going on.”<sup>219</sup> Thus, leaders must listen to what team members are saying and never assume that everyone has the same sense of direction and understanding.

*Examine.* Paul presented Timothy and Titus with a list of qualifications for pastor-elders of the church. Those criteria were meant to examine potential leaders and serve as an evaluative tool for present leaders such as Timothy and Titus. Paul expressed his concern for spiritual maturity in the lives of leaders and laity in Titus 3:14 and 1 Tim 1:5 in describing how Christians ought not be unfruitful but rather respond to the love of God with a transformed life. His concern for

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<sup>215</sup> James G. Clawson, *Level Three Leadership: Getting Below the Surface* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2012), 229.

<sup>216</sup> Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York, NY: Currency, 2006), 73.

<sup>217</sup> Hurson, *Think Better*, 163.

<sup>218</sup> Dave Logan, John King, and Haley Fischer-Wright, *Tribal Leadership: Leveraging Natural Groups to Build a Thriving Organization* (New York, NY: Harper Business, 2008), 35.

<sup>219</sup> Hurson, *Think Better*, 123.

the churches Timothy and Titus were to temporarily oversee was expressed in 1 Tim 4:16: “Pay close attention to your life and your teaching; persevere in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.” He was not referring to saving themselves from their sins but rather from shipwrecking their faith by failing to examine the false truth claims that they were entertaining.<sup>220</sup> Persevering and continuing in the faith are at the heart of *PhL*.

Self-examination was the second theme found in succession and change leadership, which involves genuinely understanding the mission, vision, and values that guide an individual or group.<sup>221</sup> Having these aspects clearly defined helps teams identify how the past is pulling on them so they can press on toward a new desired result.<sup>222</sup> Regarding succession, Danielson also describes the importance of self-awareness as the IP can lead better the more he understands himself and the situation.<sup>223</sup> Truly understanding the situation involves examining the spiritual condition and the practical efforts of the team to avoid any unnecessary setbacks or mistakes that could cause the change effort to veer off course.<sup>224</sup>

*Assess*. In the PE, Paul contrasted the effects of the false teachers in the lives of the church with the “good works” that ought to be evident. He also charged both leaders in Titus 3:9, 1 Tim 3:4,

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<sup>220</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 210-212.

<sup>221</sup> Hurson, *Think Better*, 173.

<sup>222</sup> Hurson, *Think Better*, 129-130.

<sup>223</sup> Danielson, “Beating the Odds,” 97.

<sup>224</sup> John P. Kotter, *The Heart of Change: Real-Life Stories of How People Change Their Organizations* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2002), 69.

and 2 Tim 2:23 to avoid foolish and fruitless discussions in favor of the faithful Word, which would equip them by God's grace to live authentic and effective Christian lives. In a commentary on 1 Tim 1:18, Mounce believes that Paul's charge to "fight the good fight of faith" is a challenge to persevere in the faithful Word and testimony of Christ.<sup>225</sup> Paul modeled this attitude in 2 Tim 4:7 when he stated how he personally fought the good fight and kept the faith, while later, he mentioned in verses seventeen and eighteen how Christ enabled his faithfulness.<sup>226</sup> Thus, examining the Word by faith will aid the leader in how to live by grace.

This step concerns gathering the data from listening and examining to forge the best possible decisions the team could make.<sup>227</sup> Part of the process involves analyzing each decision's possible effectiveness in advancing the organization's mission, vision, and values. Doing so could possibly identify why any form of change is required. Furthermore, this step is vital as Kotter believes that team members who go through this process together can develop a shared vision of the situation and the desired outcome, which will help them to arrive at a unified decision.<sup>228</sup>

*Decide.* The PE are filled with decisions that Paul needed Timothy and Titus to make involving spiritual and practical matters. Two key commands both must decide to do regard communicating the faithful Word. In Titus 2:15, Paul tells Titus to "proclaim these things,"

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<sup>225</sup> Mounce, *World Biblical Commentary: Pastoral Epistles*, 66.

<sup>226</sup> Doriani and Phillips, *2 Timothy & Titus*, 108-109.

<sup>227</sup> Hurson, *Think Better*, 192-194.

<sup>228</sup> Kotter, *The Heart of Change*, 73.

referring to God’s saving power and how it ought to be reflected in the lives of believers. In 2 Tim 4:2, Paul concludes by strongly charging Timothy to “preach the Word” faithfully. Reflecting on and relaying the revelation of God through Christ Jesus reflects the spirit of *PhL*, as mentioned previously in this chapter.

Hurson believes that taking the time to generate answers slowly can help teams identify the best solutions while also helping them realize whether they are asking the wrong questions.<sup>229</sup> It is in this stage that teams decide what to do next. Kotter believes that each decision must have a clearly defined win so that the team can evaluate its effectiveness, which involves looping back through the listening, evaluating, and analyzing stages to discover what step should be taken next.<sup>230</sup> Arriving at a decision requires identifying what change effort must be made, when it must be made, how it will be communicated, and who is responsible from here on out.<sup>231</sup> Slowing implementing change, as Mullins suggests, gives IPs enough time to properly evaluate the decision's effectiveness, helping them to fulfill their ministry by equipping their congregations to fulfill theirs faithfully.<sup>232</sup>

Kouzes and Posner believe that the best leaders are the best learners.<sup>233</sup> Murrell concurs as he states that potential leaders, including IPs, must be trained to be decisive and action-oriented.<sup>234</sup> Because Mullins describes life as one transition after another, IPs can benefit by

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<sup>229</sup> Hurson, *Think Better*, 147.

<sup>230</sup> Kotter, *The Heart of Change*, 133.

<sup>231</sup> Kotter, *The Heart of Change*, 10-11.

<sup>232</sup> Mullins, *Passing the Leadership Baton*, 114.

<sup>233</sup> Kouzes and Z, *Learning Leadership*, 25-33.

<sup>234</sup> William Stephen Murrell, “Post-Founding Sustainability: Building Ministries that Outlive Their Founders” (DMin diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, Spring 2019), 53.

continually developing the habits of healthy decision-making to best lead others through adversity.<sup>235</sup> These habits were previously stated as listening, examining, analyzing, and deciding, which form the acronym L.E.A.D. Examples of the L.E.A.D. tool can be found in Appendices B through H. The revolutionary nature of this process shows a natural loop where such habits are continually revisited. Thus, the *L.E.A.D. Loop* could show potential in providing a decision-making tool that can aid IPs and other transition team members to make wiser choices by collectively seeing the whole picture involved in pastoral succession, not just the part.<sup>236</sup> It can also help IPs increase their Emotional Intelligence by further developing the skills required to work well with others: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.<sup>237</sup> Finally, this tool can aid IPs in incorporating the faithful Word into the leadership culture of their churches, thus shaping congregants accordingly.<sup>238</sup>

## Conclusion

A thorough biblical review regarding *PhL* was conducted, revealing a central theme with five expressions that can help IPs with their spiritual maturity which directly impacts the spiritual maturity of the church. Research confirmed that the spiritual health of IPs is directly correlated with successful pastoral succession. Likewise, a thorough literature review regarding succession

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<sup>235</sup> Mullins, *Passing the Leadership Baton*, 7.

<sup>236</sup> Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 69.

<sup>237</sup> Daniel Goleman, "What Makes a Leader?," in *On Leadership* (Boston, Mass: Harvard Business Review Press, 2011), 3.

<sup>238</sup> Samuel R. Chand, *Culture Catalyst: Seven Strategies to Bring Lasting Change to Your Organization* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2018), 11.

was done, which revealed four important themes to aid IPs in developing the skill of strategic thinking that can help them to apply the faithful Word as they faithfully lead the church. Both sets of themes appear revolutionary: faith in the Word is the axis point that continually forms IPs and empowers them to lead faithfully according to the Word. This faith is also powerful enough to address the needs of the plateauing and declining churches that IPs are to shepherd.

Thus, this chapter provided a biblical and literature review concerning pastoral succession and the clause *PhL*, showing the possible corrections between the two. The following chapter presents the research methodology and narrative description of a qualitative study of pastors who experienced pastoral succession.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PROJECT NARRATIVE AND FIELD STUDY

#### *Introduction*

The theological and literature review confirms that pastoral succession should view change as a process rather than an event.<sup>1</sup> The change in question is more holistic than just replacing one leader for another. It requires that each participant be guided by the power of the Holy Spirit through the faithful Word to be empowered to endure the transition. Therefore, research on the lived experience of IPs who had endured pastoral succession was conducted to confirm findings in the biblical and literate review and to identify any common themes between *PhL* and pastoral succession that can address the knowledge gaps regarding the clause, as well as the lack of resources dedicated to IPs.

#### *Research Method*

A qualitative study was chosen for this project due to its ability to provide a more reliable measure of the “community development and dialogue” that occurs within a church context.<sup>2</sup> Thus, this study was meant to observe the experience of incoming pastors who have gone

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<sup>1</sup> Vestor, “First Succession: From Founding Long-Term Pastor to Second Pastor,” 70.

