

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

Leadership Matters: The Process of Leading a Declining Church To Revitalization Utilizing Early
Church Principles.

A Thesis Project Submitted to

The Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity

In Candidacy for the degree

Doctor of Ministry

By

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Liberty University School of Divinity

Thesis Project Approval Sheet

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ABSTRACT

Leadership Matters: The Process of Leading a Declining Church to Revitalization Utilizing Early Church Principles.

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Liberty University School of Divinity, 2018

Mentor: Dr. Dwayne Milioni

A review of current literature that exist details the perpetual decline that is occurring in the local church. Nevertheless, the leadership a pastor provides must not be ignored, when there is an attempt to lead a church from decline to revitalization. The purpose of this project is to assist pastors who lead declining churches to revitalization by examining the principles of the early church, which was a church that was vibrant in the area of growth and spiritual life. Based on questionnaires sent to pastors and other ministry leaders, the project will reveal the need for a practical Biblical plan for churches and ministries to “come alive again.” It then reviews both historical and current approaches to a leader’s implementation of the early church’s principles and practices.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is a staggering and somber reality that has presented itself to North American churches. That reality is discovered with the recognition a majority of the churches have plateaued, are in a sharp descent, and even worst, many simply die with closed doors being the tragic outcome. There is a cornucopia of statistics that support this relevant reality regarding North American churches. According to *Leadership Journal*, 340,000 churches are in need of church revitalization. “Ninety-five percent of churches in North America average 100 or less. Over eighty percent of American churches are in decline or on a plateau. Each year approximately 3,500 churches die in North America. In North America, fifty to sixty churches close their doors every week. Among churches of all sizes, growing churches are still rare. In fact, they make up about 20 percent of our churches today.”¹ “The other 80 are plateauing or declining.”² Nevertheless, to curtail this trend in North American churches, church revitalization can happen through sound leadership practices that will rely on biblical principles. “The Bible contains principles for church revitalization. God has provided us with a practical and helpful example of church revitalization in the Word.”³

Statement of Problem

The state of the average 21st century church is one that is a picture of slow erosion that leads to slow a decline in the majority of local churches in America. “Today, of the

¹ Rainer, Thom, *Autopsy of a Dead Church*, (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2014),

² “Churches Die With Dignity”, *Christianity Today*, Jan. 1991, Vol.36

³ Reeder, Harry, *Embers to a Flame*, (Philsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2008), 28.

approximately 350,000 churches in America, four out of five are either plateaued or declining. Many churches begin a plateau or slow decline about their fifteenth to the eighteenth year. 80-85% is on the down-side of this cycle.”⁴ “This decline in churches seems to be an ecumenical trend. Between 1969 and 2011 the Church of England eliminated 500 churches and “deconsecrated” 1,000 more. The Montreal Gazette recently reported that 340 church buildings are seeking “new” vocations with that Canadian city now representing one of the most secularized areas in North America.”⁵ “According to a report from the Assemblies of God, 4,000 congregations close their doors in the United States every year. The decline in membership began among Catholics and mainline Protestants, while evangelical groups such as the Southern Baptists appeared immune for some time. Data from the Southern Baptist’s Annual Church Profile found that between 2007 and 2012, only 27 percent of reporting churches experienced growth. Forty- three percent were plateaued, and 30 percent declined.”⁶ “The recent statistics from the Southern Baptists is a clear indication that the North American church is in trouble. Their membership began declining only nine years ago when other indicators of private American belief also showed a decline, says Jean Twenge, a professor at San Diego State University in California and author of "Generation Me," which discusses trends in American religiosity.”⁷

A further tragedy discovered in this slow decline is many of the churches deny the decline or simply do not recognize it. “This slow erosion is the worst type of decline for

⁴ Malphurs, Aubrey, *Re:Vision*, (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 2014), 21

⁵ Mohler, Albert, *A Guide To Revitalization*, (SBTS Press: Louisville, KY, 2015), 7

⁶ Ibid, 13

⁷ “The Real Reason Religion Is Declining In America”, *Psychology Today*, May 27, 2015.

churches, because the members have no sense of urgency to change. They see church on a regular basis; they don't see the gradual decline that is taking place before their eyes.”⁸

These numbers are somewhat shocking to church leadership. After the sheer shock of these numbers radiates within the leaders, it should move leaders to make adjustments within their own declining churches, such was the case in the Cornerstone Baptist church. The church that will be analyzed for this study. Consequently, it can be concluded leadership matters, when addressing this serious matter. “The state of the church reflects the state of church leadership in America. If 80-85 percent of the churches are struggling what does that say about church leadership or those pastoring those churches.”⁹ This points out there is a direct connection between the two: leadership and church decline. This is not a direct indictment on church leadership, because there are many factors that lead to a church's decline. Yet leadership does matter in this area. For instance, it can be concluded, that leadership is an important component in the failure or success in any organization. In athletics good coaches often lead good teams and in education administrators often lead good schools. Likewise in a similar fashion, pastoral leadership is an integral part of revitalizing a church from decline. It could be concluded everything rises and falls with leadership. As a matter of fact when pastors who have been leading a church for five years or longer, the church assumes the character of the pastor. “As goes the leadership, so goes the church.”¹⁰

Statement of Purpose

The decline in the contextual environment of the Cornerstone Baptist Church context and several of the sister churches within the last two to five years is they have been experiencing

⁸ Ibid,13

⁹ Ibid, 26

¹⁰ Ibid, 29

decline within their churches. A leader of the church stated, “Lately we have been having more leaving than more coming.” This statement caused the church to examine two particular areas, which are the state of the church’s health and the state of church leadership. That statement was an admission that something in the church was amiss. Recognition of decline is the first step to renewal. “Leaders must ask themselves this question: Do we believe that our church has plateaued and is now actually in decline? An affirmative answer is the first step in renewal and revitalization.”¹¹ Consequently, the task and purpose of this project are to analyze both areas. The paper will examine the correlation between church leadership, decline, and church renewal. “There are two essentials for church renewal. The primary need is the right leader. The second factor is a willing congregation. When these two dynamics come together, vibrant, renewed ministry is the outcome.”¹² Many reasons lead to the decline and death of churches, nonetheless, poor leadership is not absolved of contributing to the regression of the church. In an attempt to address the church’s decline he must be willing to accept the reality of the situation. Far too often, leaders ignore the warning signs of a declining a church, which leads to an inevitable death of the church. This program evaluation project will examine the leader’s traits, the leaders’ tactics, and the leaders’ tribulation to curtail the church’s decline and lead to revitalization.

Theological Basis for the Study

The Cornerstone Baptist Church is not viewed simply as an organization, but, an organism as well. Unfortunately, as an organism, the church is in a state of decline. To reverse this trend, the church we will be relying on church leaders to lead the church back to revitalization by studying and implementing principles that the early church utilized. As a result, the church leadership will be focusing on church health in an attempt to resuscitate the organism.

¹¹ Stuart, Robert, *Church Revitalization From the Inside and Out*, (P&R Publishing: Philipsburg, NJ, 2016), 26

¹² Ibid, 21

The pursuit of the church is to maintain church health, which will lead to life. This means growth is occurring, whether it is internal or external growth. Another way of approaching the subject of church health is to look at the church as a body. A church revitalization project must reject the notion of many examples that have the potential to stifle a church's effort at revitalization. It is always dangerous when a declining church effort for revitalization is initiated with some type of marketing plan. "Some believe churches grow primarily through the application of business principles. Others take an approach reminiscent of Hollywood- entertaining people so that they will have a good time. And the philosophy some have adopted is borrowed from the psychiatrist couch- a therapeutic self-help program."¹³ Consequently, churches interested revitalization need a "biblical fitness plan. If the physical body is to be healthy then it must have a balanced diet. In a similar fashion if the church is to be healthy then it must be balanced. The idea of church health will be the theme and theoretical basis and the biblical concept of this applied project. The church health concept must not be ignored. "This means the members of the body must be spiritually healthy. The work of the ministry cannot be carried out in a weak and unhealthy church."¹⁴ This theoretical approach assists the church in achieving this balance. To address the question of what creates a healthy balance for the church or the body, it would be apropos to examine the first-century churches in Bible history. In promoting the first church as an example for spiritual health and balance Greg Laurie use the acronym W-E-L-L. "In Acts we see the original plan in action, in the upcoming passage we see the original plan in action. In this passage, we find four foundational qualities. They were a worshipping church, they were evangelizing, church, they were a learning church,

¹³ Ibid, 28

¹⁴ Steadman, Ray, *Body Life*, (Discovery House: Grand Rapids, MI, 1972), 147.

and they were a loving church.”¹⁵ These foundations if utilized in the church with fidelity will lead to a healthy balance for the church.

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized and the same day there were there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship and in breaking bread and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many signs and wonders were done by the apostles, and had all things in common. (Acts 2:41-43)

Statement of Limitations

As with any project, limitations exist in the area of collecting exhaustive information; therefore, this project will rely on samples from pastors and church leaders who lead churches that are in declining stages. Consequently, this will present a challenge to the research, because when it comes to church attendance and church numbers, those numbers tend to be inflated due to self-reporting. It is a hard admission for a pastor and sometimes even church members, to acknowledge the church he leads or the church which they “belong” is in decline. “It is rare for a long time church member to see erosion in his or her church. Growth may come rapidly, but decline is observed usually slow, imperceptibly slow.”¹⁶ As a result of this, self-reporting methods can be considered somewhat unreliable; therefore, leading to a potential delimitation within the study of these groups. As a result, the participants will remain anonymous to combat this potential limitation.

Statement of Methodology

The first chapter of this project serves as an introduction to the project. Chapter 2 focuses on the concepts and practices of good leadership. The purpose of this chapter is to enhance the leader’s toolbox by providing skills and traits the leader should possess while

¹⁵ Laurie, Greg, *The Upside Down Church*, (Tyndale House Publishing: Wheaton, IL, 1999), 25.

¹⁶ Rainer, Thom, *Autopsy of a Dead Church*, (B&H Publishing Group: Nashville, TN, 2014), 14.

attempting to lead a declining church to revitalization. Furthermore, this chapter will examine the characteristics of turn-around pastors, which are leaders who have the qualities most likely to lead a declining church back to life.

The second chapter of this project will focus on tactics the leader can utilize in leading a church to revitalization. This portion of the paper will include an examination of the early church's practices. This chapter will attempt to provide the leader with the principles of the early church that can be implemented into the leader's local church. Also, this chapter will examine the results from the questionnaire that was completed by anonymous pastors for the project.

The third chapter of this project will focus on the potential tribulations the leader may encounter during the process of attempting to revitalize a declining church.

Review of Literature

Blackaby, Henry, *Spiritual Leadership*, B&H Holman Publishers: Nashville, TN, 2001.

This book deals with a variety of roles a leader must participate. Also, the book addresses the difference between secular leadership and spiritual leadership, which suggests there are secular principles that carry over into spiritual leadership, yet spiritual direction is primarily a spiritual endeavor, that is ordained with Godly insight and Biblical principles. This book's contribution to the overall project is the presentation of the qualities a leader possesses that will make him successful in the eyesight of God, not just man.

Malphurs, Aubrey, *Re:Vision*, Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 2014.

This book discovers and explores the necessity for transition in leadership for church transformation. It addresses the type of leader that is most likely to lead a church to a renewed vision with a sense of urgency when a church is in a declining state. It is an unfortunate

occurrence, but one that must be addressed, declining churches. This book will help the paper identify traits in the leader that will attempt to resolve this negative feature of the church.

Maxwell, John, *Developing the Leader Within*, Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville, TN, 1993.

John Maxwell expresses the importance of the leader's influence. He suggests if a leader does not have the power of influence over a group of followers, then it becomes an arduous task to lead. In addition, he gives those qualities that will help develop the leader's path to influence. The quality of leadership is achieved by the amount of influence the leader's presents to his followers. There are certain factors that foster a leader's influence. This book will identify those factors that enhance the leader's ability to lead.

Sanders, Oswald J. *Spiritual Leadership*, Moody Bible Institute: Chicago, IL, 2007.

This book is a classic study of the biblical principles of Godly leadership. The book emphasizes the nobility of leadership. Consequently, if leadership is a noble endeavor, leaders themselves must be virtuous. The book discusses those aspects that will lead to a leader's nobility in leading. The idea of nobility produces a relational quality for leadership. Leadership is to be taken a serious. It is an aspect of church life that must be entered with a serious attitude because the leader/teacher will have a stricter judgment from God.

Stanley, Andy, *The Next Generation Leader*, Multnomah Publishers: Sisters, Oregon, 2003.

This book expresses the idea that today's leader doesn't have to be well rounded by being competent in all areas of ministry. The book suggests it is vitally important for the leader to focus on his core competencies and have the courage to delegate other responsibilities to competent individuals. This book contribution is the fact it will give the leader relief in the area of that feeling of "not having to do it all." New Testament leaders had an area of ministry which they focused, which led to optimum ministry effectiveness.

Mims, Gene, *The Kingdom Focused Church*, B&H Publishing: Nashville, TN, 2003.

This book provides the agenda and purpose of a kingdom focused church. It suggests there are strategies that will lead a church to pursue the plan of God, which will yield positive results for the church in the area of growth and vitality. The New Testament leader's chief priority was kingdom building. Kingdom building through evangelism and discipleship is the heart of New Testament leadership. It is a focused area of ministry that takes precedence over all else.

Howell, Don, *Servants of the Servants: A Biblical Theology of Leadership*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers), 2013.

This book presents a different and contrasting study between Biblical leadership and secular leadership. Although there are similarities in the two field of studies, biblical leadership has some different characteristics. Mr. Howell accomplishes this task by presenting Old and New Testament profiles of biblical leaders. Furthermore, the crescendo of the leadership profile is embedded in the leadership styles and traits of Jesus.

The overriding principle of the book as it relates to leadership is the definition. "Every level and context of true leadership initiative and influence. One sees a need, then exercises initiative to address the concern; influence is then brought to bear others to join and contribute to the accomplishment of the objective."¹⁷ At the heart of each profile is this definition. Each leader had a task to accomplish and enlisted the assistance of others to help bring the mission to fruition. Leadership without followers accomplishes very little. Spiritual leaders, who do not

¹⁷ Howell, Don, *Servants of the Servants: A Biblical Theology of Leadership*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers), 2013.

employ the biblical leadership model often suffer detrimental personal and physical consequences.

Goldsworthy, Graeme, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, (IVP Academic: Downers Grove, IL), 2012

This book prioritizes the importance of Biblical theology in the landscape of Biblical interpretation. Furthermore, Goldsworthy readily and unashamedly admits he is a biblical theology addict. Because of this self-described addiction he promotes and proves the importance of Biblical theology. It is with this belief that he approaches Biblical theology and interpretation with a holistic approach; he doesn't believe the Bible is a book of disconnected stories. "When the Bible ceases to be a mass of unconnected stories and other bits of writing and begins to look like a unity that connects narratives of Israel with those four Gospels, that shows up the progression from the creation to the new creation, and highlights the Gospel of Jesus Christ, people usually sit up and take notice."¹⁸ Because of his humble approach in handling this subject matter, the audience of the book can trust in Mr. Goldsworthy positions. He doesn't present a dogmatic rendering of the subject matter. He understands other points on the subject of Biblical theology. For instance, he readily admits and recognizes the value of the opposition that his position presents. Consequently, at the heart of theological Biblical leadership is an understanding of Biblical theology. This book will contribute to that idea in the paper.

Kostenberg, Andreas, *Entrusted With The Gospel* (B&H Publishing Company, 2010), vii.

This book *Entrusted With The Gospel*, edited by Andreas Kostenberg and Terry Wilder give special and insightful attention to the Pastoral Epistles. "After a lengthy period of during

¹⁸ Goldsworthy, Graeme, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, (IVP Academic: Downers Grove, IL, 2012), 19

which scholars paid relatively little attention to 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus, a spate of studies has come to appear, critical scholars have largely neglected evangelical scholarship on these letters.”¹⁹ For instance, the book opens with the hermeneutical and exegesis challenges that are present in the Pastoral Epistles. The book doesn’t ignore the notion that there are challenges in the book. It provides an opposite argument to those challenges in support of the book. Consequently, a wealth of information that traces leadership in the New Testament can be discovered in the Pastoral Epistles, this book will assist with that research.

