

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Leading from Eternity: Developing Inmates with Life Sentences into Undershepherds

A Thesis Project Submitted to
the Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

By

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May 2021

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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In an attempt to reform the American criminal justice system, the United States Congress passed, and the President signed, the comprehensive First Step Act (FSA). The aim of the FSA is to identify and begin preparing offenders for release in order to reduce recidivism.

Unfortunately, the provisions of FSA applied to only a small percentage of the inmate population. Further, there was very little relief with regards to the reforming of the sentencing guidelines. None of the provisions provided any direct relief for inmates with a minimum of 20 years to life sentences.

This thesis project provides an opportunity for inmates with long prison sentences the opportunity to contribute to their re-entry needs. Qualitative research identified important themes for participants to associate with and apply to their hopeful reintegration to society. The thematic findings provided strong anchors for the participants to develop a continuity of leadership practice, to understand the concept of being an undershepherd, and the implications of the eternal self.

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Abbreviations

BOP	<i>Bureau of Prisons</i>
CCCA	<i>Comprehensive Crime Control Act</i>
CSC	<i>Chaplaincy Services Coordinator</i>
ESV	<i>English Standard Version</i>
FSA	<i>First Step Act</i>
GED	<i>General Educational Development</i>
LUSOD	<i>Liberty University School of Divinity</i>
NKJV	<i>New King James Version</i>
U.S.C.	<i>United States Code</i>
USP	<i>United States Penitentiary</i>

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Formerly Incarcerated Reenter Society Transformed Safely Transitioning Every Person Act, or First Step Act, is the rubric by which the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) now operates. The recently enacted plan came after several decades of exponential population growth and inadequate rehabilitative efforts. Dating back to the 1960s, conservative politicians took a “tough-on-crime” approach. The focus of increased penalties on violent and drug crimes over and above spending on social programs led to the eventual passage of the Comprehensive Crime Control Act in 1984.¹

The Comprehensive Crime Control Act (CCCA) made sweeping changes with harsher penalties on criminal activity that involve a weapon, reinstatement of federal capital punishment, and abolishing the federal parole system. This Act began to transform the habitual offender into what became known as the “Career Criminal.”² Over the next four years, the implemented anti-drug initiatives necessitated the creation of the “Drug Czar.”³ This drug czar would have overall responsibility for drug and drug-control policies in the United States. Over a ten-year period of enacting these measures, it shaped the conditions for mandatory minimum sentencing laws for violent crimes and drug trafficking.

¹ Dereck M. Cohen, “Justice, Not Jailbreak: The Context and Consequence of the First Step Act” *Victims & Offenders* 14, no. 8 (2019): 1085.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Mandatory minimum sentencing brought the “tough-on-crime” era to a culmination with the “‘94 Crime Bill.”⁴ The passage of the 1994 Crime Bill beefed up the existing Comprehensive Crime Control Act (CCCA). Along with increased law enforcement spending, the newest focus of the CCCA is the inclusion of mandatory life sentences for repeat drug offenders. The introduction of the various crime control bills and sentencing guidelines led to a vast disparity in sentencing. By 2016, for instance, “over half (55.7 percent) of the federal prison population was convicted of an offense that bore a mandatory minimum sentence,” which is typically twenty years to a life sentence for a third conviction.⁵

With the signing of the First Step Act (FSA), it became the most substantial broadly retroactive prison sentence restructuring in over three decades. The First Step Act began to take shape in 2004, with the introduction of the Second Chance Act, which was finally signed into law in 2008. The challenges of sentencing and proportionate crime disparity brought about the Fair Sentencing Act in 2010. In 2013, due to continued social concerns surrounding mounting incarceration, Congress introduced the First Step Act, which finally received the final passage on December 18, 2018.⁶

The First Step Act incorporated two reform components: prison reform and sentencing reform. Faith-based re-entry programming of the interned is a foundational component of prison reform. Explicitly stated, the FSA, “Establishes eligibility criteria for, and incentivizes participation in, evidence-based recidivism reduction programs by allowing prisoners to earn time credits for pre-release custody.”⁷ In a nutshell, faith-based re-entry programming intends to

⁴ Cohen, “Justice, Not Jailbreak,” 1085.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1086.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1093.

⁷ “Major Provisions of the First Step Act.” *Congressional Digest* 98, no. 1 (2019): 11.

provide individuals who are re-entering society with useful skills. The challenge to meet this need is to find faith-based re-entry programming that is evidence-based. The second area of reform, sentencing reform, reformed sentences imposed before 2010 and made sentencing guidelines consistent with the Fair Sentencing Act.