<sup>2</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), xxi.



through a personal succession.<sup>3</sup> Their experiences would then be examined to identify effective spiritual best practices reinforcing available practical advice regarding *PhL*. Outside research shows that more quantitative studies are being done on this topic than qualitative ones, affirming the critical contribution of this work.<sup>4</sup> Qualitative research helps to understand quantitative numbers by providing the context that shaped those results.

The first stage of this project utilized primary and secondary sources to gain a solid biblical and practical foundation for the topics presented in the previous chapter. The second stage was the execution of a case study of pastors who had experienced at least one pastoral succession. Two rounds of interviews were administered during this stage. Many pastors participated in both, while others were involved in one or the other. The results of the discussions reflected the characteristics of a grounded theory, a form of qualitative methodology that seeks to explain a process through the “grounded” views of the participants.<sup>5</sup> The desired outcome of this qualitative study was to increase knowledge that established a form of a practical theology of pastoral succession primarily concerned with participants' faithful Gospel witness rather than just seeking a pragmatic plan to switch out pastors.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 141.

<sup>4</sup> Wolf, “A Strategic Plan to Assist Pastors in the Succession between a Mentoring Lead Pastor and His or Her Mentee,” 58.

<sup>5</sup> Vestor, “First Succession,” 105.

<sup>6</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2006), 21-26.

### *Research Question*

The primary research questions for this project were “What are the meaning and significance of *Pistos ho Logos*, and what principles might the clause suggest that could equip incoming pastors to take up their new positions faithfully?” Answering these research questions would help fill learning gaps for incoming pastors in succession and involving *Pistos ho Logos*, as both lack substantial research. Doing so would prove the uniqueness of this study involving conversations surrounding both topics.

### *Data Collected*

The instrumentation for this study involved one-on-one interviews. A detailed chart with the information for each interviewee is provided in Appendix A at the end of the report. The interviews were loosely structured to allow the participants to answer freely. The researcher used open-ended questions to help the participants reevaluate their previous succession experience and how that affected their preparation for their future succession. Questions were designed to collect enough data to ensure the accuracy of their experience.<sup>7</sup> Southeastern University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) had previously approved both rounds of interviews. Open-ended questions were used in each interview.

#### 1st Interview Questions

- What was the most important factor that led to your successful transition?
- What was the relationship between the present leader and the future replacement?

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<sup>7</sup> Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 45.

- What obstacles did you face before, during, and after the transition?
- What mistakes were made throughout the transition process?
- How was the vision for change cast?
- What was the catalyst that inspired the desire to change and transition?

#### 2nd Interview Questions

- What principles did you implement when you launched a new effort in your church?
- How did you measure the success of those principles?
- How did you communicate and apply those principles?
- Did those principles lead to a restructuring of the church in any way? Please explain.

#### *Research Participants*

A variety of pastors with varying experiences and contexts were chosen for the interview with the intent of identifying prevalent themes through the process of saturation.<sup>8</sup> Twenty interviews were conducted. All participants but four were pastors. One interviewee regularly works with pastors as he heads up one of the country's top family ministry organizations concerned with helping parents to pass on their faith to the next generation. Two participants were a father-son team from a worldwide para-church ministry that experienced a successful transition from one to the other. The last non-pastor participant worked for his father's para-church ministry before starting another ministry, rather than succeeding the father. The remaining sixteen participants

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<sup>8</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 74.

are current lead pastors, except for three who are retired. One, a dean of a Christian college in Texas, leads a nationwide organization specializing in church revitalization. Seven participants planted their present churches, while the remaining nine pastors functioned as IPs in twenty-one churches. Four of the nine experienced multiple successions, while the others only went through one. Participants chose to remain anonymous.

Church sizes for this study range from one hundred in weekly attendance to over one hundred thousand when combining in-person services and their weekly online audience. Fewer than twenty-five percent of churches in the study consisted of congregations that were predominantly of Anglo descent. Another twenty-five percent were minority ethnocentric, composed of Brazilian, Korean, or Hispanic attenders. The remaining churches were considered multi-cultural, with predominantly Anglo, black, and Hispanic members. More than half the churches were from the Southeastern region of the United States, with four others from the Midwest, two from the Pacific Coastal, one from the Southwest, and one from the Rocky Mountains.

### *Contextual Scope and Limitations*

The main objective of this work is limited to the experience of the incoming pastor in pastoral succession, which is due to the emphasis that succession research has dedicated to the outgoing pastor over the years. The participants in this project focused on their previous experiences as incoming pastors, even though some are preparing to become outgoing pastors shortly. One key limitation was that most churches came primarily from the Southeastern United States. Another

was the lack of ethnic representation in those interviewed, as the majority were either Anglo or Hispanic.

This project avoids the development of strategic planning, which has resulted from previous research and publications. Instead, this work desires to complement strategic planning with spiritual strategic thinking that can better equip incoming pastors during succession and beyond. The following criteria were considered among the various pastors and congregations of differing sizes participating in the study:

- Outgoing pastors from churches they helped found or revitalize.
- Outgoing pastors who have experienced at least one succession in the past.
- Incoming pastors' experiences when faced with a difficult transition in which the outgoing pastor did not adequately prepare them or the church.
- Although it was not a criterion sought for this study, autonomous (nondenominational) churches comprised a more significant percentage of participating congregations.
- How the succession process impacted groups within multicultural churches.
- Comparing differing time frames and contexts of succession.
- Observing the relationship between the transitioning pastors.

Qualified leaders were invited to participate in an interview after providing consent.

Each interview was held over the telephone or through a Zoom call. Notes were taken during each interview, and all but five of the interviews were recorded. All information was kept and secured by the researcher. Each pastor shared the account of how his church transitioned leaders, including the time leading up to the process and the effects the transition had years later. They

also shared personal spiritual, emotional, and mental experiences. They included principles that proved to be valuable as well as lessons they wished they had learned before beginning the succession.

### *Summary of Methodology*

After the conclusion of each interview, notes were stored and analyzed to discover themes to compare and contrast with the research compiled from the biblical and literature review to see whether *PhL* has any relevance for pastoral succession today.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE PROJECT EVALUATED

#### *Introduction*

This chapter analyzes the data collected through a qualitative study that evaluated prevailing themes which address the questions concerning *PhL* and pastoral succession. Twenty interviews were conducted with pastors who had experienced a form of pastoral succession in the past or are actively preparing incoming pastors for a future transition. Open-ended questions were given to reach saturation to determine whether the research conducted concerning *PhL* could provide relevant information for IPs in pastoral succession. The gathered information proved valuable in expanding the limited resources dedicated to IPs while showing correlations from the findings regarding *PhL*.

#### *Data Analysis*

The participating pastors recounted the lessons learned and struggles they faced during succession, which can be categorized into two types. The first is chaotic. This category includes sudden transitions, primarily due to a personal problem. No pastor interviewed experienced a succession in which the OP experienced a moral failure. The smallest church in the study had prepared the IP for three years. He then unexpectedly left the church, and the OP had some health issues and could not continue. The OP's son was quickly named the lead pastor and had to be prepared after starting pastoral responsibilities, almost as if he was told to jump from a plane

and had to put his parachute on as he fell. Despite the countless issues, the church survived due to a healthy relationship between the OP and IP.

The largest church in the study was forced to enact its emergency plan due to a sudden life-threatening issue experienced by the senior pastor. The church was able to function for over two years due to its advanced preparations. Since then, the senior pastor has become an OP who has named the new IP yet remains on staff to allow for a more extended and smoother transition. The majority of pastors described a wide variety of difficulties that they encountered as well. Surprisingly, their experience has not led many of them to prepare an emergency plan or implement a system to ensure their future succession is a better experience than their past one.

A lack of communication, collaboration, or preparation characterized the cause of the chaos. A common theme of those who struggled in their transition was the lack of consistent or clear communication, which led the church and its leaders to experience anxiety. Because everyone was not on the same page, leaders and ministries found it hard to work together with a common focus. Some churches described tension between the IP and the OP, who felt threatened by their potential successor.

Lastly, the lack of preparation produced many unnecessary problems that amplified tension during the transition. Usually, the church or the OP did not financially prepare for the transition, leading some OPs to stay longer than expected, which caused unnecessary tension with their respective IPs. Another reason was that the church failed to plan for the transition of an IP who already held a position within the church. The mounting difficulties caused many leaders to make decisions out of fear rather than faith. Some participating pastors who shared this experience and survived revealed that they suffered significant losses in members. One church felt the need to rebrand to disassociate itself from problematic issues so it could start fresh.