Alexander, Paul and Devers, Mark, *The Deliberate Church*, (Crossway: Wheaton, IL, 2005), 43

This book makes the Gospel of particular import and a major priority in the development and sustaining of the local church. The effectiveness of the gospel should be presented with clarity. The audience and the potential recipients of the gospel should have precise comprehension. The church should endeavor to make this an objective in receiving new members into the local church and the *ekklesia*. Far too often, our attempt to judge our church success by external markers leads the church to a lackadaisical approach in presenting the gospel. “Most of us have been taught to measure success by external markers. In the context of the church, we typically measure things like attendance, baptisms, memberships, and people serving.”²⁰ As a result of this type of thinking, we become far too interested in numbers. Consequently, the church often sets low standards in what it means to be born again and a member of the local church. This is a point over which the authors’ succinctly express great concern. “Clarifying the gospel is so critical, especially, at the beginning of a work, because you want to ensure, as much as externally possible, the purity of the church’s membership. The more

¹⁹ Kostenberg, Andreas, *Entrusted With The Gospel* (B&H Publishing Company, 2010), vii.

²⁰ Scazzero, Peter, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI, 2015), 37

your congregation is clear on the Gospel it will likely avoid nominalism and carnal divisiveness.”²¹

As a result of this particular ideology, the book provides principles that will guard against a lethargic approach toward church membership and lenient treatment of the gospel. These principles make up several strengths of the book that will lead to a meaningful membership. In addition, the principles are practical matters that can be implemented for immediate results. This meaningful membership is contingent upon leadership principles that are derived and traced throughout the New Testament. As a matter of fact, a portion of the book is dedicated to effective leadership that will offer a significant contribution to the paper.

Towner, Philipp, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, (Wm B. Erdmans Publishing: Grand Rapids, MI), 2006

Leadership in the church will lead to the success or failure of a church. Consequently, since leadership is an important dynamic in the church, understanding the Biblical qualifications is an essential element that will aid towards success. The local church will have the opportunity to select capable and competent leaders when they comprehend the Biblical context for leadership. Paul’s letter to his apostolic delegates, Timothy and Titus, address this subject in great detail. Understanding Paul’s teaching on this subject requires an investigation of the historical context in the city of Ephesus that led to Paul addressing such a topic.

MacArthur, John, *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*, (Word Publishing: Dallas, TX), 1995

This book will guide potential leaders with the opportunity to advance toward imminent success. To that end, there are attributes to be practiced that will enhance leadership. On the contrary, there are characteristics that should be avoided that can easily derail successful

²¹ Alexander, Paul and Devers, Mark, *The Deliberate Church*, (Crossway: Wheaton, IL, 2005), 43

leadership. At the heart of a leader's success is the ability to make decisions. Decision making for the leader is imperative. When a leader fails to make a decision, the indecision is a decision. It is a grave mistake to allow apathy to hinder the leader's ability to make a decision. "Decision making is the lot of leaders, and indecision or poor decisions can become their undoing." This book emphasizes the importance New Testament leadership places upon on prioritizing decisions for effective ministry.

Scazzero, Peter, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI), 2015

This book challenges the reader to invest in becoming a leader that is self-aware of the spiritual quotient that exists in their own lives. Consequently, this self-awareness will be a great benefit to the leader. In addition, considering ancillary matters, the investment in the emotional health of the leader will be a tremendous benefit to the church or organization they lead.

"Leading a church, an organization, or ministry that transforms the world requires more than the latest leadership strategies and techniques. Lasting change in churches and organization require men and women leading from a deep and transformed inner life."²² The health of the leader is achieved by avoiding the four unhealthy commandments of church leadership. These unhealthy commandants are an insidious trap for the leader. On the surface the unhealthy commandments do not have an adverse effect on the leader. Yet, when they enter into the core of the leader, the results are detrimental to the leader and his followers. New Testament leadership produced healthy leaders which resulted in strong leadership.

Thomas, Gary, *Every Body Matters*, (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI), 2011

This book, *Every Body Matters*, Gary Thomas places on an equal value on the spirit and body. The book suggests if we are to be effective spiritually, then we must take care of our

²² Scazzero, Peter, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI, 2015), 48

physical bodies. The treatment of our body produces a cause and effect relationship between our spiritual performance and the maintenance of our body. For instance, if we take care of our bodies through exercise and healthy eating, it will help us accomplish more in our ministry production. The care of our body is no small matter when it comes to being fruitful in our ministries. “To be fully alive, fully human, the people God created us to be we have to care for our bodies, discipline them, and make them our servants in our service to God.”²³ Taking care of our bodies is a serious endeavor that God expects us to make a priority. Although body neglect may not be considered an explicit sin, the lack of self-control and self-discipline has the potential of showing up in other areas of our lives. Consequently, Satan is aware of those weaknesses, and he will strategically allow our body neglect to cause a problem in other areas of our spiritual lives. Therefore, it is imperative that we become good stewards over the bodies God has given us. This book examines the importance of the leader’s physical health; this is a much-neglected topic in the area of leadership that needs to be addressed.

Laniak, Timothy, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, (Downer Grove IL: Intervarsity Press), 2006

This book provides important background work on the image of the shepherd. This imagery is important because it lays a solid foundation for leadership that will be discovered in the New Testament. One particular word for pastor in the New Testament is shepherd or under shepherd; therefore, understanding the background for this metaphor will help understand the development of New Testament leadership.

MacArthur, John, *The Book On Leadership*, (Nelson Books: Nashville, TN), 2004

It would be difficult to trace New Testament leadership without mentioning one of the preeminent leaders in the New Testament- the Apostle Paul. This book investigates two events

²³ Thomas, Gary, *Every Body Matters*, (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI, 2011), 29

that helped shaped Paul's leadership ideology: Paul in Corinth and Paul in chains. Much can be learned about leadership from these two settings in the life of Paul, and in leadership.

Furthermore, this book addresses other leadership qualities that were discovered in successful New Testament leadership.

Hanna, Martin, "*What's Christian About Christian Leadership*, The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership, Berrien Springs (Summer 2006): 21-31

In this article, the theories of Christian leadership are defined, implemented, and evaluated. In a theoretical sense, the article suggests leadership is common to all people. Leadership is a principle that is discovered in general terms. It can be observed in a variety of spheres, which demonstrates the importance of the concept of leadership. The article also spends time distinguishing between Christian leadership and secular leadership. It defines the differences between the two, listing such distinctions as the Holy Spirit involvement in Christian leadership. Furthermore, it doesn't negate the necessity of servant leadership in a secular leadership, but, it emphasizes it is requisite in Christian leadership.

Schepers, Maurice, *The Work of the Holy Spirit: Karl Barth on the Nature of the Church*, Theological Studies, December 1, 1962, pages 625-636.

The article provides content that will lead to a healthy discussion on the origin, tenets, and principles of the church. Within the principles of the church is New Testament leadership. The article surmises it would be difficult to have a discussion about the church without addressing the topic of church leadership at some level.

Applied Ministry Context

It is important to understand the genesis of an organization to understand the projected forward movement of the organization and pursue an honest attempt at church revitalization.

Our focus for this applied project the Cornerstone Baptist Church was founded in 1969, a span of 47 years. The church was found with ten members in a domestic house by the founding pastor. Within three years the church, began to have service in a local elementary school's auditorium. This change in location helped add new members from the community to the church. The founding pastor resided as pastor for five years. His pastorate ended when he was selected to become the pastor of another church. Upon his resignation, the church selected one of the associate members to become the pastor. The second pastor had a tenure of 27 years. During his tenure, the church underwent significant transitions. They moved from the local elementary school to a church building in the same neighborhood. The church building could seat 75 people. During this time the church began to add several ministries, which included a deacon board, regular Sunday School Department, and a finance team. Within a ten year period, the church underwent major renovations, increasing its seating capacity to 150, adding a baptismal pool and a fellowship hall. All these renovations happened in the same location. In September of 2011, the pastor went on to be with the Lord. Once again the church selected a pastor within the church. They selected an associate minister who was presently serving in the church. He is still currently the pastor. He is in his fifteenth year of pastorate in this church. During this fifteen year tenure the church has been in a "yo-yo" phase regarding growth. New members will join the church, yet there is minimal retention. This allows the new members to escape through the back door within a 1-2 year period. Consequently, this scenario has caused the church to plateau, which eventually led to a slow decline.

The church identifies itself as a traditional church, when compared to the other three prominent church models- attractional, organic, and hybrid. The church closely identifies with

several of the characteristics of a traditional church.²⁴ For example, the traditional church is “hierarchical in nature, building focused, Sunday focused, preaching focused, and worship is a Sunday morning function.”²⁵ The church does not have any paid full-time staff members. The church has several part-time employees. The paid staff includes the pastor, who is bi-vocational. The other paid staff are not considered full-time staff. The other paid staff includes the minister of music, the facility manager, the finance clerk, the van driver, and the landscaper. Volunteers perform most church activities on a voluntary basis. Although our ministry is volunteer-driven, the volunteers take their part in the ministry very seriously. They are faithful and dependable in fulfilling their Christian duties to the church. In the church’s history, it has seen failure at attempting several new ministries.

Consequently, the historical ministries at church that have been maintained through the years are music ministry, usher ministry, youth ministry, adult Bible study ministry, Brotherhood ministry, Women’s ministry, and prison ministry. It is worth mentioning that the most recent ministries that were attempted to no avail were the singles ministry, marriage ministry, and sermon reproduction ministry. On the other hand, some new ministries have been attempted and are showing signs of success. These ministries include new member orientation, purposeful assimilation, and a stewardship team. Ten years ago the church purchased two acres of land for a new location. The purchase of the land required prayer from the church leaders and congregation because the land had to be rezoned for a church location, it was previously zoned as commercial. After much prayer and faith, the city council approved the property to be rezoned for a church location. Six months ago the church began the preliminary phase to build on the property. The church selected a contracting firm to lead the project. The church decided

²⁴ Rod Dempsey and Dave Earley, *Disciple Making Is*, (B&H Academic: Nashville, TN, 241), 2013

²⁵ *Ibid*, 241

to build the activity center before building the worship center, citing the economic feasibility of the activity center over the worship center. The project will be funded by securing a loan from a bank or divine intervention. Our church history is remembered, recited, and revered by the members on a frequent basis.

Church Leadership

Selection and participation in church leadership is taken very seriously at the church. The church is deliberate in making a distinction between spiritual leadership and secular leadership. It agrees with Oswald Chambers' assessment in distinguishing between the two. "In the secular, leaders are self-confident, ambitious, creates methods, enjoys commands, seeks personal rewards, and is independent. On the contrary, the spiritual leader is confident in God, knows God, seeks God's will, is humble, follow God's example, delights in obedience to God, loves God's and others, depends on God."²⁶

Because of a solid belief in this distinction the church has an eclectic group of leaders. We will begin with the present pastor. The pastor was born and raised in this church. As a matter of fact, part of the church history is connected to the pastor's history. When he was two weeks old and his parents joined the church, he participated in most of the children ministries during his childhood. He accepted Christ at the age of twelve as his personal savior. During his teen years, he participated in youth Sunday school, sang in the youth choir, served on the youth usher board, and was a junior deacon. At the age of fifteen, he became the church's custodian until he graduated high school and went to college. In 1996, he entered into the ministry. In 1998, he was selected as the associated pastor. In this role, he became the adult Bible school teacher and the presiding minister over pulpit duties. It is important to understand the pastor's

²⁶ Ibid, 27

background and connection to the church, for through that connection he recognized that something “changing” within the congregation, which has been the impetus for the church’s realization that revitalization is necessary. Consequently, if the pastor is to play an integral role in leading the church to revitalization, while utilizing early church principles, then it is important to examine the qualifications of the New Testament leader.

Leadership in the church is an important entity that will lead to the success or failure of a church. Consequently, since leadership is an important dynamic in the church, understanding the Biblical qualifications is an essential element that will aid towards success. “So as a pastor-elder-shepherd revitalizer of God’s people who must you be? Paul gives a list of qualifications for church leadership in 1 Timothy 3.”²⁷ The local church will have the opportunity to select capable and competent leaders when they comprehend the Biblical context for leadership. Paul’s letter to his apostolic delegates, Timothy and Titus, address this subject in great detail. Understanding Paul’s teaching on this subject requires an investigation of the historical context in the city of Ephesus that led to Paul addressing such a topic.

Historical Context of Leadership

The framework of Paul addressing the qualifications of leaders is centered around, but not limited to, at least two ideas. First, Paul was refuting the false teachers that were prominent throughout Ephesus. The false teachers were making a mockery of leadership with their carnal lifestyles and heretical teaching. Towner suggests, “It seems clear that the emergence of opponents would have caused a number of problems related to leadership.”²⁸ Therefore, the list of qualifications that Paul writes regarding church leadership would create a line of demarcation regarding Christian standards and the heretical opposition that was prevalent in Ephesus.

²⁷ Mohler, Albert, *A Guide To Church Revitalization*, (SBTS Press: Lexington, KY, 2005), 19

²⁸ *Ibid*, 239

Furthermore, Paul wanted to establish continued credibility within the church; therefore, such a list was necessary. He didn't want to risk the church having a humiliating witness in Ephesus. In addition, the letter was written from the perspective of the household concept in relation to that contextual climate. The household concept showed the symbolic relationship between the domestic house and the house of God. "Subsequent discussions of relationships pertinent to both household and church shows how the fundamental social institution has come to serve as a model for understanding the obligations of believers within the community of faith."²⁹ Also, the city of Ephesus helped create the historical context when addressing the qualifications of leaders. First Timothy was read in a large in metropolis center. "The second order of First Timothy envisions house churches of predominately Jewish origin, in which registered widows and ordained presbytery who constitute a presbyteral body, a presbytery are the key ministers. The abuses that have arisen in these order set the procedure for dealing with them."³⁰ Finally, the historical context of Christianity and culture factored into Paul's writing. There are times where Christianity must be counter-cultural, work within the culture, and at times be above the culture. However, at no time should Christianity have limited sensitivity or limited understanding of the culture. It would be a difficult task to potentially transform the culture, if Christians absolve themselves of having cultural knowledge of the norms. Paul was able to combat and refute the false teachers because he had an idea of their misinformed teaching. It is important to note that cultural awareness does not equate to conformity. "The NT household codes give some evidence of social awareness and cultural sensitivity, but they never advocate conformity for conformity's sake."³¹

²⁹ Ibid, 57.

³⁰ Ibid, 97.

³¹ Ibid, 357.

Various Interpretations of Leadership

Philip Towner describes two categories of leaders in this section. According to Towner the emphasis on the introduction and listed qualifications indicate that a problem existed in the church at Ephesus that needed to be addressed. In regards to the list, the leader's behavior was of especial import. The focus on the leader's character does not negate the leader's abilities or giftedness. According to Towner, "Each leadership role was regarded from the standpoint of qualifications, not duties, and from that it is clear that Paul's stress was on the quality of the leader's character, though the presence of suitable gifts and abilities would be an assumed requirement."³²

The form of the letter presents somewhat a code of conduct for the church leader. It is a list that is similar to a list that can be found in a secular environment. The list is twofold: it includes character traits that are commendable from a societal observation; on the contrary, it presents character traits that are would bring humiliation to the leader and the church, if the leader is marked by them. "Paul worked with a particular duty code pattern in addressing overseers and elders in the two letters. Within this overseer code, positive qualities and contrary vices occur in lists."³³

In addition to the leadership qualities, Towner interprets church structure in the letter. "Our knowledge of church structure and the organization of authority at the time Paul wrote to Titus and Timothy, as well as other churches is very limited."³⁴ Equally important when analyzing the qualifications of elders, is the discussion of the interchangeability of the terms elder and overseer. In this context, elder does not refer to the age of an individual. In the letters

³² Ibid, 239.

³³ Ibid, 240.

³⁴ Ibid, 242.

to his apostolic delegates the term elder carried the meaning of leader. “In the letters to Timothy and Titus, *presbyteroi* occurs in reference to leaders. Some of those so named carried out the functions of teaching and preaching.

By the same token, the letter to Titus places special emphasis on the ethical behavior of the leader. The requirement Paul mentions to Titus is the leader must be blameless. The leader’s behavior should have a good report from those within and outside of the church. Although Crete was a different environment from Ephesus, the need to select and appoint qualified leaders was a crucial endeavor.

In their interpretation of the Pauline Epistles, Quinn and Wacker examine the church order. “The question implicit at this juncture in the church order is, who does preside and teach in Christian public worship? The answer is the bishop and the deacons including women ministers.”³⁵ These particular authors approach the matter of bishops and elders in the church structure as having the least desired position. Their rationale for this belief is the amount of scrutiny this position would lessen the attractiveness of the position. Although it is a highly visible position, the visibility of the position leads to critical viewpoints from the audience of the church and society. “This leadership presumes that the bishop and his ministers have taken the least desired position as they serve the Christian assembly, for all the demands that are going to make on their personal and public life. The church order reflects a situation in which it was difficult to persuade men to accept the *episcopate*.

In the same fashion, when analyzing church order, Quinn and Wacker point to the arduous task. The office of bishop and deacons was demanding. It entailed refuting theological disputes, refuting and responding to heresy, and constantly being watched by Christians and non-

³⁵ Ibid, 251.

