

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

EVALUATION OF PASTORAL PEER LEARNING GROUPS AND THE  
APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES IN A SOUTH FLORIDA CONTEXT

A Thesis Project Submitted to  
Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

By

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Lynchburg, Virginia

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LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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GRADE

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## ABSTRACT

### EVALUATION OF PASTORAL PEER LEARNING GROUPS AND THE APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES IN A SOUTH FLORIDA CONTEXT

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The choice of peer learning groups by the Florida Baptist Convention as the primary leadership development approach for pastors is documented and examined. Surveys, Delphi Panels, and questionnaires were utilized to examine the perspectives of peer learning group participants and leaders regarding the effectiveness of the peer learning group method. Additionally, highly effective pastors in South Florida were surveyed to formulate their perspective of what characteristics are needed for a pastor to be effective in South Florida. Results were compared and evaluated to determine the effectiveness of the peer learning groups. Practical suggestions are then offered for improvement.

Abstract length: 98 words.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACP	Annual Church Profile
BUILD	Building Urban Impact through Leadership Development
DOM	Director of Missions
FBC	Florida Baptist Convention
GOAL	Greater Orlando Adventures in Leadership
GOBA	Greater Orlando Baptist Association
GSBA	Gulf Stream Baptist Association
HEP	Highly Effective Pastors
IPS	Impact Perception Survey
MBA	Miami Baptist Association
PBA	Pensacola Baptist Association
PLBA	Palm Lake Baptist Association
PLG(s)	Peer Learning Group(s)
SBC	Southern Baptist Convention
SFUIM	South Florida Urban Impact Ministries
SFUIT	South Florida Urban Impact Team

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Over 2000 years ago Jesus told the Apostle Peter, “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matt 16:18b).<sup>1</sup> In two of the eight parables told by Jesus in Mathew 13, He described the kingdom of heaven as a mustard seed and yeast—both of which are indicative of the growing and spreading influence of the gospel. Again in John 14:12 Christ promised His disciples that “anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these.” Unfortunately, according to Thom Rainer, “America is clearly becoming less Christian, less evangelized, and less churched. Yet too many of those in our churches seem oblivious to this reality.”<sup>2</sup> Since Jesus was correct in his statement to Peter that He will build His church, the apparent lack of effectiveness in reaching people for Christ in America is in the approach of the leaders. Or more succinctly—the lack of effectiveness lies at the feet of the pastors. In addition, the denominational leaders feel the weight of responsibility for leadership development of the pastors once they have completed formal training and are engaged on the mission field. Rainer laments the situation by writing, “Sadly, most churches in America are experiencing blind erosion. It is tragic that God’s church is not reaching

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New International Version.

<sup>2</sup> Thom S. Rainer, “Shattering Myths about the Unchurched” (*Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, vol. 5, no. 1: spring 2001), 47.

people. It is equally tragic that most of the members and leaders of these churches are blind to the reality of the erosion.”<sup>3</sup>

Jesus once told a parable about a farmer sowing seed. In the parable He acknowledged the existence of hard soil, poor rocky soil, and soil infested with thorns and weeds, but he concluded that the good soil would produce a hundred, sixty or thirty times the seed sown (Matt 13:1-23). Serious observers of church life in America like Rainer, George Barna, and Lyle Schaller recognize that there are more megachurches than ever before.<sup>4</sup> In Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade counties of Florida, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) churches with attendance over one thousand make up 1.7 percent of the total number of churches while accounting for 35.5 percent of the total worship attendance and 41.7 percent of the total number of baptisms.<sup>5</sup> Although very large churches are not the only size congregations that are effectively reaching and teaching in South Florida, their apparent successes provide ample evidence of good fertile soil.

Many church leaders, however, bemoan the condition of the soil, even though the megachurches and the churches which are declining occupy the same field. Rainer states that his research shows “less than four percent of churches in America meet our criteria to be an effective evangelistic church. Only one person is reached for Christ each year for

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<sup>3</sup> Thom S. Rainer, *Breakout Churches* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 181-182.

<sup>4</sup> Aubrey Malphurs and Michael Malphurs, *Church Next* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003) 16. The threshold for megachurch classification is a congregation of at least two thousand people in attendance.

<sup>5</sup> Annual Church Profiles (ACP) of the Southern Baptist Convention, 2007.

every eighty-five church members in America.”<sup>6</sup> The redemption message is as relevant as ever, the power of the gospel is in full force, the commission is fresh, resources are plentiful, most neighborhoods have a church presence, the field is white unto harvest, and a hearing can be won; therefore faithful leadership will yield souls. In this environment, true faithfulness will result in effectiveness just as faith produces works. Jack Eades reminds leaders that “church growth is more than principles and programs. It is a process of transformation in which healthy habits of the Early Church are developed.”<sup>7</sup>

In adopting a definition of effectiveness which only requires pastoral service on the level of chaplaincy, effectiveness can be sacrificed on the altar of compliancy. Pastoral effectiveness is not about the level of dedication, spirituality, education, size of staff or budget; but rather strategic implementation of leadership skills aimed at moving a congregation forward in reaching and teaching in accordance with the Great Commission. “A church that’s not pursuing and reaching lost people”, according to Aubrey Malphurs, “isn’t a Great Commission church and needs to reconsider its purpose.”<sup>8</sup> The pastoral challenge is how to embrace this great opportunity, marshal these vast resources, and effectively carryout the charge in Twenty-First century South Florida. The leadership development task entails discovering and applying a scriptural leadership model which has the greatest impact on the recruitment, resources, motivation, and support of the pastors in becoming more effective.

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<sup>6</sup> Thom S. Rainer, “Shattering Myths about the Unchurched”, 57. In Rainer’s research, the criteria to be classified as an effective evangelistic church includes having a minimum of 26 baptisms or conversions in a year and having a baptismal or conversion ratio less than 20:1; 47.

<sup>7</sup> Jack L. Eades, “Enabling Leaders—Empowering Church Transformation” (D.Min. thesis, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002), 16.

<sup>8</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches for the Twenty-first Century: A Comprehensive Guide for New Churches and Those Desiring Renewal* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 198.

## Background

In the winter of 2003, this researcher began examining the Annual Church Profiles (ACPs) of the Palm Lake Baptist Association (PLBA) churches which are within the boundaries of Palm Beach County, Florida. The expectation was that some of the thirty-two Anglo churches would be declining in worship attendance, some would be plateaued, and some would be growing. Unexpectedly, the data revealed that almost all of the Anglo Southern Baptist Churches in Palm Beach County were plateaued or declining. This researcher immediately compiled preliminary data and presented the findings to the Director of Missions (DOM) of the PLBA. In the ensuing three years, numerous attempts were made by the researcher to address the issue and suggestions were made to bring attention to the overall downward slide of the Associational churches.

In 2006 the Florida Baptist Convention (FBC) extended an invitation to the Associational leadership and some select pastors to join a newly formed South Florida Urban Impact Team (SFUIT) which was organized to address the complexity of growing healthy churches in the South Florida counties of Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade. This researcher accepted the invitation and served on the SFUIT along with several other pastors, the PLBA staff, and several leaders from the FBC. The SFUIT met on a regular basis the first year with declining attendance by the church pastors. At the end of the year the consensus of the remaining team members was to initiate a one-on-one coaching approach based on the format of Robert Logan.<sup>9</sup> In 2007 this researcher was

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<sup>9</sup> Robert E. Logan and Sherilyn Carlton, *Coaching 101: Discover the Power of Coaching* (St. Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources, 2003).

invited to participate in the first pool of pastors to receive coaching from PLBA and FBC leaders in South Florida.

Upon the completion of the one year coaching format, the pastors who participated in the coaching endeavor were invited to join a Peer Learning Group (PLG) sponsored and led by the SFUIT known by the acrostic BUILD (Building Urban Impact through Leadership Development). This researcher participated in the pilot PLG for South Florida along with three other pastors from PLBA, one pastor from the Gulf Stream Baptist Association (GSBA) in Broward County, and four pastors from the Miami Baptist Association (MBA). The South Florida group began in August of 2008 and this researcher examined and evaluated the group in conjunction with the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry thesis project at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary.

The FBC has adopted the PLG process in an effort to strategically enhance the effectiveness of the pastors. The stated outcome is: "Pastors who elevate their own personal leadership in character, passion and life long learning which results in fruitful multiplication of leaders within their churches."<sup>10</sup> Although the PLG program has been in effect in Orlando and Pensacola for three years and has now been implemented in South Florida, no formal evaluation has been conducted. Since the primary focus for developing and enhancing pastoral effectiveness in Florida is being directed by the FBC to PLGs, this research project examined the perceived effectiveness of the approach. Due to the short time period since the program was instigated, sufficient statistical data is unavailable to objectively measure the outcomes. Consequently, this study gathered and

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<sup>10</sup> Rick Wheeler, Director of Leadership and Life Development for the Florida Baptist Convention, email to researcher, August 2, 2008.



reported the *perceived* impact as reported by the participants and leaders of the completed PLGs in the Orlando, Pensacola, and South Florida areas.

The purpose of this project is to either validate or challenge the assumption that the current approach to PLGs is the best leadership development model for South Florida pastors.

### **Research Problem and Questions**

Written questionnaires were completed and communicated through email by two leaders of the Florida Baptist Convention, one leader of the Greater Orlando Baptist Association, and two leaders of the Pensacola Baptist Association. The two FBC leaders are Bob Bumgarner, Director of the Church Development Division and Cecil Seagle, Director of the Missions Division. The respondent for the Greater Orlando Baptist Association is Bill Faulkner, Director of Missions. The two leaders of the Pensacola Baptist Association are Bob Greene, Director of Missions and Kim Johnson, Director of Church Development. Bob Greene actually participated in the Pilot 1 Peer Learning Group; consequently, he completed the participant Impact Perception Survey and the Discussion Questions. Also, Al Fernandez, Director of the FBC Urban Impact Ministry Office in South Florida, completed the Leader's Questionnaire by telephone interview with this researcher. The response from these leaders overwhelmingly indicated a long held belief that a better leadership development model was needed. Cecil Seagle expressed the collective opinion as a "deep unrest with traditional methodologies."<sup>11</sup> As a result of the dissatisfaction, the leaders reached thoughtful consensus that the PLG would be the best approach to enhancing the effectiveness of the pastors.

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<sup>11</sup> Cecil Seagle, email to researcher, November 3, 2008.

The problem addressed by this project is that the FBC adopted the PLG model as the primary approach to leadership development without a formal examination and evaluation of the process to determine its effectiveness. Is the current model of Pastoral Peer Learning Groups, which is being utilized by the FBC, an effective approach to leadership development? Can the model be improved? This study seeks to answer five research questions:

1. How do the participants and leaders of the PLG program perceive its effectiveness?
2. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the PLG program?
3. Did the perceptions about pastoral effectiveness of the BUILD PLG participants change from the beginning to the end of the program?
4. Did the perceptions about pastoral effectiveness of the BUILD PLG participants move closer to the perceptions of the Highly Effective Pastors' perceptions?
5. Based on the perceptions of the participants and leaders, what changes should be made in the PLG program?

### **Terminology**

*Effectiveness.* In relation to pastors, effectiveness is defined as reaching and teaching, according to the Great Commission, as evidenced by recorded baptisms and worship attendance.

*Effectiveness.* In relation to the Pastoral Peer Learning Groups, effectiveness is defined as positively impacting the pastor's perception of his own ministry to bring it more in line with the Great Commission as evidenced by recorded baptisms and worship attendance and his perception in relation to the HEP perceptions.

*Highly Effective Pastors.* Pastors in the three South Florida Baptist Associations with a current tenure of four years or more and whose churches meet the researcher's

threshold of an evangelistic church of at least 26 baptisms in 2007 and a ratio of baptisms to worship attendance of 10:1 or less .<sup>12</sup>

*Leaders.* Associational and Florida Baptist Convention staffers who have oversight or are giving direction to the Pastoral Peer Learning Group process.

### **Limitations**

The research of this study was conducted with four PLGs in the Florida Baptist Convention, some of the Associational leaders directly connected with those four groups, four FBC leaders, and a group of eight highly effective pastors in South Florida. The four PLGs surveyed are *PBA Pilot 1*, *PBA Pilot 2*, *GOBA GOAL* (Greater Orlando Adventures in Leadership), and South Florida *BUILD*. This research does not include other PLGs conducted by the Florida Baptist Convention.

The following study does not provide a statistical analysis of the need for leadership improvement in Florida Baptist Associations. Only the perceived effectiveness of the PLGs was investigated in the four groups.

This research project does not present statistical data which objectively demonstrates an impact of the PLGs on the participating churches. The relatively embryonic nature of the PLG process in the FBC hinders the acquisition of sufficient data for analysis. Consequently, only the perceived effectiveness of the PLGs by the leaders and participants will be considered.

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<sup>12</sup> Rainer, "Shattering Myths about the Unchurched", 57. In Rainer's research, the criteria to be classified as an effective evangelistic church includes having a minimum of 26 baptisms or conversions in a year and having a baptismal or conversion ratio less than 20:1. For the purposes of this study, the baptismal ratio is 10:1 or less.

### **Biblical/Theological Basis**

One-on-one coaching has great benefits and was used by Jesus with Peter to restore the Apostle beside the Sea of Galilee after the resurrection (John 21:15-22). However the mentoring model most employed by God's Son while here on earth was that of a PLG. Jesus' learning group was comprised of twelve men whom He personally recruited. He enlisted these men so they would learn through their interaction with Him and with each other. He chose them after much prayer for they would advance the Kingdom of God following His departure (Luke 6:12-16). As Reggie McNeal notes, "Jesus was not incompetent, nor did he look for that quality in others. He did not choose the twelve apostles based on their lack of ability."<sup>13</sup> Jesus was expecting great things from His followers; consequently He invested the next three years with them in a peer learning group environment.

The PLG of Jesus and the Apostles provided shared experiences which often led to teaching opportunities. Several times significant instruction and deep insight was shared by Jesus as the direct result of a question by one of the group members. Within the tight quarters of the PLG, the acknowledgement of proper understanding was interspersed with needed admonitions. Each teachable moment was observed and processed by everyone in the group. One example is Peter's recognition of Jesus as the Christ. Peter received immediate reinforcement from Jesus and the group benefited from the instruction that followed. Peter then directly challenged Christ, which was followed by Jesus rebuking Peter. As recorded in Matthew, this exchange provided a platform for a powerful insight by the entire group:

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<sup>13</sup> Reggie McNeal, *Practicing Greatness: 7 Disciples of Extraordinary Spiritual Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publications, 2006), 3.

"Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. . . . From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (Matt 16:15b-17, 16:21-24).

The PLG modeled by Jesus with His Apostles was intense and reflected the pattern of small group interaction directed by Moses in preparing the children of Israel for the Promised Land (Deut 6:1-7). Moses lived and traveled with the Israelites and He instructed and taught them to educate their children in and through the interaction of daily life. Although it was not a peer environment, the Israelites were organized by family units for the *impression* of God's ways. Like Moses, Jesus lived and traveled with His mentees. The Apostles were with Jesus in His real life interactions. Sometimes Jesus would turn and give verbal instruction to His specially selected protégés while at other times they absorbed His depth of character through His responses to others. He chose to prepare these twelve men for the most important assignment ever given through the leadership model of a PLG. Jesus modeled the godly lifestyle.

Not only did Jesus model a godly lifestyle, He also worked to transform the mindset of His PLG. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus probed deep into the inner person for the true motives of speech and action. He challenged His listeners to look within themselves, to realize that God was in control, and to live life according to the strength and love of God. More specifically Jesus was able to address the issue of inner motives with His Apostles. One instance was when they revealed a deficit of compassion:

And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?” But He turned and rebuked them, and said, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.” And they went to another village (Luke 9:52b-56 NKJV).

Jesus recognized that the needed transformation within His leaders would not come about by simply giving them standards and guidelines (Matt 5:17-20); rather He invested His time, energy, heart, attitude, and vision in the chosen twelve. They were already motivated to pursue the Messiah (John 1:40-42), and Jesus changed their perspectives about God the Father, the Law, the Temple, and what they could do to positively influence the spiritual future of others (i.e., The Great Commission, Matt 28:16-20; Acts 1:8). In changing the perspective of eleven of the Apostles, Jesus changed the effectiveness of their leadership. Although the motives of the twelfth, Judas, cannot be dogmatically determined, his actions of betrayal and his lack of godly influence on others revealed that his perspective had not been transformed through the peer learning process.

Jesus spent time teaching multitudes, healing many, and even confronting the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, but His most powerful impact eventually came through the Apostles. He once told them, “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father” (John 14:12-13). Even though the teaching of this passage has implications for “anyone who has faith,” it was shared in the intimate setting of the last supper with the eleven Apostles. Jesus had washed their feet, shared about His coming

betrayal, instructed them to represent Him well by loving one another, and encouraged them to trust in God. In that small group setting, Thomas and Philip asked questions which led to Jesus sharing His perspective of the great things they would do. In this way, and the others listed above, Jesus utilized the PLG model to prepare the apostolic leaders for the spiritual revolution of the world.

### **Methodology**

The primary goal of the peer learning group endeavor of the Florida Baptist Convention and the participating local Baptist Associations is to enhance the leadership effectiveness of the pastors. The PLG process has entered a third cycle since the pilot group began, but to date has not been thoroughly evaluated. An objective evaluation of the success of the PLG initiative would be to measure statistically any improvements in the growth and health of the participating churches. However, the implementation of new leadership principles takes time and the gathering of statistical data to document change takes years. In the interim, much can be learned and perhaps improvements can be made to the program through this study.

Surveys and interviews were conducted through this study to evaluate the perspective of the pool of leaders and participants of the four groups which have completed the first round of the PLG process. Along with the perspectives of the effectiveness of the PLG experience, the surveys sought the participants' perception on the PLG strengths, weaknesses, and any suggested enhancements. The research instruments utilized in this project include Delphi Panels, Likert Scale surveys, Discussion Questions, Leader Questionnaires, and Interviews (Appendix A).

The first group to complete the PLG endeavor was a group of nine pastors in the GOBA which is directed by Bill Faulkner. The acrostic used to identify the Orlando group is GOAL (Greater Orlando Adventures in Leadership). The second and third groups are referred to as Pilot 1 and Pilot 2 and are located in the PBA led by Bob Greene. Pilot 1 is comprised of eight pastors and Bob Greene as the DOM. Pilot 2 includes Richard “Chip” Fox, the DOM of Santa Rosa Baptist Association, Jim Trent, a counselor at the PBA, and nine pastors.

The current PLG in South Florida began in August of 2008. The advantage of studying the new BUILD group was the opportunity to poll the participants at the beginning of the process and again at the end in the summer of 2009. The Impact Perception Survey, the Discussion Questions, and the Delphi Panel process were all administered at the first meeting and were completed a second time near the conclusion of the program. A comparison Delphi Panel process was conducted with a panel of Highly Effective Pastors (HEP) who also serve in South Florida churches. The results were examined to determine similarities and differences between the perceptions of the two panels. Consequently, the BUILD PLG perceptions were compared with the HEP perceptions at the beginning of the program and then again at the end. The investigation examined whether the PLG program moved the participants to have perceptions of pastoral effectiveness which were more closely aligned with the HEP.

### ***Research Assumptions***

The first research assumption is that above every other resource or variable in an organization, the quality of the leadership is the primary determining factor in the success of the organization. An effective leader can lead an organization to accomplish its goals.



An effective pastor can lead his church to accomplish the goals set forth by Jesus in the Great Commission of reaching and teaching. This researcher believes a pastor can be effective in South Florida because of the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit and because there are pastors in the South Florida mission field who are successfully leading their churches to baptize a significant number of new believers (reaching) and to scripturally instruct a significant number of attendees (teaching). As Rainer contributes, “It is erroneous to think . . . that only a few unique leaders can lead churches to be exciting and evangelistic churches. Other pastors have different leadership styles that can still make a difference.”<sup>14</sup>

The second research assumption is that the perceptions of the Highly Effective Pastors are the standard by which the other South Florida pastors should be compared. The HEP pastors have proven through their efficiency of reaching and teaching that their perceptions of needed pastoral characteristics are effective in carrying out the Great Commission in South Florida.

The third research assumption is that the effectiveness cited by the objective data in this study is not a direct reflection on the spiritual condition of the pastor or church. The researcher assumes that every pastor is faithful in the spiritual disciplines of the Christian faith and that any differences highlighted in this research are a direct result of leadership knowledge and application.

### ***The Validation Panel***

The distinguished panel that validated the research instruments for this project included four scholarly gentlemen. First, James S. Chavis, the Reader for this D.Min.

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<sup>14</sup> Thom S. Rainer, *High Expectations: The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church* (Nashville: Broadman, 1999), 168.

project, who received his Ed.D. from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and is the former Director of the Church Development Division of the Florida Baptist Convention. Second, Steve Whitten, who is a member of the Association for Institutional Research, the Southern Association for Institutional Research, and the Society of College and University Planning, and is currently the Vice President for Planning and Effectiveness at American InterContinental University in Atlanta, Georgia. Third, Rick Wheeler, who received his Ed.D. from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, and currently serves as the Director of Leadership and Life Development for the Florida Baptist Convention. Fourth, Tony Hoffman, Ed.D. (ABD) from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and who currently serves as the Associate Pastor of Ministries at the researcher's home church—First Baptist Church of Royal Palm Beach, Florida.

## CHAPTER 2

### PRECEDENT LITERATURE

The following overview presents the literature which proved to be foundational to this study. The insight gained from sources on the subject of effective leadership is presented, followed by a documented case for the need of effective church leadership. The process of church leadership development was examined by utilizing published material to consider various approaches to enhancing pastoral leadership. The preceding information culminates with the definition and advantages of peer learning groups.

#### **Overview**

The foundational book of inspiration and philosophy of this project is *Breakout Churches* by Thom S. Rainer. He presents statistical analysis by comparing churches that strategically broke out of complacency and became healthy growing churches contrasted with similar churches in demographics and doctrine that did not make strategic efforts.

*Coaching 101* by Robert E. Logan and Sherilyn Carlton along with *Lead Like Jesus* by Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges were both foundational books for the FBC leadership in the formation of the PLGs. Consequently, they are foundational books to this study of examining the elements which have been incorporated into the PLG process.

On a deeply spiritual level, Eugene H. Peterson's book *Working the Angles* helped maintain a balanced approach to being faithful in the basic spiritual disciplines and implementing basic leadership skills. Also, *Spiritual Leadership* by Henry and Richard

Blackaby presented a balanced approach to godly leadership with an understanding of modern day leadership challenges while remaining resolute in the sufficiency of God's plan.

*Church Next*, by Aubrey and Michael Malphurs presents a challenging look at the current condition of the American church and the vast challenges which must be navigated to move forward in effectively reaching the next generation.

Mels Carbonell, Ph.D., in his book *Extreme Personality Makeover*, challenges the concept that people with certain personality profiles cannot develop their interpersonal skills. Also, Harvey Kneisel, challenges the concept that declining churches cannot develop a feasible strategic plan to reverse their decline with an historical account of break-through churches in his book *New Life for Declining Churches*.

*What Got You Here Won't Get You There* is a secular book by a corporate executive coach named Marshall Goldsmith. According to his bio, "He has helped implement leadership development processes that have impacted more than one million people." Goldsmith contends that once an executive reaches a certain level of success; he has mastered the needed skills and must then consider what idiosyncrasies are *preventing* future advancement. Goldsmith lists twenty behavioral changes which will improve interpersonal skills.

A classic book on leadership principles which applies to every organization is *The Leadership Challenge* by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z Posner. They incorporate vast insights in presenting examples, concepts, and principles of the leadership dynamic.

Two extremely useful works were used as resources for format and style. An excellent demonstration of the leadership development process is detailed by Jack L.

Eades in his D.Min. thesis at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary entitled “Enabling Leaders—Empowering Church Transformation.” Frederick Cardoza’s 2005 Ed.D. dissertation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary entitled “Perceptions Of Ministerial Effectiveness By Leaders Of Urban Churches In The Southern Baptist Convention” provided invaluable insight to proper research methodology and reporting.

### **Leadership**

Our world has a propensity to drift toward disorder—chaos not tidiness. Managers are those who are trained or naturally inclined toward bringing chaos into order; they are focused on classifying and filing the world as it exists. Conversely, according to Kouzes and Posner, “Leaders have a desire to make something happen, to change the way things are, to create something that no one else has ever created before.”<sup>1</sup> Leaders are visionaries. The world needs managers; but the world longs for leaders. Management is mundane in comparison to leaders who “ignite the flame of passion in others by expressing enthusiasm for the compelling vision of their group.”<sup>2</sup> Leadership is the ability to see a preferred future and arouse others to march forward with vigor.

Typically leaders are seen as personalities that are bigger than life with innate leadership abilities which cannot be taught, but leadership expert Ken Blanchard insists that, “Whether you serve others as parent, spouse, family member, friend, or citizen—or whether you have a leadership title and position like CEO, pastor, coach, teacher, or

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<sup>1</sup> James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

manager—you are a leader!”<sup>3</sup> Consequently, the essence of leadership exists in a more foundational element than the ability to wave a flag and gather a huge following.

Blanchard explains that “leadership is a process of influence.”<sup>4</sup> Leaders impact the lives of those around them which can change their mindset, actions, and future development on either a personal or professional level.<sup>5</sup> Kouzes and Posner believe, “The truth is that leadership is an observable set of skills and abilities. . . And any skill can be strengthened, honed, and enhanced, given the motivation and desire, the practice and feedback, and the role models and coaching.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, the essential elements of effective leadership can be acquired and improved.