The second type of succession was calculated. This kind was a minority experience in about twenty-five percent of participants. Although the plans and their execution varied, they experienced a “smooth” yet not perfect transition. Churches whose transitions were considered calculated still faced many struggles and problems. Yet, calculated churches found themselves solving problems faster and dealing with less unnecessary issues that chaotic churches brought upon themselves. A few pastors were able to transition well and quickly. One took less than three months, while others took the expected three years. There were only three pastors who had planted their church years ago and were prepared for emergencies as well as their inevitable succession. Those churches were some of the largest in the study, whose higher-level organizations incorporated succession planning as an essential element of their operation. One OP said, “Transitions are easier when the culture is strong.” Although the larger churches in the study had more significant resources compared to the average church in America, their principles could be implanted in any church regardless of financial budget, as long as such leaders budget the time to incorporate best practices.

### Character

The reasons for the successful successions of the study’s participants were the opposite of the more turbulent experiences. One big reason was character. Pride is a process killer. Those who showed the fruit of being guided by God's love and power handled the changes better than those who found their identity in their roles and positions. Those teams who worked better together prioritized praying for each other and loving one another. Almost every pastor admitted that the

more he prioritized the faithful Word, the more he saw God move in the church. Similarly, the more a pastor lost this focus, the more apathy he encountered.

Furthermore, the churches in the study who learned from their poor past experiences implemented a leadership development culture afterward. Churches that lacked such developmental culture struggled to find the IP from within. In contrast, having a current member who can transition to become IP allows for a smoother transition. Some present pastors lamented not being as intentional as they should have been regarding preparing for their own succession. Some reasons were a fear of confronting conflict or the inability to avoid unnecessary distractions. Personal development and conflict management skills are essential as it only takes one problematic person on the transition team or a family member of a team member to undo months and years of hard work. What shapes the team has the potential to shape the transition.

### Communication

A second reason for the transition's success or failure was communication. In some cases, the lack of communication made it difficult for the church to trust the IP. Other pastors mentioned that they made sure to communicate regularly, but the communication was not clear. This practice made it hard for the IP to gain buy-in from key leaders. The lack of trust paralyzed decision-making, resulting in an accumulation of conflicts that were not resolved quickly enough. The opposite was true with other pastors, as the more intentional the transition team was in establishing trust with each other, the easier it was for the church to embrace any proposed changes or find practical solutions to unexpected problems.

A recurring motif of almost every pastor was “communication is key.” Those who had or presently have a clear succession plan with predetermined dates and phases have seen reduced anxiety from the church. Some pastors admitted they fear discussing succession or dates, thinking it will increase fear and uncertainty. The opposite appears to be true. Thus, transparency helped build trust that aided team members in working through their concerns or disagreements in a healthy way that produced solutions they could agree on.

### Concentration

A third reason for success or failure was concentration. Most interviewees spoke of how easy it is to drift away from the church's mission. A quarter of the pastors wished they had spent more time praying and being prepared more formally in God's Word. They also believed that developing better preaching and people skills would have helped them. Some pastors also spoke on how easy it was to lose sight of their family responsibilities because of the ministerial circumstances. The pastor of the smallest church that participated attributes surviving a chaotic succession to the attention he and the OP gave to guard the IP's marriage. The IP admitted that the succession would not have worked if his marriage were not as solid as it was. An OP from the second-largest church in the study admitted he wished he would have been more attentive to how the transition affected his wife. The largest church in the study has a policy in which family responsibilities are protected. A pastor in that church said, “The families of our church leaders must survive intact, even if the church does not survive the transition.”

Those who survived chaotic transitions were those that focused on the faithful Word and connected everything to discipling the found and reaching the lost as best as they could. The few

whose transitions were more manageable than others pointed to the established presence of such a focus by the OP. The few churches that are planning for eventual succession also have this strategy. Those pastors believe that doing less gives them the margin to do more effectively. Many pastors confessed the past struggles they experienced when their teams were stretched too thin by doing too much.

About half of the churches had some form of metrics by which they evaluated everything. Although varied, the common theme was that those standards were how each church in their group context defined what it looks like to be faithful to God and His Word. Five Anglo pastors in the study claimed that their focus on the Gospel, whether in their preaching or the church's operation, was responsible for God's hand in turning their previously mono-ethnic churches into healthy multicultural ones. One pastor said, "Worry about the Word, and God will do the work." So, the response of church leaders to prioritize the faithful Word had a direct correlation with the experience that each had during their succession, regardless of their church size or budget.

Although the experiences of the pastors interviewed were drastically different, they shared fundamental issues regarding character, communication, and concentration. What is encouraging is that these principles come with a price tag paid in dedication rather than dollars. Also, the researcher noticed that many of the same concepts the interviewees experienced or are applying to succession were seen in the many lesser transitions they experienced throughout their ministry. Examples were relaunching, revitalization, structural changes, or becoming multicultural. This information is vital for IPs so that they can implement healthy systems at the start of their ministry, which will benefit each pastor's eventual exit. Thus, a church can practice for succession each time it experiences a micro-transition, such as the ones mentioned above,

including training every staff and volunteer leader to plan for their mini-succession by identifying and appointing other faithful leaders to replace them when and if needed.

Combining this information with the biblical and literature review could present IPs of average churches, which are the vast majority, with a perspective that encourages them to believe that they too can experience successful successions similar to those of mega-churches without the resources of a mega-church, as long as they hold fast to the faithful Word.

### *Emerging Themes*

As a result of the research gathered through interviews and the biblical and literature review of the use of *PhL* in the PE, a single theme was affirmed through five examples.

#### Faithful is the Word

1. To save souls when preached.
2. To produce the fruits of Christ-like character when received.
3. To train those who humbly return to it in godliness.
4. To produce faithful works through those when applied.
5. To empower believers to persevere through adversity.

The affirmation of the faithful Word, as well as examples that reflected the context of the five occurrences of *PhL* were expressed in the stories of interviewed pastors. They gave examples of how each theme shaped them and their ministry. The literature review on succession also focused on how the leader's heart of worship and Christlike character can help the church

persevere through the transition process as they treat it as an opportunity to disciple believers and evangelize to unbelievers. Each theme will be further explained below.

Faithful is the Word to save souls when preached.

The most important theme from the interviews was the importance that team members and the congregation placed on God's Word. The more turbulent or unsuccessful successions included problematic people who proved unfaithful through the lack of spiritual fruit. Examples included leaders, IPs, and OPs who valued their authority rather than the authority of the Word. Another was church members who left during the leadership transition because they had greater loyalty to the pastor than the Word that was preached. Also, churches and leaders who placed their faith in their ability to copy and paste best practices from extra-biblical sources struggled more than those who tested worldly ways alongside God's Word. Lastly, one retired OP stated that healthy and effective churches always emphasize preaching over people and programs. He essentially described unfaithful leaders as those who care more about pleasing people or preserving programs rather than the stewardship of the preached Word.

Those who viewed Christ, the Holy Spirit, and His Word as the object of their faith emerged from their experiences better than those who did not. These pastors found strength and hope to endure the storm through the Spirit-inspired Scriptures. Although many interviewees admitted that the process of succession was not enjoyable, they maintained a level of joy because they desired to glorify God and make Him known because of the transition. Their faithful commitment to the Word, each other, and prayer is the primary description of the early church in Acts 2:42 and a key theme in the PE where *PhL* is found. Just as evaluation is a key component of high-achieving teams and organizations, participants claimed that those who valued the

preaching of the Word and evaluated everything against it were more faithful achievers than those who did not.<sup>1</sup>

Faithful is the Word to produce the fruits of Christ-like character when received.

Greg Beale once said, “What people revere, they resemble, either for ruin or their restoration.”<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, the psalmist declared in Ps 115:8, “Those who made them [idols] are just like them, as are all who trust in them,” which means they are dead. That is why the psalmist declares in the next verse, “Trust in the Lord!” to live. The conclusion is that the context of one’s worship will reflect in the content of one's character, resulting in a faithful life. Every New Testament charge to trust the faithful Word echoed this same call by Old Testament prophets. Today, pastors act as sheepdogs who are humbly tasked to help serve and protect the flock of Christ by working to preserve the apostolic message that has been handed down.<sup>3</sup> Each participant referenced the importance of the leader's character before God in one way or another as an essential element of faithful ministry.

According to the Scriptures, those who trusted Christ’s faithful Word and faithfulness developed a *pistos* character that only the Holy Spirit could produce. Paul commanded Timothy and Titus to find such people and place them as elders to be a model for those within their churches. Paul’s two lists of character qualifications for these leaders in 1 Timothy and Titus

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<sup>1</sup> Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 73.

<sup>2</sup> G.K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 11.

<sup>3</sup> Herbert Lockyer, *All Trades and Occupations of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1969), 201.

differ, showing that each list is not exhaustive. Instead, the lists were meant to help them identify the right person for the position based on how that person reveres the faithful Word, reflects Christ, and relates to others.<sup>4</sup> The resulting maturation of Christ-like characteristics produces a humble desire to equip the saints for the work of ministry in reflecting the Word in a faithful way.