Christians. These suppositions were not limited to bishops and deacons, but the church hierarchical order called them leaders, so the duties intensified for them. “The public image of Christians and their leaders were was coming under increasingly intense scrutiny.”³⁶

The Pastoral Epistles cover a common theme. The theme is to select leaders who will defend the Christian message against those who oppose it. Part of the strategy that was utilized to solidify the response against the opposition was to select qualified leaders in Ephesus and Crete. “The stress is laid on the character of these leaders and to teach is implicit in the description. The kind of character that is sought is positively seen in an orderly way of life.”³⁷ The key to dealing with such opposition is to select strong leaders who have the character to withstand the verbal insults and character assassinations that would be levied at them from their opponents. First Timothy moves to the key element in dealing with those who oppose the Christian message. “This is the character and ability of the people who should serve as church leaders in three types of positions traditionally, bishops, male deacons and female deacons.”³⁸

Conversely, the character for the leader is important. Not only is the public character of the leader important, but also the domestic character of the leader is held in high priority. “If the understanding of church structure at Ephesus is roughly right, then the false teaching can only have gained strength if the elders in whose houses the church meets have been inattentive to both the domestic and ecclesiastical affairs of their household.”³⁹ Consequently, Paul lays forth qualifications for the church leaders to maintain, thus, not bringing humiliation and shame to the Christian message, therefore, leaving it in ineffective its purpose, power, and practice. “Scholars

³⁶ Ibid, 252.

³⁷ Marshall, Howard, *New Testament Theology*, (IVP Academic: Downers Grove, IL, 2004), 399.

³⁸ Ibid, 403.

³⁹ Thielman, Frank, *Theology of New Testament*, (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI, 2005), 421

frequently point out how similar Paul’s list of qualifications for overseers and deacons is to the list of qualifications found in Hellenistic philosophies and moral theorists of that period.”⁴⁰

Some scholars believe the information that was written to Paul’s apostolic delegates is not new information. “In fact some scholars argue that much that was written in the Pastoral Epistles would have been very familiar to Paul’s faithful co-workers.”⁴¹ Nevertheless, “Regarding church structure, no instructions regarding the duties of the bishop or deacon are given in the pastoral letters—they are assumed.”⁴² Instead of focusing on the duties of the church leaders, Paul was more concerned with the behavior of the leader. The unethical behavior of the leader would negate the fulfillment of performance of duties by the leaders. Conduct without Christian character would create credibility issues within the community; therefore, it was imperative that Paul emphasized the qualifications that leaders must exhibit to have an impact on society. “And, the importance of their authority, such as one finds in Ignatius, is completely ignored in Paul’s letter. Paul was more concerned about the character of the church leaders.”⁴³

Explanation of Paul’s Teaching

Paul’s teaching regarding the qualifications of church leaders was necessitated by the need to combat the false teachers that were prominent in the city. Paul’s approach to addressing this problem was to create a mechanism for choosing and selecting qualified leaders. “Behind this concern was either an actual or anticipated leadership crisis, perhaps related to the activities of the false teachers. It seems clear that the emergence of opponents in the church have caused a number of problems related to church leadership”⁴⁴ Therefore, Paul created the process for the

⁴⁰ Ibid, 420.

⁴¹ Capes, David, *Rediscovering Paul*, (IVP Academic: Downers Grove, IL, 2007), 242.

⁴² Ibid, 243.

⁴³ Ibid, 243.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 239.

church to address this issue in Ephesus. The process Paul chose was to list qualifications for church leaders. He explains the qualifications for two leaders the bishop, and deacon. “There are not “three orders” of clergy in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul in this chapter expressly designates the characteristics of those who should have charge of the church, but mentions only two, “bishops and deacons”. These two leaders would be on display, which it is why it would be vitally important for these leaders to approach these qualifications as a prerequisite to the performance of duties. It would be a tremendous disservice to the spread of the Christian message if the leaders perform their duties without adhering the qualifications Paul would explain to Timothy and Titus.

Points Of Application For Modern Christians

Since leadership is such an important dynamic to church structure and strategy. It is imperative to note that the standard for leadership selection must be held in high esteem. Such was the case in Ephesus, and such is the case in the modern church. Therefore, this became a topic Paul had to address. Similarly, it is a topic that must be discussed in the modern church. Without sound leadership, the Ephesian church would drift away into a polytheistic and pagan way of the city. “A vacuum of leadership or absence of legitimate authority is particularly dangerous to the most vulnerable among us. When there is a vacuum of leadership in a congregation, stuff will fill the vacuum.”⁴⁵ Therefore, part of Paul’s intent is not only to fill the vacuum but to fill the potential vacuum with capable leaders. Without competent leadership purpose and practice, principles can be compromised; thus, to achieve this goal, the modern church must adhere to the cardinal virtues Paul writes about for church leaders. “The need to

⁴⁵ Ibid, 3

consolidate the church at this level calls forth from Paul both an endorsement for the position and guidelines to ensure that godly people are selected to occupy them.”⁴⁶

The importance of the work is attested by Paul when he declares the aspirations of the office of bishop as a noble and worthy task. “Oversight in the church is a ministry that makes a positive contribution to the life of the believing community, and done well, it brings honor to the leader.”⁴⁷ Effective leadership renders a win-win situation. The congregants are blessed by the leader, and the leader is blessed by God.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting the bishop/overseer stands in contrast to the secular chief operating officer or chief financial officer, although he may perform those functions in an ancillary matter. His leadership is different. This difference is identified in the descriptive title. “In letters to Timothy and Titus *presbyteroi* occurs in reference to leaders. (1 Timothy 5:17, 19 and Titus 1:5) Some of those individuals carried out the functions of teaching and preaching, but, the primary implication is that the primary function of the elders was to exercise leadership in the church.”⁴⁸ As a result, the modern church must not fall into the trap of thinking successful secular leadership will translate into spiritual leadership. That will not always be the case. “We live today in a culture that is dominated by ideas of expertise and specialization. But in the congregation- faith, maturity, and character and self- knowledge are more to the point than expertise and knowledge.”⁴⁹ Although this may be true, it would not be a mistake to seek individuals who have skill and expertise. “For example, we may seek someone who has an accounting background and legal background for positions that entail financial responsibilities.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 240.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 249.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 247.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 78.

These things are important, but too often it is the only thing we consider. First Timothy suggests character is crucial and spiritual maturity is central.”⁵⁰

Leadership in the church is important; consequently, the value of the leadership is identified with the established qualifications written by Paul. “If anybody aspires to the episcopate he sets his heart on a fine work, yet the content of the sentence is far from naïve. It serves to introduce a formidable list of qualities requisite for this episcopal leadership.”⁵¹ The modern church should take the selection of leadership serious. The list of qualifications provided by Paul, if adhered to, would limit the opportunity for fallacy in selecting church leaders.

Comparatively speaking, the modern application would not only benefit leaders in the church, the list of the qualifications would benefit all Christians. The list can serve as a benchmark that will assist the Christian in performing a self-evaluation. The self-evaluation could identify areas of weakness that should be strengthened based on the qualifications in the list. A thoughtful evaluation will keep our attention on Christ and will keep a balanced approach to our growth in Christ.

Furthermore, the modern church should observe the leadership qualities with a missional approach. The list of qualifications is not only for the congregation, but also it is for the community as well. The leader’s reputation has an impact on those outside the faith. “In Ephesus Timothy was to lead in Paul’s absence. This was a missional situation. They were an outpost of Christian faith, story, values and, way of life in the midst of a pagan culture. As such, their way of life speaks to the wider culture and community of their God. So the congregational

⁵⁰ Ibid, 77.

⁵¹ Ibid, 49.

leader is to be a person who is held in high regard and respected by the outsiders.”⁵² Moreover, reputation and respect of the leader would enhance the leader’s ability to reach the unsaved in the polytheistic city of Ephesus, inviting them to accept a monotheistic approach by trusting in the true and living God. On the contrary, lack of living above reproach would create an inimicable environment regarding the witness of the leader. Similarly, the same approach to leadership that values character and conduct would have an impact in our present day situation in the outside community.

The qualities in bishops and deacons place the character and conduct of leader at a premium. Since the qualities of the leader are so observable to the Christian community and the outside community, Paul writes to his coworkers Timothy and Titus, a list of qualifications to assist them with the selection of leaders. In addition, the list for church leaders would combat the false teachers in Ephesus for Timothy and help Titus “set things in order” in Crete. “It is not hard to see the failure of the false teachers behind these qualifications for leadership, Paul’s concern is to shore the church’s leadership and protect the church’s testimony in society.”⁵³ “The list of qualifications positively encourage perseverance in a standard of behavior and administration that will project a winning testimony in society.”⁵⁴ In addition, the study is not to be regarded as antiquated in its thoughts and principles. The adherence to the principles of selecting capable leaders will have a positive impact on the modern day church. Furthermore, the code of conduct listed in the Pastoral Epistles for church leaders, can serve as a great benefit to Christians who practice the qualities for themselves. Moreover, to support this rationale,

⁵² Ibid, 80.

⁵³ Ibid, 260.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 260.

many of the same positive character traits for bishops and deacons can be cross-referenced for all believers in other portion of scriptures.

Finally, the list of qualifications for bishops and deacons were designed to strengthen the testimony of the church in pagan societies, refute false teachers, and fill the leadership positions in Ephesus and Crete. Since the qualifications of leadership has been established, the leader now must have a sound understanding of revitalization.

A sound understanding of revitalization for leaders can be discovered in the Word of God. A plethora of approaches and programs have been rendered in the revitalization process, but an excellent place to start is discovering what the Bible has presented regarding the subject. Consequently, there should not be a preoccupation with program production which makes the primary objective to produce, “nickels, noise, and numbers.” On the contrary, the goal of revitalization is to promote “biblical principles by which the Holy Spirit can bring health and vitality to the body of Christ.”⁵⁵ Moreover, there are particular prerequisite characteristics and traits that the “turnaround” leader must exhibit, if success is to happen.

CHAPTER 2

THE LEADER’S TRAITS

The Leader’s Call

Spiritual leadership is not for the faint of heart. Furthermore, spiritual leadership is a key component in revitalization; consequently, spiritual leadership that engages in a revitalization project becomes even more of an arduous task. “No one can fulfill the difficult role of spiritual leadership adequately who has not been called or commissioned by Christ and the Church.”⁵⁶ As a result of the difficulty of the task at hand regarding revitalization, it is essential that the

⁵⁵ Ibid, 30

⁵⁶ MacArthur, John, *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*, (Word, Inc.: Dallas, TX, 2005), 104

spiritual leader understands his call to spiritual leadership. It is worth noting the spiritual leader's call is not some mystical event that the leader must have to make the call one of complete veracity. When the project becomes difficult, it is the seriousness of the leader's call that allows him to continue to "do" the work that is required in leading people to renewal. So the call to leadership is always connected to people. "The call usually begins with a desire to care for the spiritual well-being of others. Circumstances may put us in a position where we feel that we must do something to help people."⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the performance of this call will bring joy to those who accept the invitation and participate. Alistar Begg confirms when he states, "These tasks will never be irksome, but sheer joy."⁵⁸

The call in spiritual leadership is vitally important. It is the spiritual call of the leader that gives the leader the strength and endurance for the task of revitalization. "Leaders convinced of their call do not easily succumb to disappointments and discouragements. Nor do they calculate odds in the same way as those not operating from a call basis."⁵⁹ The heart of the leader is formed from the call. The formation of the call is initiated and concluded by God. As a matter of fact, the call in spiritual leadership gives a clear distinction between spiritual leadership and secular leadership. Secular leadership can be classified as a career. "The call also is not a religious career or position. A career and a call are two different things. Having a church job does not make one the recipient of a divine call. The call is mediated through human appointment or election."⁶⁰ On the contrary, spiritual leadership is more than a career; it is a calling. When a leader approaches church revitalization solely from a career perspective, that attitude will lead to insufficiency in many areas that the spiritual leader must have to fulfill the

⁵⁷ Prime, Derek and Begg, Alistair, *On Being A Pastor*, (Moody Publishers: Chicago, IL, 2004), 22

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 23

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 96

⁶⁰ McNeal, Reggie, *A Work of Heart*, (Josey Bassey Publishing: San Francisco, CA, 20000, 95

obligations in the revitalization project. As a result the distinction between secular and spiritual leadership must be presented. “This sense of being called to spiritual leadership is not to be confused with the more general sense of *calling*. Many people in secular leadership describe their life’s work or passion as a calling.”⁶¹ On the other hand, the spiritual leader’s call is more of a spiritually led and a spiritual guided endeavor. Secular leadership can be achieved with skill, and without the *Spirit*. Yet, spiritual leadership is more about the *Spirit*. The subject of leadership holds a deeper meaning for Christians, especially spiritual leaders. It is not just enough to be an effective leader in the spiritual realm. Many leaders- dictators, despots, and evil rulers have been “successful” in leadership; therefore, in Christendom leaders must be called. It is the call that makes the difference. “Society at large is displaying widespread and growing interest in spiritual issues. Amazingly, at a time of renewed societal interest in spiritual issues, many churches and denominations are declining. According to George Barna, “The American church is dying due to a lack of strong, spiritual leadership.”⁶² The church doesn’t simply need strong leaders; the church needs strong spiritual leaders. It is imperative the leader who is leading a church to revitalization understand a career is what you are paid to do, but, you’re calling is what you are made to do. The conundrum in society and the church is faced with is this, Sadly, there is no shortage of secular/vocational leadership, but there is a lack of authentic called leadership.

Nonetheless, secular principles have begun to emerge in the church, causing many to think secular principles will lead to success in the church. “This raises a significant issue for Christian leaders: Do leadership principles found in secular writing apply to work done in God’s

⁶¹ Ibid, 98

⁶² Blackaby, Henry, *Spiritual Leadership*, (B&H Publishers: Nashville, TN, 2001), 8

kingdom?”⁶³ Spiritual leadership must continuously and consistently consider biblical precepts when it comes to church growth and church renewal. Furthermore, the call of the spiritual leader is connected to the Word of God. Consequently, it is imperative that the leader’s call is validated by the Word of God, so when the spiritual leader’s call is challenged, criticized by culture, and misunderstood by the congregation, the Word of God will be the stabilizing force to keep the leader invigorated. The spiritual leader must rely on Scripture. Therefore, so when it comes to revitalization, the spiritual leader must take their calling seriously. For it is not an easy task to lead a church back to renewal. “Throughout scripture leaders are warned by the Lord to take their calling seriously and to heal his church when it is sickly.”⁶⁴ Reportedly, statistics show that the 21st century church is sickly and in need of called leaders who can lead the church to revitalization.

“Statistics do not lie and what they tell us about the church is that God’s *ekklesia* is ailing and is urgently in need of treatment. It will take a called spiritual leader to accept the facts and be prepared to deal with the state of the local church.”⁶⁵ “The Hartford Institute for Religion Research claims that 59 percent of all Protestant churches average between 7 and 99 attendees, and 35 percent average between 100 and 499.”⁶⁶ Furthermore, in a tragic report in an, “American Congregations Study of 2008 reported that, steadily from 2000-2008, approximately 75 percent of all churches had conflict within the previous five year period over matters of money, worship, and leadership.”⁶⁷ These negative factors within the church have an impact on church morale and church loyalty. When these types of things are happening, it robs a church of

⁶³ Ibid, 10.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 15.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 77.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 104.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 213.

its vitality. Consequently, the inevitable outcome is many members become disenfranchised and ultimately leave the church, leading the church down a path of regression and decline.

So the calling of the leader when it comes to revitalization must be met with a measure of certitude. It is imperative that the spiritual leader know that they have been called and have a clear understanding of they have been called to do. The certainty of this call be may be realized in a private situation, yet it will be validated in a public forum. This validation of the call gains credibility in public when the leader's character accompanies it. Character and call are inextricably woven together when it comes to spiritual leadership. Furthermore, a leader's character is ostensibly to the notion of integrity in the leader's life.