Ministry Context

The task of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) is confining offenders in the controlled environments of prisons and community-based facilities that are safe, humane, cost-efficient, and appropriately secure. Additionally, the BOP provides opportunities for work and other self-improvement programs to assist offenders in becoming law-abiding citizens, which underscores the broader ethos of incarceration. Within the mission of the BOP is the understanding that correctional workers and officers will conduct themselves with correctional excellence, respect, and integrity. One component of the BOP is the Reentry Services Division under which is the Chaplaincy Services Branch.

The overall make-up of Chaplaincy within the BOP begins at the institutional level. Each institution (122 total throughout the United States) has an allotment of at least one, and up to five, Chaplains to include a Supervisory Chaplain, and a Religious Services Assistant in some cases. Most of the Chaplains are Protestant, but also include Catholic, Jewish, Islamic, and Buddhist faith traditions. The number of Chaplains per institution is dependent upon the size and mission of the facility.

The Bureau of Prisons is divided up into six different regions. Within the regions, there are Chaplaincy Services Coordinators (CSCs). Currently, there are three CSCs who are covering two regions each. The CSCs were at one time supervisory Chaplains at the institutional level. The job of the CSC is to advise Chaplains in the field and to be a resource to the regional offices on matters of religious beliefs and practices. The CSCs accomplish this by developing, maintaining, and monitoring religious services throughout the institution in their perspective regions.⁸

The headquarters of the BOP resides in Washington, D.C., in what is known as the Central Office, where a team of senior Chaplains advises the BOP director and his staff on religious matters. These Chaplains also work with the CSCs to help the field, plan training, and provide an audit function to ensure Chaplains at the institution level are in compliance with policy, the Code of Federal Regulations, and The American Correctional Association (ACA - A private, non-profit, non-governmental trade association and accrediting body for the corrections industry), concerning religious practice and accommodation.⁹

The BOP recognizes 22 different religious groups. The designation of a religious group is a general label. For instance, within a given prison population, under the Protestant tradition, there may be Methodist, Pentecostal, and Baptist Christians, but there is one General Protestant Service to meet the religious needs of all adherents of the Christian faith. Chaplains may lead the worship service from his or her own faith tradition but must maintain a level of inclusiveness for all involved adherents of each chosen religious faith. A Chaplain, regardless of his or her

⁸ “About Our Facilities,” Federal Bureau of Prisons, accessed July 1, 2020, https://www.bop.gov/about/agency/org_rsd.jsp.

⁹ “The History of the American Correctional Association,” accessed July 1, 2020, http://www.aca.org/ACA_Prod_IMIS/ACA_Member/About_Us/Our_History.

faith tradition, is required to ensure that each religious group in one's facility has time and space for worship and practice in the chapel. A Chaplain always remains within his or her specific faith tradition but ensures accommodation for all inmates who request religious services to meet in a worshipful setting at least once weekly.

Two significant factors that affect BOP Chaplains in their daily function and mission at the institutional level are tasks and resources. A Chaplain's daily tasking frequently involve large mission requirements, involving layers of policy oversight, but lack equivalent resourcing. For example, Religious Services is a lower-tier programming need, but one requiring a sizable time commitment to ensure the protection of an inmate's religious freedoms as established in The First Amendment to the United States Constitution.¹⁰ The daily struggle is to maintain accommodation with a pastoral presence while at the same time ensuring an uncompromised environment due to nefarious ambitions of the inmate population. This mission, to maintain accommodation while balancing a safe and effective chapel environment, requires a Chaplain to envision and prosecute a fine line between law and grace. Al Mohler writes it this way, "Convictional intelligence comes by what we rightly call the ordinary means of grace."¹¹

The Chaplain must be able to balance pastoral responsibilities with security matters effectively. Security concerns can impact pastoral responsibilities and cause unhealthy tension leading to problems in the overall operations of Chaplaincy Services. Chaplains must understand that justice and mercy are vital social threads that are co-dependent if there will be a redemptive outcome. All Chaplains maintain a safe chapel environment by including two of the directives of

¹⁰ US Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons Program Statement 5360.09, *Religious Beliefs and Practices* (June 12, 2015), 2.