So what are the essential elements of effective leadership? Kouzes and Posner insist that “constituents look for leaders who demonstrate an enthusiastic and genuine belief in the capacity of others, who strengthen people’s will, who supply the means to achieve, and who express optimism for the future. Constituents want leaders who remain passionate despite obstacles and setbacks.”<sup>7</sup> Passion is an expression of effective leaders, but passion stems from a deeper belief. Passion is grounded in a belief in the power of what can be accomplished through unity of purpose and a collaboration of talents. The passion of an effective leader is an outward expression of an inward conviction that the

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<sup>3</sup> Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus: Lessons from the Greatest Leadership Role Model of All Times* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 8.

<sup>4</sup> Blanchard and Hodges, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Kouzes and Posner, 386.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 398.

collective will of the group can overcome any scarcity of resources or wall of deterrent factors.

At this juncture in consideration of the leadership dynamic, Henry and Richard Blackaby add a sober reminder of reality by stating, “The fact is, some leaders are successful no matter what challenge they take on, while others suffer chronic failure and mediocrity.”<sup>8</sup> Is the lack of leadership effectiveness by some the result of difficult circumstances or a deficiency of the essential elements in the core of the leader? Marshall Goldsmith makes an intriguing observation concerning the difference in perspectives of successful people and those he refers to as lottery people. “Serious lottery players tend to believe that any success is a function of luck, external factors, or random chance. . . . Successful people trade in this lottery mentality for an unshakable belief in themselves.”<sup>9</sup> Kouzes and Posner agree by adding, “‘Luck’ or ‘being in the right place at the right time’ may play a role in the specific opportunities leaders embrace, but those who lead others to greatness seek and accept challenge.”<sup>10</sup> Goldsmith’s observations conclude that successful people do not see life as a function of luck or random chance. Instead, they view the success of their future as a direct result of their motivation and ability—not external factors.<sup>11</sup>

When directing a group of people to achieve a goal, the essential elements of effective leadership must include more than the passion to rally others and a deep belief in self; one must persevere in applying the right principles. Stephen Covey, a renowned

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<sup>8</sup> Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God’s Agenda* (Nashville: Broadman, 2001), ix.

<sup>9</sup> Marshall Goldsmith, *What Got You Here Won’t Get You There* (New York: Hyperion, 2007), 21.

<sup>10</sup> Kouzes and Posner, 16.

<sup>11</sup> Goldsmith, 20.

leadership expert, supports this concept when reflecting on his life work in this field by pronouncing:

One of the most profound learnings of my life is this: if you want to achieve your highest aspirations and overcome your greatest challenges, *identify and apply the principle or natural law that governs the results you seek*. How we apply a principle will vary greatly and will be determined by our unique strengths, talents, and creativity, but, ultimately, success in any endeavor is always derived from acting in harmony with the principles to which the success is tied.<sup>12</sup>

The Blackabys agree that leadership principles applied passionately and correctly will render results, but they question the rightness of the pursuit if it does not align with “Christian principles of leadership.”<sup>13</sup> They reason, “Effective leaders are not enough. Hitler was an effective leader.”<sup>14</sup> They conclude that “only when we understand leadership in light of God’s calling on our lives will we be equipped to lead effectively.”<sup>15</sup> While the world is looking for more gifted and passionate leaders, the church is looking for leaders who are grounded in God’s word and who can passionately apply leadership principles in leading others to pursue the Great Commission.

### **Need for Effective Church Leadership**

Ken Blanchard points out that “Jesus is clear about how He wants us to lead: He asks us to make a difference in our world by being effective servant leaders.”<sup>16</sup> Yet according to the data collected by Thom Rainer, “Eight out of ten of the approximately

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<sup>12</sup> Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 7.

<sup>13</sup> Blackaby and Blackaby, 13.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., xi.

<sup>16</sup> Blanchard and Hodges, XIII.



400,000 churches in the United States are declining or have plateaued.”<sup>17</sup> Roland Allen in his classic book, *Missionary Principles and Practice*, explains that the goal of all missionary endeavors is to take the message world-wide and it should not be limited by small thinking. Rather, “The means by which we attain is the strongest possible expression of that Spirit in outward form over the widest possible field.”<sup>18</sup>

The simplest and clearest measurement which can be applied to missionary endeavor, which would indicate effective Christian leadership, is baptisms. Rainer gives clarity to the issue by stating, “While evangelism is not the totality of a healthy church’s ministry, we do not believe that a church could be called healthy if it is not obediently responding to Christ’s Great Commission.”<sup>19</sup> Churches are commissioned to reach and teach, and by all measurements, the American church is languishing in a land of plenty. Peterson observes that “the pastors of America have metamorphosed into a company of shopkeepers, and the shops they keep are churches.”<sup>20</sup> Tom Mullins, who has led Christ Fellowship Church to reach 12,000 worshipers over the last twenty-five years adds, “Ministry is not for our comfort or personal benefit but for the benefit of those God has called us to reach with his love and message of hope.”<sup>21</sup>

Rainer’s research concluded that “the typical solution to stagnated churches is to replace the pastor. Unfortunately, there are not enough ‘breakout pastors’ to lead even 5

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<sup>17</sup> Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 45.

<sup>18</sup> Roland Allen, *Missionary Principles and Practice*, (Original edition 1913, Reprint, Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2006), 77.

<sup>19</sup> Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 213.

<sup>20</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, *Working the Angles* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1987), 2.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas D. Mullins, “Coaching As A Leadership Model For Ministry In The 21st Century Church” (D.Min. thesis, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003), 102. Attendance figure obtained from “The Outreach 100”, *Outreach*, Special Issue (2008), 35.

percent of the churches in America.” Consequently, the only viable solution is to develop spiritually deep and highly effective spiritual leaders through innovative discipleship approaches.

Some pastors are strong charismatic leaders like King David—most are not. In the Southern Baptist Convention there is a culture of seeking out the King Davids among us and imploring them to serve on the national and/or world stage of leadership within the convention. God has blessed this process because, for the most part, the God-gifted high profile leaders were first HEP. The SBC is a grassroots mission field organization and a proving ground for higher calling and service. Perhaps the local associations should follow the example of the national and state convention in this regard.

Alexander Strauch, in his book *Biblical Eldership*, makes the assertion that “those among the elders who are particularly gifted leaders and/or teachers will naturally stand out among the other elders as leaders and teachers within the leadership body. This is what the Romans called *primus inter pares*, meaning ‘first among equals,’ or *primi inter pares*, meaning ‘first ones among equals.’”<sup>22</sup> The South Florida Baptist associations have HEP—first among equals. They are, however, conspicuously absent from places of service among the local SBC pastors and it is substantially more rare for them to serve in positions of associational leadership. Fortunately, according to Strauch, “The advantage of the principle of ‘first among equals’ is that *it allows for functional, gift-based diversity within the eldership team without creating an official, superior office over fellow elders.*”<sup>23</sup> The challenge is for the active associational pastors to include the HEP.

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<sup>22</sup> Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth, 1995), 45.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

The lack of HEP could be the missing element in plateaued and declining church pastors having the vision and skill sets needed to aggressively pursue church growth. Lyle Schaller records that the small church mentality may actually be detrimental to growth into a large church. When speaking of church leaders who are thoughtfully pursuing exponential growth, he points out that “these leaders believe that if their congregation is to achieve its potential, it will be more productive to learn from the experiences of big churches than to study how small and middle-sized congregations carry out their ministries.”<sup>24</sup> Also, given a scenario of a church seeking a new pastor with the intent to double the congregation of 500 in seven years, a church may be better served “to look for a minister who brings firsthand and contemporary experience on the staff of a very large congregation rather than someone who brings small or middle-sized church experience.”<sup>25</sup> In summary, Schaller points out that the “most distinctive” asset the very large congregations bring to the table is the knowledge of how to “do big church”.<sup>26</sup>

### **Peer Learning Group**

In his book, *Working the Angles*, Eugene Peterson reestablishes that, “Three pastoral acts are so basic, so critical, that they determine the shape of everything else. The acts are praying, reading Scripture, and giving spiritual direction.”<sup>27</sup> John Chrysostom, however, testified that the monastic lifestyle of praying and reading Scripture alone were

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<sup>24</sup> Lyle E. Schaller, *The Very Large Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 215.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>27</sup> Peterson, 3.

not the best kind of training for the shepherd's task.<sup>28</sup> Giving spiritual direction, the third element in Peterson's formula, is in effect—leadership. Leadership is essential in the mission of the Christian leader.

When considering solutions, "Albert Einstein observed, 'The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.'"<sup>29</sup> If the monastic approach of leadership development omits one of the essential elements, then what model of training will achieve the desired results? Seminary education utilizing the lecture and research method is well entrenched as the primary clergy educational model, yet there may be a missing ingredient. Similarly, the approach of workshops and seminars featuring expert speakers has been employed by Baptist Conventions and Associations for decades and are producing diminishing results. Conversely, peer learning groups are increasing in popularity among leaders of businesses and non-profit organizations. According to the internet website of Authenticity Consulting, "The concept of peer learning is . . . highly valued by business leaders and managers, whether for-profit or nonprofit. It's written about by educators, researchers, writers and consultants. It's used by consulting services, training centers, associations, businesses and citizens."<sup>30</sup>

Michele Martin, a certified Career Development Facilitator and Instructor, defines Peer Learning Groups as "peers learning from each other."<sup>31</sup> Martin continues by

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<sup>28</sup> Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity. Volume 1: The Early Church of the Dawn of the Reformation* (San Francisco: Harper, 1984), 195-196.

<sup>29</sup> Covey, 42.

<sup>30</sup> Authenticity Consulting, LLC, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, <http://www.authenticityconsulting.com/act-lrn/index.html>, (accessed November 4, 2008).

explaining that everyone in a peer learning group, regardless of their job title or status, is dedicated to helping their *peers* in the group. “Peer Learning Groups generally have 6-10 members who are coming together for one of two reasons: To learn together about a specific topic or area (a training group)” or “To work on a collective issue or on their own personal goals (a coaching group).”<sup>32</sup>

Everyone needs helpful feedback on their work. Most workers have a built-in accountability system with their supervisor on how to work smarter. On the other end of the spectrum, “CEOs [Chief Executive Officers] have access to a lot of information, to smart subordinates and perhaps a few too many ‘yes men.’”<sup>33</sup> Consequently, those with the task of knowing what to do and how to get it done find themselves in need of constructive input as well. Because of this need for confidential and honest feedback from knowledgeable contemporaries, PLGs are dotting the professional landscape.

Although some PLGs are formed specifically for medical professionals and nonprofit leaders, in the business world most are organized around the purpose of bringing “business owners and executives into contact with peers in a way that immediately allows them to improve their management and grow their business.”<sup>34</sup> Multiple consulting firms and organizations provide these networking opportunities.

Belmont University has formed The Peer Learning Network which “maintains a purpose

<sup>31</sup> Michele Martin, <http://michelemartin.typepad.com/beyondtheglassceiling/2007/10/career-tool-sta.html>, (accessed November 4, 2008).

<sup>32</sup> Martin, accessed November 4, 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Young Presidents’ Organization, under Mission. <http://www.ypo.org/mission.htm>; (accessed 9 July 2009).

<sup>34</sup> “Unique Alternative to Traditional Small Business Consulting and Executive Coaching Services”, Overview, The Alternative Board, <http://www.thealternativeboard.com/TabBoards/TabPages1/Overview.aspx>; (accessed July 9, 2009).

of ‘bringing together top executives of Nashville's best-run companies in a setting where they can learn from each other.’”<sup>35</sup> However, Philadelphia millionaires are not dependent on a university grant to provide a PLG setting. A nonprofit organization known as “Wealth 360” and subtitled “Navigating the Challenges and Opportunities of Wealth”, has been formed for individuals with a minimum personal net worth of ten million dollars.<sup>36</sup> The group “is designed to promote personal and professional development and generate new perspectives on living with wealth.”<sup>37</sup>

Fortunately, the cost for most groups is relatively small. The “annual membership fees range from about \$1,500 to \$8,500, depending on the organization.”<sup>38</sup> Most participants would maintain that the price is worth the benefit. Mary Tappouni, of Breaking Ground Contracting, was recently named Florida Small Business Person of the Year. Tappouni joined a PLG named Vistage Florida in January 2007 and now touts the mentoring and peer coaching of the group as pivotal in her success. “Members of Vistage Florida meet in small peer groups every month under the same guiding principles - to help one another make better business decisions, achieve better results, and enhance their

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<sup>35</sup> Jill Robinson, “Peer Learning Network”, Scarlett Leadership Institute, Belmont University. [http://www.belmont.edu/business/executive\\_education/executive\\_learning\\_networks/peer\\_learning\\_network.html](http://www.belmont.edu/business/executive_education/executive_learning_networks/peer_learning_network.html); (accessed July 9, 2009).

<sup>36</sup> Todd M. Pree, “Wealth 360, New Peer Learning Group for High-Net-Worth Individuals, Launches in Philadelphia”. Newswire.com., Last Updated (December 13, 2007); <http://www.mmdnewswire.com/2685.html?task=view>; (accessed July 9, 2009).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Kelly LaDuke, “Peer Group”, *Florida Trend Magazine*, (published May 26, 2008 in *Florida Small Business*), [http://www.floridatrend.com/small\\_biz\\_article.asp?aID=48906](http://www.floridatrend.com/small_biz_article.asp?aID=48906); (accessed July 9, 2009).

lives. Members learn from one another by acting as each other's board of directors, coaches, mentors and consultants.”<sup>39</sup>

One of the guiding principals of PLGs is that “members give their views — which may be blunt — on solving the problems. Meetings may include a guest speaker or a visit to a member’s company.”<sup>40</sup> The point of the group, however, is to learn from peers. It is the purest form of collaborative conversation. In most groups, a professional facilitator is utilized to keep the interaction on track and healthy, but the dynamic is one of group interaction—not lecture. The Peer Learning Network encourages its members to focus on the following three questions:

[1] What contemporary issues do you need to explore NOW for your company to thrive during change? [2] What best practices could you and your company share with other PLN members? What do you do better than most other companies? And what could you learn from other executives and their companies' best practices? [3] Who are the world-class speakers and business leaders you want to spend time with and learn from?<sup>41</sup>

Peer learning groups are utilized in the business sector because they are productive in helping leaders improve their performance. The participants are open to input from other practitioners. Rather than seeking to avoid confrontation, they actively seek the insight of others who can objectively speak truth into a situation. The PLG becomes a sounding board—indeed an alternative board of directors for the leader’s benefit. Based on the precedent sources for contemporary leadership development, it appears that the FBC has chosen a competent model for encouraging current pastors and

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<sup>39</sup> “Vistage Florida Announces Member Mary Tappouni of Breaking Ground Contracting Named Florida Small Business Person of the Year”, *Thomson Reuters*, (April 15, 2009), <http://www.reuters.com/article/press+Release/idUS184856+15-Apr-2009+PRN20090415>; (accessed July 9, 2009).

<sup>40</sup> LaDuke, accessed July 9, 2009.

<sup>41</sup> Robinson, accessed, July 9, 2009.

developing new church leaders. Perhaps the small group approach utilized by Jesus of Nazareth is being rediscovered by innovative leaders in the Twenty-First Century.



## CHAPTER 3

### PEER LEARNING GROUP MODEL

The rationale of the leaders of the FBC for choosing the PLG model is detailed in this section. Field observations, from the leaders, which were gathered for this study through the Leader's Questionnaires and interviews are listed along with the resources which were consulted. An examination of the current design of the PLG program leads into a discussion of the differences and compatibility of PLGs and one-on-one coaching.

The leaders of the FBC South Florida Urban Impact Ministries (SFUIM) recently compiled statistics in examination of trends in PLBA, GSBA, and MBA. The results demonstrated that the number of churches with a worship attendance of 351 or more has stayed relatively the same with only a 5.7 percent increase over a ten year period from 1998 to 2007. During the same ten year period, churches with average worship attendance of 201-350 have decreased by 17.8 percent. Those with worship attendance of 76-200 have decreased by 31.4 percent while those with worship attendance of 36-75 have decreased by 11 percent. The number of small churches with 35 or fewer in average attendance has increased by 171 percent. The number of small churches has increased because of new church starts and outside churches being accepted into the Associations; however, the huge increase in small churches also reflects the decrease in attendance during the ten year period of the churches that were once in the larger categories between

36 and 350. These numbers are indicative of the deep need observed by pastors, associational leaders, and FBC staff alike.<sup>1</sup>

The initiation of the PLG process in Florida was the direct result of the disillusionment of leaders as they witnessed the dwindling results of standard approaches to training seminars formatted to *teach* the pastors how to carry out the latest FBC programs or even to improve pastoral skills. As expressed by Bob Greene, DOM of PBA, “I . . . noticed that pastors were not coming to our ‘y’all come’ meetings, regardless of how excellent the material or presenter was.”<sup>2</sup>

When Bill Faulkner, DOM of the GOBA, was asked what issues in Florida pastoral leadership prompted him to develop a leadership initiative, he responded that it came from his “own conviction that pastoral leadership was ill-equipped, and the apparent need for leadership development among staff leaders.”<sup>3</sup> Bob Bumgarner, the director of the FBC leadership division added, “Negatively speaking . . . pastoral isolation, discouragement, declining results from ‘conferencing’, and disengagement by younger leaders.”<sup>4</sup> From a missionary leader’s point of view Cecil Seagle lamented “the loss of Missionary Behavior in a missions/missionary setting.”<sup>5</sup> According to Greene, “our pastors needed to be personally and corporately healthy—physically, emotionally, spiritually. This meant we had to do things differently.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Annual Church Profiles (ACP), Southern Baptist Convention, 1998 and 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Bob Greene and Kim Johnson, email with researcher, November 24, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Bill Faulkner, email to researcher, November 4, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Bob Bumgarner, email to researcher, November 16, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Seagle, November 3, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Greene and Johnson, November 24, 2008.

Fortunately, the leaders were able to tap into a hunger among the pastors. The plan began to develop because “positively speaking . . . pastors were talking about leadership, they were expressing the need to understand and lead change in their ministry contexts.”<sup>7</sup> A mantra was coined among the leaders, “Let’s form a *coalition of the willing*.”

### **Peer Learning Group Defined**

As leader of the initiative, Bob Bumgarner defined a Pastoral Peer Learning Group as “a biblically rich environment where authentic relationships provide participants with opportunities to intentionally engage in their own leadership transformation.”<sup>8</sup>

When asked why he chose the PLG model to address the leadership issues in the GOBA, Bill Faulkner responded, “Two reasons: people learn better in small groups and to establish covenant relations among leaders.”<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Bob Greene and Kim Johnson of the PBA replied, “The need to cluster groups together to learn from one another with built in accountability, intentionality, to be part of a process with measurable outcomes.”<sup>10</sup> In speaking for the South Florida investigation of starting PLGs, Al Fernandez expressed, “I think after discussion and dialogue it seemed to us there was a collective IQ that our pastors had or have, and each one of them brings expertise and experiences, that not only will they learn from one another, but quite honestly the

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<sup>7</sup> Bumgarner, November 16, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Faulkner, November 4, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Greene and Johnson, November 24, 2008.

Convention and the Association could also learn.”<sup>11</sup> According to Bumgarner, when it came to formulating a process that provided a mechanism to come alongside pastors in meaningful relationships; with contextual understanding, in a clear process, and with personal accountability, the PLGs were the best current solution.<sup>12</sup>

### **Peer Learning Group Design**

The Florida Baptist Convention PLG process was developed as a measured response to the recognized need for an improved approach to leadership development among Florida pastors. Bob Bumgarner drew from numerous resources he had read and utilized in his professional career. The assimilation process included various leadership publications, websites, diagnostic instruments, and group facilitation events. The overall approach was to begin with the strengthening of the individual participants by refocusing on how to *Lead Like Jesus*, a process developed by Kenneth H. Blanchard and Phil Hodges. The Personal DISC personality profile was also incorporated into the initial phase of the program. Resource books included: *Get a Life* by McNeal, *In a Pit with a Lion on a Snowy Day* by Batterson, *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership* by McIntosh and Rima, and *Spiritual Leadership* by Blackaby and Blackaby.

The second phase of the process was designed to improve interpersonal leadership by strengthening the leader’s skills in one-on-one interactions. The primary texts used for this endeavor were *Coaching 101* by Logan and *Situational Leadership* by Blanchard. Additional texts which supported this focus were *Leading from the Second Chair* by Bonem and Patterson, and *The Peacemaker* by Sande.

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<sup>11</sup> Al Fernandez, interview by researcher, November 16, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Bumgarner, November 16, 2008.

The third phase of development designed into the PLG was team leadership which centered on *Building Powerful Ministry Teams* produced by Triaxia Partners. The primary objectives of the effort are: transforming conflict, powerful decision making, high performance meetings, and mastering the art of communication. *Overcoming the FIVE Dysfunctions of the Team* by Lencioni was a principal resource as well. Prominent readings for this section included *Doing Church as a Team* by Cordeiro and *The Performance Factor* by MacMillan.

The fourth and final phase of the PLG process was developed to improve the participant's ability to strategically plan and lead a corporate group to accomplish the stated goals. The pertinent resources were *Breaking the Missional Code* by Stetzer, *Natural Church Development* by Schwarz, *Outcome* by Passmore, *Simple Church* by Geiger and Rainer, and *WildWorks: Results Based Conversations*, which is developed by WildWorks Group. The readings included: *Advanced Strategic Planning* by Malphurs, *Good to Great* by Collins, *Our Iceberg is Melting* by Kotter and Rathgeber, *Reveal - Where are You?* by Hawkins and Parkinson, *7 Practices of Effective Ministry* by Stanley, Joiner and Jones, and *Transitioning* by Southerland.

In addition to the published material, the following websites were accessed: <http://www.excellerators.org> by General LD Resources, <http://www.leadered.com> by Institute for Leadership in Education, <http://www.coachnet.org/en/> by CoachNet International Ministries, and <http://www.faithwalkleadership.org> by Lead Like Jesus.

### One-on-One Coaching

One-on-one coaching is a higher level of leadership development. The coaching relationship involves proactive attempts by the coach to draw out the desire of the person being coached—to have them verbalize what they think they should do and want to do. The coach then helps to strategize for positive change. In its secular form, coaching helps people do what they want to do. In the Christian approach “coaches walk alongside people throughout the whole process: clarifying goals, brainstorming plans, trying them out, revising them, trying again, and celebrating successes. They help people discover who God made them to be and delight in the unique mission he has called them to accomplish.”<sup>13</sup>

Along with Peer Learning Groups, one-on-one coaching was carefully considered and utilized by the FBC leaders. Al Fernandez is leading the PLG which recently started in South Florida. When asked if PLGs were more effective than one-on-one coaching, Fernandez clarified, “I would say that each has a different role to play. I would say the coaching is what allows us, for the most part, to get them to the Peer Learning Process. It develops our relationships with our pastors.”<sup>14</sup> Coaching helps build trust and friendship. The approach of the coach is to listen and ask questions. The coaching process is: relate, reflect, refocus, resource, and review.<sup>15</sup> It enables the coach or leader “to help the other person accomplish what God wants . . . to do, that person must be the one setting the

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<sup>13</sup> Logan and Carlton, *Coaching 101*, 23.

<sup>14</sup> Fernandez, November 16, 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Logan and Carlton, 29.

agenda and determining what to work on—not the coach.”<sup>16</sup> In the South Florida model, the coaching relationship appears to facilitate the invitation into the PLG program.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 32.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

This study only solicited participation of the pastors, associate pastors, and associational staff members who participated in the four completed Peer Learning Groups of Pensacola, Orlando, and South Florida. The research was conducted in two phases with the participants of the three PLGs in Central and North Florida (Phase One groups) being surveyed in the fall of 2008 and the South Florida participants (Phase Two BUILD group) being surveyed in late 2008 and early 2009.

The research for this investigation could not be accomplished by gathering an adequate compilation of data to objectively measure the numerical impact of the PLGs. The PLGs under consideration have been staggered over a three year period; consequently each is in a different phase of implementation with follow-up meetings. Also, the collection of Annual Church Profiles (ACP) involves a lapse in time which prevents sufficient data to be collected on the latter groups. Therefore, this study is an examination of the *perception of effectiveness* by the leaders and participants of the four groups which have completed the program.

#### **Participation Criterion**

Of the three PLGs being examined in Phase One, each group was chosen by a different means. The initial GOAL PLG in Orlando was formed through an open invitation to informational luncheons. All of the pastors in the GOBA were invited to the



luncheons and the first twelve to sign up formed the PLG.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the group was established on a first come first serve basis. The Pilot 1 PLG in Pensacola was established through a more targeted approach, yet with objective criteria. Twenty-nine of the possible seventy pastors in the PBA were invited to participate by letter from the DOM. Greene explained by saying, “We chose those particular pastors because we believed that out of the 70 plus, these 29 were more likely to be missional in their thinking and leading. We believed these 29 would be receptive to the PLG initiative.”<sup>2</sup> The Pilot 2 PLG participants in the PBA were invited through a one-on-one lunch with the DOM where he explained the process and the benefits. Since the Pilot 1 program was limited to twelve members, several of the Pilot 2 invitees came from that waiting list.

In the Phase Two BUILD group, the participants were chosen by the PLBA and FBC leaders based on the prior coaching process. Through the coaching process, the leaders were able to observe that certain pastors “were learners, pastors that were motivated, pastors that would commit and do what they said they were going to do.”<sup>3</sup> Those pastors were then invited to associational luncheons, one for each of the three associations, where the design of the program was presented and the invitation was extended for participation. The invitation was extended to four pastors from each association. MBA and PLBA were eventually represented by four each and GSBA was represented by one pastor.

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<sup>1</sup> Faulkner, November 4, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Greene and Johnson, November 24, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Fernandez, November 16, 2008.