The Leader's Character

Leadership in church revitalization has a definite character component. "One important observation is that character, or lack of it, is a prime indicator of whether a church can climb out of the hole that it has dug for itself. Character is the foundation that supports everything else in revitalization ministry."⁶⁸ Sound character is necessary to earn influence with followers. Successful spiritual leadership is achieved through the level of influence the leader has with his followers. "Leadership is influence. That's it. Nothing more nothing less. He who thinketh he leadeth and hath no one following is only taking a walk. Leadership is the ability to obtain followers."⁶⁹ Although a leader's influence is paramount to church renewal, it must not be achieved through improper means. For example, it would be erroneous to achieve influence by virtue of a leader's position. "The manner of gaining influence through one's station has inherent flaws. This approach lends itself to flagrant abuses."⁷⁰ Not only is position a negative

⁶⁸ Cheyney, Tom and Rials, Terry, *Nuts & Bolts*, (Renovate Publishing Group: Orlando, FL, 2015), 110

⁶⁹ Maxwell, John, *Developing The Leader Within You*, (Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville, TN, 1993), 1

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 87

way to achieve influence, but also so is power. “Christian leaders invite rebellion when they use force to achieve their organizational goals.”⁷¹ As noble as church renewal is, it must not be a forced action upon the church members; it must be a process that members see as a benefit and one that is viewed as an essential element for church survival. In the same way, a leader must not rely on personal charisma to gain influence. “People often follow leaders strictly because of their personality. The popularity of a leader in itself is not a bad thing, but, leaders must offer more to their people than just charm.”⁷²

There is a tangible and credible way a leader can gain influence. When a leader receives affirmation from God through results, it has the potential to influence followers in a variety of ways. According to Henry Blackaby, “The first and most important test of legitimacy for spiritual leaders is God’s authentication.”⁷³ The affirmation of God’s leaders is not an elusive characteristic for followers to observe. First, “Affirmation is discovered when God fulfills his promise to the leader’s organization.” Second, “It is discovered when the leader’s reputation is vindicated.” Third, the leader’s affirmation is observed, “When lives are changed. When someone leads in the Spirit’s power lives are changed.”⁷⁴

Because of these observable features, influential leaders in the church are easily identified. Just through observation, one can look individuals whose opinion is valued the most. In addition, one can take note to who the people are most willing to follow. The person who achieves the most in these two categories usually is the most influential, which makes them the leader of that particular group. Moreover, all individuals have some level of influence.

Knowing that all individuals have influence leads to this conclusion. The critical issue is not if

⁷¹ Ibid, 90

⁷² Ibid, 93

⁷³ Ibid, 93

⁷⁴ Ibid, 94

someone is an influencer; the important question becomes what type of influencer he will be. When it comes to a spiritual leader revitalizing a church, influence is vitally important. For instance, at the Cornerstone Church, much of the ministry is based on volunteerism. Therefore, the leader must have the ability to develop followers who believe in the project he is initiating in church renewal. According to Fred Smith, “Leadership is getting people to work for you when they are not obligated.” The influential leader will have an instant impact on a church revitalization project. His influence can set the tone. The influential tone is accomplished by understanding the value of relationships. “People who are unable to build solid, lasting relationships will soon discover they are unable to sustain long, effective leadership.”⁷⁵

The very heart of this influential matter is love. “You can love people without leading them, but you cannot lead people without loving them.”⁷⁶ The essence of the revitalization is connected to the people, not just the people in the church. The people see the value in themselves before they can see the value in rebuilding their church. So, much of the revitalization project is about people building, not just about buildings, baptisms, and budgets. As a result, influence is about followers believing in the leadership. The leader’s influence is synonymous with his integrity. Influence without integrity leads to incompetent leadership.⁷⁷ Consequently, nothing can deteriorate a leader’s influence like a lack of character.

When it comes to leadership character truly counts. Most leadership experts agree that character, or integrity, is foundational to leadership success. The dictionary definition of integrity is: “A firm attachment to moral or artistic principle; honesty and sincerity; uprightness; wholeness, completeness; the condition of being unmarred or uncorrupted.”⁷⁸ Nothing can ruin a

⁷⁵ Ibid, 33

⁷⁶ Ibid, 51

⁷⁷ Ibid, 7

⁷⁸

leaders' position in his follower's opinion more than a consistent deficiency of character. For this reason, there are specific attributes a leader who is attempting to revitalize a church must pay careful attention to and make sure they are a constant presence in his life.

First, the spiritual leader has to lead with honesty. The leader's life must not have a trace of duplicity and hypocrisy. "A person with integrity does not have divided loyalties, nor is he or she merely pretending. People with integrity have nothing to hide and nothing to fear."⁷⁹ There must be a matching of external and internal behaviors when it comes to the leader's public and private life; this is where honesty must play a pivotal part in the leader's life. This balance is accomplished when belief matches behavior, dialogue matches deeds, being matches doing, and character matches conversation. "When there is integrity, and character words and deeds match up, I am who I am no matter where I am or who I am with."⁸⁰ When starting a revitalization process, the members have to trust the leader is guiding them in the right direction, this belief in the leader begins with honesty. It is no understatement to reason people still value honesty. "Kouzes and Posner, in an extensive study of employees from across the United States, asked people what they value most and admired in their leaders. Over the years the trait that has consistently topped all lists has been honesty."⁸¹ Nevertheless, a derivative of honesty is credibility. A leader's honesty will give him credibility with his followers. It is understood that honesty is the bedrock for integrity. Yet, credibility is the foundation for leadership. Kouzes and Posner use another term to describe integrity in a leader: credibility. "The ultimate test of leader's credibility is whether they do what they say." Of all individuals in leadership positions, spiritual leaders have to be known for their honesty. "Dishonesty and artificiality are

⁷⁹ Ibid, 37

⁸⁰ Ibid, 35

⁸¹ Ibid, 104

incompatible with true leadership. The leader who engages in double-dealing or deception will very quickly lose his following. A leader must be trustworthy.”⁸²

Not only must the leader who is leading a church toward renewal practice honesty, but the leader’s life must be characterized by morality. Including in the definition of integrity is “a firm attachment to moral or artistic principles. The leader must have a sense of morality. This sense of morality that the spiritual leader has is based on a set of absolutes that are present in the Word of God. The leader’s whose morals are based on the Word of God will rely on the immutability of God’s standards, which is the antithesis to the world of relativism that exists in this post-modern society. A leader must never sacrifice the absolutes. “When God has spoken, there can be no compromise. It’s one thing to compromise on matters of preference. It’s entirely different to compromise on matters of principles.”⁸³ In a shifting culture that regards morals as a different set of standards for everyone, the leader must adhere to set of morals that are exemplified in Christian living, guided by principles that are found in the Word of God. “When it comes to a matter of principle- moral and ethical foundations, biblical absolutes, the axioms of God’s Word, God’s clear commands, and the truthfulness of God himself, compromise is never okay.”⁸⁴ Much has been done to maintain doctrinal excellence in the evangelical church. However, that same vigor must be given to moral excellence in church leadership. “For the most part, evangelical Christianity during this century has focused on the battle for doctrinal purity-and it should be-but we are losing the battle for moral purity.”⁸⁵ The morality of the leader who is engaging in church revitalization is of special import. “A person’s level of

⁸² MacArthur, John, *The Book on Leadership*, (Nelson Books: Nashville, TN, 2004), 75

⁸³ Ibid, 51

⁸⁴ Ibid, 51

⁸⁵ Ibid, 89

morality is one of the most important dimensions of leadership determining whether people will trust and respect the leader.”⁸⁶

Moreover, the importance of morality is discovered in Paul’s writings to his young protégé Timothy, when states or gives the “first and most indispensable quality for men in leadership was that they may be blameless.” Paul employed a Greek word that means “above reproach”- inculpable, unblemished, irreprehensible. Literally, it means “not subject to accusation.” According to John MacArthur, this describes a leader whose Christian testimony is free from the taint of scandal-someone who is upright, sound in character, and without any serious moral blemish. Simply put, it means leaders must have a reputation for unimpeachable integrity.”⁸⁷ Consequently, when morality and purity are missing in the leader’s life, the clarity in the voice of God is difficult to be heard, subsequently leading to an unclear vision for the leader. Not utterly synonymous with morality, but, inextricably interwoven is the attitude and action of purity.

Leadership must not solely be based upon the cult of personality. There must be purity in the leader’s lifestyle. A lack of purity in the leader’s life can derail any project, especially one that involves church revitalization. A leader must demonstrate self-control in his own life before attempting to control any project involving the people and the church. This society is tolerant of sexual sin, yet, the church must be careful in how it handles the necessity of purity in the life of the spiritual leader. “One contemporary trend that is cause for great concern is the shocking moral sins spiritual leaders commit that destroy the purity of the leader, yet, the church is willing to allow them to step back into ministry as soon as the publicity cools down.”⁸⁸ The purity of the

⁸⁶ Ibid, 88

⁸⁷ Ibid, 163

⁸⁸ Ibid, 89

leader involves twofold accountability. The church has the responsibility of holding the leader/leaders accountable, and the leader must hold himself accountable before God.

Simply stated, the revitalizing leader must be a man or woman of impeccable character. Furthermore, the leader must have a life identified as being sexually pure. “If he is married, he is devoted to his one wife, not scandalized by past mistresses, illegitimate children, or present adulteries. He loves and desires only one woman and has been faithful to her.”⁸⁹

As a matter of fact, this is the kind of leader the Lord is looking for to lead a declining church back to life again. Moreover, if the leader is to resuscitate life to a dying church, then his life must be one of purity. Nothing can rob a leader’s life of vibrancy and vitality more than impurity. The leader who maintains a life of morality and purity, approaches situations with humility.

The leader understands he must take a humble approach to life because, he comprehends before destruction there is a life filled with pride and lacks humility. “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.” (1 Corinthians 10:12) Humble submission under the authority of God is the first step in meeting the moral and ethical standards that are expected to lead a revitalization project.

Also, sacrificial service is prerequisite for humility. The leader who is approaching a revitalization must hold himself in low regard, depending upon the Lord to lead him in the work and relying on the people/members to help him with the work. It is important that the leader understands the very essence of humility. This essence can be discovered when the leader understands sacrificial service is encapsulated within the idea of servant leadership.

Consequently, “Humility is a hallmark of the spiritual leader. Christ told his disciples to turn

⁸⁹ Ibid, 90

away from the pompous attitudes of the oriental despots and instead take on the lowly bearing of the servant.”⁹⁰ Furthermore, “As in ancient days so today humility is least admired in leadership circles. But no bother! The spiritual leader will choose the hidden path of sacrificial service and approval of the Lord over flamboyant self-advertising of the world.”⁹¹

The hidden path of sacrificial service is discovered in servant leadership. Servant leadership in its simplest terms is a calling to serve. This calling to serve can’t be achieved without an attitude of humility. Leaders who aspire to be great must understand it involves servanthood first. “The servant leader is different from the individual who is motivated by selfish goals. People do not trust the self-server whose primary thoughts are for personal gain. Trust is given to the leader who humbly works for the common good and has the interests of others at heart.”⁹²

The servant leader has made the distinction between authority and power. In the revitalization process, it is imperative that the difference between the two is disclosed. Reportedly, over 80% of all church problems center around power struggle or control. This struggle for power exists when members view the church as “belonging” to them. This sense of the church being theirs can be attributed to how long people have been there and the amount of sacrifice the people have put into the church. Many power struggles are directed but, not limited to, these two things. These misguided power struggles are detrimental to revitalization. Those attitudes cause a type of blinding to the people who are in a declining church. Nonetheless, it is important for the leader who is engaged in church renewal to address the issue of power and

⁹⁰ Ibid, 62

⁹¹ Ibid, 62

⁹² Curtis, Kent and Manning, George, *The Art of Leadership*, (McGraw-Hill Irwin: New York, NY, 2003), 120

authority. “Authority is one thing; power is another. We need a greater sense of authority and a lesser sense of power. Church leadership is not about having or wielding power.”⁹³

The term power refers to the personal capacity of an individual to influence others to do or not to do an act. It is independent and informal in nature, derived from charisma and status. It is an acquired ability that comes from knowledge and expertise. It is the right to control other’s actions, decisions, and, performances. On the other hand, authority is a legal and formal right given to a person, who can make decisions, give orders, and command others to perform a particular task. It is conferred to high officials to accomplish an organization’s objectives. The leader who desires to lead with humility will exercise authority and not power in most instances. Integrity is important in church revitalization because it allows the leader to lead with clarity. This clarity is discovered in the leader’s vision. When there is a lack of integrity, there will be a lack of vision, because the leader’s vision comes from God. The New Testament leader’s quality of leadership was enhanced when he spoke to the people with a clear vision in mind. This must be the case for the church revitalization leader, too. The New Testament leader’s vision allowed him to see things others could not see. This fact is observed in Jesus’ selection of the apostles for New Testament leadership. “Eyes that look are common; eyes that see are rare. The Pharisees looked at Peter and saw only and unschooled fisherman- not worth a second look. Jesus saw in Peter a prophet and a preacher, saint, a New Testament leader who would turn the world upside down.”⁹⁴ That is what clear vision does; it sees optimism, not merely pessimism. The New Testament leader was able to lead with such clarity because of the source of his vision. Many have visions but not all visions come from God. There is a notable distinction between visions, where it comes from can make all the difference. “The popular connotation of vision

⁹³ Ibid, 195

⁹⁴ Ibid, 57.

refers to an idea of a leader-generated goal or dream, whereas for the New Testament or spiritual leader vision refers to what God has revealed and promised about the future. The visions that drive spiritual leaders must be derived from God.”⁹⁵

Followers want something to believe in, and the vision from the leader relates what they believe they can accomplish to actually accomplishing it. That was a proponent of New Testament leadership. The leader would cast goals with clarity, the followers would be invigorated by the vision, and both would work toward the goal. “All effective leaders have a vision of what they must accomplish. With the clarity of vision, the leader is on a mission, and a contagious spirit is felt among the crowd until others begin to rise alongside the leader.”⁹⁶

The Leader’s Vision

The leader’s vision must begin with a personal vision. A leader’s humility will lead him to understand that he is an imperfect person, leading an imperfect people. So his personal vision will create a goal for his life and an expectation for his life. In this case, because of his imperfection, his goal is to be Christ-like. Even though the leader may fall short of his goal, he can still reach the expectation of being excellent. For this reason, it is important to note in his personal vision for his life, imperfect people who strive to be Christ-like can regularly achieve excellence. “The word vision evokes pictures in the mind. It suggests a future orientation, implies a standard of excellence.”⁹⁷ The heart of the revitalization project is to remind imperfect people that excellence can be achieved once again in a declining church. The personal vision for excellence can be achieved. For instance, “Excellence is a certain style of life, a manner of living, a bigness of spirit, a point of view, a set of priorities, a hierarchy of values.”⁹⁸ Once the

⁹⁵ Ibid, 69.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 139.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 57

⁹⁸ Fisher, William, *Our Goal Is Excellence*, (Beacon Hill: Kansas City, MO, 1996), 13

leader's personal vision has been realized, the leader can move on to corporate vision for church revitalization.

Vision is necessary for a church to complete a revitalization project. "To attempt revitalization of a church without a clear compelling vision from God is like asking a surgeon to operate without a scalpel or a carpenter to build without a hammer. It simply won't happen."⁹⁹ Vision can come from a variety of sources, yet the vision for the church, and especially for church revitalization, must come from God. "A leader develops vision from a variety of sources. First and foremost it comes from God through the Holy Scriptures, which is the blueprint for God's people."¹⁰⁰ It is dangerous to begin a church revitalization project with a self-motivated agenda, which is not attached to God's voice and leadership. "Wise leaders recognize that life is far too complex to comprehend apart from God's revelation and guidance."¹⁰¹ The importance of God-generated vision gives the leader the confidence to move forward. This dependency is void of self-dependency; this dependency on God places the responsibility on God to lead the leader in the revitalization project. Many Christian leaders adopt the world's approach to vision and miss out on God's way. In seeking to serve God, they inadvertently try to take on the responsibility of God."¹⁰²

Once the leader receives the vision for the revitalization project from God, he or she must now convince the members that the vision is the the best interest of the church. The vision must now become a corporate vision. The leader must put an emphasis on sharing the vision with the people, for the people are the ones who can make the vision work. "A vision must be communicated to followers and must be supported by them. Leaders have to let others see, hear,

⁹⁹ Malphurs, Aubrey, *Re:Vision*, (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 2014), 147

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 298

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 69

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 79

taste, touch, and feel their vision.”¹⁰³ Part of disseminating the corporate vision means each person understands their role and responsibilities in helping the vision to fruition.

In a declining church, vision gives life to the church. “Revitalization leaders must be men of vision. They must possess a deep sense of what they are to do, where they are to go, and how they are to do it. Vision supplies the directions. Vision is critical to the life of the church.”¹⁰⁴ Momentum is gained by having clarity when it comes to a vision for church renewal. Vision is a breathing process that can resuscitate a dying church.

Vision becomes the impetus for the revitalization project. Vision gives the process of revitalization a sense of direction. “Leaders have the capacity to create a compelling vision, one that takes people to a new place, and then to translate the vision into reality.”¹⁰⁵ The goal of a vision for revitalization is to move the declining church from where it is to a more desirable future. “A vision is an attempt to articulate, as clearly and vividly as possible, the desired future state of the organization. The vision is the goal that provides direction, aligns key players, and energizes people to achieve a common purpose.”¹⁰⁶ Finally, the revitalization’s leader’s vision must be held with intrinsic conviction. Several factors contribute to this conviction, first, “God is in it. Second, God has chosen to accomplish this vision through a person. Third, The vision will benefit the people. Fourth, the visionary is also convinced that the vision must be because of his passion for the vision.”¹⁰⁷ Once the vision for revitalization has been placed in the leader’s heart, the leader must be self-aware. Self-awareness is accomplished when the leader recognizes

¹⁰³ Ibid, 66

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 297

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 297

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 298

¹⁰⁷ Henard, Bill, *Can These Bones Live*, (B&H Publishers: Nashville, TN, 2015), 163

his leadership style. Consequently, several leadership styles are conducive to leading a declining church towards revitalization.