Study participants shared stories that revealed the ramifications one's character can have on the church and its leaders. Some interviewees reflected on negative examples and pointed out how leaders with weak character or selfish ambition became cancerous to the church's efforts. Their selfish intents or inability to manage their personal lives outside the team had such a negative impact that it threatened to compromise their efforts. These leaders shared some regrets for not properly vetting such individuals or hesitating to remove them. One retired pastor emphasized how a leader's Spirit-formed character will take them further than their gifting or talent ever can. This type of character is only developed when leaders develop a healthy prayer life rooted in a faithful approach to Scripture. Some participants regretted times when they compromised time spent in prayer by prioritizing the demands of ministry. Others who prioritized prayer experienced less anxiety and a greater level of peace and strength, which Paul described in Phil 3:6-7. In the end, *pistos* preaching ought to produce *pistos* people.

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<sup>4</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 156.



Faithful is the Word to train those who humbly return to it in godliness.

Every participating pastor mentioned how the church's mission should reflect the Great Commission of Jesus: to make faithful disciples.<sup>5</sup> This responsibility involves teaching them to become mature disciples, out of which a few will become leaders who are expected to do the same for the many.<sup>6</sup> The book of Acts showcased how the early church experienced occasional extraordinary events that resulted from the ordinary means of grace that believers engaged in daily as a community.<sup>7</sup> Participants spoke of the role that the weekly gathering of believers plays in their discipleship process. One pastor emphasized how preachers should be aware to preach Christ more than they preach their framework and opinions so that they can present a true gospel rather than a false one. What is seen in the pews is a product of the pulpit, where God's faithful Word is being preached. Also, the PE show the need for present leaders to prioritize the continual development of their leaders in the faithful Word so that the Gospel may be preserved, leading to the maturation of the church. No church can expect to duplicate in the laity what the leaders will not replicate. That principle drove certain participating pastors to prioritize discipling those who were disciplining others as a form of ongoing leadership development.

Christian character is formed by regularly engaging with the Word of God, with the people of God, with the intent to grow in knowing Jesus intimately rather than informationally.<sup>8</sup> This kind of growth would produce fruits of righteousness.<sup>9</sup> Some interviewed IPs talked about

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<sup>5</sup> Matt 28:19-20.

<sup>6</sup> Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 34.

<sup>7</sup> Gallaty and Swain, *Replicate*, 40.

<sup>8</sup> Gallaty and Swain, *Replicate*, 63.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Cor 9:10-11; Phil 1:11; Gal 5:22.

how they revitalized weak churches through the simple means of grace experienced in Bible study, prayer, and loving one another. Jesus expected this way of living in John 13:34-35 when He said that the believers' love for one another would prove to outsiders that they were authentic and faithful disciples.

Participant pastors felt responsible for ensuring that every one of their church's systems was designed to develop congregants who loved to learn about Christ as they learned to love like Christ. In Rom 15:13, Paul prayed that the church may be filled with the joy and peace that the faithful Word reveals so that members may overflow with hope as they live by the power of the Spirit. Some leaders expressed how difficult, yet necessary, it was to address unfruitful programs, positions, and people in leadership positions because they understood that the church's overflow is what it is being filled with. IPs who inherited messy circumstances implemented this form of pruning, which helped the church to heal, move forward, and mature. To accomplish this task of reorienting the church life around the faithful Word, each pastor who was interviewed agreed that ministers must take personal responsibility to process the very Word they are to preach.

Faithful is the Word to produce faithful works through those when applied.

Evangelism is the "proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ, which arises naturally from believers' love for God and appreciation of all that God has done for them."<sup>10</sup> Many participants affirmed this interrelationship between discipleship and evangelism. One pastor agreed with

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<sup>10</sup> Martin H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London: Martin Manser, 2009).

Robby Gallaty's claim that evangelism should be the natural overflow of a disciple's learning in the faithful Word.<sup>11</sup> Examples can take many forms within the rhythms of the church, such as service projects, special events, or street preaching. Success was viewed as whether the believer shared the Gospel rather than if the unbelievers responded.<sup>12</sup> It is one thing for churches to program evangelism, but the accurate measure of their discipleship success is whether the people engage in evangelistic ways through faithful works without needing a program. Some participants shared different ways to measure this activity among their people. The measurements varied but shared a common goal of observing congregants' engagement patterns regarding initiating those outside of the church and then inviting those people to join congregants as they gather as a church.<sup>13</sup>

If discipleship is practiced by how believers love one another as they process the faithful Word, then evangelism can be viewed as how believers love outsiders as they practice the faithful Word. All participating pastors spoke of their heart for their church's testimony before unbelieving neighbors, much like Paul wrote to Titus in chapter three. Some interviewees shared how they went to great lengths to have a positive presence in their community. Others emphasized that maturing Christians ought to naturally find ways to witness to non-believers through their words and deeds. Because the church's ability to "Go" results from the quality they experience each time they gather around the faithful Word, participants developed rhythms of evaluation in which all programs and efforts would be assessed to grade their spiritual effectiveness. This habit was the exception and not the norm among IPs who inherited a messy

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<sup>11</sup> Gallaty and Swain, *Replicate*, 42-43.

<sup>12</sup> Gallaty and Swain, *Replicate*, 240.

<sup>13</sup> Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders*, 90.

ministry from an OP who did not implement such a strategy. Those who experienced a smoother and more successful succession pointed to such evaluative measures that saw succession as another way to practice the Gospel in a manner that would reflect the Word's faithfulness.

Faithful is the Word to empower believers to persevere through adversity.

The themes of endurance and perseverance of faith are found throughout the Bible, indicating one's worship and character forged through discipleship and evangelistic activities. The Spirit must empower sincere faith if the believer is to be faithful, primarily through adversity. This understanding is seen when team members care for one another as they experience personal issues throughout the long transition process. Another awkward tension arises when the IP must pastor the OP, especially if the OP remains in the church. The reversal in relationships will be delicate, especially if the IP is the son or relative of the OP. This scenario was the case of the smallest church interviewed. In that case, the IP had to remain patient as the OP persevered in not undermining him by not allowing previous congregants or leaders to approach him rather than the new lead pastor. This post-succession habit will destabilize even the most perfect plan, which is what almost happened to the previously mentioned church in the study.

As stated in the project, pastoral succession is a season of intense spiritual warfare and personal conflict. Only those are faithful to the Word will be able to endure trials faithfully through the Word. Succession is a process in which the impact of decisions and the influence of tension is magnified. Thus, making wise decisions, adjusting quickly if correcting wrong decisions, and resolving conflict collaboratively with the goal being to communicate clearly and constantly are critical skill sets for IPs to develop, which can only be accomplished by trusting

the faithful Word. These skills will serve the team in the future as the bonds members formed will help them better apply the lessons they learned when confronted with mini-transitions or the next succession.

A common trap for IPs is the temptation to be anyone other than themselves. Research shows that leadership personalities have little impact on their effectiveness.<sup>14</sup> A different leadership style is sometimes needed to take the church to the next phase. The nation of Israel needed a shepherd to guide them in the wilderness for forty years, which was Moses's experience. Afterward, they needed a general to lead them in the conquest of the land, which was the experience that Joshua gained as a warrior during that wilderness trek. Each church, especially one transitioning its leader, needs a pastor who is confident in Christ and in His Word.<sup>15</sup>

A final example was shared by one participating pastor who experienced an unsuccessful transition before successfully replacing another OP in a different church. He mentioned, “More things go bad than they do good during pastoral succession.” He shared a common problem many other pastors admitted to having experienced, which made it harder to persevere through problems: a struggle to make wise and timely decisions. A process for strategic thinking will be presented in the next chapter that embodies the overarching themes found in this chapter and addresses the issues of character, communication, and concentration. The aim of this process is to help IPs better understand themselves, their situation, and what success looks like so that they can preserve and proclaim the faithful Word in their congregational context.

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<sup>14</sup> Dr. Mike Clarensau, “The Leader and Organizational Health” (lecture, Los Angeles, CA, September 28, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> Acts 20:24.

## Summary

This chapter analyzed the qualitative study and evaluated prominent themes regarding pastoral succession, including the impact of leaders who trusted in the faithful Word. The results provided a unique contribution to the general conversation involving both topics that can equip the IP to start well and remain faithful so that they can finish well.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE PROJECT CONCLUSIONS

#### *Introduction*

Pastoral succession is an essential issue that churches of all sizes will eventually experience in one form or another. This study sought to expand the knowledge regarding *PhL* and succession to prepare future IPs for their transition. This chapter presents a brief overview of the project and practical implications for the IP from which the global church can benefit. Also included are lessons learned, project strengths and weaknesses, and the potential for further study.

#### *Project Overview*

The researcher approached this study with great concern. The first was personal, as he felt unprepared to take over as the lead pastor from his father (OP). The research further increased those worries as it revealed how unprepared churches tend to be when faced with having to transition key leaders, increasing the potential damage that congregants may experience.