### Instrumentation and Procedures

The Phase One participants were initially contacted by telephone with the follow-up invitations to participate in the evaluation being sent through email. The gathering of data was accomplished by requesting each participant to complete an online survey through SurveyMonkey.com. The survey was comprised of the Impact Perception Survey (IPS) and Discussion Questions (Appendix A). The leaders of the PLGs and three key FBC leaders, Bob Bumgarner, Cecil Seagle, and Al Fernandez, were asked to complete a short Leader's Questionnaire (Appendix A) giving insight into the genesis of the program, the criterion used to select the participants, and the leader's perspective on the effectiveness of the PLG model. The answers were assimilated and detailed in the following pages. Conclusions were then made based on the findings presented.

	<b>Impact Perception Survey (IPS)</b>	<b>Questionnaire</b>	<b>Delphi Panel</b>	<b>Discussion Questions</b>	<b>Interview</b>
Leaders		X			X
Phase One PLGs	X			X	
Phase Two BUILD PLG Start	X		X	X	
Phase Two BUILD PLG End	X		X	X	
HEP			X	X	

Table 1. Research Instrument Distribution

The Phase Two BUILD group was surveyed using the IPS, Discussion Questions, and a Delphi Panel process. Each of the instruments was utilized at the start of the

BUILD program and near the end of the program. The gathering of the data was accomplished through on-site meetings, electronically through email, and by online surveys conducted through Surveymonkey.com.

The second portion of this study focused on the BUILD PLG in Palm Lake, Gulf Stream, and Miami Baptist Associations. The PLG was personally engaged by the researcher who also participated in the group, but did not complete the research instruments for this study. The group began on August 7, 2008 with a kick-off event where the eight participating pastors completed the Impact Perception Survey to record their expectations and perception of effectiveness. The pastors, through a Delphi Panel process, also detailed their perceptions of the unique characteristics essential for a South Florida pastor to be effective. The list of characteristics was synthesized and sent to the pastors by email to grade on a Likert Scale two subsequent times. The characteristics chosen by the BUILD pastors as the most essential traits were then listed in descending order as ranked by the pastors in the process. The Delphi Panel process was similarly conducted with the eight pastors who met the set criteria as highly effective.

When the BUILD PLG concluded in the summer of 2009, the IPS and the Delphi Panel process were repeated with the eight PLG pastors. The characteristics list was then compared to the one compiled by the same pastors in at the beginning of the process for possible changes. Differences in the ratings were tested using the Mann-Whitney Test to obtain a two-tailed P value which determines whether the differences were considered statistically significant. The data analysis was accomplished utilizing GraphPad Software.

The two PLG Delphi lists were then compared to the list prepared by the HEP for similarities and differences. Conclusions were then drawn based on the findings presented.

### **Research Design Overview**

Multiple survey instruments were utilized in gauging the perception of the leaders and participants of the four PLGs. A forty question online Likert Scale survey, referred to as the Impact Perception Survey (IPS), was designed with the assistance of the Validation Panel. No neutral option was given which forced the respondents to choose in the positive or negative range. This approach was chosen to facilitate the discovery of slight changes in perception in any future follow-up studies. The six choices were graded from 6 to 1. Six represented “strongly agree,” 5 represented “agree,” and 4 represented “somewhat agree.” The negative choices were 3 representing “somewhat disagree,” 2 representing “disagree,” and 1 representing “strongly disagree.” Most questions were asked in a positive form, but some were asked in a negative form in order to avoid perfunctory answers. Additionally, three discussion questions were asked to allow for input beyond the Likert Scale entries.

The Leaders of the PLGs and three key leaders of FBC were surveyed with a Leader’s Questionnaire. The Questionnaire inquired about the observed needs which initiated the PLGs, the definition and model used, the criterion used to choose the participants, and the perceived effectiveness. The leaders were also asked to support their perceptions with foundations for their conclusions. The Leader’s Questionnaires were completed through email with one being completed by telephone interview.

The foundational research instrument utilized in this study was the Delphi Panel approach. This means was only used in Phase Two with the BUILD PLG and the HEP cohort. The essence of this inquiry was to determine if the PLG model has been successful in improving the ministry perspective of the participating pastors. In order to determine improvement—establishing a viable standard was imperative. The determination was made to survey the most successful SBC pastors in South Florida as determined by objective measurements of *reaching* and *teaching*. Once the criterion was set and the pool of eligible candidates had been identified, the invitation was given to participate as a panel member in the Delphi process. Eight pastors were identified as HEP which was a perfect match for the eight BUILD pastors located in the same three South Florida Baptist associations. Consequently, these two groups formed the two panels which completed the Delphi process. The BUILD PLG completed the instrument at the start of the program and again at the end. The HEP group completed the process once during the time the BUILD PLG was progressing through the program.

The Delphi Panel process involved three phases. After securing consent from the potential participants, each was asked to respond to the initial question: “What unique or specific characteristics are needed to be an effective pastor in South Florida?” The responses were then assimilated into a list of traits or characteristics which was developed into an online Likert Scale survey. The second step was to send the survey to the participants by email and then gather the responses. The resulting ratings of the characteristics were averaged and listed with the corresponding trait and sent back to the participants to rate a second time. The purpose of the second rating was to inform each pastor of the previous rating to see if the collective average on the first survey influenced

his second rating. The process had the effect of forming a group judgment on the ratings of each trait.

The original intent of the researcher was to set a threshold for the ratings provided by the respondents to determine the list of the most important characteristics. Each participant was asked to rate each characteristic on a scale of 1 to 5; 1 being the least important and 5 being the most important. Once the surveys were completed, however, the more accurate approach was to determine the top groupings or rankings for comparison of one group to the other. Since the survey pools were small, one dissident could easily skew the entire response level making the threshold inconsistent from one group to the other. As a result, the top grouping of the HEP group was 5.00, the top grouping for the BUILD PLG at the start was 4.88, and the top grouping for the BUILD PLG at the end was 4.63.

## CHAPTER 5

### ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

This section will give an overview of the compilation protocol. Selected input from each of the instruments was analyzed and the most pertinent information is highlighted in this section. The five areas of consideration are in direct correlation with the research questions. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of the research design.

#### **Compilation Protocol**

The objective of the research was to measure the perceived effectiveness of the PLGs as recorded by the leaders and the participants. The goal was to receive input from each of the leaders and participants which would provide a 100 percent involvement in the evaluation process. Therefore, each leader and participant was invited to participate, and each leader and participant completed the research instrument as requested. As a result, this study offers the highest possible feedback for the perceived effectiveness of the PLGs to date.

Four different PLGs and a cohort of HEP were included in this study for a total of five separate groups. In Phase One the two PLGs of Pensacola Baptist Association and the PLG of the Greater Orlando Baptist Association were surveyed using the IPS developed for this study (Appendix A). In Phase Two the BUILD PLG was surveyed at the start and the end of the program using the IPS and the Delphi Panel process. The HEP of South Florida were also surveyed through the Delphi approach. The results of these

surveys were then supplemented by insights from Associational and FBC leaders through questionnaires conducted through email and by telephone.

### Findings

The findings presented below are a combination of the input received on the survey instruments as each pertains to the specific research question in consideration. The questions and findings are listed in the same order as presented in Chapter 1.

#### *Peer Learning Group Participants' Perceptions Of The Effectiveness Of The Program*

The first item on the IPS asked respondents if participation in the Peer Learning Group improved their leadership effectiveness. Thirty-one percent of respondents from Phase One strongly agreed that the PLG had improved their leadership effectiveness, while 58.6% agreed, and 10.4% somewhat agreed. None of the participants disagreed with the statement (Figure 1).

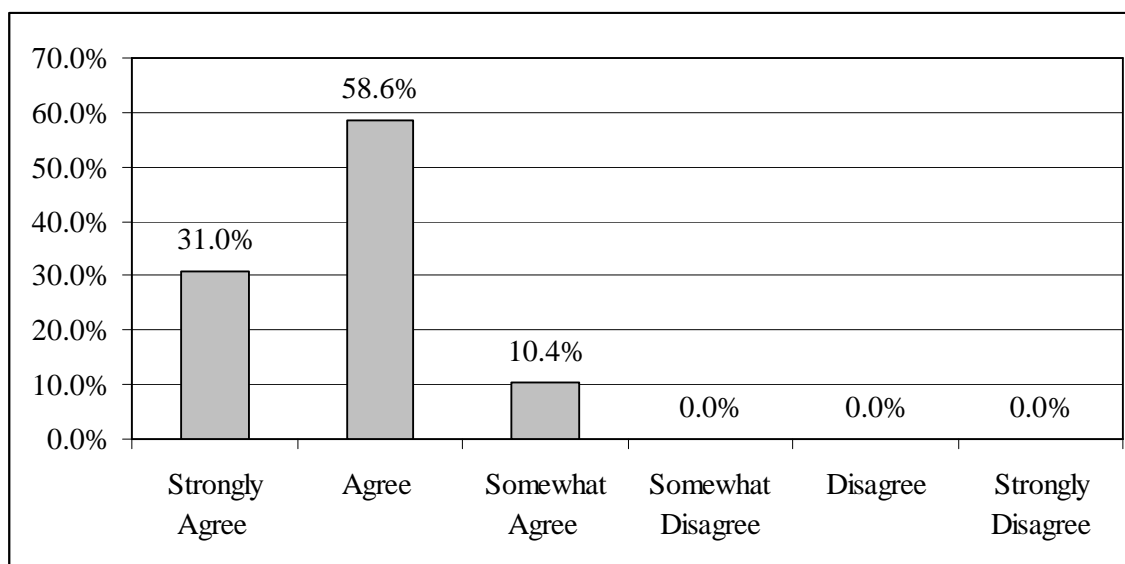


Figure 1. Phase One Groups: Participation in the Peer Learning Group improved my leadership effectiveness



The results from Phase Two were similar. Thirty-seven point five percent of respondents strongly agreed that the PLG had improved their leadership effectiveness, while 50% agreed, and 12.5% somewhat agreed. None of the participants disagreed with the statement (Figure 2).

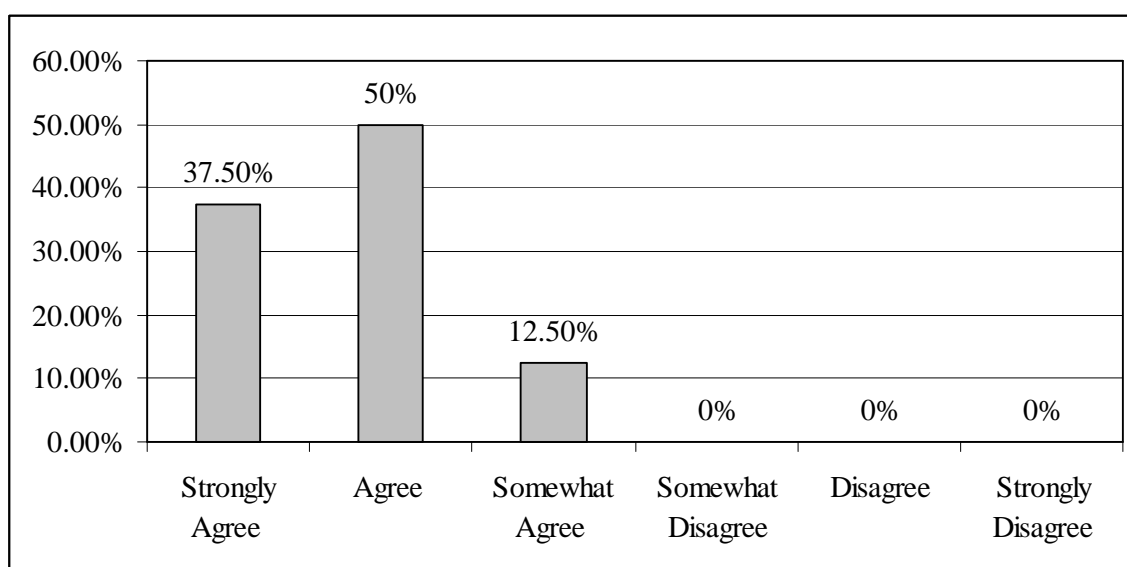


Figure 2. Phase Two BUILD Group: Participation in the Peer Learning Group improved my leadership effectiveness

When the Phase One groups were asked in item 35 of the IPS if the changes brought about by the PLG needed to be made in order to function at the highest level of effectiveness as a pastor, 17.2% strongly agreed, 41.4% agreed, 20.7% somewhat agreed, 13.8% somewhat disagreed, and 6.9% disagreed (Figure 3).

The response to item 35 of the IPS by the BUILD group was much stronger than the Phase One groups. No participant disagreed with the statement. Twelve and one half percent strongly agreed, 62.5% agreed, 25% somewhat agreed that the changes brought about by the PLG needed to be made in order to function at the highest level of pastoral effectiveness (Figure 4).

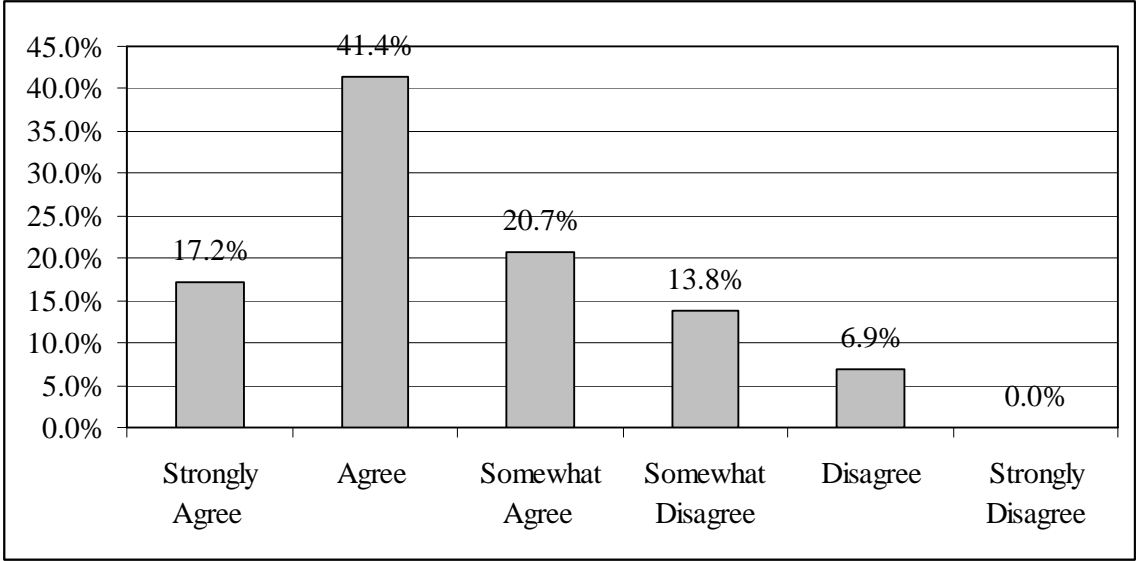


Figure 3. Phase One Groups: I believe I needed to make the changes prompted by my participation in the Peer Learning Group in order to function at the highest level of effectiveness as a pastor

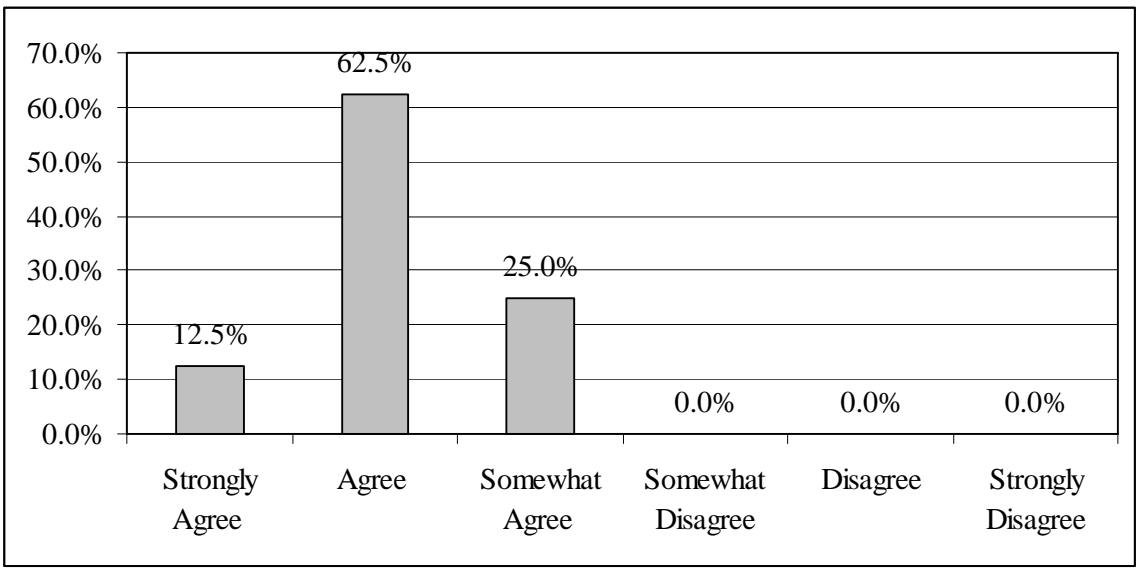


Figure 4. Phase Two BUILD Group: I believe I needed to make the changes prompted by my participation in the Peer Learning Group in order to function at the highest level of effectiveness as a pastor

Question 4 of the IPS probed deeper by asking if the PLG actually provided a needed component for the leader to be more effective. One hundred percent of the registered responses of Phase One were positive with 37.9% in strong agreement, 48.3% in agreement, and 13.8% somewhat in agreement (Figure 5).

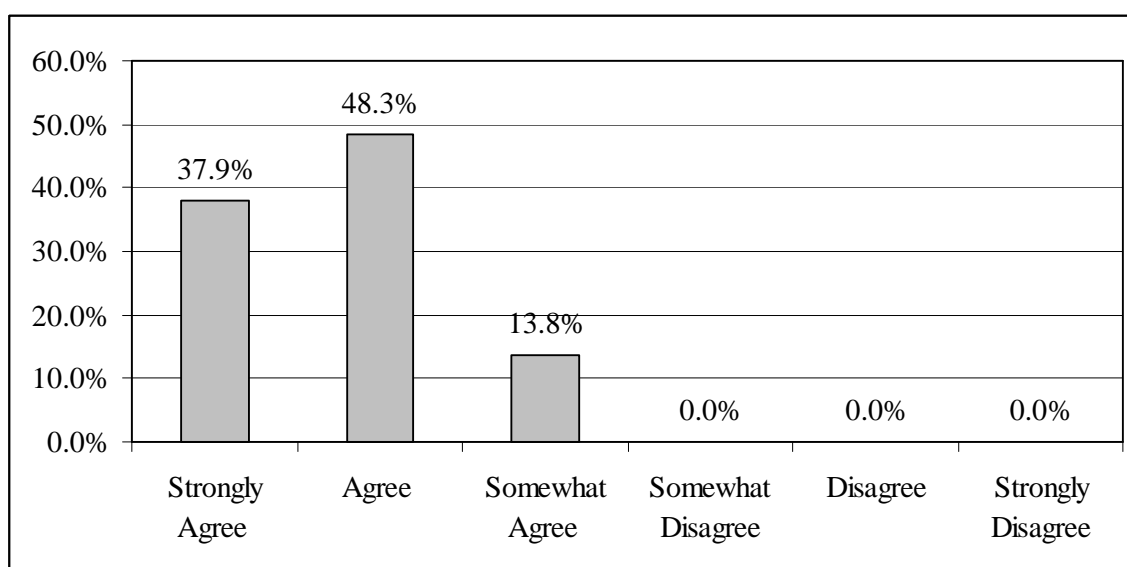


Figure 5. Phase One Groups: The Peer Learning Group provided or enhanced a needed component for me to be more effective as a leader

The BUILD group agreed with the Phase One pastors that the PLG provided or enhanced a needed component for them to be more effective as leaders, but those who strongly agreed was less with 25%. Sixty-seven and one half agreed with the statement and 12.5% somewhat agreed. No respondent disagreed with the statement (Figure 6).

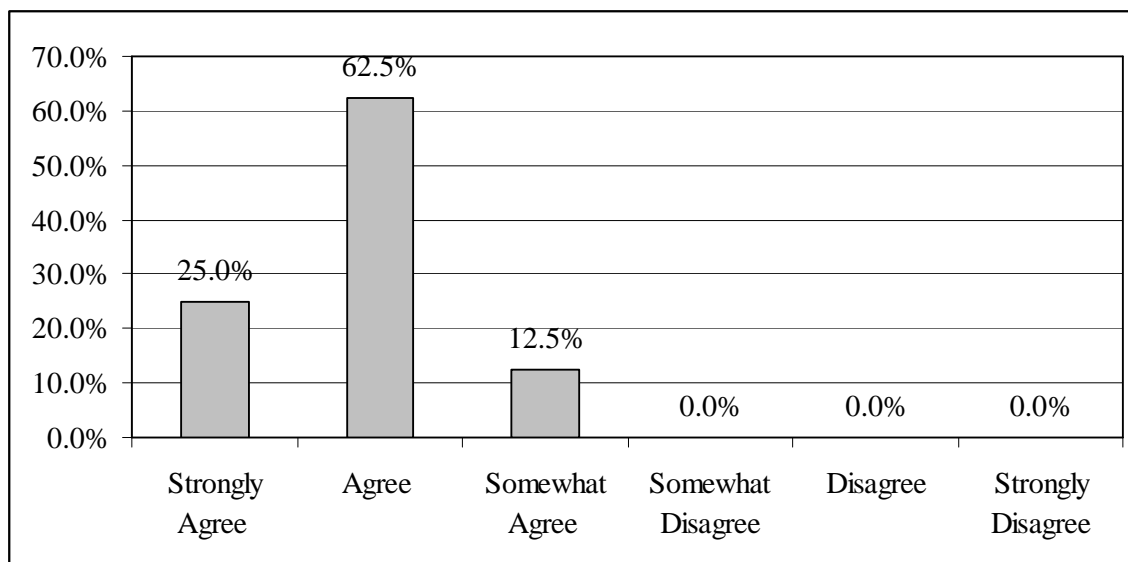


Figure 6. Phase Two BUILD Group: The Peer Learning Group provided or enhanced a needed component for me to be more effective as a leader

### *The Peer Learning Group Leaders' Perceptions Of The Effectiveness Of The Program*

The second research question of this study concerns how the leaders of the PLG program perceive its effectiveness. In response to the Leader's Questionnaire, Cecil Seagle states "a new, fresh, vital partnering process is being formed between denominational leadership and undershepherd leadership."<sup>1</sup> Bob Greene observes that pastors and leaders are no longer content with the status quo and are beginning to ask the right questions. "There is a recognizable momentum among leaders who are involved in the PLG process that is not present in those who are not part of the process."<sup>2</sup> Bill Faulkner agrees with the assessment by adding, "The PLGs have been effective in our

<sup>1</sup> Seagle, November 3, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Greene and Johnson, November 24, 2008.

association. The measure has been the comments from the participants and the implementation of principles learned in the leaders own setting.”<sup>3</sup>

The originator of the program, Bob Bumgarner, states, “Yes I do believe they have been effective. My conclusion has been drawn from the following observations.”

1. Pastors want to be a part of these groups. The groups have multiplied by word of mouth. There has never been a media campaign to try to enlist pastoral leaders. The numbers of groups and participants have increased and in 2009 over 300 pastoral leaders will be involved in this initiative.
2. Initiatives to strengthen community impact of local churches have been started by group participants.
3. Participant pastors are becoming interested in and concerned for the ministry and personal lives of other pastors in their association.
4. Pastors are applying the knowledge and skills they are acquiring in this process in the way they lead their staff and ministry volunteers. DOMs and FBC staff are gaining greater influence in the churches of PLG participants.
5. The relationship between the DOMs and the pastoral staff in the associations with peer learning groups is strengthening dramatically.
6. Culturally diverse contexts are finding the methodology effective for increasing relationships, accountability and reducing pastoral isolation.<sup>4</sup>

### *The Perceived Strengths Of The Program*

As established in the background of this study, the FBC stated outcome for the PLG process is: “Pastors who elevate their own personal leadership in character, passion and life long learning which results in fruitful multiplication of leaders within their churches.”<sup>5</sup> Although a statistical measurement of multiplied leaders would be the objective evaluation of the strength of the program, this finding attempts to record the

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<sup>3</sup> Faulkner, November 4, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Bumgarner, November 16, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Wheeler, August 2, 2008.

perception of strength which may be indicated by the respondents' perceptions. The following four statements which were presented to the participants of the PLGs reveal the perception of the respondents concerning the strengths of the program as it relates to *personal, spiritual, relational, and organizational* effectiveness.

*Personal.* Item 27 of the IPS prompted a response on a personal level as to whether the PLG helped to identify and meet needs. Twenty-seven point six percent of the Phase One groups strongly agreed with the statement, 34.5% agreed, 31% somewhat agreed with only 6.9% who somewhat disagreed (Figure 7).