The Leader's Style

There are many ways to lead, yet the one who desires to lead a revitalization project must lead from a different perspective. There are many variables that help shape a leader's style. Styles of leadership can be an inherent trait, or it can be a skill that is taught. In a leadership conference, Bill Hybel asked the questions are there any born leaders?" His response was, yes, they are all born. His point was when it comes to leadership and leadership styles, while there are some who are more naturally gifted toward this characteristic, it is something that can be developed."¹⁰⁸ "Styles of leading are influenced by experience. People develop preferred styles by modeling others, going through formal training and learning from personal experience."¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, there is this tendency for a leader to lead like he follows. The mismatching of this concept often leads to chaos. For instance, "General George Patton was a directive leader and free rein follower, causing mixed signal and much controversy in his relations with commanders and subordinates."¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, there is no general rule for an effective and efficient style of leading. The most optimum leadership style depends on the attitude and aptitude of the leader, attributes of the followers and, nature of the situation.

Although this may be true regardless of the followers and the situation, the leader has a leadership style that is apparent to his followers by how he or she handle the situation. If the case is church decline, the leader has a style that will help or hurt the church move toward

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 115

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 49

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 49

renewal. For this study, four leadership styles have been observed in leaders who desire revitalization for their situation.

First, there is the Entrepreneur leader. This leadership style is incredible at casting vision and inspiring others to help accomplish that vision. They have no problem setting a course to achieve the seemingly impossible. They often accomplish greater things than anyone else, but many people will think they're crazy.

Second, there is the Shepherd leader. This leadership style believes above all else God has called them to care for the hurting, reach the lost, and comfort the grieving. They are peacemakers, great counselors, and, enjoy visiting the sick. Entrepreneurs get frustrated with them because they don't seem to care as much about growth. Administrators get frustrated with them, because they forget about important details.

Third, there is the Teacher leader. All pastors teach the word of God, but some are especially gifted in this area. These pastors love to study the word of God and are able to uncover rich insights, creative illustrations, and applicable next steps for their listeners. These pastors are often able to draw large crowds, but they struggle providing clear direction for the future.

Fourth, there is the Administrator leader. Administrators are excellent at creating plans, strategies, and systems that keep the church running. They have no problem delegating tasks and placing everyone in the right role. Administrators can drive entrepreneurs crazy, because they insist on having everything in place before they begin a new initiative. Shepherds may assume that their concentration on systems misses the hearts of the people.

For the purpose of revitalization, all of the styles are adequate. The important factor in leadership and revitalization is making sure the style matches the church. "Because of spiritual

gifting, personal abilities, likes and dislikes, and background, not every leader has the potential for success in a church revitalization project. One must realize leaders can be the greatest hindrances in church revitalization, especially if style, gifting, talents, and abilities do not match.”¹¹¹

Notwithstanding, the four leadership styles chosen for this study if at best, has a modicum match ability that will make success imminent in a revitalization project, because embedded in each leadership style are attributes or processes the leader can perform that will be beneficial for the leader in the process of revitalization.

Each style can contain a component of servant leadership. The revitalization leader understands that church renewal is not simply for his preference, popularity, and power. He is there for sacrificial spiritual service to the church and to the people of the church. His servant leadership, places an emphasis on others and not himself. He readily supports this attitude with humility, realizing this is the best way to achieve church renewal. This very attitude is promoted by Christ when he says, “The greatest among you will be your servant.” (Matthew 23:11). This attitude is exemplified when the spiritual leader realizes it is more important to be a giver than a receiver. “God did not create us to be takers. He created us to be givers. Rather than focusing on the needs of others. Instead of cutting to the front of the line, we are called to wait at the end. God created us to serve.”¹¹² The servant leader cares about others. “Caring leadership also means caring about people. The caring leader is unselfish, ready, eager, to hear the other person’s story. The caring leader will dedicate himself in service to others.”¹¹³ Leadership is based on trust. As a result, people have a difficult time trusting leaders who value their own personal agendas over

¹¹¹ Ibid, 127

¹¹² Groeschel, Craig, *Divine Direction*, (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI, 2017), 120

¹¹³ Ibid, 10

the best agenda for the group. People do not trust the self-server whose primary thoughts are for personal gain. “Trust is given to the leader who works for the common good and has the interests of others at heart.”¹¹⁴ The servant leaders’ goals are not to be selfish goals. Unselfish goals are at the heart of servant leadership.

Second, the creation and realization of goals is a process the leader can initiate that will help a declining church. The revitalization leader understands the importance of setting goals. Great leaders are leaders who have provided vision and goals for their church, team, and organization. Goals give the map for the direction they were intending to go. A lack of goals is a detriment to the church. “Goallessness is one of the worst diseases of the 20th century. Three percent of the people in America have written goals. Seven percent know what goals are.”¹¹⁵

Moreover, ninety percent have no goals at all. The understanding of goals for successful leadership falls into two categories- “misguided goals and goals that guide.” It is imperative that the leader who engages in revitalization should have goals that have a propensity to lead a declining church to renewal.

“The ultimate goal of spiritual leadership is not to achieve numerical growth. It is to take people from where they are to where God wants them to be.”¹¹⁶ That statement is the heart of revitalization. Part of the purpose of revitalization is to move a declining church to church renewal. However, the initial stages of church revitalization may not need to a numbers increase, yet, there could be maturation development in the present members, which could be the impetus that leads the church to life again. This spiritual maturity that leads to church renewal is a conduit to another goal of the leader, which is bringing glory to God. When a church is able to

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 121

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 43

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 27

return to the place of vibrancy, it brings glory to the Lord. There are several goals the revitalization leader can create, albeit, spiritual maturity and bringing glory to God can be great centerpieces to the rest of the goals. In the event that goals are created, the leader must carefully prioritize the goals.

The success of the leader's project in revitalizing the church is, "The progressive realization of a predetermined goal. This definition tells us that the discipline to prioritize and ability to work toward a stated goal are essential to a leader's success."¹¹⁷ It is dangerous to begin a revitalization project with no structured direction. The structure that allows us to take aim to complete any project with efficiency and effectiveness is found in the idea of prioritizing. So it is important to organize assignments.

According to John Maxwell, there are four ways to organize assignments that will lead to success. "First, high importance/high urgency. Here a leader tackles projects first. Second, there is high importance/low urgency. Here a leader sets deadlines for completion and get these projects worked into daily routine. Third, there is low importance/high urgency. Here a leader finds quick efficient ways to get this work done without much personal involvement. If possible delegate it to a "can do" assistant. Fourth, there is low importance/low urgency. This is busy or repetitious work such as filing. Stack it up and do it in one half hour segments every week; get somebody else to do it; or don't do it all. Before putting off until tomorrow something, you can do today, study it clearly. Maybe it can be postponed indefinitely."¹¹⁸

Even with this priority hierarchy, it still is important for leaders to make the right decisions regarding priorities. The complexity of priority discovery is exacerbated when a leader must choose between what is good and what is best. "Most people can prioritize when faced

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 19

¹¹⁸ Maxwell, John, *Developing the Leader Within*, (Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville, TN, 1993), 23

with right or wrong. The challenge arises when faced with two good choices.”¹¹⁹ On the other hand, the fear of making a wrong decision may be an overriding impetus behind some people leadership’s style. Such leaders become immobilized by their fear of making a mistake. Thus, the leader’s decision making must be executed skillfully.

Once priorities have been established, the process of deciding the order of the priorities comes next. At the center of decision making is the question about how decisions will be made. When it comes to decisions a leader can rely on his own insight or God’s wisdom and direction in the decision-making process. As a result, good decision making relies on instruction and direction from God. “God doesn’t want people to know what they think is best, he wants them to do what he knows is best, and no amount of reasoning and intellectualizing will discover that. God himself must reveal it.”¹²⁰ The first step in making good decisions is wisdom. Moreover, wisdom comes from God, so God is still at the heart of good decision making. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” (James 1:5) “When leaders have received God’s vision for the future, they will have a clear sense of direction from which to make decisions.”¹²¹

According to Paul Powell decision making and priority setting for a revitalization project involves knowing some important information about both the church and community. These are some of the things you need to know about your church. “First, how long has it been in existence? Second, what has been its growth pattern for the past years? Third, how many baptisms and how many additions by letter have you had and what has been your average Sunday school. Put the figures on a chart or graph so you and others can see if the church is

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 121

¹²⁰ Ibid, 179

¹²¹ Ibid, 197

growing, declining, or plateaued. Fourth, what has been its giving pattern for the past ten years? Fifth, what buildings have been built in the church's history and when did it build them? Fifth, a breakdown of present church membership by age groups.

With this important information, goal-setting, prioritizing, and decision-making, can initiate and sustain the revitalization project. All of these traits are important in discovering a leader who can lead a church to renewal, yet an important admission the leader must make is the true status of his church. The leader must identify those characteristics that are prevalent in a declining /dying church. All of the leader's traits for revitalization are important, but, the he or she must have the foresight to see if the church he or she leads is declining.

Since a church's decline can be subtle, the leader must know or at least have an idea of the characteristics of the church that is in decline or dying. One of the first characteristics of a church in decline is denial its obvious signs for decline. The reason the signs are easily ignored is because a church doesn't typically decline "overnight." It is slow decline that keeps the present members in denial of what's happening to their church. "The slow erosion is the worst kind of decline for churches, because the members have no sense of urgency to change. They see the church on a regular basis; they don't see the gradual decline that is taking place before their eyes."¹²² Furthermore, "Dying churches spend much time pining over the "glory days" of the past. This clinging to the past makes the church reluctant to change. Consequently, the functionality of the spiritual threshold in declining churches is often overestimated, so the signs are purposely overlooked."¹²³ For instance, the low view of Scripture is disregarded as a sign. "Churches needing revitalization have in some sense despised the Word of God and turned away from God's messengers' in rebellion. This low view of scripture shows itself in the biblical

¹²² Ibid, 13

¹²³ Ibid, 199

ignorance of most of its members.”¹²⁴ Most of the members have not advanced into the maturity stage of reading and studying God’s word, they are still in the “babe in Christ stage,” although they have been converted to the Christian faith for several years.

The church’s primary focus should be to display God’s glory. When a church puts its preferences, priorities, and, positions before God, it is doomed for failure. The failure may be slow, but it will come because God refuses to share his glory with anyone or anything, even the church. A church will die “when it lives for its own glory, reputation, agenda, and ideals. It cares much more what key people think than what God thinks, as revealed in his Word.”¹²⁵

Moreover, churches that have low regard for church discipline are headed for a slow death. This aspect is revealed in a declining church’s intake plan and retention plan. “Declining churches have low standards regarding who join the church. Members have children who are baptized at a young age, but who are not walking with Christ in their adulthood, are sentimentally kept on the church rolls. The same happens with people who joined the church years ago, but now no one knows their whereabouts.”¹²⁶ It is not unusual for declining churches to become satisfied with new members. This produces a lackadaisical in approach to discipline and discipleship for new members; this is a huge mistake. This type of thinking causes members to have low accountability and low expectations. To address this particular issue, Mark Devers has what many would consider a radical idea when it comes to members who are not fulfilling their responsibilities as a church member. Churches should not allow “missing” members to stay on their church roll. Membership in the local church should be taken seriously. “Membership should mean more in the church than it does in a rotary club. One of the best ways to reinforce

¹²⁴ Davis, Andrew, *Revitalize*, (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 2017), 43

¹²⁵ Ibid, 43

¹²⁶ Ibid, 43

this is to teach why membership in the local church matters. No one is saved by either church membership or attendance. However, membership in the local church is a church's external, public affirmation that the member is continuing to give evidence of genuine Christian conversion."¹²⁷ Any church that is void of this teaching is headed for a decline.

Although it is important for the church to make the distinction between committed members who contribute, and inconsistent members who consume the services of the church, it is important for the committed members to pray. A failure to pray will lead a church into decline. "Dying churches do not pray together. If the leaders call them to extraordinary prayer meetings very few come"¹²⁸ "The vast number of churches that are in trouble and in need of revitalization or renewal is a display of prayerlessness or at the very least possess a prayer focus centered on what we desire over what the Lord has planned for his church."¹²⁹ One of the reasons zeal for prayer is important for the church is because prayer is connected to the evangelistic method of the church. The negation of prayer leads to a weak evangelism program, which is a sign of a declining church. "Jesus came to "seek and to save the lost," but dying churches are not joining Jesus in his mission. Because of their selfishness, worldliness, prayerlessness, and sin, dying churches have long since ceased effective witnesses in their communities."¹³⁰ Even though the revitalizing leader must identify the characteristics of a dying church, the leader must not become faint of heart. He or she must realize there is hope for dying churches. This hope for the leader can be discovered in the New Testament.

Biblical Paradigm for Church Revitalization

¹²⁷ Dever, Mark and Alexander, Paul, *The Deliberate Church*, (Crossway: Wheaton, IL, 2005), 47

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 45

¹²⁹ Cheyney, Tom, *Slaying the Dragons of Church Revitalization*, (Renovate Publishing Group), 2017

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, 43

Revitalizing a church is not a new process; there is a biblical paradigm for church revitalization. An example of church revitalization can be discovered in the church at Ephesus. At one time during the first century, the church at Ephesus was one of the greatest in the world. It was one of the four influential “epicenter” churches. Ephesus was a great church in its early days, making a difference for Christ in its community and in the world. But Paul knew a “resting on its laurels” attitude could change the church from a successful one to one that could easily slide into decline. As a result, Paul writes these words to the Elders of the church.

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know after that my departure fierce wolves will come among you, not sparing the flock; and from among yourselves will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, be alert. (Acts 20:28-31)

Just as the Apostle Paul predicted, teachers who were not committed to the truth of God’s word infiltrated the church and began to cause conflict in the church. Consequently, after Paul left, this influential church began to decline. “Because of its occasion and purpose, in fact, the whole book of 1 Timothy serves as a manual for church revitalization. But despite all this instruction from Paul, and Timothy’s effort, the church at Ephesus eventually did reach a low point of decline.”¹³¹ In the last book of the New Testament, Jesus himself warned that the church was about to be judged by God, if it did not reverse its decline:

I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand, from its place unless you repent. (Revelation 2:1-5)

¹³¹ Ibid, 32

“Jesus requires us to take a good hard look at ourselves. Just because our church has been vibrant in the past doesn’t mean that it still is.”¹³² Christ spoke openly about the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2. After commending the believers for their perseverance and intolerance of evil men, Jesus admonished them for leaving their first love. He then exhorted them to remember from where they had fallen and repent from their backslidden state to recommit to what they had done at first.