As an IP, the researcher sought ways to beat the odds by finding methods and examples to personally prepare for the unexpected in case the church failed to adequately prepare. In studying how Paul addressed two church leaders sent to established churches that needed corrections, the author of this work stumbled across the debate over *Pistos ho Logos*. The project results emerged from the triangulation between the biblical review of *PhL*, the literature review on succession, and the stories of experienced pastors. Works such as *Switch Point* by Glen Wolf

have answered questions regarding strategic planning. The researcher desired to contribute something that complements past research on the subject. Thus, the uncovered themes regarding *PhL* and succession produced a pastoral framework that could equip IPs to faithfully fulfill their ministerial obligations by combining the spiritual dimension of church leaders inspired by *PhL* with a pattern of strategic thinking, which could help IPs make wiser decisions that will preserve the faithful Word in the hearts of their congregations.

Churches that went through successful pastoral successions were ready long before change needed to happen. Aside from having an emergency plan, these churches were consumed with establishing a culture of pastoral leadership development based on God's Word, which led to healthier churches that were strong enough to handle the tension in transitions. The habits they established and the lessons learned from going through micro-transitions helped them to prepare for the difficult task of replacing a lead pastor. Also, similar principles were found in churches that barely survived the succession due to their unpreparedness. Because of the lack of resources for IPs and the time that churches have to prepare to address the high burnout rate and the looming wave of retiring pastors, the research regarding *PhL* and the shared experience of those interviewed produced a pastoral framework that could be easily taught and adopted without financial cost.<sup>1</sup> The framework is explained below.

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<sup>1</sup> Barna Group, *Leadership Transitions*, 10.



A pastor's mission is to lead others to follow Christ and not themselves, in accordance with the faithful Word. It is a selfless task that requires great sacrifice. The demands and distractions are many. Thus, the human subject research revealed the benefit that a pastor, especially an IP, can gain from having a simple personal compass that is versatile enough to be applied to multiple disciplines, helping to maintain proper focus. The clause *Pistos ho Logos* provides such a focus by forging a pastor mentality that reflects a belief that "Faithful is the Word." This conviction regarding *PhL* is complemented by the leadership themes regarding change theory and decision-making uncovered in the research. The biblical and literature review and the human subject research showed the importance of how church leaders are to continually abide and dwell in the richness of Christ and His Word. Doing so produces a "revolutionary" life constantly reformed by God's grace, which testifies to the effectiveness of the faithful Word.

Faithful is the Word to save souls when preached

Paul's first use of *PhL* showed a connection between preaching and praise, as he concludes the Gospel proclamation with a benediction of worship to the one true God. Sinclair B. Ferguson believes preaching is worship that ought to evoke a worshipful response in the listeners.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the goal of preaching as worship seems to reflect 1 Tim 1:5 as the goal of Timothy's instruction to others in the faithful Word is love (*agape*) expressed through a pure heart and clear conscience produced by faith. It is with a strong conviction that pastors preach, knowing the faithful Word does not rest on quicksand but on the solid foundation, which is Christ Jesus.<sup>3</sup> Thus, *pistos*

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<sup>2</sup> Sinclair B. Ferguson, "Preaching as Worship," in *Pulpit Aflame*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Dustin W. Benge (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016), 89.

<sup>3</sup> Bruggen, "Vaste grond onder de voeten. De formule *pistos ho logos* in de Pastorale Brieven," 38.

preaching is defined as sharing a reliable Word that the minister proclaims with confident conviction.<sup>4</sup>

Faithful is the Word to produce fruits of Christ-like character when received

The research showed that nothing will limit leaders more than the content of their character, regardless of their leadership style. That is why they must understand the transformative power that faithful praying can have on them when they humble themselves in the way Christ taught in Matt 6. Paul's second use of *PhL* in 1 Tim 3:1 was surrounded by a lesson on prayer that involved correcting the conduct of men and women within the church, along with a detailed list of character traits that help define the type of person who can lead within a church. Those traits were based on how they reflect Christ and relate to others. Thus, church leaders who prioritize praying in accord to the faithful Word will be sanctified by it, leading them to avoid the kind of selfish ambition and strife that will keep them from fulfilling their ministry faithfully.

Faithful is the Word to train those who humbly return to it in godliness

The defining mark of a mature Christian is based on the spiritual disciplines they implement in their lives. Paul's third use of *PhL* in 1 Tim 4:9 invoked the concept of training oneself in godliness. A disciple of Christ is a life-long learner whose primary focus is continually growing the knowledge of Christ and helping others do the same. This lifestyle requires church leaders to

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<sup>4</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, "Πιστεύω, Πίστις, Πιστός, Πιστόω, Ἄπιστος, Ἀπιστέω, Ἀπιστία, Ὀλιγόπιστος, Ὀλιγοπιστία," ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 204.

prioritize their spiritual formation by praying and studying God's Word, much like the church's first leaders modeled in Acts 6:4. The ongoing habit of processing the faithful Word will produce and preserve a level of spiritual health that will not only aid IPs in succession but also in any other pastoral responsibility they might have.<sup>5</sup>

Faithful is the Word to produce faithful works through those when applied

A church that does not love the lost has lost its way. One pastor said, "The church is losing when it is not winning souls." Paul's fourth use of *PhL* in Titus 3:8 was in the context of doing the kind of good works that would demonstrate the power of the Holy Spirit in an individual to reflect the kindness of Christ toward non-believers. The output of a church is a result of the input, which should be the life-changing Gospel of Christ. That is why Paul wrote *PhL* in chapter three, verse 8, saying Titus ought to insist on "these things," referring to the redemptive work of the Gospel in the lives of believers. This concept is discussed in verses one through seven with the reminder that "those who have believed God might be careful to devote themselves to good works." For only the faithful Word can produce faithful works.

Faithful is the Word to empower believers to persevere through adversity

One of the most repeated themes in the New Testament is perseverance in the faith. Paul's final use of *PhL* was found in 2 Tim 2:11, which included many examples of *pistos* believers who endured until then, including Paul. It also had tragic descriptions of those who shipwrecked their

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<sup>5</sup> Wolf, *Switch Point*, 95-102.

faith. All throughout this letter, Paul shared his many struggles and pain, especially discussing how certain Christians and non-Christians significantly harmed him.<sup>6</sup> This vulnerability was also a common theme among participating pastors in the human study research.

The apostle also laments the many in the faith who will be deceived and not finish faithfully in the last days due to false teachers becoming more proficient in twisting God's Word.<sup>7</sup> Paul is preparing Timothy for the harsh reality that his actions will likely go unappreciated, or even the possibility of others harming his ministry, as Paul experienced with Alexander. Any Christian leader can only persevere in the faith by trusting in God's Word, which calls them to die to themselves so that Christ is to live through them.

Along with the singular emphasis on the Faithful Word, the research uncovered four strategic applications that show value in equipping IPs. The *L.E.A.D. Loop* provides four simple steps that have broad applications. It is "revolutionary" because of its ongoing nature that reminds the individual of the importance of placing one's faith in a faithful God and His Word. This tool is inspired by scholarly research from Alan Ehler on decision-making.<sup>8</sup> It is designed to help leaders develop better thinking skills so that teams can make wiser decisions quickly and intuitively, especially under pressure, which was a key need that was identified in the human subject research that was conducted.

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<sup>6</sup> 2 Tim 4:16-18.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Tim 3:1-9, 4:3-5.

<sup>8</sup> Alan Ehler, *How to Make Big Decisions Wisely: A Biblical and Scientific Guide to Healthier Habits, Less Stress, a Better Career, and Much More* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020), 22-28.

#### Four strategic applications

*Listen.* The practice of learning to listen values thinking first rather than thinking fast.<sup>9</sup> Listening wisely helps people understand what is happening before rushing to make decisions based on misinformation, which could produce undesirable results.<sup>10</sup> “360 Degree Leadership,” which is revolutionary, requires listening because it sees the value in feedback, which is essential to learning.<sup>11</sup> Listening is a response to asking questions of ourselves and others.<sup>12</sup> Jesus’s style of teaching included asking questions in a way that led the believer to respond with a question to better understand the information. This listening phase is not the time for being judgmental but rather a moment of collecting as much information as possible during a “Green Light” moment, as people should be free to speak without judgment and requires all parties involved to exemplify love as they listen.

*Examine.* After collecting information objectively, leaders and teams should go from “Green Light” to “Yellow Light” as they begin to slow down and examine what success should look like regarding their agreed-upon mission, vision, values, and culture.<sup>13</sup> Aside from figuring out what

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<sup>9</sup> Jim Collins, *Great by Choice: Uncertainty, Chaos, and Luck - Why Some Thrive Despite Them All* (London, UK: Random House Business, 2011), 116.

<sup>10</sup> Tim Hurson, *Think Better: An Innovator’s Guide to Productive Thinking* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education, 2018), 101.

<sup>11</sup> James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *Learning Leadership: The Five Fundamentals of Becoming an Exemplary Leader* (San Francisco, CA: Wiley, 2016), 160.