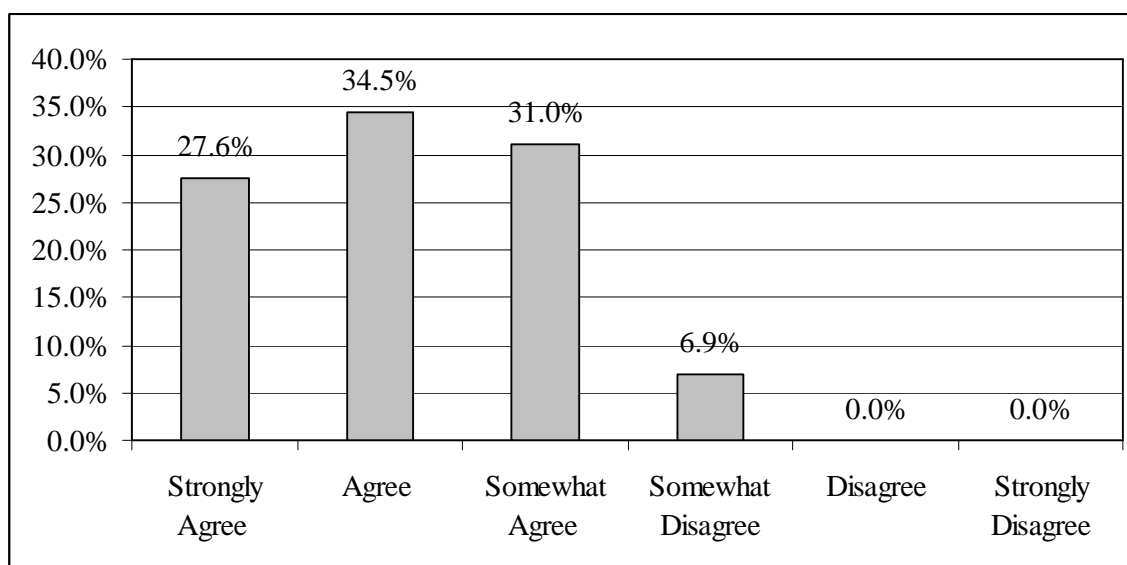


Figure 7. Phase One Groups: I believe that the interactive approach of the Peer Learning Group helped me identify and meet needs in my life

Although 27.6% of the Phase One pastors strongly agreed that the interactive approach helped them identify and meet needs in their lives, only 12.5% of the BUILD pastors strongly agreed. Sixty-two point five percent of the BUILD group agreed with the statement, 12.5% somewhat agreed, and 12.5% somewhat disagreed (Figure 8).

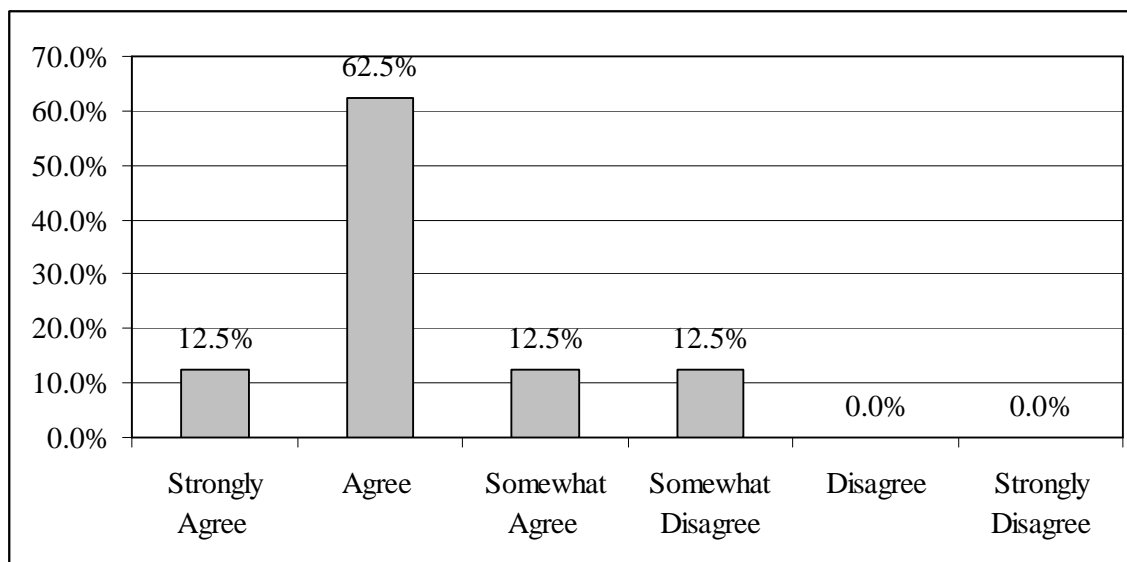


Figure 8. Phase Two BUILD Group: I believe that the interactive approach of the Peer Learning Group helped me identify and meet needs in my life

*Spiritual.* On a spiritual level, item 40 of the IPS elicited responses concerning the PLG effect on the pastor's walk with Christ and spiritual disciplines. Of the 29 respondents, 6.9% recorded they disagreed with the statement and 6.9% somewhat disagreed. Those in agreement included 44.8% who somewhat agreed, 34.5% who agreed, and 6.9% who strongly agreed (Figure 9).

The BUILD PLG responses to the effect on their walk with Christ and spiritual disciplines was 37.5% agreed, 37.5% somewhat agreed, and 25% recorded they somewhat disagreed with the statement (Figure 10).

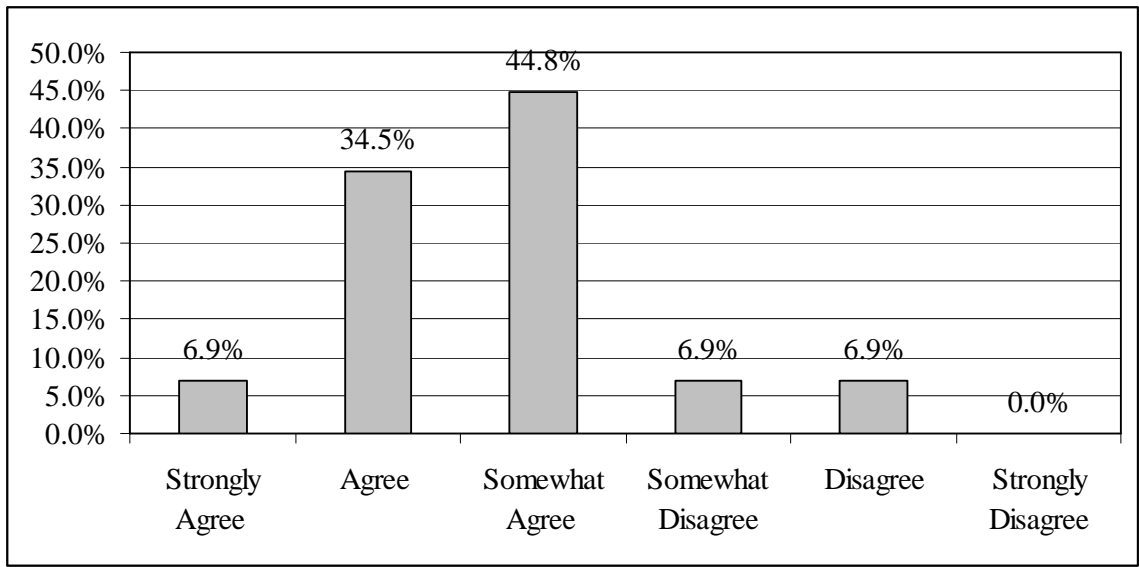


Figure 9. Phase One Groups: I have a deeper walk with Christ and a more disciplined spiritual life due to my participation in the Peer Learning Group

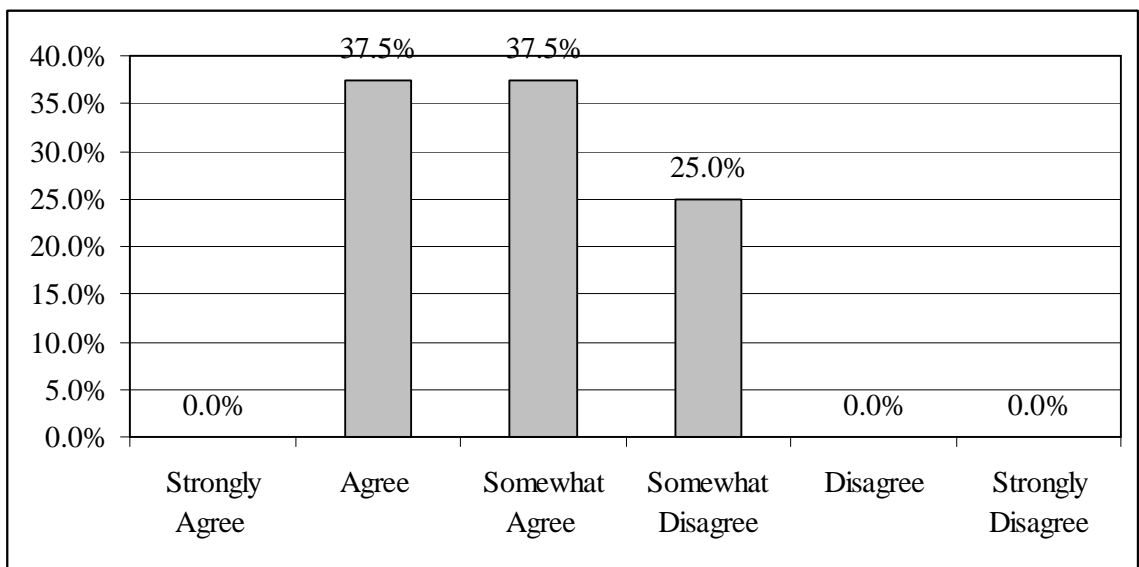


Figure 10. Phase Two BUILD Group: I have a deeper walk with Christ and a more disciplined spiritual life due to my participation in the Peer Learning Group

*Relational.* On the relational front, Phase One participants rated statement 38 of the IPS which concerned better relationships with other pastors and denominational



leaders as a result of the PLG experience. The respondents submitted a 27.6% level of strongly agree, 34.5% who agreed, 27.6% who somewhat agreed, and 10.3% who somewhat disagreed (Figure 11).

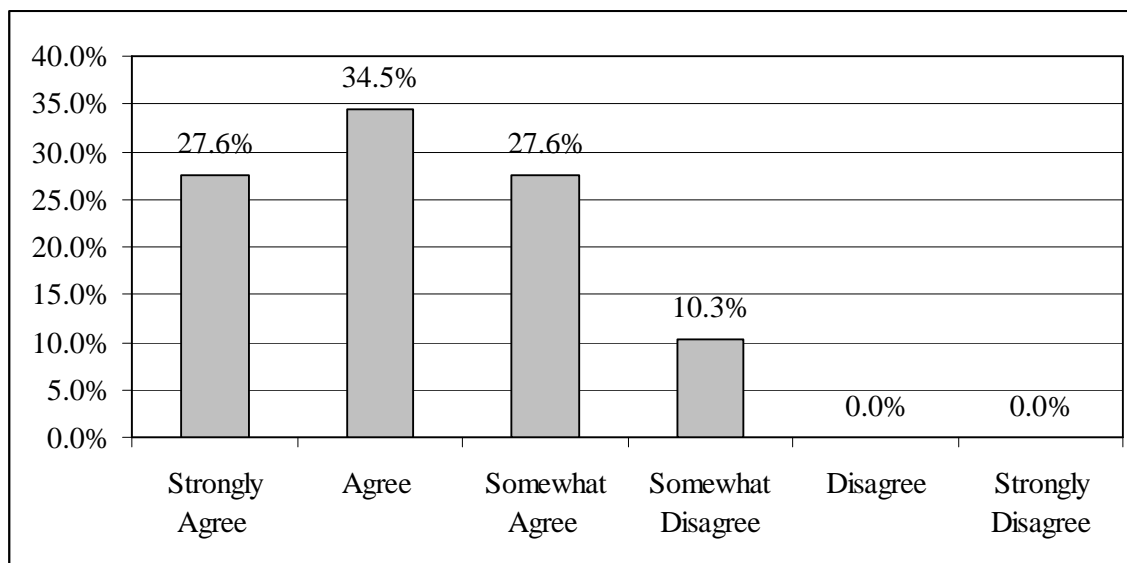


Figure 11. Phase One Groups: I have better relationships with other pastors and denominational leaders based on the Peer Learning Group experience

The BUILD participants appear less enthusiastic concerning the improvement in their relationships with other pastors and denominational leaders than their Phase One counterparts. Only 12.5% rated the statement with strongly agree, 37.5% agreed which was similar to the Phase One groups and 50% somewhat agreed (Figure 12).

*Organizational.* The perceived organizational impact of the Phase One PLG on the participants is indicated by their response to question 37 of the IPS which queried them about the effectiveness of leading their church. Those strongly agreeing is 10.3%, agreeing is 34.5%, somewhat agreeing is 41.4%, and 13.8% somewhat disagree that they

are leading their church in a more positive mode of growth and spirituality as a result of the PLG process (Figure 13).

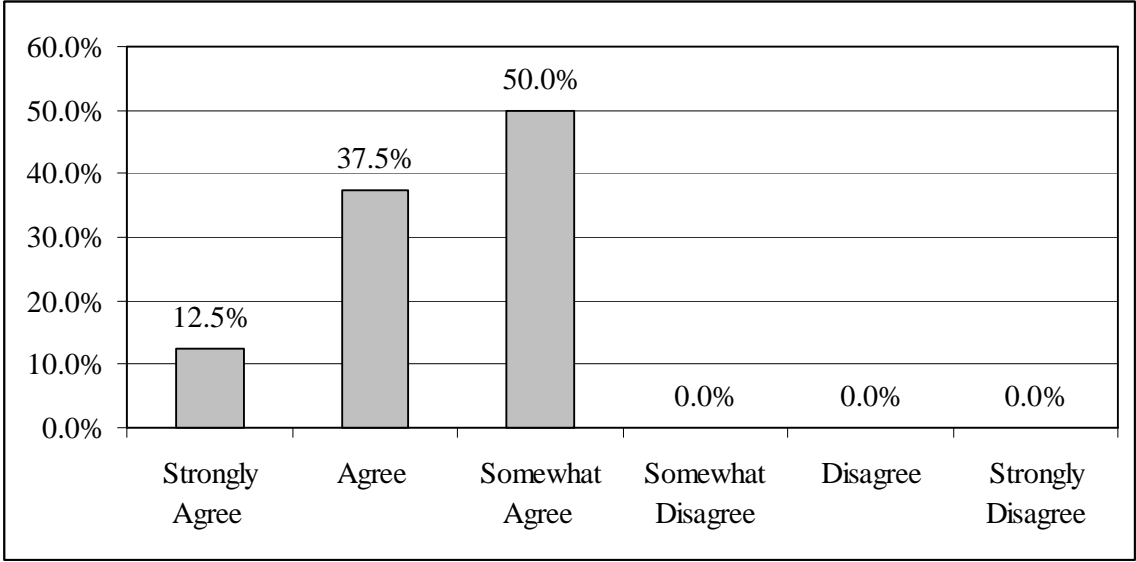


Figure 12. Phase Two BUILD Group: I have better relationships with other pastors and denominational leaders based on the Peer Learning Group experience

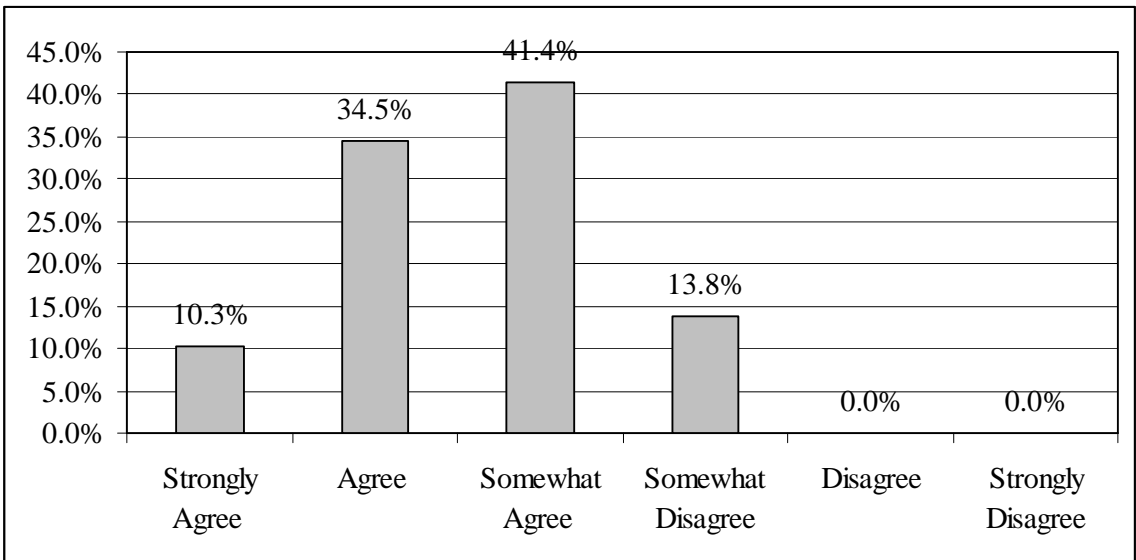


Figure 13. Phase One Groups: I am leading my church into a more positive mode of growth and spirituality based on the implementation of what I learned in the Peer Learning Group

The perceived organizational impact of the Phase Two PLG on the participants is indicated by their response to question 37 of the IPS which asked them about the effectiveness of leading their church. Of the BUILD group respondents, those strongly agreeing that they are leading their church in a more positive mode of growth and spirituality as a result of the PLG process is 12.5%. Those agreeing is 25% and those somewhat agreeing is 62.5%. None of the BUILD pastors disagreed with the statement (Figure 14).

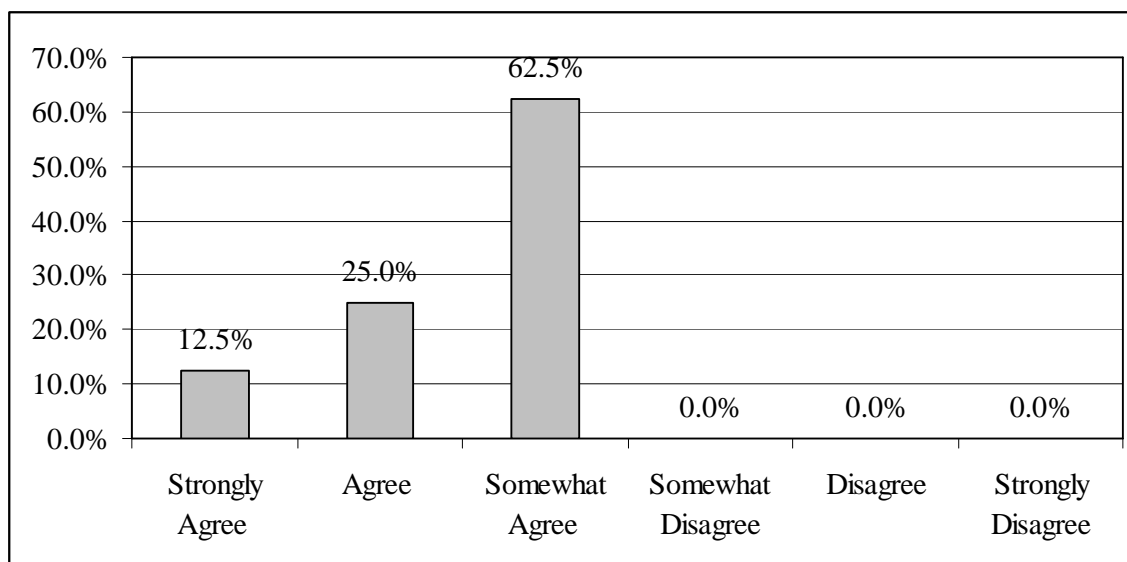


Figure 14. Phase Two BUILD Group: I am leading my church into a more positive mode of growth and spirituality based on the implementation of what I learned in the Peer Learning Group

### *The Perceived Weaknesses Of The Program.*

The Discussion Questions (Appendix A) completed by the participants revealed several perceived weaknesses in the PLG program. A respondent from PBA in Pilot 1 noted that there was “attrition over time.” The dropout rate was a continuing theme in the responses from the first three groups, however no dropout was experienced in the BUILD

group. Although the difficulty of including the PLG time requirements into the pastor's busy schedule, a respondent from PBA Pilot 2 concluded by saying, "In my spirit I would grumble and complain every time I had a meeting. I would consider all of the work that was not being done. I was always wrong. Every meeting was more than worth it."

Additionally, there appeared to be frustration regarding accountability. A respondent in Pilot 2 shared, "The weakest area of the peer learning group is the difficulty of gathering 12 pastors together consistently." This issue was echoed by a GOBA participant who said, "A few of the members were not faithful to the group so it hurt us as a whole." The primary desire expressed by the BUILD group was recorded in the statement of one participant as "I would get much more out of the time if I had done pre-reading. Yet only once were we given a book to read in advance, which I did."

The most prominent element in the responses concerning weaknesses was the matter of time in the PLG sessions and lack of time together outside the official meetings. A Pilot 2 participant articulated the input of many by saying, "In my opinion there was not enough time to cover subjects and classes were too fast paced. It seemed like too often there was a hurry to get done early. When I have to set aside a large block of time in my schedule I like to get as much as possible from the effort." A fellow Pilot 2 respondent added, "Not enough time to adequately discuss the issues being studied. More time is needed." The insight of a Pilot 1 member was, "Sometimes too much information and not enough of wrestling together with some of the tough issues." The need for time together outside the classroom was a common theme in the submissions. A GOBA respondent observed, "Not enough interaction outside of the time together." A Pilot 1

contribution was, “Not enough opportunity for fellowship outside of the structured meetings and few chances to include spouses.”

An issue which was submitted by both PBA groups was the desire to implement the principles being taught sooner in the process. A Pilot 1 participant shared that he felt the leaders “needed to engage participants sooner in actually putting their learning to use.” Another Pilot 2 member lamented about “how to take the information and apply it to our church's and personal lives.”

### *Changed Perceptions Due to BUILD PLG Participation*

The Phase Two BUILD pastors from the South Florida Baptist associations were surveyed at the start of their PLG process and participated in a Delphi Panel to determine “What unique or specific characteristics are needed to be an effective pastor in South Florida?” Each pastor listed characteristics which were then synthesized into a list which was redistributed to the pastors in an online Likert Scale survey. The pastors then rated the characteristics from 1 to 5; 1 being least important and 5 being most important. The rating average was then added to the characteristic description and the pastors were asked a second time to rate the characteristics by taking the average rating of the previous round into consideration. The effect of the process was that of a group judgment concerning the rating and ranking of the characteristics. The top ten characteristics of the Delphi Panel for the BUILD PLG at the start of the program are shown (Figure 15) and listed below with the corresponding characteristics from the Delphi Panel completed at the end of the PLG. Some characteristics were not mentioned by the same pastors at the end of the process after completing the PLG program. Some of the characteristics increased in rating and ranking while some traits decreased in rating and ranking.

The following chart (Figure 15) demonstrates the distribution of the top characteristics chosen by the BUILD PLG at the start of the program. The top four groupings or rankings were chosen for comparison with the list developed through the Delphi process at the end of the program and the list compiled by the HEP group. The four top rankings were rated at 4.88, 4.75, 4.63, and 4.50 on a 5.00 scale. A total of fourteen traits were included in the top rankings at the start of the PLG program. None of the characteristics were rated 5.00 by the entire BUILD PLG—at the start or at the end.

The three top ranking characteristics which rated 4.88 each were:

- Committed to authentic spiritual growth (Engages in a process of personal spiritual development).
- Passionate (Enthusiastic about life and ministry).
- Integrity (The resolve to live by biblical standards regardless of the personal consequences).

Although the trait of being *committed to authentic spiritual growth* was one of the top ranked traits in the Delphi Panel at the start of the PLG and received a rating of 4.88 out of a maximum possibility of 5.00, the PLG did not include the trait at the end of the program. The characteristic of passionate enthusiasm about life and ministry was repeated as *Spiritually passionate*, but dropped in rating from 4.88 to 4.25 and dropped in ranking from the top grouping to the fourth grouping. With the application of the Mann-Whitney Test, the two-tailed P value is 0.0878 which is considered not quite significant. Any P value less than .05 would be considered significant. In other words, the difference between the two ratings of the same characteristic, by the same respondents, is not statistically significant and can not be utilized to highlight a change in the perspective of

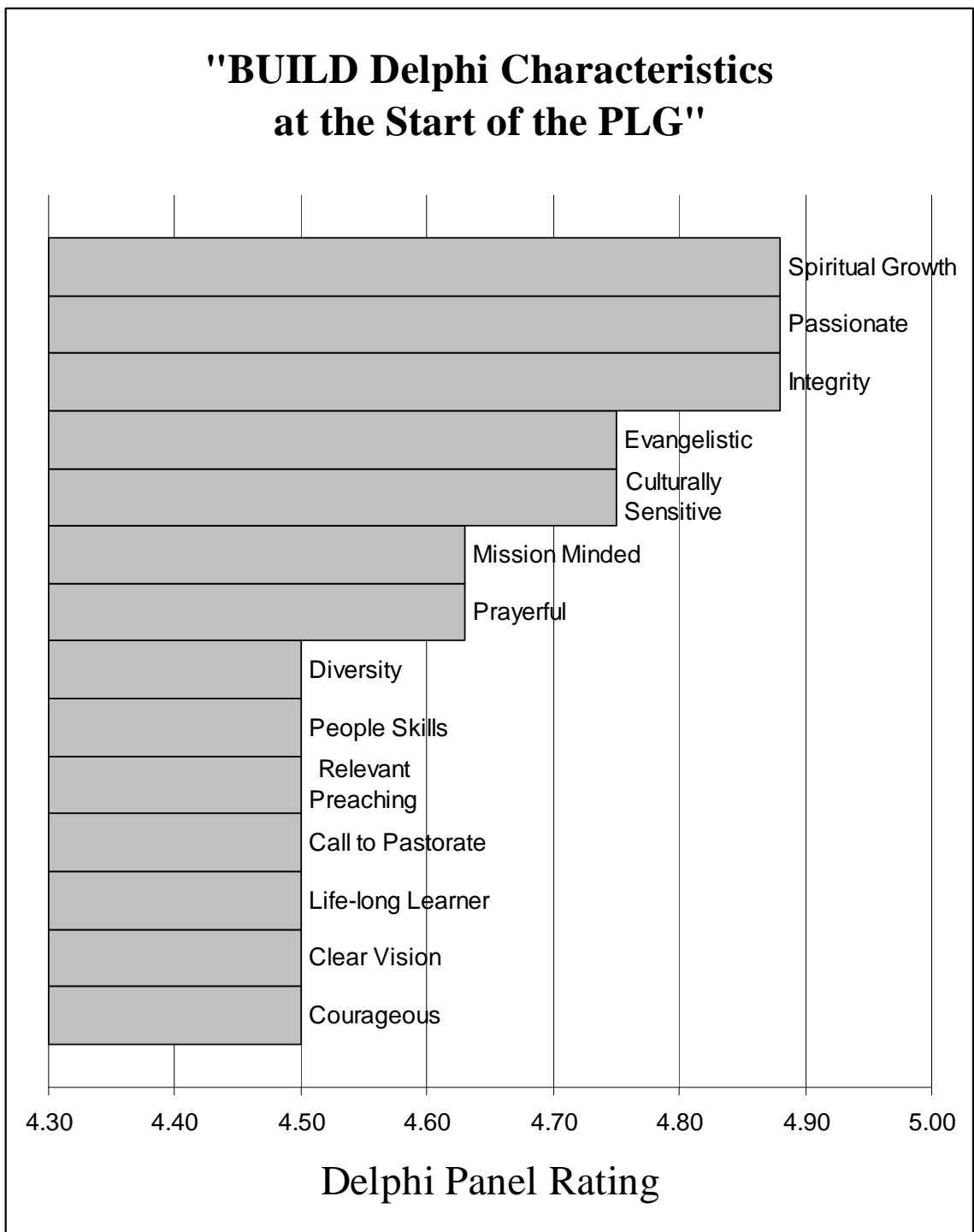


Figure 15. The Delphi ratings by the BUILD PLG at the start of the program

the participants for the *Passionate* trait. The characteristic of *Integrity* was also ranked at the top of the list at the start of the PLG and continued to be in the top group at the end of the PLG with a rating of 4.63.