Not only is the church at Ephesus a Biblical example for church revitalization, so is the church at Sardis: “I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. Remember, then what you have received and heard. Keep it and repent.” (Rev. 3:1-3)

Sardis had lost its vision of being what Christ desired it to be,”¹³³ Their material and monetary prosperity prompted an apathetic attitude. “The problem was this church had developed a nominal and inoffensive Christianity, which may have been compromised with the culture, which led to an internal disease in the church leading to a slow death.”¹³⁴

Church Health

The dying characteristics of a declining church show a deterioration of church health. As a result, the idea of church health in a declining church must not be ignored. Church health evaluation has become the more suitable apparatus for judging a church’s “success.” “In church circles today, many writers and bloggers on the church have moved away from church growth terminology in favor of church health. An honest appraisal of modern church growth methods

¹³² Ibid, 200

¹³³ Ibid, 195

¹³⁴ Ibid, 194

affirm the need for this perspective.”¹³⁵ Church health does not promote the “numbers” idea for church success. Appealing to the masses is not the same as a ministry to the masses in a healthy fashion. “Numbers continue to be extremely important, yet other criteria must be present to evaluate the church besides just numbers.”¹³⁶ We should make every effort to invite people to our church in an attempt to move them to conversion, then growth. In this way they can reproduce the same process in others. “Yet growth and increase in numbers alone does not indicate a church is healthy. The simple truth is that size and growth rate does not indicate health. However, health on the other hand, almost always leads naturally to growth.”¹³⁷ Church growth terminology seems to have placed a high priority on numbers to evaluate the growth of the church. This is the reason that many have chosen church health over church growth especially in the area church revitalization. “Church revitalization becomes a viable means of church growth because it necessitates church health. Many churches fall into decline because they have become unhealthy.”¹³⁸

The work of the church cannot successfully be administered in an unhealthy church. The lack of a healthy Christian ministry leads to church decline. The word health as it relates to church effectiveness is an appropriate term. One of the Bible’s descriptive names for the church is body. “In the simplest term, a healthy church looks like a healthy body. The Apostle Paul makes it clear that the church is to be considered the body of Christ. The human body is an amazingly complex arrangement of organic systems, when all parts are working properly, the body grows and develops without any effort.”¹³⁹ In the physical sense, the personal goal of

¹³⁵ Ibid, 8

¹³⁶ Ibid, 9

¹³⁷ Laurie, Greg, *The Upside Down Church*, (Tyndale Publishers: Wheaton, IL, 1999), 40

¹³⁸ Ibid, 11

¹³⁹ Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*, (B&H Publishing: Nashville, TN, 2013), 213

individuals who desire an optimum lifestyle is to get and keep the body healthy. In a similar fashion, since the church is described as a body, to perform at an efficient and effective level and to avoid decline. “When it comes to the church I like the word healthy because it communicates the idea of a body that is growing as it should. It may have its share of problems. It’s not perfected yet. But it’s on the way.”¹⁴⁰

Now, when there is talk about keeping a physical body healthy, things are listed begin to listed that would lead to and maintain health, such as eating a balanced diet, exercising, getting the proper amount of sleep, and so on. Likewise, if the church is going to be described as a body, there are ways that will lead to a healthy church. According to Mark Devers, “A healthy church is a congregation that increasingly reflects God’s character as his character has been revealed in his Word.”¹⁴¹ Notwithstanding, a healthy church is a church that is balanced in its approach to church life. “For instance, if a church has a large worship service that grows exponentially, but fails at discipleship, this lack of balance makes the members rootless, they are easy targets for doctrinal confusion, inappropriate behavior, and discouragement.”¹⁴² This is the approach the early New Testament church avoided in an attempt to maintain church health. Similarly, the revitalization leader must be willing to follow the same tactics of the early New Testament church.

Early Church Principles

The revitalization church must achieve balance in its approach to ministry. The early church centered its ministry on four foundational principles. Of course, these were not the only principles that made the New Testament church healthy and successful, and these were

¹⁴⁰ Devers, Mark, *What Is A Healthy Church?* (Crossway Books: Wheaton, IL, 2005), 3

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 40

¹⁴² Mims, Gene, *The Kingdom Focused Church*, (B&H: Nashville, TN, 2003), 118

prominent themes throughout the church. Examining those first-century believers will give leaders who are leading declining churches guidance on their behavior and beliefs. What did these first-century believers do? In Acts 2:42-47, we see a picture of how the early church was working:

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Consequently, when we look at the early church leaders, we see at least three things that help them lead the New Testament church in the process of church health and church growth, which made them people God could use to build his church. “First, they walked according to the Spirit, not the flesh (human inclinations). Second, they kept in mind the purposes of God, not the priorities of people. Third, they acted according to God’s methods, not their own.”¹⁴³

Along with these characteristics in the disciples, in Acts, we see the “Original Plan in action. In Acts 2:42-47, we find “four foundational qualities. “They were a evangelizing, learning, loving, and a worshipping church. At first glance, these four foundational principles don’t appear to be remarkable. But I believe that when God set up the first church, He did it right.”¹⁴⁴

An Evangelizing Church

The leader of a declining church must revitalize these foundational qualities in the church. First, the revitalization leader must bring evangelism back to the church. Most declining

¹⁴³ Ibid, 28

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 47

churches have lost their zeal for reaching the lost. The revitalization leader must reverse this trend. Too many declining churches have been defined by the Great Omission and not the Great Commission. “The deceased church somewhere in its history, forgot to act upon the Great Commission. So they stopped going. And making disciples. And baptizing them. And teaching them.”¹⁴⁵ Thom Rainer, in studying the death of fourteen churches says he saw a common pattern. Obedience to the Great Commission faded, but it usually faded gradually. It’s not like one day the church was sending out dozens of members in the community and it suddenly stopped. Instead, the decline in the outward focus was gradual, almost imperceptibly slow. As a result, “Members of dying church weren’t willing to go into the community to reach and minister to people. They were unwilling to invite their unchurched friends and relatives.”¹⁴⁶

So, Jesus has called the entire church to participate in this foundational act of witnessing. If the revitalizing leader is going to lead his church back to evangelism, then he must spend time understanding and explaining just what evangelism means. The English word evangelism comes from the Greek word, *euaggelidzo*, which is often translated in the English Bibles as preach the gospel. “There are many modern definitions of evangelism. Still the way, you define evangelism is important because your definition says a lot about the way you evangelize.”¹⁴⁷

According to John Mark Terry, there are five basic reasons that should motivate to reach out to a lost and spiritually dying world. First, the declining church should realize they evangelize to follow Christ’s example. Jesus sent his disciples to complete the task he had begun. So, to be Christ-like means to be a Christian who participates in evangelism.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 41

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 44

¹⁴⁷ Terry, John Mark, *Church Evangelism*, (B&H Publishers: Nashville, TN, 3), 1997

Second, evangelism is to obey the Lord's command. Jesus commanded his disciples to evangelize the world. This command is found in, but not limited to two passages:

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matthew 28:19-20)

The imperative in those verses is "go." But as we go, there are several sub-commands. We are to make disciples. We are to baptize. We are to reach. "You see the Great Commission requires at least two points of obedience from church members. They are to go, and they are to depend totally upon the power of Christ. That's why Jesus reminded them: "I am with you always. Christ was ready and willing to work through them."¹⁴⁸

A few days before Jesus ascended into glory, He gave his disciples some final instructions. These words were of utmost significance because they are the last words Jesus ever said to his followers. As his last words, they express the urgency and importance of the matter he is addressing.

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. (Acts 1:8-11)

These verses explain the nature of the church's ministry. Jesus not only challenged his disciples to carry on his work, he also directed them to do his work as he did it. Third, globally evangelism meets the world's need; communally it meets your community need. "A sound

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 44

theology of evangelism rests on the belief that people without Christ are lost and without hope of eternal life.”¹⁴⁹ Consequently, there is a need for evangelism.

Fourth, evangelism imitates the early church. “The early church at Jerusalem is our prototype. We should study these actions. The earliest Christian church should be imitated.”¹⁵⁰

Fifth, we evangelize because of an inner compulsion. The declining church must return to its first love. The love of Christ should be a motivating factor in being a witness for him. A return to evangelism is the first foundational step in revitalizing a declining church. In addition, to the imperative command “go” in the Great Commission, is interwoven the command “make disciples”, which leads to the second foundational step that will lead a declining church back to life, discipleship. Provided that evangelism is occurring in a practical fashion discipleship is a sequential progression.

A Learning Church

According to Dave Earley and Rick Dempsey, there are three progressive stages of discipleship. “Stage one asks, will you believe in Jesus? Stage two asks, will you follow Jesus? Stage three asks, will you go for Jesus?”¹⁵¹ Stages two and three are directly related to discipleship. “The Gospels reveal that discipleship is a matter of taking to the next step. It is a growing relationship based on increasing levels of faith, obedience, and commitment.”¹⁵²

In declining churches, the Bible is not being preached and taught with a view to giving the congregation a deepening understanding of scripture, which limits the opportunities for discipleship. The primary term in the Great Commission is the imperative verb “make disciples.” The other words “go”, “baptize”, and “teach” all modify and explain how we are to

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 13

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 14

¹⁵² Ibid, 14

fulfill the primary task: make disciples. “In order to make this evident to English readers, Matthew 28:18-20 is paraphrased as follows: I am Supreme Commander in Chief and these are the orders I am issuing you: As you are going into the culture, MAKE DISCIPLES!!!

Make disciples of people from every people group by baptizing them in order to teach them and by staying with them in order to teach them to obey everything I have taught you.”¹⁵³

To further reiterate Jesus’ last words as it relates to discipleship, the first church placed a premium on this foundational principle. “They continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine”

A fundamental element of healthy churches is there is a priority on preaching and learning God’s word. The exposition and application of God’s word will guide the members into Christian maturity. “At the time of the early church, this meant listening to the apostles’ teachings and reading the Scripture they had at this point.”¹⁵⁴ It is worth noting the members of the church “continued in,” meaning this congregation engaged the Scriptures through active listening and active participation, which allowed them to learn and keep growing.

Learning and growing in God’s word are signs of health in the church. “God’s Word is the source of all life and health. It’s what feeds, develops and preserves a church’s understanding of the gospel. The spiritual leader of a dying church first goal is they should pray about and focus on moving people to a vibrant walk with Jesus Christ. A first place to start with discipleship is the pulpit. The revitalization pastor must commit to expositional preaching. This commitment to expositional preaching isn’t just limited to the pulpit; this commitment must be in the pew as well. “Expositional preaching is the kind of preaching that, quite simply, exposes God’s Word. It takes a particular passage of scripture, explains the passage, and then applies the

¹⁵³ Ibid, 3

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 52

meaning of the passage to the life of the congregation.”¹⁵⁵ The most noteworthy power in the revitalization of a declining church is the continuous service of the Word of God from the pulpit, Sunday by Sunday. In the event that a leader is a reviving church, he or she has to implore that God will raise up a steadfast scriptural commentator to lecture God's Word from the podium of the congregation. According to Andrew Davis, “Expositional preaching is by far the most effective and powerful form of preaching in the revitalization of a church.”¹⁵⁶

Be that as it may, discipleship involves obedience to what is read and taught in the scripture. “Before you can be a disciple, you need to begin obeying Jesus’ commands.”¹⁵⁷ One characteristic of a declining church is the church is satisfied with being Christians and not moving into discipleship. There is a distinction between being a Christian and a disciple. The word disciple means a student or learner. It describes a protégé who learns and follows his teacher’s precepts and instructions. It speaks of a follower who adopts the lifestyle of his master. In the first-century, disciple- making relationship were based on intimacy and obedience. “Discipleship is not merely a matter of information remembered. It is about that which is practiced. It is a lifestyle of absolute abandonment to loving and obeying His commands.”¹⁵⁸ When it comes to discipleship and revitalization, the more people grow and develop, the healthier they become. The healthier they become, the healthier the body becomes. Consequently, the healthy church will be a church of life and vitality, limiting or reversing the decline in the church. Once the declining church has begun to disciple from the pulpit to the pew, it should then move to personal discipleship. A key component of discipleship is disciples reproduce disciples. There is a threefold goal in disciple-making. “First, win the lost by

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 63

¹⁵⁶ Davis, Andrew, *Revitalize*, (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 2007), 89

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 49

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 51

cooperating with the Holy Spirit in seeing every person within your sphere of influence become a repentant believer in Jesus. Second, disciple the saved by helping every believer become a devoted disciple of Jesus who has abandoned all for the gospel and is prayerfully winning to Christ. Third, multiply disciples to be disciples makers.¹⁵⁹

Discipling outside the scope of the pulpit can be an informal matter. It should flow naturally between the mentor and the mentee. There are certain things the discipler understands that the new believer needs to grow in their walk with Christ. According to Greg Laurie, new believers need love and support to feel comfortable in the church. They have no idea how to assimilate into a church, due to their lack of church experience. They need help and encouragement to understand the Bible correctly. We read in Acts 18 how a man by the name of Apollos was filled with enthusiasm for the Lord. However, he had a few doctrinal problems. So Priscilla and Aquila took him into their home. As a result, Apollos became more effective in what God had called him to do. New believers need to see a Christian life in action. They can get only so much information from a pulpit. What they need is to see God's principles at work in real life on a day to day basis. They need your help to mature in their own gifts and ministries. Finally, the healthy church grows disciples. "Another important mark of a healthy church is a pervasive concern for church growth as growth is prescribed in the Bible. That means growing members, not just numbers."¹⁶⁰ In the healthy church members matter. The reproduction of disciples can be accomplished with the initiation of foundational principle number three for a healthy church- fellowship.

A Loving Church

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 130

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 107

The aspect of fellowship is essential for the church. “You cannot be a dynamic, growing disciple of Jesus Christ without practicing dynamic fellowship. It’s one of the absolute necessities in following Christ as His disciples.”¹⁶¹ In similar fashion to the church being called a body, to describe the fellowship that happens in the church it is also called a family. Members of the church are members of the same family and love one another. “And this is no dysfunctional family, with family members estranged from one another. It’s a fellowship. When God called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our “Lord”, he also called into “fellowship” with the whole family.”¹⁶² The commitment of the early church was based on familial relationships. These relationships required concentration on nurturing and discipling new believers. The discipling process could best be accomplished by warm fellowship.

The early church disciples, “were continually devoting themselves...to fellowship, to the breaking of bread.” (Acts 2:42) Then verse 46 says they had daily fellowship, “breaking bread from house to house” and taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.” “Fellowship was critical to their functioning as the church, the disciples of Jesus Christ.”¹⁶³

“The Greek word translated fellowship is *koinonia*”. This is an interesting term. It means basically “that which is common.”¹⁶⁴ The language in which the New Testament is written is called Koine Greek, because it was the common language of the day; the language the people spoke in the street. “Something that is common is something shared. So the New Testament uses this term for commonness to refer to our sharing together, our communion in the

¹⁶¹Evans, Tony, *What Matters Most*, (Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 1997), 140

¹⁶² Ibid, 26

¹⁶³ Ibid, 14

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 142

body of Christ. To have fellowship is to have something in common, to enjoy a shared relationship.”¹⁶⁵

There are two dimensions to fellowship that will revitalize a declining church. The first dimension of fellowship is the vertical dimension. This is the relationship that exists between God and man. The second dimension is the horizontal dimension, which is the relationship that exists between man and man. One's dynamic fellowship with other believers begins with our dynamic fellowship with Christ. This must be the foundation the thing that determines the legitimacy of our fellowship. Declining churches often confuse the two dimensions. For instance, they promote how close they are to God, while ignoring the importance of the horizontal relationship. It is impossible to be in fellowship with God and not be in fellowship with your fellow brothers and sisters.

If a church is going to be healthy and vibrant, it will be because of the relationships formed. “It will be because there is a group of people who care for one another and love one another based on their commonality in Christ.”¹⁶⁶ The centrality of this commonality is love. In the declining church, there must be a return to a love for God, a love for lost souls, and love for fellow brothers. Love is the imperative that makes all other aspects ancillary. God states that love is so important that successfully completing all other tasks will not matter if members don't love effectively. “We can evangelize right. We can get discipleship right, teaching and learning until the sun goes down. But a person or church who doesn't love right is not getting much else right.”¹⁶⁷

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. ² And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 140

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 148

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 163

mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. ³ And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

This is the type of love that healthy churches practice on a consistent basis. This type of love on the surface seems radical. Actually, this type of love prompts true fellowship. True fellowship denounces the idea of self-love, or this American cultural concept of me first or me above everything else. That attitude is a fellowship destroyer, which will make church decline imminent. The Bible renders a description of this attitude that is permeating through American culture. The Bible teaches that one of the characteristic signs of the last days is that there will be a type self-love more than ever. Second Timothy 3:1-2 says, “Mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves.” That is crystal clear description of American culture. Furthermore, it goes on to say: Lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient, to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.” At the very least, these characteristics are fellowship destroyers. “Of course putting other first goes directly against our inclination to care about ourselves above all. But if we really want to reveal Christ to our world and practice Christian fellowship our most powerful tool is love.”¹⁶⁸ This kind of love has its primary concern not its own well-being, but the welfare of others. This type of love extends beyond the confines of church fellowship. It extends to the community, providing an example to those outside the walls of the church. Jesus gives us commands about this type of love in his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). “First, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. The tendency is to hate our “enemy”- that guy at the office who keeps trying to take credit for everything and make us look

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 163

incompetent. Second, if someone strikes your right cheek, turn to him the other also. The tendency is to slap back- cut off the guy on the freeway who cuts us off. Third, if someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. The tendency is to make sure no one takes advantage of us. Fourth, freely forgive those who don't deserve it over and over again. The tendency is to wait for an apology¹⁶⁹

It is important to remember the love, unity, and fellowship was an integral part of the early church. It was life-giving love. That is our example. We have many translations of *koinonia* into the English language, the most common being the word fellowship. But it can also be translated into the words *communion, distribution, contribution, partnership, partakership*. It describes working together for the common good of all. Once fellowship is established between individuals and between God, it sets the atmosphere for true worship. The Bible declares how can you say you hate your brother who you see daily and love God whom you have never seen. Avoidance of this deterrent leads to our final foundational principle for church health and church revitalization.