<sup>12</sup> Kouzes and Posner, *Learning Leadership*, 55.

<sup>13</sup> Hurson, *Think Better*, 125.

should be done, teams must understand what should not be done.<sup>14</sup> The solution or decision becomes more self-evident if it does not further the mission.<sup>15</sup> This step shared a common trait that served participants well in their ministry. Understanding how to examine could help teams avoid asking the wrong questions, which will help them search for better ones.<sup>16</sup>

*Assess.* Once options align with the church’s mission, vision, and values, which should be extensions of the faithful Word, teams should go from “Yellow Light” to “Red Light” as solutions emerge. The goal is to stop and find a way to maximize the team’s resources while avoiding the trap of frustration that results from focusing on what the team does not have.<sup>17</sup> The process will take some time, as varying solutions to the problem must be considered. This form of critical thinking will help to weed out poor solutions and could help to reveal options that would have never been considered if the time to process was not given.<sup>18</sup> This space in the process is when high criticism is now allowed to operate, as ramifications of intended and non-intended consequences to decisions are being analyzed.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Hurson, *Think Better*, 128.

<sup>15</sup> Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2018), 125.

<sup>16</sup> Hurson, *Think Better*, 147.

<sup>17</sup> Collins, *Great by Choice*, 64.

<sup>18</sup> Hurson, *Think Better*, 164.

<sup>19</sup> Hurson, *Think Better*, 180.

*Decide.* At some point, leaders and teams conclude and execute a decision. Best is better than perfect. After the decision has been made, the team moves back to “Green Light,” as they are to listen as they monitor the results of their decision. If changes need to be made, the process loops again until the desired results are experienced.

The *L.E.A.D.* tool does not guarantee perfect results. Instead, exercising thinking, planning, and evaluating will help teams develop healthy skills to achieve greater success.<sup>20</sup> This tool can help IPs make decisions centered on the preservation, proclamation, and practice of the faithful Word in the church's life. Learning to L.E.A.D. is meant to help individuals and teams make wiser decisions instead of desperate ones.<sup>21</sup> Yet, this tool is most concerned with healthy communication that leads to healthier decision-making. That is why this tool can be applied in multiple disciplines, such as decision-making, conflict management, evaluation, and strategic planning, as well as in spiritual practices such as praying and devotional reading of the Scriptures. Examples are provided in Appendices B through J.

Ultimately, these conclusions are meant to reflect a *pistos* pastor mentality that would enable pastors to function faithfully as they lead their congregations. Sadly, it has become acceptable for church leaders to think like CEOs of an organization.<sup>22</sup> Although some excellent best practices can be learned from the business world, church leaders must do things differently by thinking biblically. The Church must learn to be flexible and fluid with its methods while remaining firm and solid with its faithful message. Therefore, the results of this work addressed

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<sup>20</sup> Hurson, *Think Better*, 199.

<sup>21</sup> Collins, *Great by Choice*, 113.

<sup>22</sup> Meredith James, “A Kingdom Model of Leadership: Developing a Biblical Leadership Standard Established on Kingdom Principles and Exemplified by the Person and Ministry of Jesus” (DMin diss., Southeastern University, Lakeland, Florida, 2023), iii.

the needs IPs have regarding character, communication, and concentration through the conviction that “Faithful is the Word” to enable them to faithfully shepherd the people of God for the glory of God.

### *Lessons Learned*

Before beginning this work, I believed the Bible was God’s inspired and unified revelation of His nature and our redemption. Yet, due to my work, I have grown to appreciate the Scriptures’ wonderful complex simplicity. Initially, focusing on the obscure phrase *Pistos ho Logos* seemed silly. The final result was a pleasant surprise as I found myself having more fun preaching fearlessly, knowing that God’s Word will faithfully execute His work through my imperfect words.

A second lesson learned was what equates to successful pastoral succession. At first, I thought it was to avoid failure. I understand the pressure as to why a pastor would instead plant rather than succeed another because of the potential of years’ worth of hard work being erased. Yet, knowing that the legacy of the Gospel, and not my father’s ministry, is what matters most has also encouraged me. That is not to say the latter is unimportant, because it is. The *Pastor’s Wheel* was inspired by my dad, who coincidentally has a captain’s wheel and small-scale model ships in his office.

Being unencumbered by the burden of preserving my father’s legacy helped me explore this topic so freely, primarily since my father has expressed his desire that the name of Christ continue to be remembered more than his or our church’s. This affirmation helps me know that any option, including restructuring, revitalization, or relaunching, ought to be on the table to



ensure the greater chances of the church continuing in the faithful Word. Thus, what matters is not whether the church doors close but whether the church's hearts have been closed to the Lord and His Word.

A third lesson I learned involved growing in previously gained knowledge. This growth includes learning not to jump to conclusions too quickly based on my assumptions of the Word. Seeing the interrelationships across the Bible caused me to be awed in seeing the Scriptures as a sea of Truth with no floor nor shore. I even found connections with every sermon I preached over the past two years that corresponded with this project. What a gift God's Word is to us. It is an authentic truth we must look to in an increasingly artificial world.

Finally, my definition of the faithfulness of God has expanded. Before, I saw it as another beautiful adjective to describe God. Now, I see His "faithfulness" as an adverb that modifies, describes, and qualifies all His other adjectives. He is not God because He is loving, kind, mighty, marvelous, slow to anger, compassionate, wise, etc. He is God because He is always those things.

### *Project Strengths*

One of the greatest strengths of this project is the findings that resulted from the research saturation. The triangulation between the biblical review, literature review, and interviews helped uncover this project's conclusions, which has led to addressing two significant knowledge gaps involving *PhL* and resources on pastoral succession directed primarily toward IPs.

A second strength of this work is in the life experiences of the interviewed pastors, which was primarily due to the diversity of the participating churches, ranging from micro-churches to

mega-churches all throughout the United States. The principles found in the biblical and literature reviews, as well as in the pastors' stories, showed that the conclusions of this project are not simply practical in theory. Instead, its faithfulness can be seen by God's faithful hands in each of their lives. Thus, the knowledge gained and shared by these pastors will significantly benefit the kingdom of God on earth.

Lastly, a third strength of this study is that it offers a complementary spiritual perspective that can be applied to various strategic plans for pastoral succession, as well as expressing practical implications as to why the Word is faithful when applied to pastoral ministry.

### *Project Limitations*

This project contains many limitations. One involves the sample size of the pastors interviewed. A more significant number could have further confirmed findings or presented unforeseen perspectives. Male church leaders were the only ones who participated, which limited the results to one gender. Including only Anglo and Hispanic pastors in the study determined the findings. The experiences of other pastors from different ethnic or national contexts would have provided a more robust final analysis. Also, the fact that the researcher is an IP possibly influenced the study's direction and the overall analysis of the findings.

### *Considerations for Future Study*

The researcher believes that more study should be dedicated to understanding the clause *Pistos ho Logos*, as little has been done since the writing of this project. One specific example is the phrase in the writings of early Church fathers, to which the researcher could not identify any scholarly attention attributed. Another consideration for future study is to consider whether the way *PhL* is translated should be revised to reflect a single statement, “Faithful is the Word,” rather than pointing to another saying as faithful. A third could be a cross-reference to how other New Testament authors used the words *pistos* and *logos*, including how Paul used those words in his other letters to find any correlation to how Paul used *PhL* in the PE. Lastly, as this study appears to be the only work done on *PhL* that attempts to make practical applications to the pastorate, a study could be done to confirm this work’s conclusions affirming Paul’s use of the clause in relationship to pastoring churches.

Another consideration for future study inspired by this project is observing the effectiveness of the *L.E.A.D Loop*. Presently, the researcher is beginning to apply it in his church context. Yet, not enough time has passed to confirm its potency. The researcher and his wife have used the *L.E.A.D. Loop* strategy in their lives, helping them to improve their communication and collaboration efforts. It would be great to see how this tool could be used in other applications which were shown in the Appendix section. Finally, it would be interesting to research whether the wheel or loop would be successful in other organizations outside of the church.

If beneficial, I hope to find ways to publish this work in a book or create a workshop that would bless pastors, church leaders, and as much of the family of God as possible.

### *Concluding Remarks*

Pastoral succession is something that any church cannot afford to underestimate. Those who have gone through it either regret how they approached it or regret not starting soon enough. It also weighs heavy on my heart to think about the pressures most IPs face when asked to shepherd plateauing or declining churches. This task is not for the faint of heart. I pray that “Faithful is the Word” (*PhL*) may act as a spiritual call-to-arms for the next generation of pastors so that they may go to war against the false truth claims of the day by trusting in the faithful Word as they entrust it to others, knowing that God will continue to use imperfect people to execute His plan to perfection as He has always done. He will not fail, for faithful is the Lord!