The following chart (Figure 16) details the top four rankings or groupings of characteristics as presented by the BUILD PLG at the end of the program. The four top ratings were 4.63, 4.50, 4.38, and 4.25 on a 5.00 scale. Thirteen traits were included in the top rankings at the end of the PLG program; none of which were rated 5.00 by the entire BUILD PLG. Four previous traits did not appear and five new traits were added implying that the PLG program may have affected the perspective of the participants.

The second grouping of characteristics in the Delphi Panel conducted at the start of the BUILD PLG consisted of:

- Evangelistic (Committed to clearly and consistently emphasizing evangelism.)
- Culturally sensitive (Empathizes with and responsive to different cultures.)

Each of the two traits were rated 4.75 at the start of the program. *Evangelistic* was rated a little lower at 4.63 by the end of the program, but the trait had moved into the top ranking group. *Culturally sensitive* was also rated 4.75 at the start and rated lower by the end of the program at 4.38 moving the trait to the third group by rank. Even though the rating dropped, the Mann-Whitney Test shows a P value of 0.2180 which is considered not a significant change.



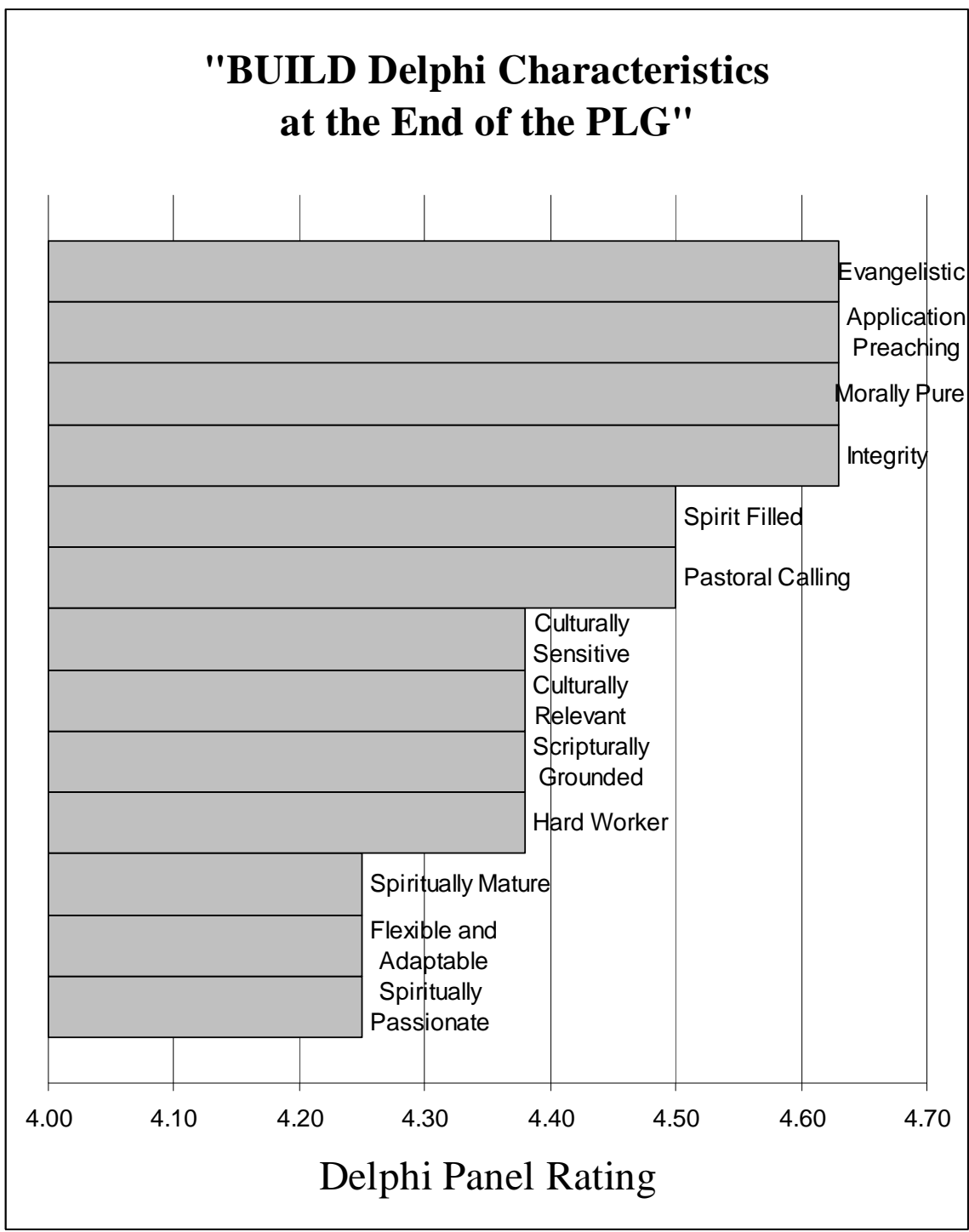


Figure 16. The Delphi ratings by the BUILD PLG at the end of the program

The third grouping of traits in the first Delphi Panel of the BUILD PLG consisted of:

- Mission minded (A ministry philosophy which focuses on the Great Commission) and
- Prayerful (Committed to a disciplined lifestyle of prayer)

Each trait was rated 4.63. Although *Mission minded* emerged in the third grouping at the start of the PLG process, it did not appear in the characteristics compiled at the end of the program. *Prayerful* was placed in the third grouping at the start of the PLG, but dropped to the fifth grouping by the end of the program with a rating of 4.13; however the Mann-Whitney Test determined a P value of 0.1519 which is not considered statistically significant.

The fourth grouping of characteristics as rated by the BUILD PLG at the start of the program consists of seven traits as follows:

- Appreciation for diversity (Accepts people regardless of their race, culture, or economic status).
- People skills (The ability to effectively interact and positively influence others).
- Relevant preaching (Seeks to emphasize life application in preaching and teaching).
- Strong sense of call (Convinced of God's divine call to South Florida ministry).
- Life-long learner (An attitude and lifestyle which embraces opportunities for learning and self-improvement).
- Clear vision (An identified strategy to reach a preferred future).
- Courageous (Willingness to face difficult situations in order to accomplish a specific purpose).

These seven traits were each rated 4.50. *Appreciation for diversity* appeared in the list of traits at the end of the program as *Culturally sensitive and inclusive* with a rating of 4.38

and moved from the fourth grouping to the third ranking. *People skills* dropped from the fourth grouping to the fifth grouping with a rating of 4.13. *Relevant preaching* moved from the fourth ranking to the top ranking by the end of the program with a rating of 4.63, but it was not a statistically significant change. *Strong sense of call* maintained the 4.50 rating, but elevated to the second grouping. *Life-long learner* received a 4.13 rating at the end and moved down into the fifth grouping. With a two-tailed P value of 0.2869, the change is not considered significant. Neither *Clear vision* nor *Courageous* appeared on the characteristics list prepared by the BUILD pastors at the end the program.

In summary, of the traits which reappeared on the characteristics list at the end of the PLG program, none changed enough in ratings to be considered statistically significant. However, four of the traits first listed with a rating of 4.50 or higher were dropped from the list entirely by the end of the PLG program. These traits were: (1) *Committed to authentic spiritual growth*, (2) *Mission minded*, (3) *Clear vision* and (4) *Courageous*. Consequently, of the fourteen highest rated and ranked characteristics listed by the BUILD PLG at the start of their program, there was no significant change in ten of the traits, but four of the top traits were completely absence from the list at the end of the program.

Although four traits were dropped from the list, five new traits appeared on the list and were ranked within the top four groupings. The new characteristics were: *Spirit filled* (4.50), *Scripturally grounded* (4.38), *Hard worker* (4.38), *Spiritually mature* (4.25), and *Flexible and adaptable* (4.25).

### *Alignment of BUILD PLG Perceptions with HEP Perceptions*

The movement of perception within the BUILD PLG from the start of the program to the end as documented above can not be analyzed in isolation. There must be a standard in order to compare and measure the changes in relation to perspectives that are proven to be effective in the pastorate in South Florida. To obtain the working standard, the eight most highly effective pastors in the Southern Baptist Convention in the PLBA, GSBA, and MBA were engaged in a Delphi Panel process identical to the research instrument employed with the BUILD PLG.

The eight churches were chosen based on the longevity of the pastor and the baptism ratio as detailed in this study. The eight churches had average worship attendances in 2007 from 530 in the smallest to 6,218 in the largest. The average worship attendance of the eight churches was 2,340 (Figure 17) with an average number of 305 baptisms in each church (Figure 18). The total combined average number of attendees each Sunday was 18,717. The total number of baptisms in 2007 by the eight churches was 2,439 for a total average worship attendance to baptism ratio of 7.67 to 1. Conversely, the eight churches represented in the Phase Two BUILD PLG had average worship attendances in 2007 from 90 in the smallest to 549 in the largest. The average worship attendance of the eight churches was 200 (Figure 19) with an average number of 13 baptisms in each church (Figure 20). The total combined number of attendees each Sunday was 1,599. The total number of baptisms in 2007 by the eight churches was 105 for a total average worship attendance to baptism ratio of 15.23 to 1. The following table displays this data (Table 2).

2007	Average Worship Attendance	Average Baptisms	Total Worship Attendance	Total Baptisms	Baptism Ratio
HEP Churches	2,340	305	18,717	2,439	7.67:1
BUILD Churches	200	13	1,599	105	15.23:1

Table 2. Comparison of HEP and BUILD PLG Churches

Consequently, since the HEP were twice as efficient in baptisms as the BUILD pastors, the HEP were chosen to establish the standard for perceptions of effectiveness in South Florida and the BUILD pastors perceptions were compared to the standard. While some may argue that being a bigger church is not necessarily better, the objective statistics show that the eight churches that are most effectively reaching and teaching are also among the largest. Figures 17, 18, 19, and 20 give a revealing visual of the growth direction of each group of churches and demonstrate the logic in choosing the HEP churches to create the standard by which the BUILD churches were compared. The comparison gives indicators as to whether any changes in the BUILD pastors' perceptions are in a direction which will prove to be more effective based on their alignment with the perceptions of the HEP.

It is not within the scope of this study to make a *spiritual distinction* between the two groups of pastors based on the number in attendance or the number of baptisms in their respective churches. On the contrary, it is the belief of this researcher that—although spiritual blessings follow pastors who are obedient to spiritual principles—the primary differences between the highly effective pastors and those who are less effective revolve around issues other than their spiritual depth and faithfulness to Christ.

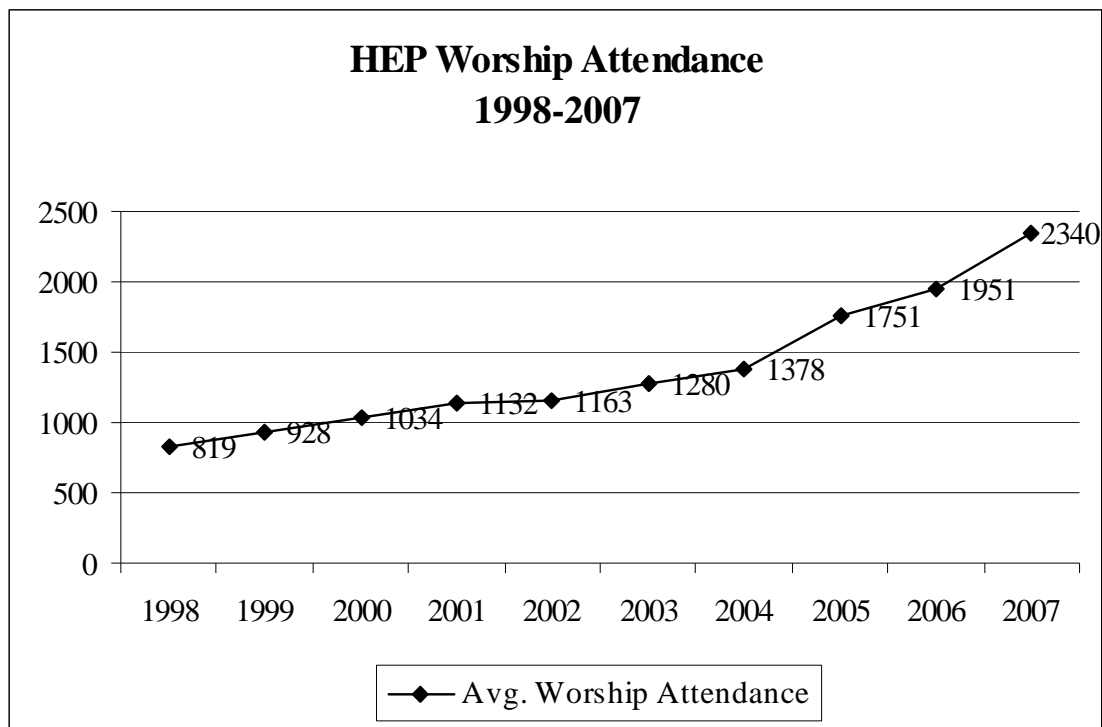


Figure 17. Worship Attendance in Churches of Highly Effective Pastors

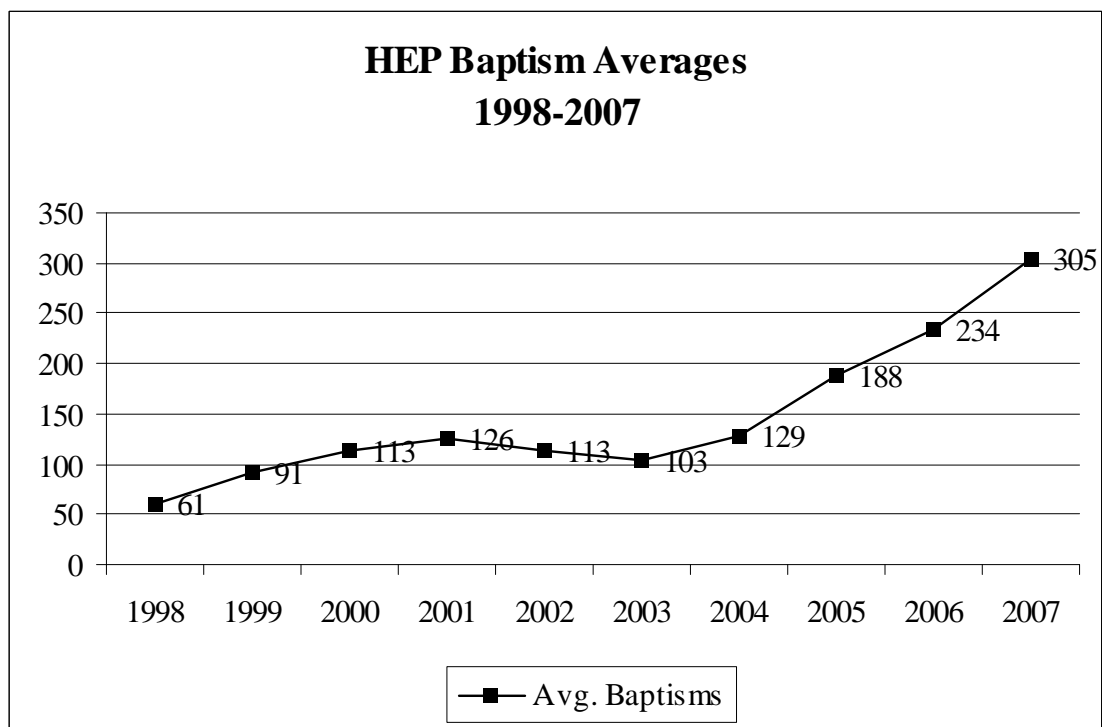


Figure 18. Baptisms in Churches of Highly Effective Pastors

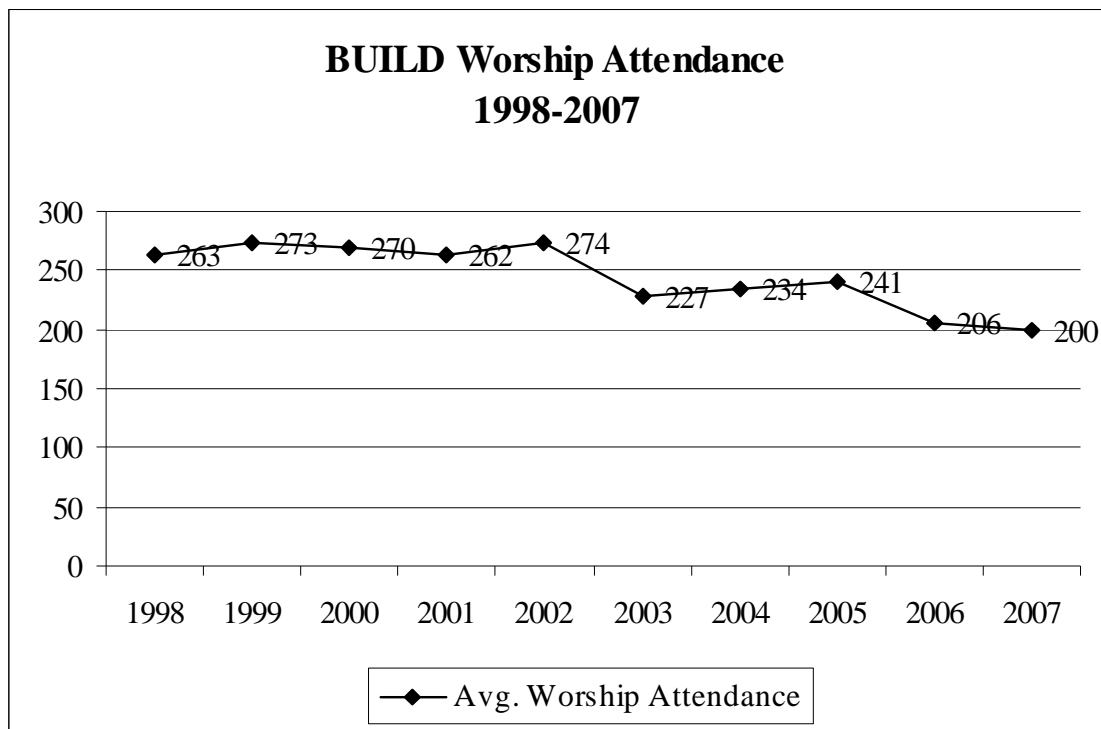


Figure 19. Worship Attendance in Churches of BUILD Pastors

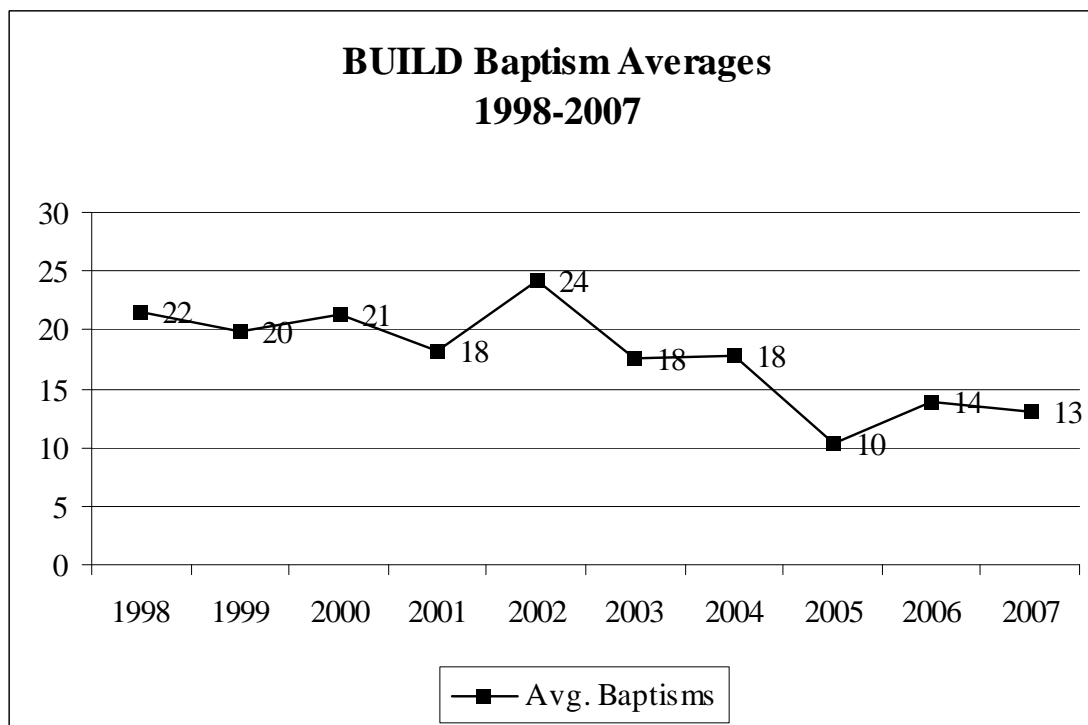


Figure 20. Baptisms in Churches of BUILD Pastors

Therefore, the thrust of this research is to discover the differences in perspectives between the two groups and to evaluate the helpfulness of the PLG leadership development model in bridging the gap.

The perspectives of the HEP are delineated in the results of the Delphi Panel which yielded fifteen characteristics in four groupings. The traits are listed below with the ratings and also shown in chart form (Figure 21):

- Puts God first in ministry, 5.00.
- Is led by the Holy Spirit, 5.00.
  
- Possesses evangelistic passion, 4.88.
- Gives strong Pastoral Leadership, 4.88.
- Constantly casts a clearly defined and compelling vision, 4.88.
  
- Demonstrates long term Pastoral commitment, 4.75.
- Exemplifies personal resilience, 4.75.
- Demonstrates personal spiritual integrity, 4.75.
- Works hard, 4.75.
- Shows commitment to the biblical purposes of the church, 4.75.
  
- Embraces cross cultural outreach, 4.63.
- Operates in faith, 4.63.
- Sets the example across the board, 4.63.
- Holds unwaveringly to doctrinal positions, 4.63.
- Resistant to complacency, 4.63.

Based on the logic presented in this study, these fifteen traits will serve as the standard for the unique or specific characteristics which are needed to be an effective pastor in South Florida. The submissions by the BUILD pastors at the start of the program and again at the end of the program will be compared to these standards to determine if the PLG experience facilitated the group moving closer to the perceptions of the HEP.



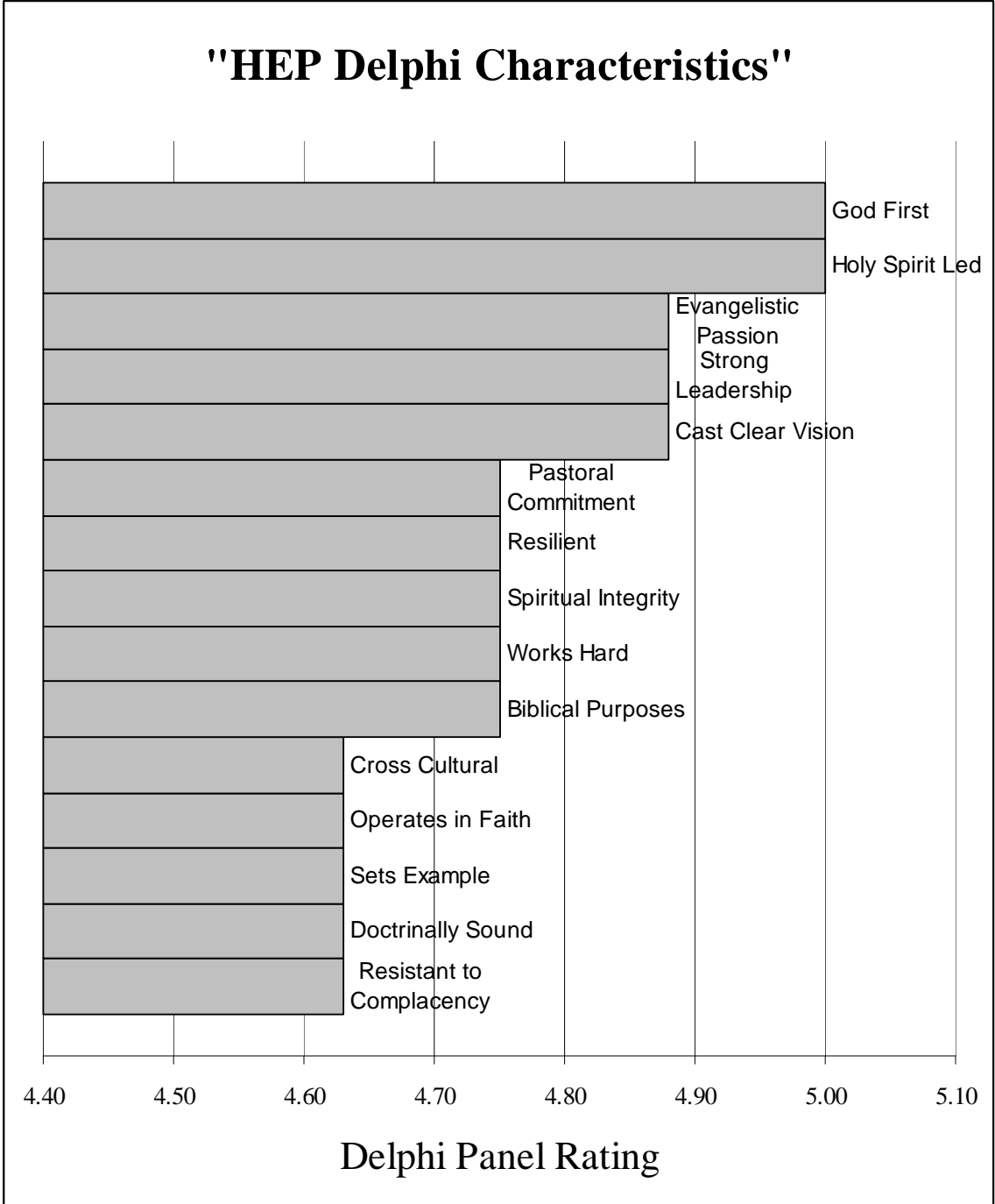


Figure 21. The four top rankings of characteristics by the HEP

According to Tim Passmore in his book *Outcome*, “The correct passion is a passion for God. The ministries of the church should exist to fulfill the commands to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to reveal this love by serving others”<sup>6</sup> *Puts God first in ministry* was one of only two traits which received a perfect 5.00 rating by the HEP respondents. However, the BUILD pastors did not include the characteristic of placing God first in ministry in their listing at the start or at the end of the program.