A Worshiping Church

The fourth foundational principle from the early church is worship. Again in Acts 2:42, the believers devoted themselves to “the breaking of bread [celebrating the Lord’s Supper] and prayer.” In verse 46 they were going to the temple every day and “praising God continually” (v. 47). Worship can be described as the passion of the church. Declining churches have lost their passion for God. Their worship has become cold and calculated. In a sense, the declining church has forgotten who God is and what God has done. They have forgotten “praising God,

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 168

worshiping Him and celebrating him for who He is and what He has done are the ways to get God's attention."¹⁷⁰

The declining church must make a concerted effort to return to the two spheres of worship. First, there is public worship. Public worship occurs when the corporate, local body congregates together to remember that God is our father, rather than just my father. "Public worship demonstrates that you recognize you are not the only child in the kingdom, you are not an only child in the kingdom."¹⁷¹ Not being part of the public worship experience is an affront to God as the Head of a family. Not only is there public worship, those in a declining church must make time for the second sphere, which is private worship. Private worship is the time spent admiring and adoring God outside of the corporate experience. The private worship experience is focused on what the Lord has done specifically for you. It is in private worship that we begin to understand the Lord deserves our worship. Whether worship is public or private, the word has to do with paying homage or ascribing worth to something or someone. "Worship is all that I am paying homage to all that God is. It is my joyful reflection of God's worth, my recognizing God as God."¹⁷² Furthermore, the word worship comes from an old English word worth-ship. In other words, we praise and honor a God who is worth it, who deserves our praise. This recognition of God from the church that is to be revitalized must be done with a twofold application.

"The essence of worship is that it must be both authentic, coming from the inner man, the spirit, and accurate, reflecting the truth about God. True worship engages the emotions and the mind. True worship engages emotions and mind."¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 65

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 75

¹⁷² Ibid, 79

¹⁷³ Ibid, 75

Worship involves the head. If worship is to be meaningful, it has to involve the truth about God. Worship without the right information becomes emotionalism. Consequently, the emotive aspect of worship must be combined with knowledge about God. The more we have experienced God, the more we will know about God, and the result will make the individual a better worshiper. “That is why Bible study and worship go hand in hand and are both crucial to the church. Worship is going to be more effective when it is based on an accurate understanding of who God is.”¹⁷⁴ Nonetheless, the right information in worship is not void of emotions. Our worship of God should engage the mind, but it should also engage the emotional aspects of our beings, such as our heart, our passion, and our affections toward God. “True worship involves balance involving the mind, emotions, and the will of the worshiper. It incorporates attitudes, such as reverence, awe, respect, and actions such as bowing, praising, serving, and giving.”¹⁷⁵

According to Greg Laurie, there are at least four key qualities a declining church must adhere to when it comes to worship for revitalization purposes. First, they should lavishly praise a God who needs nothing. Why does a God who has everything and needs nothing want us to worship him? It is true that God may not need our worship, but he desires it. Second, they should worship the Lord even when they don’t feel like it. The revitalizing church does not have time for making excuses as to why they don’t worship the Lord. Third, they should worship with their whole life. Worship is a lifestyle. True worship is living a life that is pleasing to God. When lives are filled with worship, it changes the individual.”¹⁷⁶

Moreover, if worship is to have an impact, the revitalization leader must provide opportunities for genuine worship to happen and give instructions on how to worship. “What are

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 199

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 42

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 102

the elements which must be present to provide the opportunity for God's people to participate in worship? Franklin Segler describes ten elements of worship evident in the New Testament church. "1) Music; 2) Scripture; 3) Prayers; 4) The sermon or exposition of the Scriptures; 5) Exhortation; 6) Giving; 7) Doxologies; 8) Confession of sin; 9) The ordinance of baptism and Lord's Supper; 10) The people amens"¹⁷⁷

When the revitalization leader begins to pronounce, promote, and make these four foundational principles a priority, the church is on the path to spiritual health. Of course, these four foundational principles must be accompanied with prayer. "The vast number of churches in trouble today and in need of revitalization or renewal are a display of either prayerlessness or at the very least possess a prayer focus centered on what we desire over what the Lord has planned for his church."¹⁷⁸ A prayer life that is self-directed is a prayer life that is misdirected. "The most critical key to any church working in the church revitalization and church renewal is prayer. Prayer is the impetus for beginning any new direction a church might take. A plateaued or declining church should be desperate for God to reconnect with your church body that prayer should be a primary focus upon each member's mind."¹⁷⁹ The foundational principles are adequate to revitalize a church, but prayer is the prerequisite and constant to uphold the foundational principles. Thom Rainer, when speaking on church growth/church health, calls prayer the power behind the principles. Furthermore, Ken Hemphill asserts in order for church growth/health to occur, a supernatural power is a critical element. So, if church growth/health is supernatural, then the fuel for revitalization is powerful prayer. Could it be the primary reason so many churches are plateauing or declining is prayerlessness? "When all fails, read the

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 44

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 23

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 24

instructions, when all else fails, pray. Unfortunately, many churches follow this pattern. Prayer becomes the last resort, not the first.”¹⁸⁰ On the contrary, supplication is the beginning and end for everything that the congregation revitalizer will do. “Prayer is the foundation for beginning any new direction a church might take. It anchors the future and the past by drawing participants closer to the Lord.”¹⁸¹

The church revitalizer must make prayer the number one strategy for church revitalization prayer. When seeking the Lord’s face regarding the church, the leader is attempting to renew the highest priority. “Such daily discipline becomes an anchor to one’s soul while the incredibly strenuous task of revitalization occurs. Prayer is foundational to the revitalization of rapidly declining churches. Prayer is the critical connection between God and the church revitalizer.”¹⁸² Plateaued churches need to get serious about prayer. Declining churches need to get intentional about prayer. Dying churches need to place prayer as the chief priority if it is going to become viable again.

Jim Nicodem offers some excellent suggestions on how to get the church praying. “First, set a good example. Pray as the leader. Second, pray as a staff. Third, teach regularly on the topic of prayer. Fourth, train small group leaders to protect for prayer.”¹⁸³

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Developing and Leading A Leadership Retreat

Purpose

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 199

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 24

¹⁸² Ibid, 24

¹⁸³ Ibid, 174

The increased number of leaders at Cornerstone church and sister churches who are concerned about declining numbers has shown a great need for leaders to develop knowledge, skills and characteristics that will attempt to reverse this trend. This retreat was for leaders seeking to revitalize their church. In addition, many of the leaders have not had any type of training in leadership, either formal or informal.

This leadership retreat was explicitly developed to share information with leaders that will meet the needs of the church when working through the process of revitalization. The curriculum/sessions are based on seven key topics which were developed to provide leaders with information that will enhance their leadership skills and help strengthen their church.

Identifying Seven Key Topics For Leadership Sessions

The first week of the project was focused on gathering information through informal discussions with church leaders regarding a list of topics they would like to see included in the leadership retreat. Seven potential topics were identified and, a questionnaire was developed for the purpose of narrowing down seven topics that would be developed into sessions for the retreat.

The questionnaire was distributed to 10 church leaders, who are lead pastors or ruling elders in their church. All ten were returned back to me within a two week time period. They were submitted anonymously. Data from the ten returned questionnaires and informal discussions identified these topics that were developed into sessions for the retreat: 1) Evangelism; 2) Discipleship; 3) Vision Statement; 4) Mission Statement; 5) Conflict Resolution; 6) Keys to Revitalization; 7) Ministry of the Word.

During the first week, the decision was made to conduct the leadership retreat as weekend retreat starting Friday evening and concluding Saturday evening. Flyers and announcements

were made at the ten churches that were participating in the leadership retreat. Each participating pastor or elder was responsible for getting the information to their leadership team, those whom they desired to be in attendance for the leadership retreat. Of the ten churches that would participate, there would be a total of approximately 70 participants based on information from participating pastors. The participants would include associate pastors, deacons, ruling elders, teaching elders, Sunday school teachers, Praise team leaders, and ministers of music.

The location of the retreat would be a local church. Most participating churches are within a 30-mile radius of the church. The majority of the participants would be driving to the location. An evening meal would be served Friday evening. This would accommodate those who would be coming to the retreat directly after work. On Saturday morning in the fellowship hall, there would be a continental breakfast available for those who wish to partake. Also, lunch will be provided Saturday during a brief intermission for the retreat.

Session Development

In the planning stages session lesson plans for the leadership retreat were developed for each of the seven topics during weeks 2 through 5. While developing the sessions for the leadership retreat, an obvious concern was how the session-leader would address the different learning styles of the participants. In an attempt to address this concern, each session leader was given information on Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences to read as a form of preparation, to at least get acquainted with the different learning styles. Howard Gardner of Harvard has identified seven distinct intelligences. "This theory has emerged from recent cognitive research and documents the extent to which students possess different kinds of minds and therefore learn,

remember, perform, and understand in different ways. This session leaders would be mindful of this while preparing and presenting.”¹⁸⁴

Session 1: Keys To Revitalization

The goal of this session is to give the participants a sound definition of revitalization. In addition, this session will look at signs of a dying church. The signs that will be discussed are found in Thom Rainer’s, *The Autopsy of a Deceased Church*. The signs that will be discussed are: “1) The church refused to look like the community; 2) The church had no community-focused ministries; 3) Members had become more focused on memorials; 4) The percentage of the budget for member’s need increasing; 5) There were no evangelistic emphasis; 6) The members had more and more arguments about what they wanted; 7) With few exceptions, pastoral tenure grew shorter and shorter; 8) The church rarely prayed together; 9) The church had no clarity as to why it existed; 10) The members idolized another area; 11) The facilities continued to deteriorate.”¹⁸⁵

In addition, the goal of this session is to look at trends in North American churches. Often churches that finally admit they are declining look at their decline in isolation. Consequently, that is not the case; the session will examine statistics that relate to declining churches.

According to Tom Cheney in his book, *Slaying the Dragons of Church Revitalization*, the harsh reality in North America most churches and most, if not all, denominations are in a state of decline. “Vast numbers of congregations are now fighting for survival and may well close. Some experts predict that as many as two-thirds of the mainline congregations that exist today will close their doors over the coming decades. With the turn of the twenty-first century,

¹⁸⁴ Hanifan,J, *Multiple Intelligences, Theory, Actions, and, Teacher Professional Development*, Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 39, (4)

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 85

sustained growth within our churches is an intermittent exception while decline seems to be more of the pronouncement.”¹⁸⁶ The portion of this session will provide a measure of hope for the churches, when, they realize “they are not the only ones” who are experiencing decline. “If some doubt still exists as to the absolute necessity for church revitalization these points will be made in a power point presentation: “First, very few of the 350,000 American churches are actually growing, mostly within the under 200 range or 2,000 range. The vast number in the middle is in decline. Second, churchgoers are getting older and especially when compared to the general population. Millennials are on the most part unassociated with a local church. Third, church attendance continues to decline. Forty percent of American say they attend church. The actual number is closer to twenty percent. Fourth, from 2005 to 2010 the percentage of churches characterized by the phrase “high spiritual vitality”, dropped from 43% to 28%. Fifth, church contributions continue to drop on average. About 31% of congregation exhibited good financial health in 2000. The number dropped to 14% in 2010. Sixth, every year, about 2.7million church members become inactive. Seventh, half of all churches in America did not add any new members between 2010-2012.”¹⁸⁷

The final goal of this sessions is to provide strategies for revitalization. Tom Cheney offers The Seven Pillars of Church Revitalization. He asserts, “Working in the area of church revitalization will lead you to consider the Seven Pillars of Church Revitalization. A church revitalizer will not be working in all of these areas at the same time, but, you will eventually find yourself working in most of them at one time or another. First, revitalization and realignment. This is perhaps the easiest of the strategic pillars. In this phase the church realizes it is need of revitalization. Second is refocusing. This pillar helps churches understand that they are

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 67

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 182

growing, but still needs to set new challenges and look for new opportunities to expand their gospel witness into their target area. Third, Re-visioning is a church that needs to work on its Re-visioning. Any Re-Visioning Strategy works to help churches dream new dreams and accomplish new goals. Fourth, Renewing, church renewal is when the church simply needs to get back to that which was working and get back on track. Fifth, reinvention, this pillar deals with tools and techniques to assist the church when it's necessary to reinvent itself to a changing community. Sixth, restoration, this pillar deals with things a church must go through when circumstances necessitate that a restoration process is called for! Seventh, restarting, the final pillar is the hardest. Many of the residual membership's mindset is difficult to change in the strategic part of the process. Senior adults occupy most of these restart candidate churches for which change is hard to come by. Until the church is ready to make drastic changes, it is useless to become involve."¹⁸⁸ These strategies are an attempt to address, reverse, and correct those signs that exist for a declining church headed toward death.

Session 2: Mission Statement

Many of the churches participating in the leadership retreat had an overriding concern that their church had lost the reason for their existence. Furthermore, most of the churches did not have a written mission statement. The goal of this session is to help leaders understand and begin to help them craft a mission statement for their church. The first step is to grasp an understanding of exactly what a mission statement means. "A mission is the primary purpose in which all Christian churches should be involved these purposes typically include evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, ministry, and worship. The purpose of the mission of statement is to move the church from a less than desirable position to a more desirable position."¹⁸⁹ There are

¹⁸⁸ Cheney, Tom, *Nuts and Bolts of Church Revitalization*, (Renovate Publishing Group: Orlando, FL, 2015),

¹⁸⁹ Rainer, Thom, *High Expectations*, (B&H Publishers: Nashville, TN, 138), 1999

several advantages for a church producing a workable mission statement. According to Thom Rainer, “The mission statement explains why the church exists, it can identify deficiencies, it can keep the church balanced, it gives reasons for the ministries of the church, it can enhance assimilation, and it can be an evaluative tool.”¹⁹⁰ Therefore, the mission statement is an expression of the intentional strategy of the church. “The mission statement summarizes and provides the church with its biblical tasks, and it defines its results. The mission statement answers the fundamental question of the ministry: what are we supposed to be doing.”¹⁹¹ The question of how a church develops a mission statement will be addressed in this session. According to John Mark Terry, the pastor must take a leadership role in developing the church’s mission statement in collaboration with an appropriate group of church leaders. Depending on the church’s form of organization, this group might be the church council, the board of elders, the evangelism council or an ad hoc committee for this purpose. The group should review relevant biblical passages and other church’s statements. The church deserves a statement that is biblical, functional, and divinely inspired. The mission statement gives the church its present purpose.

Session 3: Vision Statement

The church leaders wanted to point toward a future work of the ministry during or at the completion of the revitalization project. The purpose of this session is to help the retreat participants to not only look at where they are, but to look at where they want to go. Vision strives for the kind of church the church would like to be. “The vision is a picture of the church we seek to create. It depicts the church’s preferred future. Also, the vision serves to bridge the past and the future. The right vision provides the all-important link between what has taken

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 148

¹⁹¹ Malphurs, Aubrey, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 2005), 120

place, what is now taking place, and what the organization aspires to be in the future.”¹⁹²

Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to think that the vision statement is simply to point to the future. The vision statement has a present ministry focus as well. Vision statements are detailed plans. “Vision: God’s specific plan for a specific church at a specific time.”¹⁹³ That specific time can be in the present work of the church or the future work of the church. Aubrey Malphurs in transparent fashion blends these two ideas by providing this thought, “What most leaders have discovered is that it is vision that motivates giving. We at Dallas Seminary understand this. Few contributors donate to pay the light bill or my salary. They donate to what they see the seminary accomplishing for Christ in the coming years based on what he has accomplished in the past.”¹⁹⁴ In a similar fashion to session two, which help the leaders create a mission statement, this session will begin to help the participants craft a vision statement for their churches.¹⁹⁵

Session 4: Conflict Resolution

When the church leader is engaged in a revitalization project, he will meet opposition from some within the congregation. The revitalization leader will have to deal with entrenched leadership. “The entrenched leadership will resist, ridicule, and even enlist others to oppose the revitalization project.”¹⁹⁶ “If the leader is to move forward with the revitalization project then the leader must either work around these entrenched leaders, discover a way to work with them or he must drive them away.”¹⁹⁷ The goal of this session is to help the leader understand and resolve conflict in a godly way. “Many of the problems associated with responses to conflict can be prevented if you learn to look at and respond to conflict in a biblical way. In his Word, God

¹⁹² Ibid, 153

¹⁹³ Ibid, 138

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 149

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 3

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 139

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 139

has explained why conflict occurs and how we should deal with them.”¹⁹⁸ In this session, a definition of conflict will be explored. Conflict is a difference of opinion or purpose that frustrates someone’s goals or desires.