Before this project, I would get emotional thinking about the day Jesus would receive me with the words, “Well done, good and faithful (*pistos*) servant.” Now, I cannot wait to praise Him with my own words, knowing that His faithfulness and goodness toward me is what will make me faithful. Christ acts faithfully because His name is faithful (*Pistos*).<sup>23</sup> His words are trustworthy because His name is Truth (*Logos*).<sup>24</sup> *Pistos ho Logos!* Great is thy faithfulness and trustworthy is your Word, now and forever. Lord, may your people increasingly share such a conviction, so that they may be empowered to witness faithfully and finish well.

To this I hold,  
My hope is only Jesus  
All the glory evermore to Him  
When the race is complete,  
Still my lips shall repeat  
Yet not I, but through Christ in me.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Rev 3:14.

<sup>24</sup> Rev 19:13.

<sup>25</sup> CityAlight Music, “Yet Not I but Through Christ in Me,” track 2 on *Yet Not I but Through Christ in Me*, 2018, audio.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Chart representing those who participated in the interviews

Pastor	Role	Size at the start	Size presently or post-succession	US Region	Extra
#1 - Pastor	IP	(+)1,000	Presently on staff	Southeast	Candidate to succeed OP
#2 - Pastor	IP	80-100	70	Southeast	Bouncing back after post-succession turnover
#3 - Pastor	IP	600 +/-	980	Midwest	
	IP	600 +/-	1,700	Midwest	
#4 - Pastor	IP	496	2,300	Southeast	Presently on staff, looking to become OP
#5 - Pastor	IP	1,800	(+)70,000 *including online	Southwest	Operated as an associate pastor, currently retired
#6 - Pastor	IP	200	525	Southeast	Currently retired OP
	IP	110	325	Southeast	
	IP	32	135	Southeast	
	IP	20	125	Southeast	
	IP	55	185	Southeast	
	IP	24	495	Southeast	
#7 - Pastor	IP	3,500	(+) 4,500	Southwest	Current Lead Pastor
#8 - Pastor	IP	75	1,000	Rocky Mountains	OP
	IP	800	1,300	Pacific Coastal	OP
	IP	200	200	Midwest	Current Lead Pastor

Pastor	Role	Size at the start	Size presently or post-succession	US Region	Extra
<b>#9 - Pastor</b>	IP	20	40 +/-	Southeast	All IP positions were as Youth Pastor
	IP	50	75 +/-	Southeast	
	IP	150	200	Southeast	
	IP	500	600	Southeast	
	IP	80	150	Southeast	
<b>#10 - Pastor</b>	Church Planter	6	(+) 200	Southeast	Current Lead Pastor, looking to retire within the next ten years
<b>#11 - Pastor</b>	Church Planter	12	(+)100,000 *including online	Southeast	Retired OP
<b>#12 - Pastor</b>	Church Planter	12	(+)1,000	Southeast	Current Lead Pastor, looking to retire within the next ten years
<b>#13 - Pastor</b>	Church Planter	8-12	(+) 320	Midwest	Current Lead Pastor
<b>#14 - Pastor</b>	Church Planter	9	(+) 500	Southeast	Current Lead Pastor
<b>#15 - Pastor</b>	Church Planter	20	350	Southeast	Current Lead Pastor
<b>#16 - Pastor</b>	Church Planter	4	75	Pacific Coastal	Current Lead Pastor
<b>#17 - Participant</b>	Director			N/A	Is part of the key leadership of a ministry that works with churches regarding the succession of the faith into the next generation.

Pastor	Role	Size at the start	Size presently or post-succession	US Region	Extra
#18 - Participant	Director			N/A	Retired and was succeeded by the son (Participant #19)
#19 - Participant	Director			N/A	Successfully succeeded the father and presently runs the world-wide para-church ministry
#20 - Participant	Director			N/A	Did not succeed the father but launched another para-church ministry.



## APPENDIX B

## L.E.A.D as a Decision-Making Tool for Strategic Planning

<b>LISTEN</b>	<b>EVALUATE</b>	<b>ASSESS</b>	<b>DECIDE</b>
What is actually going on?	What do we actually want?	What can we actually do?	What are we going to do?
360 Degree Listening	Personal Reflection	Solutions Considered	Action Step Finalized
What are others saying?  What am I saying?  What has been said on the topic or subject?  What are the most important voices that need to be heard?	What is our motivation?  What are we not seeing that we hoped to see?  How does it further the mission?  How does it reflect our core values?	What should be done?  What can be done?  What do we need to accomplish this?  What do we have?  What are the possible indirect effects?	What are we going to do?  Who will be responsible to evaluate the decision's effectiveness and for how long?  What else needs to be done?
GOAL: Gather as much information as possible without judging. (Green Light)	GOAL: Regroup by having a clear definition of success. (Yellow Light)	GOAL: Identify the best (not perfect) possible solution that has the likelihood of achieving a desired result. (Red Light)	GOAL: Execute an agreed upon action step toward a desired result. (Green Light)

- This tool is meant to be used during strategic planning sessions to make better decisions with Godly wisdom in Godly council.
- The process is meant to loop to the beginning to establish the next action step in the plan until it is complete.

## APPENDIX C

### L.E.A.D as an Evaluation Tool

LISTEN	EVALUATE	ASSESS	DECIDE
What happened?	Was it successful?	What should be done?	What needs to be done?
360 Degree Listening	Personal Reflection	Solutions Considered	Action Step Finalized
What are others saying?  What am I saying?  What has been said on the topic or subject?  What are the most important voices that need to be heard?	What is our motivation?  What are we not seeing that we hoped to see?  How does it further the mission?  How does it reflect our core values?	What should be done?  What can be done?  What do we need to accomplish this?  What do we have?  What are the possible indirect effects?	What are we going to do?  Who will be responsible to evaluate the decision's effectiveness and for how long?  What else needs to be done?
GOAL: Gather as much information as possible without judging. (Green Light)	GOAL: Regroup by having a clear definition of success. (Yellow Light)	GOAL: Identify the best (not perfect) possible solution that has the likelihood of achieving a desired result. (Red Light)	GOAL: Execute an agreed upon action step toward a desired result. (Green Light)

- This tool can be used to evaluate the action steps of the established strategic plan.
- Suppose the answer to “Was it successful?” can be answered positively. In that case, the process must be continually monitored to ensure its lasting impact and identify the early stages of problems.
- If the question cannot be answered positively, then new considerations must be analyzed to decide what adjustments must be made. This includes starting the process again from scratch or ending the effort to redirect resources.

## APPENDIX D

## L.E.A.D as a Communication Tool

<b>LISTEN</b>	<b>EVALUATE</b>	<b>ASSESS</b>	<b>DECIDE</b>
What is actually going on?	What do we actually want?	What can we actually say?	What are we going to say?
360 Degree Listening	Personal Reflection	Solutions Considered	Action Step Finalized
What are others saying?  What am I saying?  What has been said on the topic or subject?  What are the most important voices that need to be heard?	What is our motivation?  What are we not seeing that we hoped to see?  How does it further the mission?  How does it reflect our core values?	What should be said?  What can be said?  What do we need to accomplish this?  What do we have?  What are the possible indirect affects?	What are we going to say?  Who will be responsible to evaluate the decision's effectiveness and for how long?  What else needs to be said?
GOAL: Gather as much information as possible without judging. (Green Light)	GOAL: Regroup by having a clear definition of success. (Yellow Light)	GOAL: Identify the best (not perfect) possible solution that has the likelihood of achieving a desired result. (Red Light)	GOAL: Execute an agreed upon action step toward a desired result. (Green Light)

- This tool can be used to enhance internal, external, and personal forms of communication.
- Internal
  - This tool can craft memos and other important information that circle within an organization, ensuring everyone is on the same page.
- External
  - This tool can craft narratives that an organization would share through marketing directed toward those outside the organization.
- Personal
  - This tool can equip people to be quick to listen and slow to speak to have healthier conversations.
  - Example: Marital Conversations = Spouses can better communicate when both try to listen to what the other is saying while each slows down to evaluate what they are saying and why. This requires patience to mutually submit to each other out of honoring their spouse.