Overall, twenty-one characteristics were listed by the HEP that were not given by the BUILD PLG at the start of the program or at the end. The list, along with the corresponding rating given by the HEP, is provided below in descending order:

1. Puts God first in ministry, 5.00.
2. Demonstrates long term Pastoral commitment, 4.75.
3. Shows commitment to the biblical purposes of the church, 4.75.
4. Sets the example across the board, 4.63.
5. Resistant to complacency, 4.63.
6. Resists manipulation by power brokers, 4.50.
7. Emphasizes biblical stewardship, 4.38.
8. Protects the integrity of the point leadership positions, 4.38.
9. Operates with a high level of personal self-control, 4.25.
10. Confident of calling to a specific church, 4.25.
11. Experiences Holy discontentment with falling short of God’s plan for the church, 4.25.

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<sup>6</sup> Tim Passmore, *Outcome: A Blueprint for Becoming an Effective Church* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 2006), 149.

12. Strives for a balanced commitment to evangelism and discipleship, 4.13.
13. Has realistic perception of the community's spiritual condition, 4.00.
14. Strategically hires staff to balance own strengths and weaknesses, 4.00.
15. Provides multiple entry points and strategies for people to connect with the church, 3.88.
16. Possesses an appropriate skepticism of salvation experiences, 3.63.
17. Sensitive to generational diversity, 3.63.
18. Organizes an array of opportunities for service and ministry in the church and the community, 3.63.
19. Resists the temptation to measure effectiveness solely by numerical growth, 3.38.
20. Has tolerance for other value systems, 3.13.
21. Recognizes the varying socio-economic needs of youth, 2.88.

The presence of each of these traits may or may not be significant depending on the threshold established. For example, *Recognizes the varying socio-economic needs of youth* received a very low rating and was ranked last by the HEP. Nevertheless, consideration of the characteristics included by the HEP within the top four groupings (ratings of 4.63 and higher) but absent from the traits given at the start and at the end of the BUILD PLG is warranted.

*Is led by the Holy Spirit* was the second characteristic to receive a 5.00 rating from the HEP cohort. The BUILD group did not include the trait in the first submission, but did include *Spirit filled* with a 4.50 rating in the end survey (Figure 22).

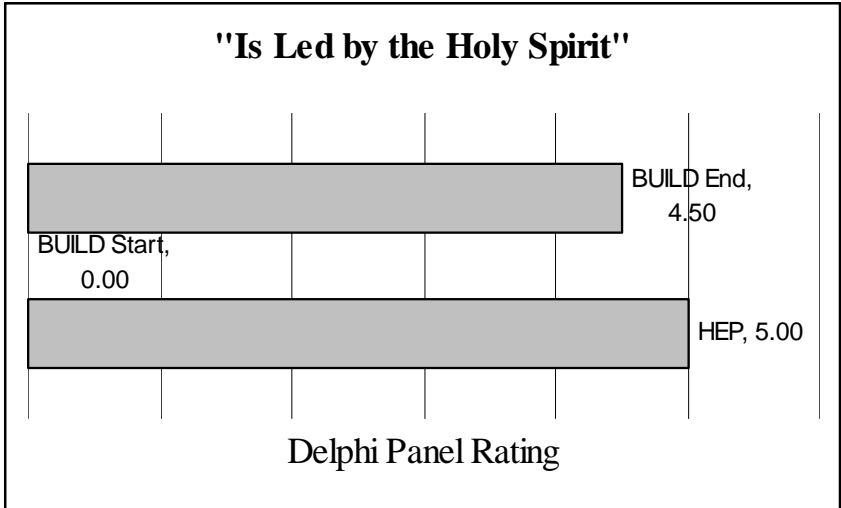


Figure 22. Rating comparison for leading of Holy Spirit

*Possesses evangelistic passion* received a 4.88 rating from the HEP group and fell within the second ranking. The BUILD PLG rated evangelistic with a 4.75 in the second ranking and with a 4.63 rating in the end survey placing it in the top ranking (Figure 23).

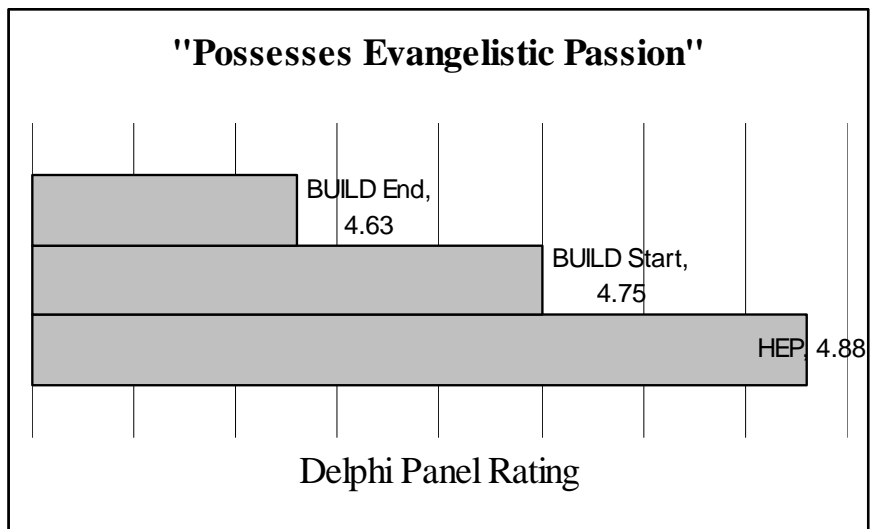


Figure 23. Rating comparison of Evangelist Passion

The trait of a pastor that *gives strong leadership* was rated 4.88 by the HEP which placed it in the second grouping. The BUILD PLG also included the trait with a rating of 4.13 at the start of the program and a rating of 3.75 at the end of the program. The two-tailed P value is 0.0127 for the difference between the HEP rating and the BUILD start rating—which is considered statistically significant. The P value for the difference between the HEP and BUILD end rating is 0.0083, which is considered very significant. Thus, there is a considerable difference of perspective between the HEP and the BUILD pastors with the margin widening over the course of the PLG program (Figure 24).

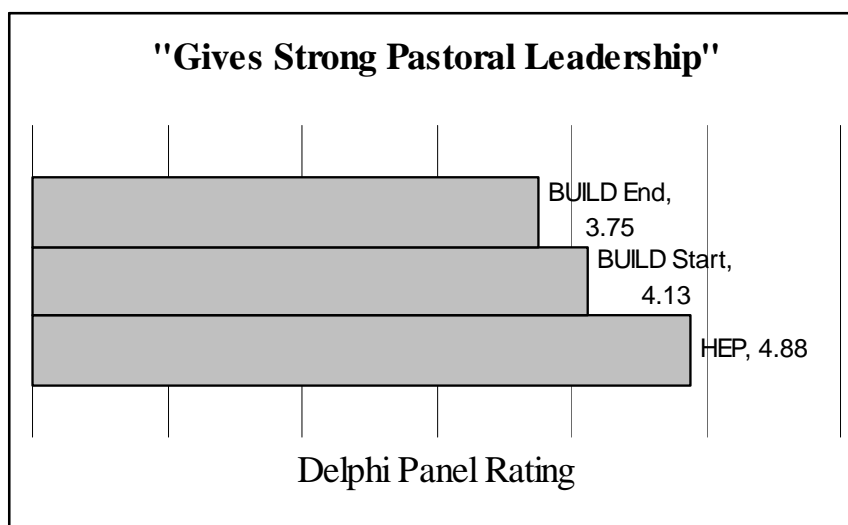


Figure 24. Rating comparison of Strong Pastoral Leadership

Most church growth experts agree that *casting a compelling vision* is a fundamental element of effective leadership. The HEP agree with that premise and rated the factor at 4.88. The BUILD PLG also seemed to agree by rating the trait at 4.50 at the start of the program. The trait did not reappear, however, at the end of the program (Figure 25).

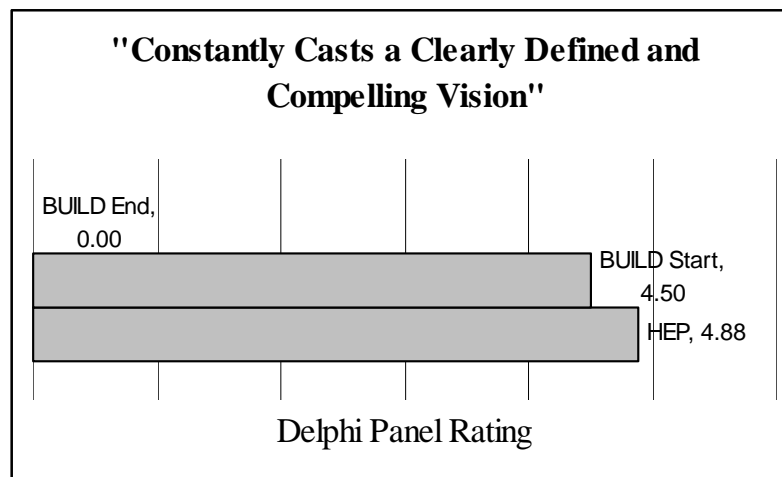


Figure 25. Rating comparison of Constantly Casts Clear Vision

“The issue of long tenure is critical,” according to Rainer “because much of the transition to greatness is a long-term process”.<sup>7</sup> The HEP concurred with a rating for *demonstrate long term pastoral commitment* of 4.75. Data reveals that the average tenure of the HEP is 13 years while the average tenure for the BUILD PLG pastors is 7.88 years. The BUILD pastors did not list long term pastoral commitment as a needed characteristic of a South Florida pastor for effectiveness (Figure 26).

According to a 4.75 rating by the HEP, an effective pastor *exemplifies personal resilience*. The BUILD pastors agreed with a 4.38 rating at the start and a 4.25 rating at the end. The starting BUILD PLG described this characteristic as, *the dogged determination to endure difficulties in order to accomplish goals* (Figure 27).

All three surveys indicated a strong opinion about the necessity of demonstrating personal spiritual integrity. The HEP rated the trait as 4.75 while the BUILD PLG gave start and end ratings of 4.88 and 4.63 (Figure 28).

<sup>7</sup> Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 66.

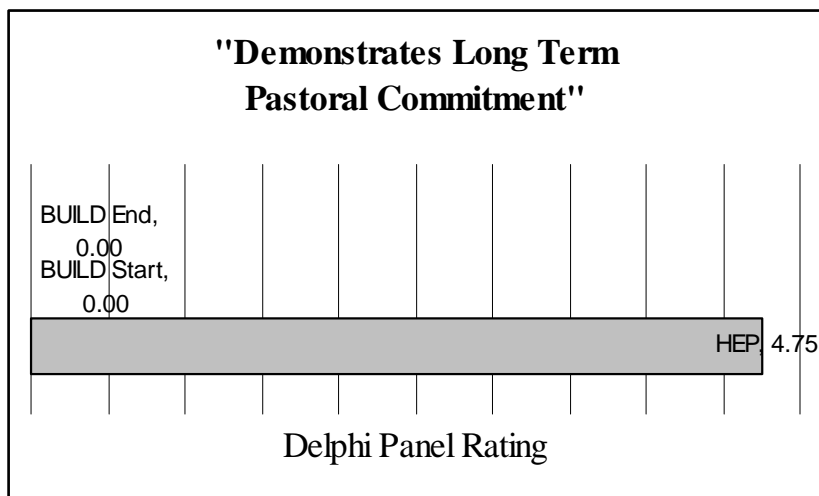


Figure 26. Rating comparison of Long Term Pastoral Commitment

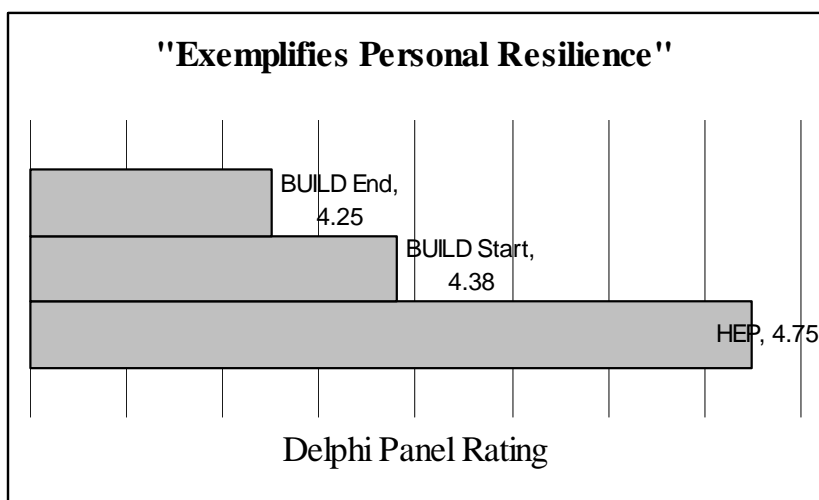


Figure 27. Rating comparison of Exemplifies Personal Resilience

David Nelms, one of the HEP and Pastor of Grace Fellowship, has led his church from an attendance of under one thousand in 2000 to over three thousand in 2009. In a personal interview he stated that he didn't "believe a pastor can lead his church the way he should without putting in at least sixty hours per week."<sup>8</sup> The other HEP recorded their collective perspective in rating the *works hard* trait as 4.75. Statistically the differences

<sup>8</sup> David Nelms, interview with researcher, May 19, 2009.

between the HEP rating and the two ratings from the BUILD PLGs are not significant, but it is encouraging to see that the BUILD rating increased by the end of the program (Figure 29).

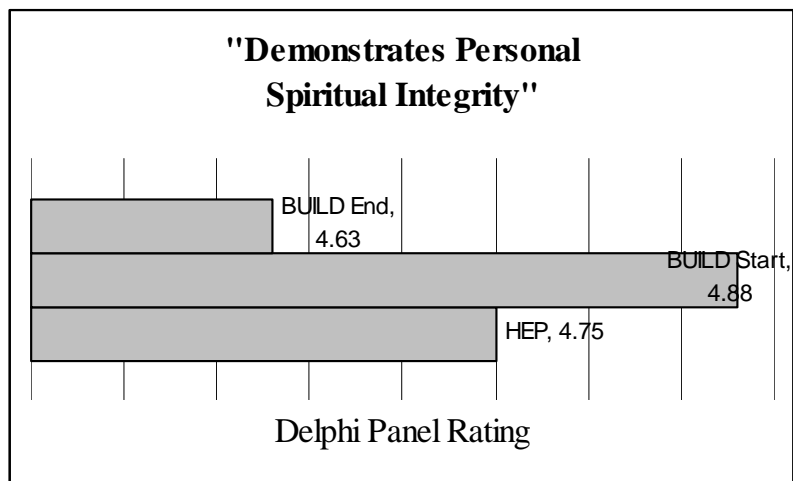


Figure 28. Rating comparison of Demonstrates Spiritual Integrity

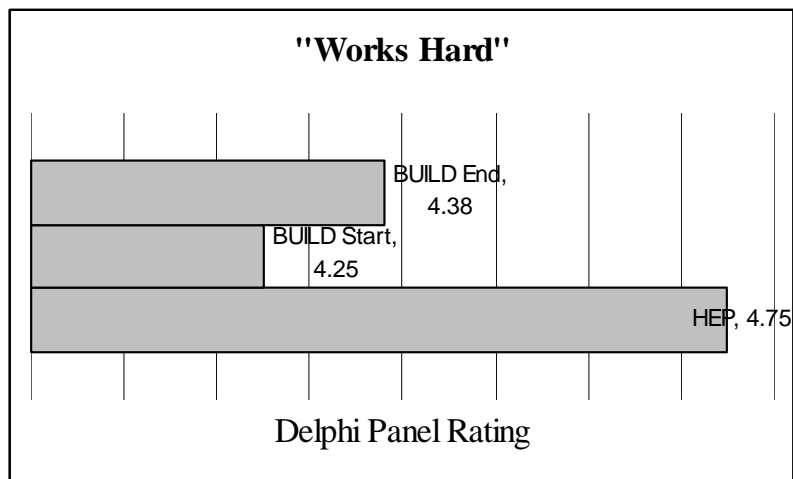


Figure 29. Rating comparison of Works Hard

The HEP seem to be clear on their mandate to *show commitment to the Biblical purposes of the Church*. They gave a rating of 4.75 as opposed to their BUILD counterpart which did not list the characteristic in either survey (Figure 30).



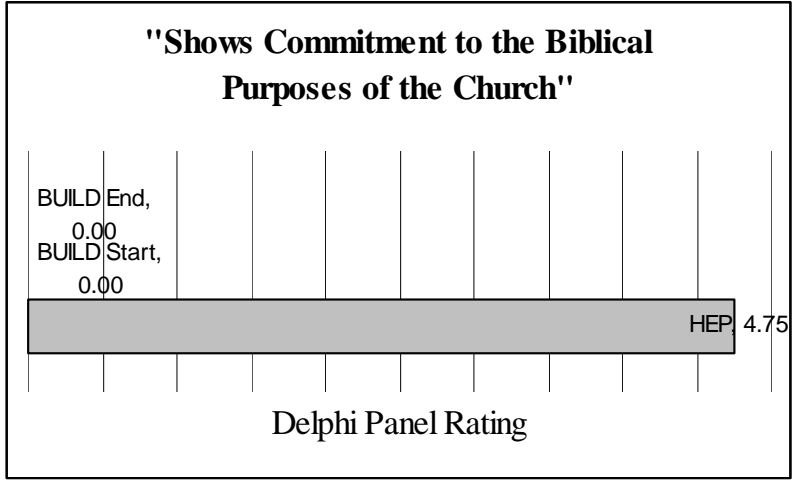


Figure 30. Rating comparison of Commitment to Church Purposes

Both groups *embraced cross cultural outreach* as a needed characteristic with high marks of 4.63, 4.50, and 4.38 from the HEP and BUILD PLG respectively (Figure 31).

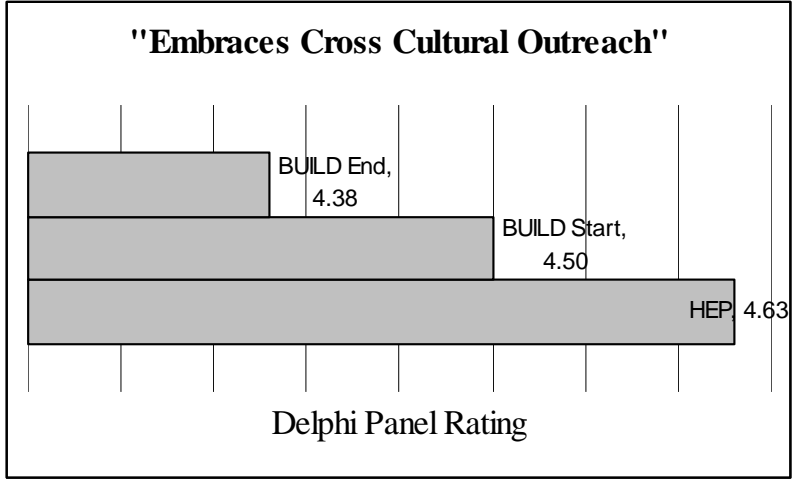


Figure 31. Rating comparison of Cross Cultural Outreach

The HEP and the BUILD PLG at the start both rated *operates in faith* with relatively high marks, but by the end, the BUILD group jettisoned the characteristic (Figure 32).

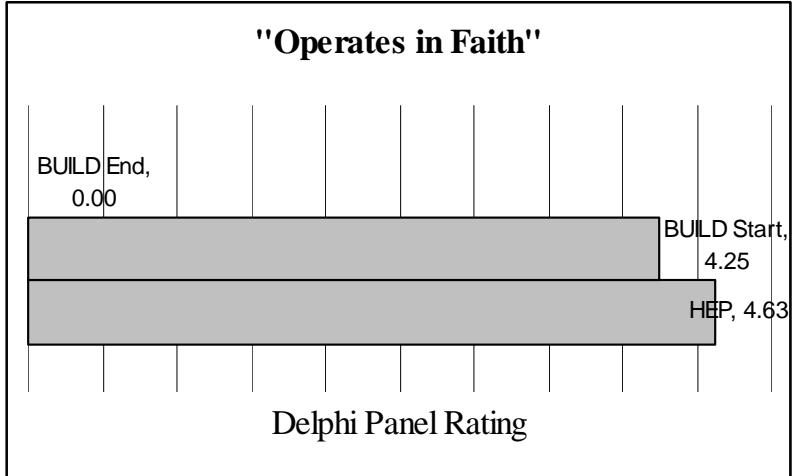


Figure 32. Rating comparison of Operates in Faith

Highly effective pastors have a deep belief that in order to be leaders of integrity, they must *walk the walk*. They rated *sets the example across the board* at 4.63 while the BUILD PLG did not list this characteristic either at the start or at the end (Figure 33).

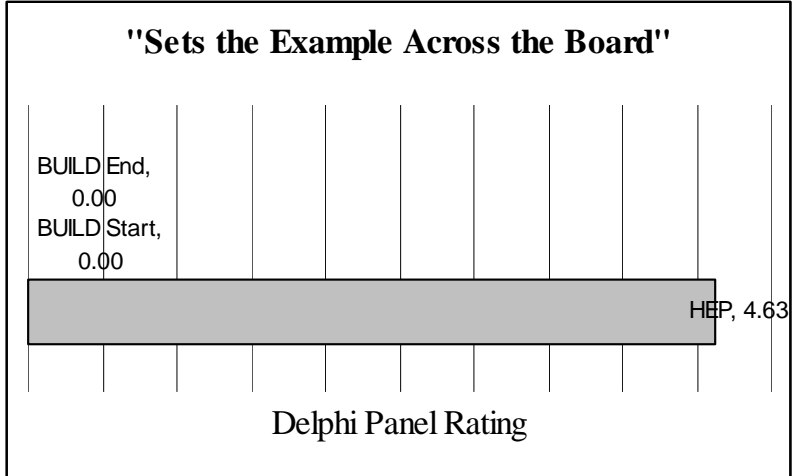


Figure 33. Rating comparison of Sets the Example

Effective “leaders display fierce biblical faithfulness”, according to Rainer: “They not only give mental assent to key doctrinal truths, but they also practice these beliefs in

their preaching, teaching, leadership, and ministry.”<sup>9</sup> The HEP position on doctrine rang true with Rainer’s statement as they rated the trait at 4.63. The BUILD pastors did not include the characteristic at the start, but by the end rated it at 4.38 (Figure 34).

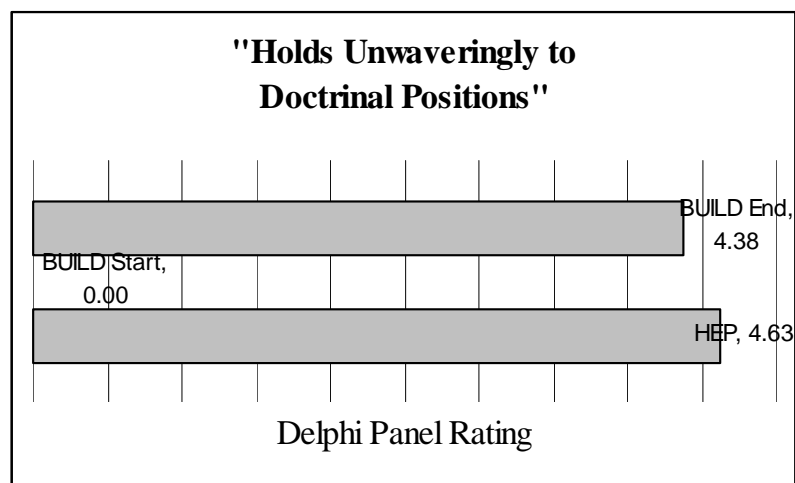


Figure 34. Rating comparison of Doctrinal Positions

Opposition typically plays a key role in preventing pastors from leading their churches to make the necessary changes for growth. However, HEP are *resistant to complacency* and continue to plod forward leading their churches to embrace the needed changes. The HEP rated this trait at 4.63. The BUILD pastors did not list the characteristic at all which may indicate a tolerance for complacency (Figure 35).