Session 5: The Importance of the Ministry of the Word

The church leaders took an internal look within themselves and agreed there had to be a returned emphasis to the ministry of the Word. The preached Word of God “has always been the chosen instrument to create, convict, convert, and conform his people.”¹⁹⁹ The goal of this session is to share with leaders the type of messages that will be an impetus for revitalization and sustenance for church health. Several types of messages will be examined in this session are: “1) A Gospel Message. First, we must preach the good news of salvation; 2) A Christ-Centered Message- Second. Our preaching must focus on the person and work of Christ; 3) A God-Given Message. As Paul continues exhorting Timothy to be a preacher of the Word, he explains, “All scripture is breathed out by God.”(2 Timothy 3:16) He wants the apprentice to understand the purpose of preaching is not to communicate our own ideas or even the ideas of great teachers who have gone before us. The purpose of preaching is to communicate the words of God Himself; 4) A Life-Transforming Message. God knows what each person needs, better than any preacher or teacher. According to 2 Timothy 3:16, “The Word is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and training for righteousness.” You cannot make application to the lives of people until you have first taught them what the scripture says and what it means by what it says; 5) An Equipping Message. In 2 Timothy 3:17, Paul states the purpose for the preaching and teaching of God’s Word, “That the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good

¹⁹⁸ Sande, Ken, *The Peacemaker*, (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 24), 1997

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 34

work.” “Paul is saying our preaching and teaching should be primarily for the equipping or building up the saints so that they can be better worshipers and servants of God.²⁰⁰

All of these messages will assist the preaching/teaching team in the revitalization process. Nonetheless, the preferred method of delivering these types of message is the expository delivery method. “God’s Word is the source of all life and health. It’s what feeds, develops, and preserves a church’s health. Fundamentally, this means that both pastors and congregation must be committed to expository preaching.”²⁰¹ Expository preaching is the kind of preaching that, quite simply, exposes God’s Word. It takes a particular passage of scripture, explains that passage, and then applies the meaning of the passage to the life of the congregation. “It’s the kind of preaching most geared to get at what God wants to say to his people, as well as those who are not his people.”²⁰² Consequently, a small portion of this session will be dedicated to the benefit of expository preaching.

Session 6: Evangelism

The participating churches in the leadership retreat have discussed a lack of evangelistic priority. “What was once the heartbeat of the entire church, particularly the early church, has diminished enormously as a priority in the minds of its members. What was once an important criterion for success has diminished.”²⁰³ Not only has the church lost the heartbeat of evangelism specifically, evangelism is not a matter of importance for laypeople. This low priority for evangelism in individuals can be attributed to the notion “very few laypeople feel able to share their faith effectively.” Consequently, the goal of this session is to show the participants a proximity to peripheral approach to evangelism in an attempt to develop a level of

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 116

²⁰¹ Ibid, 63

²⁰² Ibid, 65

²⁰³ Wil Arn and Charles Arn, *The Master’s Plan for Making Disciples*, (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 1998), 9.

comfort in evangelism. Evangelism for the revitalization church can begin within the members' sphere of influence. "God has an intentional focus on the household (friends, extended families, associates) in the New Testament in his plans for communicating to humankind. The Gospels, Acts and Epistles show the bridges *oikos* were used regularly as a means to spread the Good News."²⁰⁴ This principle has a present-day application. "Webs of common kinship (the larger family), common friendships (friends and neighbors), and common associates (work associates), and people with common interests or recreational pursuits are still paths most people follow in becoming Christians today."²⁰⁵

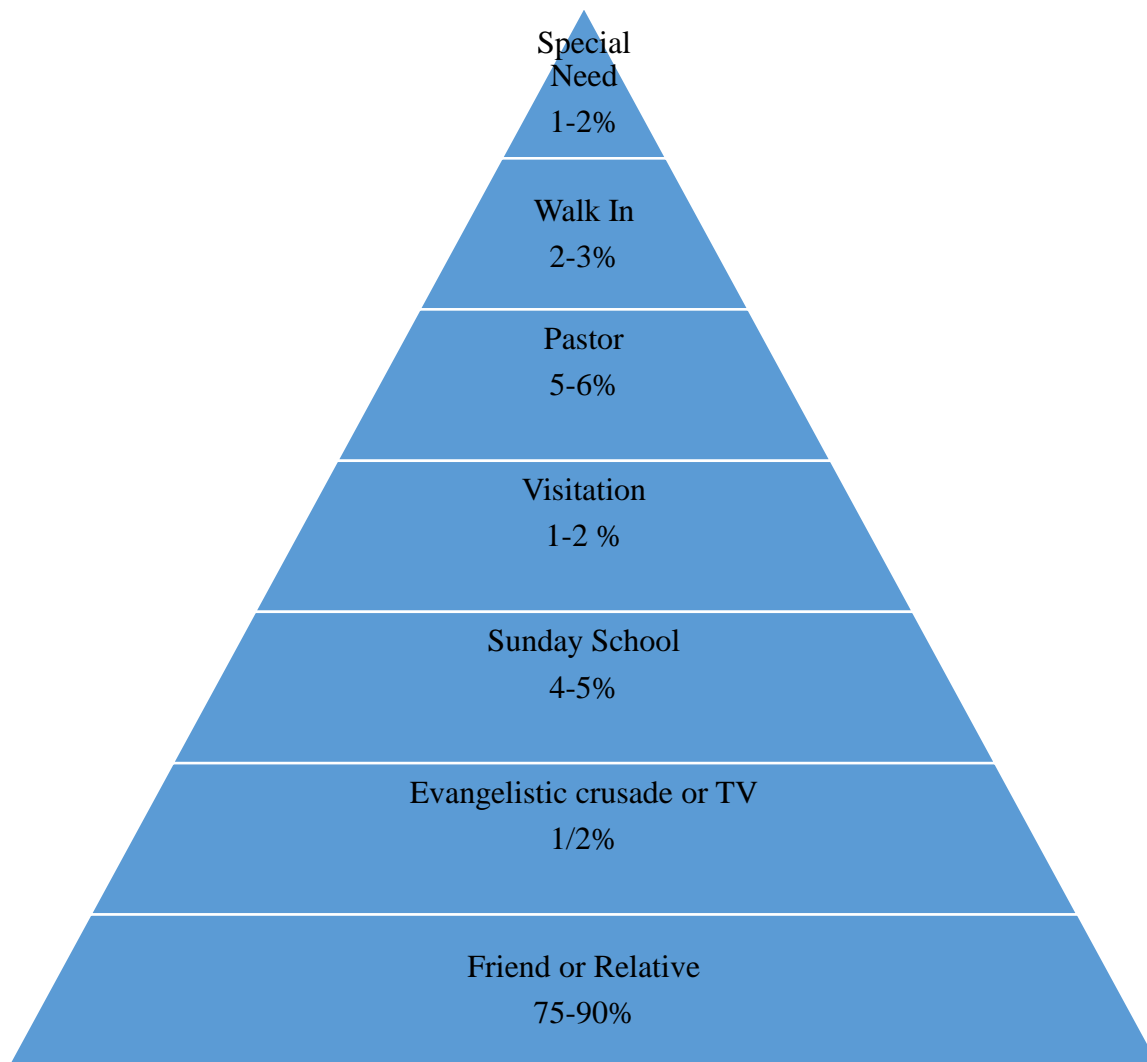
Research conducted by Church Growth, Inc of Monvia, California supports the notion that the *oikos* process is at work today. Over forty-two thousand laypeople were asked the question, what or who was responsible for your coming to Christ and your church? One of the following eight responses was given: "1) Some said a "special need" brought them to Christ and the church; 2) Some responded they just "walked in."; 3) Some listed the "pastor."; 4) Some indicated "visitation; 5) Some mentioned "Sunday school."; 6) Some listed "evangelistic crusade or television."; 7) Some responded that a "friend/relative" was the reason they are now in Christ and the church."²⁰⁶

What percentage of people gave each response as to how they came to their new relationship with Christ and their church? Here are the results.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 42

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 45

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 63



The conclusion is clear: The majority of people today can trace their “spiritual roots” directly to a relative or friend. This session will emphasize those relationships in the evangelistic efforts.

Session 7: Discipleship

The goal of this session is to discuss with the participants how to move members through the spectrum of discipleship. This session will look at stage one- repentance and belief. Moreover, the session will highlight stage two- obedience, which focuses on discipleship. “Discipleship is not merely a matter of information remembered. It is about a lifestyle that is

practiced. It is a lifestyle of absolute abandonment to loving God and obeying his commands.”²⁰⁷

CHAPTER 4

EVALUATION AND REFLECTION ON THE LEADERSHIP RETREAT

In today’s evaluation of the church, the church growth movement has left declining churches in isolation, with little to no hope for recovery. The leadership retreat was designed to move leaders from thinking budgets, buildings, and baptisms are the only signs of growth for the church. The purpose of this leadership retreat was to introduce leaders to ideologies that will assist them in leading a declining church to revitalization. Part of the struggle for leaders in declining churches is there is a lack of training to help move their church forward.

Evaluation of the Session’s Goals

The first goal of the leadership retreat was to identify seven essential topics to be included in the retreat. This goal was accomplished by creating a questionnaire and distributing it to ten pastor/elder via mail. All ten were returned anonymously. The compiled results and informal discussions became the basis for defining the seven topics.

The second goal of the sessions was to meet with each session presenter and offer material that would assist them in leading their session. Nevertheless, upon agreeing to lead the session, the session leader was at liberty to lead their session with complete autonomy. Although, I did ask each session leader to provide me with a lesson for their session. Each session leader was given one and a half weeks to evaluate materials and offer his comments and suggestions for making improvements to the leadership retreat. After completing the material

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 51

evaluation, session leaders were also given opportunities to meet one-on-one for follow up discussions.

After finalizing the meetings with the session leaders, the retreat was held on the weekend of September 14-15. Here is an outline of the leadership retreat scheduled:

September 14- Friday

5:00-6:00 PM- Social Hour/Light Dinner

6:00-7:00 PM- Session One- Keys to Revitalization

7:00-8:00- Session Two- Mission Statements

8:00-9:00- Session Three-Vision Statements

9:00 PM- Closing Prayer

(Retreat participants were instructed/allowed to breaks on Friday night as individually needed)

September 15- Saturday

8:00 AM- 8:45- Continental Breakfast

9:00 AM-10:00 AM- Ministry of the Word

10:15 AM- 11:15 AM- Evangelism

11:15 AM- 12:15 AM- Lunch On Site

12:30 PM- 1:30 PM- Discipleship

1:40 PM-2:40 PM- Conflict Resolution

2:45 PM-3:15 PM- Closing Questions and Answers

Strengths of the Leadership Retreat

The first strength of the Leadership Retreat was the prerequisite preparation that was done by the session leaders. It was ostensible through the session-leaders' presentations they had background knowledge, had research the subject matter thoroughly, and, had experience in the

content they were teaching. Consequently, because they had prepared adequately, the second strength of the retreat was the session leader's presentations. Each session leader delivered his material with skill and competency. Each of the presentations was done in a similar format during the one-hour session. They all had relevant introductions that grasped audience attention from the very beginning. In addition, each session-leader was able to give application for the subject matter in their session. Although these were teaching sessions, I was able to introduce them to a modified homiletical strategy, because many of them were concerned about the hour time frame being too long for them lead the session. Ironically, it wasn't enough time. I suggested they find four or five topics they would like to address within their session, develop those topics into solid division statements. Then follow my format, give the division statements/topic an explanation, illustration, and application. This was a strength of the retreat; their teaching was succinct and applicable to the audience.

The third strength of the retreat was the audience engagement. The participants seemed to be very interested in the information that was being present. They were very transparent about what they needed to enhance their leadership, and the problems they were experiencing at their local churches.

Weaknesses of the Leadership Retreat

A significant weakness of the retreat was each session had about 70-75 participants. The group was viewed as too large by many. A majority of the participants would like to have had smaller groups. This is an agreeable assessment. A smaller session-leader to participant ratio would have allowed the session leader to check for comprehension on a more personal level. On the other hand, the large session-leader to participant ratio, was not conducive to an intimate learning atmosphere.

Although the delivery of the presentations was stellar by the session-leaders, most of the sessions were done in lecture format. This can be viewed as a retreat weakness, because the lecture format is considered the least likely method in retaining information. In addition, the sessions may have been too long. Each session lasted approximately an hour. Though the information was valuable, it seemed the attention span of the participants was pushed to the limits during the hour-long session.

Suggestions

One suggestion many of the participants offered was to have the retreat at an off-site location. They discussed having at a hotel or cabin resort. They felt a more intimate setting away from a church location would bring higher value to the retreat atmosphere. Furthermore, they would have liked to have stayed overnight and participated in some team building type events. It was discussed this modification of staying overnight would produce a cost. Yet, many of the participants stated in one conversation or another. That it would be worth the cost. Another suggestion was to break the retreat into smaller groups instead of just having one big group. In addition, this would allow each participant to select which sessions would benefit them the most, as opposed to having to sit through all seven sessions.

Conclusion of Leadership Retreat

The Cornerstone Baptist Church left the retreat, and after reading the report from this project was optimistic that the church could go from decline to renewal with the practicing of New Testament principles and church leaders who are trained with an intentional effort to help their church be restored. From the leadership retreat, the Cornerstone Baptist Church was able to develop some valuable statements. First, it developed a mission statement. From information gathered at the leadership retreat, the church wrote this mission statement, “A Great

Commitment to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission Will Make Us A Great Church.” The leadership team took this statement from Rick Warren’s book, *The Purpose Driven Church*. The leadership team believed this statement was inclusive of all they wanted to do as a church. The Pastor was enthralled with the goal of being and becoming a great church. In addition, he was excited about a path that would lead us to greatness. He firmly believed if we would pursue those two commands with sincerity and purity greatness would be imminent. As a result of this belief, the church went through a reshifting and restructuring process. After attending the leadership retreat, the Pastor had an invigorated spirit, because although we attempted the restructuring with an indefatigable attempt, in the past it was met with a modicum of success. Therefore, he is excited about the idea of the retreat being another attempt to move the membership toward God’s will. The leadership team believes in the validity of the mission statement that was given through the Purpose Driven Church. First, a commitment to the Great Commission. The Great Commission when employed and applied scripturally will create an atmosphere of “declaration, development, deployment, knowing, growing, and going.”²⁰⁸ Part of the church’s greatness is achieved by fulfilling the Great Commission. “A few days before Jesus ascended into glory, He gave his disciples some final instructions. As his last words, they eloquently express his greatest passion and top priority.”²⁰⁹ This final statement is called the Great Commission. When the church follows these orders, it will be operating in the supreme will of God. In addition, part of the church’s mission statement is a commitment to the Great Commandment, which is to love your neighbor as you love yourself. This part of the mission means demonstrating God’s love to others by meeting their needs and healing their hurts in the name of Jesus. The church is to minister to all kinds of needs: spiritual, emotional, relational and

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 19

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 2

physical. The leadership retreat not only initiated a mission statement. It was the impetus for the church developing a purpose statement. The information learned at the leadership retreat about mission statements helped to shape the church's purpose statement from the principles that could be derived from the mission statement

The church chose for its purpose a statement that would embody the idea of achieving and maintaining church health. As a result of this, the purpose statement intended to be a statement that emphasized a balanced approach to ministry, which would result into health. Consequently, a balanced church will have a balance purpose statement centered on the same purposes of the first New Testament church. The church' purpose statement is be: "Our church will find people for the Lord Jesus (evangelism), feed them on the Lord's Word (discipleship), fasten them to the Lord's people (fellowship), focus them on the Lord's wonder (worship), and send them to do the Lord's work (ministry)."

This purpose statement encompasses all the purposes of the first New Testament Church. This purpose statement is the foundation of our church. "If you want to be healthy, strong church you must spend time laying a solid foundation. This is done by clarifying in the minds of everyone involved exactly why the church exists and what it supposed to do. There is great power in having a clearly defined purpose statement."²¹⁰ Nonetheless, it is not enough to have a purpose statement. The purpose statement must be lived out by the congregation. It must be a practical application process. "Your church's purpose statement must become the standard by which you measure your congregation's health and strength."²¹¹ In the beginning stages of the revitalization process, applying the purposes with balance is where the church might struggle. "Integrating your purposes into every area and aspect of your church's life is the most difficult

²¹⁰ Ibid, 86

²¹¹ Ibid, 93

phase becoming a purpose-driven church. The church must rigorously apply its purposes to every part of the church.”²¹²

When conducting a spiritual eye test, it becomes apparent that the church is out of balance when it comes to accomplishing the purpose statement. It would suggested on a scale of 100, most of the church’s time and programs are involved in fellowship (65%) worship (15%), discipleship (15%) evangelism (5%). This number indicated the church will have some work to do in pursuit of the church’s purpose statement. For instance, in the session Keys to Revitalization, balance was a thought that was reiterated time and time again.

Concluding Statement

There is hope and help for declining churches. First, declining churches must understand that the decline in their churches is not an isolated incident. Declining churches are far more prevalent than one may think from their own perspective. Furthermore, the revitalization or renewal of declining churches is happening with more frequency than in the past. Second, there is information through books, the Bible included, that will assist declining churches with renewal. As a matter of fact, the early New Testament church provides more than a few strategies and principles that will give rebirth to a dying church. Third, there are seminars, which include experts on the subject who can lead and guide the declining church back to being a healthy and vibrant church again.

²¹² Ibid, 137

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