## APPENDIX E

### L.E.A.D as a Conflict Management Tool

LISTEN	EVALUATE	ASSESS	DECIDE
What is actually going on?	What do we actually want?	What can we actually say?	What are we going to say?
360 Degree Listening	Personal Reflection	Solutions Considered	Action Step Finalized
<p>What are others saying?</p> <p>What has been said on the topic or subject?</p> <p>What are the most important voices that need to be heard?</p>	<p>What is each party's motivation?</p> <p>What are they not seeing that they hoped to see?</p>	<p>What are possible solutions?</p> <p>What are obstacles to those solutions?</p> <p>What is needed to accomplish this?</p> <p>What are the possible indirect affects?</p>	<p>What is going to be done?</p> <p>Who will be responsible to evaluate the decision's effectiveness and for how long?</p> <p>What else needs to be done?</p>
GOAL: Gather as much information as possible without judging. (Green Light)	GOAL: Regroup by having a clear definition of success. (Yellow Light)	GOAL: Identify the best (not perfect) possible solution that has the likelihood of achieving a desired result. (Red Light)	GOAL: Execute an agreed upon action step toward a desired result. (Green Light)

- This tool can be used as a conflict resolution tool by a mediator, or teams can use it to resolve an issue that a plan or program may have.
- The goal is to avoid the extremes of attacking or escaping, to establish peace.
- The initial goal is to help the mediator understand what is going on and to give each participant a chance to know how the opposing side/person feels and desires.
- This tool can be used without a mediator. One should be brought in if opposing sides cannot resolve the issue alone. If the initial mediator cannot resolve the conflict, the decision must be made to bring in another mediator with greater authority or ability to handle the situation.
- Conflict resolution is a revival issue. A lack of love for one another will hinder our testimony, according to Jesus' claim in John 13:34-35.

## APPENDIX F

## L.E.A.D as a Devotional Tool

<b>LISTEN</b>	<b>EVALUATE</b>	<b>ASSESS</b>	<b>DECIDE</b>
What has God's Word said?	How is God's nature displayed?	How is my nature exposed?	What am I going to do?
360 Degree Listening	Personal Reflection	Solutions Considered	Action Step Finalized
Consider the context: - Who is included and what happened? - What are keywords that stand out? - When did it happen (history/narrative)? - How did the actions impact others? - Why does this story matter? - How can it be cross-referenced within the Bible? - What has been said traditionally about the text?	Where is Christ in the text?  What aspect of God's nature does the text reveal? Why?  What does the text reveal about God's Word?  How does this story fit in the Gospel's grand redemptive narrative?	What aspects of my life and character are brought to life by the text?  What examples should be followed or avoided in the text?  What attitudes should change?  What does the text have to say about Christians and non-Christians?	What must I praise God for?  What will I pray for?  How can I trust in God to accomplish His work in my life?  What attitude adjustment should I pray to make?  What action step should I pray to take?
GOAL: Gather as much information as possible without judging. (Green Light)	GOAL: Take time to prioritize knowing Christ. (Yellow Light)	GOAL: Take time to allow God's Word to rebuke and/or correct. (Red Light)	GOAL: Pray for the Holy Spirit to empower the decision (Green Light)

- This tool is meant to help the believer to read the Bible better, with the primary intent of knowing Christ as an act of worship so that their character can be shaped by being rebuked, corrected, and encouraged by God's Word.
- This form of reading is meant to cause "heartburn," which the two travelers to Emmaus felt in Luke 24:13-35 when Jesus opened the Scriptures to them, revealing the faithfulness of God's Gospel plan. This is opposed to reading the Bible in a way that tickles one's ears, as Paul put it in 2 Tim 4:3. God's Word is our daily bread that ought to bite back when it penetrates the heart, as Hebrews 4:12 states. This form of reading leads the believer to pray in ways that are rooted in honoring God as Holy, desiring to see the advancement of Christ's kingdom, surrendering their will to God's will, asking for greater spiritual nourishment through God's Word, and confessing their need for forgiveness and deliverance so they can remain faithful.

## APPENDIX G

### L.E.A.D as a Preaching Tool

LISTEN	EVALUATE	ASSESS	DECIDE
What has God's Word said?	How is God's nature displayed?	How is human nature exposed?	What am I going to preach?
360 Degree Listening	Personal Reflection	Solutions Considered	Action Step Finalized
<p>What has God said in His Word? (Context of the book and the Bible)</p> <p>What has been said concerning the text historically and traditionally?</p> <p>What are church members saying or believing about this text or topic?</p>	<p>Where is Christ in the text? And what are the Gospel implications?</p> <p>What aspect of God's nature does the text reveal? Why?</p> <p>What does the text reveal about God's Word?</p>	<p>What aspects of this world or the flesh are brought to life by the text, especially in me?</p> <p>What does the text have to say about Christians and non-Christians?</p> <p>How would congregants react to this text? What will their objections be?</p>	<p>What is the one thing that God wants people to know and do, including me?</p> <p>How will I communicate this?</p> <p>What is the natural structure of the text?</p> <p>What must I leave out to maintain the focus of the message?</p>
GOAL: Know the text (Green Light)	GOAL: Know Christ (Yellow Light)	GOAL: Know what could be said (Red Light)	GOAL: Know how to preach Christ faithfully. (Green Light)

- *Pistos ho Logos* as a guide for faithful preaching that produces faithful people (2 Tim 4:2).
  - The pastor must equip his people once a week to proclaim God throughout the week.
  - Preach Christ: Faithful preaching constantly proclaims the power and implications of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.
  - Be Ready: Faithful preaching and in-depth sermon prep help to shape one's character and prepare them for impromptu conversations, causing them to practice what they preach.
  - Correct: Faithful preaching strives to communicate what ought to be.
  - Rebuke: Faithful preaching strives to communicate what ought not to be.
  - Encourage: Faithful preaching calls listeners to trust Jesus and His Word to live by grace.
  - Summary: Faithful preaching aims to transform others more than it does to inform them.
  
- *Pistos ho Logos* can also act as a guide for faithful pastors to equip them for the following:
  - Having to pastor and preach to people who refuse to listen but choose to run after the false teachers they are to oppose boldly (2 Tim 4:3-4). Being sober-minded in one's attitude and character so that the pastor may endure all hardships, as passionately proclaiming the Gospel to the lost and found is how they will fulfill their ministry faithfully (2 Tim 4:5).

## APPENDIX H

## A Pastoral Succession Path for Tabernacle of God Church

<b>PHASE 1: Practice</b>	<b>PHASE 2: Pre-Game</b>	<b>PHASE 3: Gametime</b>	<b>PHASE 4: Post-Game</b>
Normal Church life without succession	Preparing for succession	Execute the Succession Plan	Establish new norms of Church life
Healthy leadership development culture	Establish transition team members, including consultants	Agree upon the new lead pastor	Maintain a regular rhythm of meetings until change solidifies
Healthy expressions of communication and collaboration	Evaluate structure, systems, and culture. Make necessary adjustments	Begin rolling out information consistently and clearly	Focus on relationships over casting new vision or making hasty changes
Healthy structure and systems to process and disciple people	Establish next steps and preparations for the outgoing pastor	Transitioning pastors should progressively fade in and out of responsibilities as each honors the other	Address any issues that may arise spiritually and organizationally
Healthy rhythms and relationships should be made, especially for church leaders	Establish next steps and preparations for the church financially and organizationally.	Maintain a regular rhythm of meetings & evaluation of plan for needed adjustments	Maintain a regular rhythm of meetings until change solidifies
Emergency plans are established	Establish a defined desired transition date, as well as the plan on how to communicate the news to others	Have the outgoing pastor officiate a special event in which the incoming pastor is honored and established officially	Have the new pastor officiate a special event in which the former pastor is honored, roughly 90 days after transition
No timeline	6m to 5yr prior	3-5 years	No timeline

## APPENDIX I

### A Leadership Pipeline, Structure, and System for Tabernacle of God Church.

1. LEVEL 4 Leaders: Pastors, Elders, & Staff
2. LEVEL 3 Leaders: Leaders of Teams (Deacon)
3. LEVEL 2 Leaders: Team Leaders
4. LEVEL 1 Leaders: Team Assistants

- Level 4 is responsible for spiritual health and sound doctrine.
- Levels 1 to 3 are responsible for spiritual efforts and practice.
- *Promotion will be based on testimony over talent.*

#### CENTRALIZED (Church-focused)

- Apprenticeship
- Rallies (2x)
- Turbo Group\*

#### DECENTRALIZED (Ministry-focused)

- Workshops
- Huddles
- Self-led

#### Spirit-Empowered Leaders...

- Carry crosses together rather than climbing ladders over each other.
- Recognize their value regardless of their role.
- Are aware of their limits, as well as those they lead.
- Know that the higher they go, the more they must let go.
- Prioritize filling people over buildings.
- Are bottle-openers and not bottlenecks.
- Are developers and not doers who multiply themselves.

#### Spirit-Empowered Leaders & Leadership...

- Culture of collaboration
- Culture of celebration
- Culture of conflict resolutions
- Culture of appreciation and acknowledgment
- Culture of support and friendship (guard)
- Culture of empowerment



## APPENDIX J

## Meeting Requirements for Tabernacle of God Church

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	<b>DO</b>	<b>PLAN</b>
Not Important	<b>DELEGATE</b>	<b>DELETE</b>

*Image by Steven Covey.<sup>26</sup>*

Can this problem be solved or issue discussed in...?

- 3 MIN
- 3 DAYS
- 3 WEEKS
- 3 MONTHS

If it can be done through an email, then send the email!

We want to make sure to protect our people's time and energy, so they are free to be God's faithful witnesses in non-related ministry efforts.

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<sup>26</sup> Stephen R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2004), 151.