Five traits were given in the first four groupings by the HEP which were not listed by the BUILD PLG at the start or the end of the program. They are listed in descending order by rating as follows:

1. Puts God first in ministry, 5.00.
2. Demonstrates long term Pastoral commitment, 4.75.
3. Shows commitment to the biblical purposes of the church, 4.75.

<sup>9</sup> Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 66.

4. Sets the example across the board, 4.63.

5. Resistant to complacency, 4.63.

It is beyond the scope of this study to determine why each individual characteristic is included or excluded from each Delphi Panel list; rather it is the intent to show which traits are listed by each group and if the BUILD PLG moved closer to the HEP through the course of the program. In the case of these five traits, there was no change.

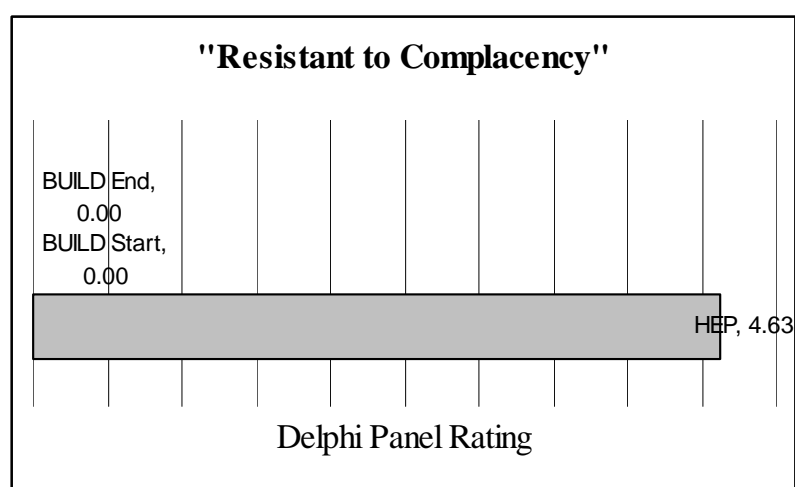


Figure 35. Rating comparison of Resistant to Complacency

The characteristics showing the strongest correlation from the start to the finish are as follows: (1) *Possesses Evangelistic Passion*, (2) *Exemplifies Personal Resilience*, (3) *Demonstrates Personal Spiritual Integrity*, (4) *Works Hard*, and (5) *Embraces Cross Cultural Outreach*. The characteristics showing the strongest increase in rating include *Is Led by the Holy Spirit* and *Holds Unwaveringly to Doctrinal Positions*

The characteristic showing a significant decrease in rating is *Gives Strong Pastoral Leadership*. The characteristics appearing at the start of the program, but being

dropped from the list by the end of the program are *Constantly Casts a Clearly Defined and Compelling Vision* and *Operates in Faith*.

In the final analysis of this data, no increase was observed in the cumulative rating by the BUILD PLG of the top fifteen HEP traits (Table 3). At the start of the program, the PLG matched eight of the fifteen characteristics listed by the HEP and at the end of the program they again matched eight. The cumulative rating of the HEP characteristics was 71.54 out of a maximum cumulative rating of 75. More specifically, fifteen traits were listed by the HEP in the first four groupings. Each of the fifteen could have received a maximum rating of 5; fifteen multiplied by 5 equals 75. Out of the eight traits matched by the BUILD PLG at the start of the program, the cumulative rating was 35.64 and at the end of the program the cumulative rating for eight matches was 34.90. Observed as a percent, at the start of the BUILD PLG the pastors had a 49.82 percent rate of agreement with the HEP characteristics. At the end of the program, the BUILD PLG had a 48.78 percent rate of agreement with the HEP characteristics. Consequently, the PLG was able to match eight out of fifteen traits (53%) at the beginning and at the end, but was unable to increase the cumulative rating in comparison to the HEP. In the book *7 Practices of Effective Ministry*, the authors make the point about motivated leaders that “with or without a goal, they’re going to work hard to get somewhere. That’s the thing about leaders—they lead. The question is, Are they getting where you want them to go?”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Andy Stanley, Reggie Joiner, and Lane Jones, *7 Practices of Effective Ministry* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2004), 33.

<b>Highly Effective Pastors</b>	<b>PLG Pastors: Start</b>	<b>PLG Pastor: End</b>
Puts God first in ministry, 5.00.		
Is led by the Holy Spirit, 5.00.		Spirit filled, 4.50.
Possesses evangelistic passion, 4.88.	Evangelistic, 4.75 (Committed to clearly and consistently emphasizing evangelism).	Evangelistic, 4.63.
Gives strong Pastoral Leadership, 4.88.	Skilled leader, 4.13 (Ability to lead others to embrace and accomplish common goals).	Strong leader, 3.75.
Constantly casts a clearly defined and compelling vision, 4.88.	Clear vision, 4.50 (An identified strategy to reach a preferred future).	
Demonstrates long term Pastoral commitment, 4.75.		
Exemplifies personal resilience, 4.75.	Perseverance, 4.38 (The dogged determination to endure difficulties in order to accomplish goals).	Flexible and adaptable, 4.25.
Demonstrates personal spiritual integrity, 4.75.	Integrity, 4.88 (The resolve to live by biblical standards regardless of the personal consequences).	Demonstrates integrity, 4.63.
Works hard, 4.75.	Self starter, 4.25 (The self-discipline to initiate projects and work without supervision).	Hard worker, 4.38.
Shows commitment to the biblical purposes of the church, 4.75.		
Embraces cross cultural outreach, 4.63.	Appreciation for diversity, 4.50 (Accepts people regardless of their race, culture, or economic status).	Culturally sensitive and inclusive, 4.38.
Operates in faith, 4.63.	Risk taker, 4.25 (Willingness to jeopardize assets in hope of obtaining a preferred outcome).	
Sets the example across the board, 4.63.		
Holds unwaveringly to doctrinal positions, 4.63.		Scripturally grounded, 4.38.
Resistant to complacency, 4.63.		
<b>Total Rating, 71.54</b>	<b>Total Rating, 35.64</b>	<b>Total Rating, 34.90</b>

Table 3. Comparison of Characteristics

One of the more interesting developments in the responses from the BUILD group from the start to the end was the appearance of six characteristics that were listed both times, but not listed by the HEP (Table 4). The HEP group listed forty-three traits; the BUILD group in the start only listed twenty-eight traits, and listed thirty-seven traits at the end. Of all the traits listed, the following six were the only characteristics listed exclusively and consistently by the BUILD PLG.

<b>Characteristics Listed by BUILD PLG at Start of Program</b>	<b>Characteristics Listed by BUILD PLG at End of Program</b>
Passionate, 4.88 (Enthusiastic about life and ministry).	Spiritually passionate, 4.25.
Prayerful, 4.63 (Committed to a disciplined lifestyle of prayer).	Practices prayer and fasting, 4.13.
Life-long learner, 4.50 (An attitude and lifestyle which embraces opportunities for learning and self-improvement).	Life-long learner, 4.13.
People skills, 4.50 (The ability to effectively interact and positively influence others).	Personable and relational, 4.13.
Embraces accountability relationships, 3.50 (Willingness to be involved in mentoring relationships with other pastors and leaders).	Accountable, 3.75.
Bilingual, 2.75 (The ability to speak English as well as the heart language of the community).	Bi-lingual – English/Spanish, 1.75.

Table 4. Traits common to BUILD but omitted by HEP

The HEP did not place these six traits on their list of unique or specific characteristics needed by a pastor to be effective in South Florida. In considering the question as to whether the PLG process moved the BUILD group closer to the perceptions of the Highly Effective Pastors, it is noteworthy that with five of these six

traits not listed by the HEP, the BUILD PLG at the end rated the five lower than at the start. Accountability was the one exception.

Since South Florida has a large Hispanic population, it is surprising that *Bilingual* was rated and ranked last by the BUILD PLG and not listed at all by the HEP as a needed characteristic for effective pastoral ministry.

### ***The Changes That Should Be Made In The Program***

Each of the participants in the four studied PLGs submitted responses to the question: "If you were given the responsibility of developing and facilitating a Peer Learning Group, what changes would you incorporate?" (Appendix A). The suggestions for improvement of the PLG program are presented below organized only by the Associational PLG designation:

#### **GOBA: GOAL**

1. To have more interaction with other peer members outside the chosen meeting times.
2. Have more accountability outside of the meeting times. Encourage more interaction outside the class time.
3. Listen guides for all sessions with action plans and a map of how to continue developing based on the material you covered.
4. I would not have the men go away for a night.

#### **PBA: Pilot 1**

1. We would meet for 2 hours at least once a month with no summer breaks so that we didn't lose momentum, because I believe the relationships that have been established have become the foundation for our peer learning group. The meeting may or may not be structured around a particular resource. Some of the meetings may just be an "open forum" type of meeting where we share ideas, burdens or issues and get advice from each other - some what of a support group as well as a peer learning group. I would be very careful not to let it evolve into a "support group" only.
2. Greater emphasis on the pragmatic.



3. Include the spouses in some outside fellowship and relationship building activities.
4. Add an end-vision-- what does the end result look like. How does leadership development help us fulfill the Mission? Maybe less topics and more discussion on key topics.
5. I would duplicate what we have.
6. I would have the group communicate more between meetings.
7. I don't know that I would change anything.

**PBA: Pilot 2**

1. No major changes. Thought the overall approach was done very well.
2. There is no change I'm able to recommend today. What I see as very important is to continue changing instruction and methods in order to stay relative to our time, which is changing at the speed of life.
3. I would personally speak with the leaders of the church (after speaking with the pastor and he is present) about the purpose and intent of the peer learning group. Explaining how it could help the church and them personally to be the church and people that God can use to expand His kingdom. I would put them to the challenge to grow along with the pastor. I think this would lead to implementing the change, if needed, and growth. This may lead to the connection from peer group to the church. It will take more time up front but in the long run the pastor would have a group of leaders within the church that are thinking the same things, reading the same books, and processing the same information and able to implement the changes needed.
4. I would be more strategic in my planning of books to read and also in scheduling the different meetings. I would do this so that we would not have more than 1 meeting a month. I believe that this would maximize effectiveness and thus display for the participants that there has been thoughtful planning and not just haphazard meetings thrown together. For example having three training events in less than one month is too much for any pastor to be able to attend and apply to his ministry.
5. I would make it more of a weekly meeting time than monthly. Because if you miss the one months meeting then you're out of touch for many more days.
6. If possible – I would add books on tape for the program.
7. One change would be to take time for an annual 2 or 3 day retreat that focuses on spiritual transformation and renewal in the context of deepening and strengthening the relationships among the members of the group.

8. I would have less material to read and more time to interact with others about the material you have learned.

**PLBA, GSBA, and MBA: BUILD**

1. More preparation prior to learning group meetings. I think (if possible) we might see better results by partnering PLG pastors with highly effective pastors. Also, perhaps more material could be led by area pastors who can "contextualize" it better.
2. I honestly can't think of anything I would do differently. I really do like the idea of going to large and growing churches to learn from them.
3. No changes.
4. Higher interaction among Pastors within a smaller group.
5. More "homework" and expectancy to come "prepared" to meeting.
6. More "face time" with those who are successful in the specific learning areas.
7. Probably I would incorporate more principles from the Bible . . . more emphasis on the dependence of the Holy Spirit.

Rick Wheeler, Director of the Leadership & Life Development department of the Florida Baptist Convention added the following insights after reviewing the above suggestions:

1. This is great work and very helpful feedback for us. I would concur with nearly all of your conclusions based upon other feedback and my casual observation. In fact, some of the changes we made to the BUILD [PLG] are based on the need to help pastors become more intentional with implementation / application. For example, the WildWorks project is designed to guide pastors through implementation and there is more peer interaction and less content during this phase.
2. Another important factor to consider in your findings and conclusions is that the process is not identical from one association to another. My observation is that there is a significant variance of quality, retention and outcomes among the . . . active groups we now resource across Florida. Remember, that by design these groups are locally owned and operated by the local DOM. The BUILD group is an exception to this, as it is facilitated through the Urban Impact Center.

3. I would like to discuss the findings regarding the relationship between coaching and PLGs. We definitely see them in concert with each other but each have their own set of strengths and weaknesses as a methodology.<sup>11</sup>

### *Special Insights about South Florida by the HEP*

At the conclusion of the Delphi Panel consisting of the HEP, a single discussion question was posed, “If a highly effective pastor from another region of the country was considering a move to South Florida, what advice would you offer concerning the unique challenges he would face?” Five of the eight HEP responded with the following insights:

1. Make sure God has called and equipped you to represent Him in this multi-cultural society. You may be very effective elsewhere but you need to possess the qualities needed for this area. You must be flexible. There must be a mind which can be tunable to the voice of God in using your skills and abilities. For your ministry to be effective you have to be relevant. You must love God and love the people. You must be sociable and Christlike.
2. Determine your Biblical convictions and unchangeable principles before you come. Consider that your church will need to be open to many races and cultures in South Florida. Many of the traditional programs of the Bible belt may not be as effective as you may have hope. Be ready for higher living cost depending on where you are coming from. If your heart is in reaching the world then you will have many great opportunities for reaching many nations. It is not uncommon for some of our churches to have 20, 30, 40, nations represent in one church. If you are able to speak Spanish then this will be a great plus. Be prepared to have staff members that do speak Spanish, etc. Learn from successful models that are reaching people in South Florida. It may be good to research or visit some of these churches before you make your decision. It may be wise to speak to some of the pastors that are local that have your ministry conviction and style before you make your decision. Of course a clear call from God will trump all of your research of the church and area. The traditional model of a Baptist church does not seem to be as effective as those that are adapting their methods to reach this culture. Even the name Baptist is considered by some as a hindrance to attracting visitors. That of course can be overcome by a vibrant church that reaches out to the lost. Consider your family in a move to South Florida. If you plan to have your children in public schools know that they will have stronger worldly influence than the public schools of a rural area or the Bible belt. You may have to consider that your family is going to a mission field and you will trust God to keep them strong in the Lord. Get involved right away with pastors of like faith to encourage you and support you. Too many become isolated and grow discouraged. Guard your personal love relationship with Jesus and your family and do not let

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<sup>11</sup> Wheeler, December 12, 2008.

- ministry rob you of this. All ministry is hard. It takes God's grace daily. But some areas have more oppression than others and South Florida seems to be one of those areas. But there are millions of people to be reached and the sky is the limit for ministry. South Florida does have the potential to grow large churches with the right pastor. If you have a passion to grow a large church to reach even thousands for Christ then South Florida is such a place.
3. First and foremost, if nothing else, **THEY MUST BE CALLED HERE**. Most of the time, I note people want to come here because of weather, beach, mystique and it never works. I discourage anyone from coming if they can't say they had a specific call by God to come here.
  4. You can describe Call whatever way you want, but if it's not Him, don't come. Be prepared to downsize your living, your home, etc. etc. Cultural diversity is a given. I see very few people come from the Deep South or Midwest and stay for any length of time; honestly, it goes back to the call. School, seminary, can not prepare you for this, and it almost gives a false sense of security that you are ready. Much more, but that is enough to rule out 90% of those wanting to come.
  5. I would tell him to hang on for the ride of his life. People will come to faith in Christ that he never imagined if he will proclaim the gospel. He will also have opportunity to see God at work in ways he never dreamed of elsewhere. South Florida is a Corinth like setting where he will deal with issues that he has not seen since they were written on the pages of Scripture. It will be fun, exhilarating, and challenging all at the same time.
  6. The cost of living will be higher than in most areas. It will take more to live here. The racial diversity is much higher. He would need to be open to not having an all white congregation. Many people move to South Florida to 'play'. Therefore, the level of non-commitment in the Church is a bit higher here than in many areas. Along with that there are many more 'distractions' than in some other areas of the country (year round sports opportunities, the beach, Orlando, cruises, etc...). The opportunity to reach people here is 'sky-high'. Most people here do not know the Lord. Therefore, almost everyone is a 'prospect'. There are many Jews, Muslims, Catholics and many thousands who claim no affiliation of any kind. A Spirit filled aggressive pastor can reach many for the Kingdom in South Florida.

### **Evaluation of the Research Design**

The research instruments worked well for the intended purpose of gathering the input of church and denominational leaders who had participated in and designed the PLGs. Upon final analysis, the Likert Scale survey (IPS) could have been significantly

reduced from forty questions to twenty or less. A wide sweep of inquiries was chosen in order to engage the respondent without telegraphing the specific area of interest. Also, there was the hope that the various queries would unveil vital points that were otherwise unknown to the researcher. In so doing, the instrument became somewhat tedious for the researcher and the participant.

The most difficult function of the research was obtaining the cooperation of all the participants. A certain level of credibility and trust had to be established with leaders on the opposite end of the state. This was accomplished through the researcher's association with the Florida Baptist Convention, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, and as a fellow Florida pastor. The design of the Delphi Panel process requires that all the participants respond to the current phase of the process before the next phase can begin. Many times over the year of research, personal emails and telephone calls were made as gentle reminders to the panel members to complete the online survey. The internet did make the surveys convenient for the participants, yet only one delinquent panel member could delay the process. No practical solution exists to overcome the schedule demands and priority decisions of those involved in this evaluation process.

The candor of this evaluation is intended to help future researchers who may work with busy pastors. Although the online survey is extremely convenient and cost effective, the best information was obtained one-on-one in personal interviews at lunch or over the telephone.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS

This section of the study summarizes the research findings and draws implications concerning the current PLG approach to pastoral leadership development in the FBC. The five research questions serve as the format for the conclusions. Direct application of the research findings are made as possible considerations in structuring future leadership development efforts. This project concludes with several additional insights and an observation about possible research which could be helpful in the future.

The research problem focuses on the perceived effectiveness of the PLG model of leadership development as practiced by the FBC. Pastors need access to relevant resource material, fellowship with other church leaders, and encouragement from denominational leaders, in a training model that is conducive to the pressures of the pastoral ministry in Florida. The FBC has chosen the Peer Learning Group approach as the primary vehicle to accomplish the goal of developing, “Pastors who elevate their own personal leadership in character, passion and life long learning which results in fruitful multiplication of leaders within their churches.”<sup>1</sup> The following conclusions reflect the perspective of the leaders and participants of the four PLGs studied as they relate to the five research questions.

#### **Participants’ Perceptions of Effectiveness**

The participants of the four completed PLGs perceive that the model is effective. In fact, 31 percent of the respondents of the Phase One groups and 37.5 percent of the

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<sup>1</sup> Wheeler, August 2, 2008.

BUILD group strongly agreed that their participation in the PLG improved their leadership effectiveness. Almost 60 percent of the Phase One groups and 50 percent of the BUILD group agreed that their leadership effectiveness was improved by the PLG. The remaining 10 percent and 12.5 percent respectively somewhat agreed. Not one of the twenty-nine participants in the Phase One groups or any of the eight participants in the BUILD group disagreed with the statement of effectiveness. When the Phase One participants were asked if they needed to make the changes prompted by their participation in the PLG in order to function at the highest level of effectiveness as a pastor, less than 21 percent indicated that they did not believe the changes were needed. Conversely, 79 percent did believe the changes were needed. The BUILD group participants all gave a positive response. More specifically, when asked if the PLG provided or enhanced a needed component to the participant to be more effective as a leader, 100 percent of the thirty-seven participants in the four groups responded in the affirmative.

In comparing the responses of the Phase One groups with the Phase Two group, there appears to be a marked improvement in the expectations of the latter group. Perhaps the one year one-on-one coaching in preparation for the BUILD PLG enhanced the recruitment process by targeting pastors who were known to be interested in increasing their effectiveness. The absence of dropouts and the low level of absenteeism in the BUILD group supports the premise that highly motivated participants were chosen.

### **Leaders' Perceptions of Effectiveness**

The leaders of the FBC and of the participating associations perceive that the PLG model is effective. The respondents highlighted the renewed connection in relationships

between the leaders and the pastors, the “recognizable momentum”<sup>2</sup> of the participants in comparison to non-participants, the actual implementation of the principles learned, the increased interest by pastors to start new groups, collaborative efforts in missions and ministry by participating pastors, and the issue of pastoral isolation being addressed and reduced.

### **Strengths of Peer Learning Group Model**

Based on the perception of the participants, the PLG model has multiple strengths. In question 36 of the IPS, the respondents were asked to rate the following statement: “I did not expect a significant change to occur in my life or ministry as a result of my participation in the Peer Learning Group.” Thirteen point eight percent of the participants agreed and 27.6 percent somewhat agreed. Consequently, 41.4 percent of the members of the Phase One PLGs came into the experience with a low expectation for significant change. Conversely, when questioned about the actual impact of the PLGs on *personal*, *spiritual*, *relational*, and *organizational* issues, the responses were overwhelmingly positive. With very few exceptions, participants felt needs were identified and met, they have a deeper walk with Christ and a more disciplined spiritual life, they have better relationships with other pastors and denominational leaders, and they are leading their churches into a more positive mode of growth and spirituality.

### **Weaknesses of PLG Model**

Weaknesses of the PLG model which were identified by the Phase One participants included the distraction of low accountability concerning attendance and a disheartening dropout rate. The BUILD group did not experience low attendance or

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<sup>2</sup> Faulkner, November 4, 2008.



dropout. The most prominent element in the responses concerning weaknesses was the matter of time in the PLG sessions and lack of time together outside the official meetings. The respondents appeared to be requesting more time for interaction or *peer learning*. Also included in the feedback was the need for directed application of the principles presented in the sessions to occur sooner in the process. Rick Wheeler explains that “some of the changes we made to the BUILD PLG are based on the need to help pastors become more intentional with implementation / application”.<sup>3</sup>

A heartening element revealed in the study (IPS, item 26) was that 93 percent of the Phase One participants and 87.5 percent of the BUILD members gave a positive response to “I believe the Peer Learning Group experience was the best approach to provide encouragement to me as a pastor”. This element addresses encouragement and camaraderie. To a statement of real change however (IPS, item 31), “In reality, I did not make dramatic changes in my life or leadership style based on my participation in the Peer Learning Group”, 31 percent of the Phase One respondents and 37.5 percent of the BUILD respondents strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed. A follow-up study of this one-third of participants could be enlightening and helpful in making improvements to the program.

### **Changed Perceptions Due to BUILD PLG Participation**

Ten of the fourteen highest rated and ranked characteristics needed by a pastor to be effective in South Florida as provided by the participants of the BUILD PLG at the start of the program in August 2008 remained relatively the same without a statistically significant difference from the beginning to the end. Four of the highest rated and ranked

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<sup>3</sup> Rick Wheeler, email to researcher, December 12, 2008.

characteristics, *Committed to authentic spiritual growth*, *Mission minded*, *Clear vision* and *Courageous* were completely dropped from the list by the end of the program. Even though four traits were removed from the list, five new traits appeared on the list and were ranked within the top four groupings through the Delphi Panel process at the end of the program. The new characteristics were *Spirit filled* (4.50), *Scripturally grounded* (4.38), *Hard worker* (4.38), *Spiritually mature* (4.25), and *Flexible and adaptable* (4.25).

In total, nineteen characteristics were ranked in the top four groupings between the listing at the start of the PLG and the listing at the end. Of the nineteen, four of the originally listed characteristics were dropped and five which were not originally listed were added at the end. With the movement of nine of the nineteen traits, 47 percent of the listed characteristics represented a change over the course of the program. The perceptions list about pastoral effectiveness of the BUILD PLG participants *did change* from the beginning to the end of the program, but whether the changes in the list were significant must be determined by analyzing the BUILD characteristics with those listed by the Highly Effective Pastors.

### **HEP Perceptions Compared to BUILD Perceptions**

When analysis is being conducted, “research is needed to narrow the risk of error by providing further clarification and greater certainty.”<sup>4</sup> The objective criteria of (1) number of baptisms, (2) average worship attendance, and (3) the resulting baptism ratio provides a basis for analysis as to which churches (pastors) are highly effective in reaching and teaching in the South Florida environment. As a result of identifying the eight most highly effective pastors and surveying them on their perspectives of the most

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<sup>4</sup> Harvie M. Conn, ed., *Planting and Growing Urban Churches: From Dream to Reality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 46.

needed characteristics for a pastor to be effective in South Florida, a standard has been established. Since these eight pastors have produced outstanding results in an environment that many label as *difficult and complex*, the HEP standard is impressive—and realistic. Consequently, the BUILD PLG perspectives were compared to the HEP perspectives revealing the similarities and differences.

At the start of the program, the PLG matched eight of the fifteen characteristics listed by the HEP and at the end of the program they again matched eight. The cumulative rating of the HEP characteristics was 71.54 out of a maximum cumulative rating of 75. Out of the eight traits matched by the BUILD PLG at the start of the program, the cumulative rating was 35.64 and at the end of the program the cumulative rating for eight matches was 34.90. Consequently, the PLG was able to match eight out of fifteen traits (53%) at the beginning and at the end, but was unable to increase the cumulative rating in comparison to the HEP.

### **Summary Conclusions**

The *conclusion* of this study is that the current PLG model was not effective in moving the perspectives of the PLG participants closer to the perspectives of the HEP. However, the opinion of the participants and leaders is that the model is effective. The specific areas showing positive opinions are as follows: (1) improved leadership effectiveness, (2) needed components and changes for effectiveness, (3) identifying and meeting life needs, (4) promoting a deeper and more disciplined spiritual life, (5) improved relationships with pastors and denominational leaders, and (6) in leading their respective churches in a more positive mode of growth and spirituality. The *problem* is that the HEP and the participants/leaders are defining *effective* in different terms.

The *research* results show that the outcome of the HEP perspectives and definition of effectiveness is an average worship attendance of 2,340 and a baptism ratio of 7.67 to 1. The outcome of the BUILD PLG participants' perspectives and definition of effectiveness is an average worship attendance of 200 and a baptism ratio of 15.23 to 1.

The *question* is whether the leaders will continue to agree with the participants—who are in the program because of a desire and need to become more effective—or adopt the perspective of the pastors with the proven track record of Great Commission results in South Florida.

### **Recommended Changes**

Changes which were recommended by the participants of the PLGs included a less rigid academic approach and the addition of more time for discussion and interaction. Few suggestions were given to improve the curriculum; whereas a number of comments reflected a desire for more interpersonal interaction in the formal meetings and in informal settings. In the Phase One groups the need for more accountability surfaced in relation to attendance and interpersonal accountability as group members. Responses also suggested more attention to the practical application of material covered and principles presented through some form of follow-up. One respondent submitted the need for a clear end-vision and another added that including the church leaders in the process in an informational meeting and an invitation to read the same resources would be helpful to the pastor in integrating the principles learned into the life of the church.

Changes recommended by this researcher include a complete paradigm shift in defining effectiveness for churches and pastors on the local level and opening the fellowship of associational pastors to a stronger working relationship with HEP.

The first recommendation is to define *effective* with objective criteria established by the Great Commission. The essence of the Great Commission is to reach and teach. The best measurement for the efficiency of reaching and teaching is baptism ratio. It is interesting to gather the perspectives of the less effective church pastors, but the ultimate standard of effectiveness must be determined by the mandates of Christ as detailed in scripture. The leaders must adopt the objective measurements of church effectiveness and heed the insights of pastors who represent the “best practices” of evangelistic ministry in South Florida.

Once the perspectives of the HEP are embraced, the leaders should thoroughly analyze all leadership development approaches and formulate the *best methodology* to lead the less effective pastors to personally adopt Great Commission objectives, methods, and perspectives; as delineated by the HEP.

Traditionally, the Southern Baptist Convention is led by highly effective pastors. By and large, they are elected or appointed to the leadership positions as officers of the convention, chairmen of important committees, task force leaders, officers of the pastor’s conference, and strategic board members. The highly effective pastors are the high profile leaders who receive invitations to speak at conventions, conferences, and seminars. Similarly, the state conventions reflect the same pattern. Unfortunately, the local South Florida Baptist association tends to be a grassroots operation with less effective pastors giving primary leadership. The HEP appears to be absent from the inter-workings of associational life. Consequently, the less effective pastors do not benefit from their close geographic proximity to their highly effective brothers.

The *primary challenge* is to bring the HEP into a mentoring relationship with less effective pastors. *First*, the associational and denominational leaders must recognize the necessity of this approach. With the pastors, there are attitudinal issues with each group concerning the other, but strong leadership can build bridges of friendship and even genuine appreciation. *Second*, the primary focus of the leaders must be evangelism. Soul winning, baptism, and discipleship are the essence of the call. The leaders should redefine associational success in terms of effectively reaching others for Christ; instead of participation in associational committees and the amount of funds given to the associational organization and denominational structure. With the redefining of success, the most successful will be the HEP. Over time, the leadership will be less reflective of the ineffective churches and more responsive to the input of the highly effective pastors.

Once authentic relationships have been built among the pastors and the definition of success is in tune with the mission, the approach to leadership development should be a systematic process combining the best practices in the area of learning. Consulting, teaching, mentoring, coaching, and peer interaction are all sound methods of training, but the strengths of each must be utilized depending upon the different stages of life, learning, and ministry of individual pastors. In a study of pastors completed by Rainer, he investigated “the relative level of influence of different factors in leadership development. Actual experience and mentor examples were the highest rated responses.”<sup>5</sup>

Situational leadership calls for a consultant approach early in the process. A knowledgeable person must investigate the knowledge and skill level of the new pastor. The three needed skills, according to Ken Blanchard, are *diagnosis, flexibility, and*

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<sup>5</sup> Rainer, *High Expectations*, 78.

*partnering*.<sup>6</sup> First, a knowledgeable denominational or associational consultant must ascertain the ability of the pastor in order to advise and resource the best course of development. The diagnosis must include the determination of which leadership style is appropriate for the next phase of growth for the pastor's church. Second, flexibility must be embraced in developing the course of training for the pastor. Third, partnering is an absolute necessity for the long term success of the effort. Partnering—after the basic levels of pastoral competencies have been obtained—includes mentoring, coaching, peer learning groups, and occasional learning events.

An example of a systematic process could be as follows. Since SBC pastors have no minimum training requirements for ordination, consulting would be a great place to start in establishing the knowledge level, skill set, and perspective of the local church pastor. Recommendations could then be made for training in areas of deficit. Once a pastor was considered proficient in basic pastoral knowledge (which could be immediately) the associational coordinator would introduce the participating pastor to a local HEP who had been recruited as a mentor. Additionally, a coach would be assigned to help the pastor process life and ministry. The coach would remain with the pastor until such time that the relationship proved to be unproductive—whereby another coach would be assigned—or the pastor becomes a HEP. The peer learning approach would simply be a part of associational life. A routine meeting of pastors with open interaction would become invaluable with problem solving, brain storming, and encouragement as the norm for pastors across the efficacy spectrum. Occasional group training events could be

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<sup>6</sup> Ken Blanchard , Patricia Zigarmi, and Drea Zigarmi. *Leadership And The One Minute Manager: Increasing Effectiveness Through Situational Leadership* (New York: Morrow, 1985), 28.

interspersed on an as needed basis. The Associational Director of Missions (DOM) or Missions Coordinator would be the key player in this process.

### **Additional Insights**

A very interesting insight is that all of the HEP churches had 530 in attendance or more and all the BUILD PLG churches had 550 in attendance or less. No HEP were invited to participate in the PLG program.

Participants appear to favor one-on-one coaching over group interactions. When asked if one-on-one coaching was a superior method to Peer Learning Groups, over half of the respondents thought coaching was superior. Of those, 10.3 percent strongly agreed, 20.7 percent agreed, and 20.7 percent somewhat agreed in the Phase One groups; and in the BUILD group 12.5 percent strongly agreed, 37.5 percent agreed, and 12.5 percent somewhat agreed. Yet, when questioned about Peer Learning Groups requiring too much preparation, travel, expense, and time in comparison to other approaches, 93 percent of the Phase One groups and 75 percent of the BUILD group did not agree that was true. The majority believe coaching is a superior approach, but not because PLGs require more preparation, travel, expense, or time. Apparently, there is an element of leadership development which is more strongly addressed in the coaching method than in the current approach to PLGs.

The leadership could consider weaving the two approaches of PLGs and one-on-one coaching into a more comprehensive approach to leadership development with Florida pastors. Al Fernandez has incorporated the coaching method as a one year preparation step in inviting South Florida pastors to participate in the PLGs. In these surveys, participants indicated a need for help in direct application of principles learned



while going through the process. Perhaps a Coach/Consultant could be assigned on an as-needed basis. Perhaps a Coach/Consultant could be in partnership with the participant's church leaders in helping to incorporate the concepts learned. Also, to enhance the peer aspect of the experience, perhaps the participating pastor could be encouraged to invite another participant pastor to partner with him in any or all of the above endeavors. An excellent resource, which is cited in this project, is the D.Min. project of Jack Eades for Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary in which he detailed a comprehensive approach to leadership development for the West Virginia Baptist Convention in 2002.<sup>7</sup>

Another insight is that 79 percent of the Phase One respondents and 75 percent of the BUILD group indicated that they shared openly because they believed other participants in the PLG would benefit from their experience and insights. Interestingly, 90 percent of the Phase One pastors and 100 percent of the BUILD pastors indicated that their level of participation was influenced by the leadership style employed to facilitate the PLG. These responses appear to confirm that participants want to share with their peers and that the facilitation style must match the need of the group members and the goal of peer learning. In the final IPS the South Florida participants were asked, "Considering all you learned in the BUILD Group, what percentage was a result of the reading material, what percentage was a result of the experts who led the group, and what percentage was a result of the influence of your peers within the group?" As presented in the following chart (Figure 36), the average response was that only 27.25 percent of the learning occurred as a result of the influence of peers in comparison to 19.25 percent that

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<sup>7</sup> Jack L. Eades, "Enabling Leaders—Empowering Church Transformation" (D.Min. thesis, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002).

occurred from the reading and 53.50 percent occurred as a result of the experts who led the group.

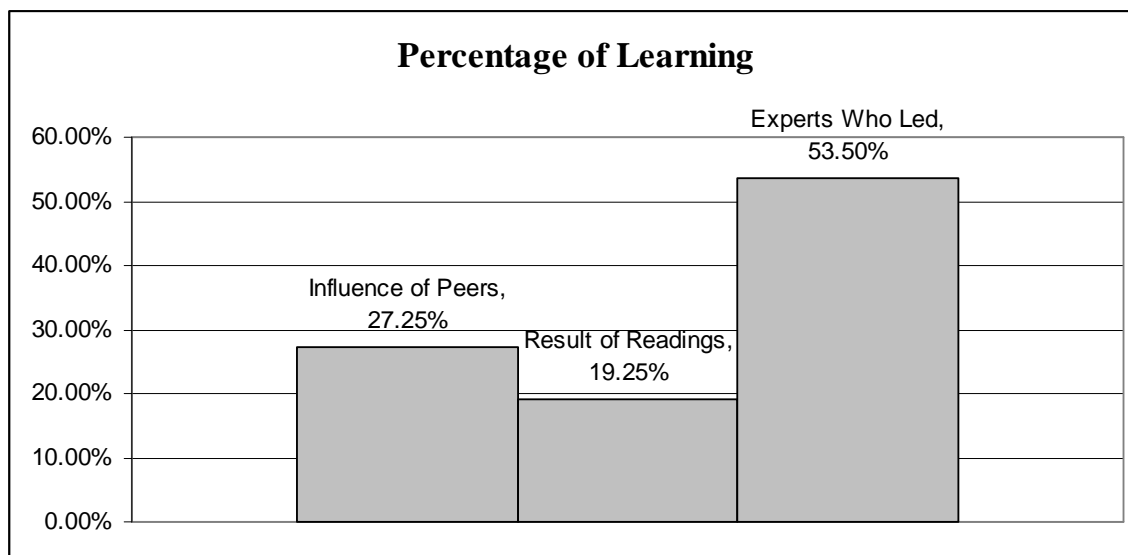


Figure 36. The Percentage of Learning Gleaned From PLG Sources

The perception of the participants is that most of the learning in the group comes directly from the leaders and not from their peers. Either the insight of the leaders is favored over that of the participants or the leadership style is not conducive to fostering direct peer learning.

### Further Research

Further research suggested as a result of this study is an in-depth statistical church growth analysis. This should measure the average worship attendance and baptisms of the churches pastored by those who participated in the PLGs in comparison to the churches of non-participating pastors. Sufficient time will need to elapse before adequate data can be collected and analyzed.

A more proactive approach to the study of long range effectiveness could be undertaken through the implementation and analysis of:

1. a PLG completing the program which is encouraged to continue to meet and systematically engage in ministry projects together, in comparison with
2. a PLG where each member completing the program is paired with an expert coach from the FBC or local association leadership, compared with
3. a PLG where each member completing the program is matched with a HEP for mentorship

For the study to be accurate, as many variables as possible would have to be taken out of the equation. For example, the PLGs would need to be located in the same region of Florida. Also, each group would have to be led by the same experts covering the same material. A parallel study could be accomplished where a PLG was conducted on the campuses of HEP with the subject matter and approach determined completely by the HEP. Additionally, a pure peer learning group could be conducted in the fashion of business and professional PLGs where the participants themselves set the agenda and lead the interaction.

Another study that might prove to be invaluable to denominational and church leaders is an investigation of possible correlations between personality profiles and pastoral effectiveness. If a direct correlation exists, the implications could be far-reaching.

APPENDIX A  
RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

**IMPACT PERCEPTION SURVEY**      Name \_\_\_\_\_

The following survey questions are intended to record your personal perspective concerning your involvement in the Peer Learning Group. The Leader’s desired outcome was: “Pastors who elevate their own personal leadership in character, passion and life long learning which results in fruitful multiplication of leaders within their churches.” The objective measurement of this outcome would be the multiplication of leaders in your church. However, this survey seeks to record your subjective opinion.

Your opinion on each question will be recorded by choosing one of six possible options on a scale. Strongly agree and strongly disagree choices will represent positions which you do not believe will change over time. Somewhat agree and somewhat disagree will represent opinions which you only slightly favor in that direction.

**Expectations:**

At the start of the Peer Learning Group I had great expectations for improving my leadership effectiveness.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Somewhat Agree    Somewhat Disagree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

At the outset of the Peer Learning Group I hoped to gain insightful and useful information.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Somewhat Agree    Somewhat Disagree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

Going into the Peer Learning Group I hoped to connect and network with other pastors.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Somewhat Agree    Somewhat Disagree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

When I agreed to participate in the Peer Learning Group I believed it would provide or enhance a needed component for me to be more effective as a leader.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Somewhat Agree    Somewhat Disagree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

From the beginning, I did *not* believe that participation in a Peer Learning Group would significantly enhance my ability to lead effectively.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Somewhat Agree    Somewhat Disagree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

**Motivations:**

The driving motivation for my participation in the Peer Learning Group was to enhance my effectiveness as a pastor.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I hoped that my participation in the Peer Learning Group would serve to reenergized me to engage and lead others.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I participated in the Peer Learning Group in hopes of networking with other pastors and denominational leaders

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

My participation in the Peer Learning Group stemmed from my need for encouragement and positive interaction.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

My motivation for participating in the Peer Learning Group came *more* from what I hoped to gain personally than what it might do for my pastoral leadership abilities.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

**Participation Level:**

It was my intention to be cautious in my participation in the Peer Learning Group until I could determine if it offered real value to my life and ministry.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I intended to share openly because I believed other participants in the Peer Learning Group would benefit from my experience and insights.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I knew that my level of participation would depend on the leadership style employed to facilitate the Peer Learning Group.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

It was my intention to attempt to forge relationships in the Peer Learning Group that would last the remainder of my life.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I had every intention to give a 100% effort in my participation in the Peer Learning Group.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

**Personal Leadership Strengths:**

One of my greatest leadership strengths is the credibility I gain by the perception of others that my life is a model for twenty-first Christian living.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

Most people consider me to be very personable.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

My strongest pastoral trait is the nurture, comfort, and care of the congregational flock.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

My abilities are more heavily concentrated in working with people than managing administrative details.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I am confident in my ability to reconcile interpersonal conflict.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

**Personal Leadership Weaknesses:**

I actually *need* words of approval from members of my congregation.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I have a tendency to avoid making hard decisions if they appear to be divisive.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

Most often I am overwhelmed by the demand levels of the pastorate and I would prefer an easier vocation.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

Others believe I am doing too much as pastor.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

Over time I feel as if I am being drained instead of being filled.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

**Peer Learning Group Program Strengths and Weaknesses:**

I believe the Peer Learning Group experience was the best approach to provide encouragement to me as a pastor.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I believe that the interactive approach of the Peer Learning Group helped me identify and meet needs in my life.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

The inherent small group dynamic of the Peer Learning Group provided a balanced delivery system for information, accountability, and support.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I think that one-on-one coaching is a superior method to Peer Learning Groups.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

Peer Learning groups require too much preparation, travel, expense, and time which makes it a less efficient model in comparison to other approaches.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

### **Implementation:**

In reality, I did not make dramatic changes in my life or leadership style based on my participation in the Peer Learning Group.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I implemented most of the principles I learned in the Peer Learning Group.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

The lay leaders in my church embraced the changes I sought to implement as a result of my participation in the Peer Learning Group.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I believe the changes I implemented as a result of the Peer Learning Group were more personal in nature than institutional.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I believe I needed to make the changes prompted by my participation in the Peer Learning Group in order to function at the highest level of effectiveness as a pastor.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

### **Perceived Effectiveness:**

I did not expect a significant change to occur in my life or ministry as a result of my participation in the Peer Learning Group.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I expected to lead my church into a more positive mode of growth and spirituality based on the implementation of what I learned in the Peer Learning Group.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I anticipated better relationships with other pastors and denominational leaders based on the Peer Learning Group experience.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I expected to see a multiplication of leaders in my church due to my participation in the Peer Learning Group.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I anticipated a deeper walk with Christ and a more disciplined spiritual life due to my participation in the Peer Learning Group.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Somewhat Disagree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree



### **Discussion Questions**

What do you believe were the strongest aspects of the Peer Learning Group?

What do you believe were the weakest areas in the Peer Learning Group?

If you were given the responsibility of developing and facilitating a Peer Learning Group, what changes would you incorporate?

**Leaders' Questionnaire  
Peer Learning Group**

Please fully answer the questions which apply to you.

1. What issues in Florida pastoral leadership prompted you to develop a leadership initiative?

2. Why did you choose the peer learning group model to address these issues?

3. How would you define a peer learning group and whose model did you use?

4. What criteria did you use to choose the participants in the peer learning groups?

5. Do you believe the peer learning groups have been effective? What is the foundation of your conclusions?

**Delphi Panel Question**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**What unique or specific characteristics are needed to be an effective pastor in South Florida?**

APPENDIX B  
RESEARCH DATA TABLES

**Comparison Chart of Delphi Panel Characteristics**

<b>Highly Effective Pastors</b>	<b>PLG Pastors at the Start</b>	<b>PLG Pastors at the End</b>
Puts God first in ministry, 5.00.	Committed to authentic spiritual growth, 4.88 (Engages in a process of personal spiritual development).	Evangelistic, 4.63.
Is led by the Holy Spirit, 5.00.	Passionate, 4.88 (Enthusiastic about life and ministry).	Preaches for scriptural application, 4.63.
Possesses evangelistic passion, 4.88.	Integrity, 4.88 (The resolve to live by biblical standards regardless of the personal consequences).	Morally pure, 4.63.
Gives strong Pastoral Leadership, 4.88.	Evangelistic, 4.75 (Committed to clearly and consistently emphasizing evangelism).	Demonstrates integrity, 4.63.
Constantly casts a clearly defined and compelling vision, 4.88.	Culturally sensitive, 4.75 (Empathizes with and responsive to different cultures).	Spirit filled, 4.50.
Demonstrates long term Pastoral commitment, 4.75.	Mission minded, 4.63 (A ministry philosophy which focuses on the Great Commission).	Clear pastoral calling, 4.50.

<b>Highly Effective Pastors</b>	<b>PLG Pastors at the Start</b>	<b>PLG Pastors at the End</b>
Exemplifies personal resilience, 4.75.	Prayerful, 4.63 (Committed to a disciplined lifestyle of prayer).	Culturally sensitive and inclusive, 4.38.
Demonstrates personal spiritual integrity, 4.75.	Appreciation for diversity, 4.50 (Accepts people regardless of their race, culture, or economic status).	Culturally relevant, 4.38.
Works hard, 4.75.	People skills, 4.50 (The ability to effectively interact and positively influence others).	Scripturally grounded, 4.38.
Shows commitment to the biblical purposes of the church, 4.75.	Relevant preaching, 4.50 (Seeks to emphasize life application in preaching and teaching).	Hard worker, 4.38.
Embraces cross cultural outreach, 4.63.	Strong sense of call, 4.50 (Convinced of God's divine call to South Florida ministry).	Spiritually mature, 4.25.
Operates in faith, 4.63.	Life-long learner, 4.50 (An attitude and lifestyle which embraces opportunities for learning and self-improvement).	Flexible and adaptable, 4.25.
Sets the example across the board, 4.63.	Clear vision, 4.50 (An identified strategy to reach a preferred future).	Spiritually passionate, 4.25.
Holds unwaveringly to doctrinal positions, 4.63.	Courageous, 4.50 (Willingness to face difficult situations in order to accomplish a specific purpose).	Persistent, 4.13.
Resistant to complacency, 4.63.	Servant's heart, 4.38 (A willingness to place others above self).	Patient, 4.13.

<b>Highly Effective Pastors</b>	<b>PLG Pastors at the Start</b>	<b>PLG Pastors at the End</b>
Resists manipulation by power brokers, 4.50.	Perseverance, 4.38 (The dogged determination to endure difficulties in order to accomplish goals).	Personable and relational, 4.13.
Stays laser focused on mission and vision, 4.50.	Self starter, 4.25 (The self-discipline to initiate projects and work without supervision).	Practices prayer and fasting, 4.13.
Emphasizes biblical stewardship, 4.38.	Risk taker, 4.25 (Willingness to jeopardize assets in hope of obtaining a preferred outcome).	Life-long learner, 4.13.
Protects the integrity of the point leadership positions, 4.38.	Skilled leader, 4.13 (Ability to lead others to embrace and accomplish common goals).	Enjoys South Florida, 4.00.
Exemplifies patience and perseverance, 4.38.	Change agent, 4.13 (Possesses the ability to influence positive change).	Leads people to serve according to their spiritual gifts, 3.88.
Consistently teaches practical applications of spiritual truth, 4.38.	Discipler, 4.13 (Ability to engage people of all spiritual maturity levels in the discipleship process).	Communicates well in the South Florida context, 3.88.
Understands and embraces a culturally relevant approach, 4.25.	Creative communicator, 4.00 (The ability to communicate truth through engaging and imaginative methods).	Accountable, 3.75.
Operates with a high level of personal self-control, 4.25.	Ability to navigate adversity, 4.00 (Ability to cope with crises such as natural disasters and economic instability).	Strong leader, 3.75.

<b>Highly Effective Pastors</b>	<b>PLG Pastors at the Start</b>	<b>PLG Pastors at the End</b>
Confident of calling to a specific church, 4.25.	Willingness to address immorality, 3.88 (Takes an appropriate stand against immorality).	Team minded, 3.75.
Experiences Holy discontentment with falling short of God's plan for the church, 4.25.	Conflict resolution, 3.63 (Ability to successfully deal with conflict).	Employs creative preaching techniques, 3.63.
Embraces modern technologies and methods to communicate eternal truth, 4.25.	Organized, 3.63 (Manages time, resources, and opportunities well).	Strong biblical expositor, 3.50.
Strategically deliberate in Discipleship development, 4.13.	Embraces accountability relationships, 3.50 (Willingness to be involved in mentoring relationships with other pastors and leaders).	Dynamic discipler, 3.50.
Strives for a balanced commitment to evangelism and discipleship, 4.13.	Bilingual, 2.75 (The ability to speak English as well as the heart language of the community).	Goal oriented, 3.50.
Open to needed change, 4.13.		Creative, 3.38.
Has realistic perception of the community's spiritual condition, 4.00.		People centered manager, 3.38.
Strategically hires staff to balance own strengths and weaknesses, 4.00.		Sensitive to people's needs, 3.38.
Uses a wide variety of creative elements to engage the listener and reinforce teaching, 4.00.		Compassionate, 3.25.
Trains disciple makers, 3.88.		Technically savvy, 2.63.

**Highly Effective Pastors    PLG Pastors at the Start    PLG Pastors at the End**

Provides multiple entry points and strategies for people to connect with the church, 3.88.

Implements an intentional church growth strategy, 3.75.

Possesses an appropriate skepticism of salvation experiences, 3.63.

Sensitive to generational diversity, 3.63.

Organizes an array of opportunities for service and ministry in the church and the community, 3.63.

Resists the temptation to measure effectiveness solely by numerical growth, 3.38.

Holds a strong commitment to expository preaching, 3.25.

Has a heart for the poor, 3.13.

Has tolerance for other value systems, 3.13.

Recognizes the varying socio-economic needs of youth, 2.88.

Resists societal distractions, 2.50.

Has established relationships in South Florida, 2.50.

Understands Catholic perspective, 2.38.

Bi-lingual – English/Spanish, 1.75.



## APPENDIX C

### SAMPLE EMAIL SOLICITING PARTICIPATION

#### **Sample Email Soliciting Participation in Impact Perception Survey**

Dear Pastor Chris,

I obtained your name from Bob Greene of the Pensacola Baptist Association. Rick Wheeler (Florida Baptist Convention) and I are working on an evaluative study of the Peer Learning Group in which you participated. The results will be reported to the Florida Baptist Convention and in my Doctor of Ministry Thesis Project for Liberty Seminary in May, 2010.

Rick is interested in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the current Peer Learning Group process and making any needed improvements and I will consider it a personal favor if you follow the embedded link below and complete the survey instrument attached. It contains 40 multiple choice questions with three open comment questions at the end. Although your name and church will be listed in the report/thesis, your responses will not be singled out and identified with you. I am the only one that will be aware of your individual answers. This will enable me to respond back to you in case clarification is needed or to have you expound on your response.

Blessings,  
Dale R. Faircloth  
Pastor, FBC of Royal Palm Beach, Fl.  
Cell 561-568-6055

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=m56PXlxd8\\_2bCib19HA3E0fg\\_3d\\_3d&c=00010](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=m56PXlxd8_2bCib19HA3E0fg_3d_3d&c=00010)

## APPENDIX D

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## VITA

Dale R. Faircloth

### PERSONAL

Born: July 15, 1957

Parents: Cecil and Lelia Faircloth

Married: Mary Alinda Grant Faircloth

Children: Kyle D. Faircloth, September 1, 1977

Grandchildren: Micah Laine Faircloth, December 31, 2002

Kyla Ann Faircloth, November 10, 2005

### EDUCATION

Bachelor of Business Administration, Sam Houston State University, 1980.

Master of Science, Sam Houston State University, 1988.

### MINISTERIAL

License, Rural Shade Baptist Church, Cleveland, Texas, May 17, 1981.

Ordination, First Baptist Church, Cleveland, Texas, May 19, 1991.

### PROFESSIONAL

Served in various part-time ministry positions in Texas including Youth Minister and Interim Pastor, 1980-90.

Associate Pastor/Minister to Students, First Baptist Church, Cleveland, Texas, 1990-93.

Pastor, First Baptist Church of Royal Palm Beach, Florida, 1993-present.