¹¹ Albert R. Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles of Leadership that Matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Bethany House, 2012), 36.

correctional management, which are order and control. Every area of an institution, including the chapel, should have procedures in place to maintain these directives. Establishing a religious services program schedule that has adequate supervision, sanitation, security checks, ongoing training, and knowing the individuals and groups that meet in the chapel are all essential components to chapel security. The range of measures can include ensuring there is no radicalizing material introduced to the chapel library, as well as ensuring that inmates are not making weapons out of the religious accouterments. Some of the best practices to manage any inmate population is to apply basic correctional practices, which include strong supervision, adherence to policy, inmate accountability, and effective communication.¹² These practices are especially true for any population of inmates who have a propensity for violence.

The immediate ministry context of this writer is the United States Penitentiary (USP) in Canaan Township, Pennsylvania. USP Canaan is a high-security institution that houses dangerous offenders. USP Canaan opened in March 2005 and is designed to house 1088 male inmates in six housing units. Six V-shaped buildings facing each other with a more extensive maintenance building surround a central yard with a tower in the middle. Six additional towers line the rectangular-shaped facility. A lethal electrical double fence surrounds the facility.¹³ Keeping true to statistics, 20% of the prison at USP Canaan population is serving a sentence of at least twenty years to life. The population is diverse, with a mixed ethnic make-up of Black, Hispanic, and White. The overall population is 16% White, 59% Black, 22% Hispanic, and 3%

¹² Scott Hoke and Randy Demory, *Inmate Behavior Managements: Guide to Meeting Basic Needs* (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Corrections, 2014), np.

¹³ “About Our Facilities,” Federal Bureau of Prisons, accessed July 1, 2020, https://www.bop.gov/about/agency/org_rsd.jsp.

Other. From this writer's experience, within the culture of any penitentiary, there is a hunger for spiritual leadership and a need for the development of such.

The greater ministry context of any prison in the United States is that most incarcerated men did not grow up with a positive male influence in their lives. The prevailing sentiment echoes a poem that begins rather sadly, "Like my father, I fathered a fatherless son..."¹⁴ Because of this fatherless perspective, it gives rise to a level of adverse obedience to authority. From this writer's experience, most male inmates tend to resent male authority of correctional staff and typically will express themselves violently when their individual credo does not correlate with the overall mission and goals of the correctional facility. The overall effect of the incarcerated fatherless manifests itself in what is known as the "status attainment model." As one writer explains, "Just as incarceration has emerged as a stage in the life course of young Black males parental incarceration has also disproportionately become a stage in the life course of minority children."¹⁵ What this translates to for the whole of a typical prison population is 46% of the overall prison population has a family member who is incarcerated, with 44% of inmates who grew up in a single-parent household, and 13% from households with no parents at all.¹⁶

The ministry context of USP Canaan reflects the above troubling trends endemic to mass incarceration. With the high percentage of fatherlessness, the tight balance of security and pastoral ministry, and the imbalanced ratio of resources to responsibilities, it is imperative for the Chaplain to develop a more sustainable way forward in prison ministry. The need to form

¹⁴ Valerie Schultz, "In Prison, Writing is an Act of Redemption" *America* 217, no. 12 (2017): 2.

¹⁵ Marcus Shaw, "The Racial Implications of the Effects of Parental Incarceration on Intergenerational Mobility" *Sociology Compass* 10, no. 12 (2016): 1104.

¹⁶ Peter K. Enns et al., "What Percentage of Americans Have Ever Had a Family Member Incarcerated?: Evidence from the Family History of Incarceration Survey (FamHIS)" *Socius* (January 2019): 6.

ministry leaders within the walls of worldly made men is vital. The development of spiritual leaders who have the ability to lead from eternity is paramount.

Problem Presented

The First Step Act, passed in December of 2018, addressed reducing criminal recidivism, preparing inmates for a successful return to society, and reforming the criminal sentencing guidelines.¹⁷ The primary focus to accomplish the reforms rely on evidence-based programming. This focus presents a great ideological challenge. One challenge with evidenced-based programming, when dealing with religious curricula, is that there is a scant amount of research from the social science and policy research sectors and thus fails to meet initial standards and criteria. Even with current secular re-entry programming, there is little research that compares faith-based and nonspiritual programs. The most considerable difficulty in choosing effective faith-based programming is the question: which belief system? Even though this author believes that only the Christian faith provides the necessary means for proper inmate reform, this ideal does not correspond well in a pluralistic setting.

A second challenge with evidenced-based programming is the difficulty of measuring eternity. A researcher can measure a program only within the realm of human knowledge. However, when compared to the transcendence of an eternal kingdom, the instrument needed to measure the effects can only be utilized by the abitur of the Kingdom. The idea seems counter-intuitive. The reality is that what truly needs measuring with regards to eternal things is “heart change.” Again, arbitrary, but “heart change” is best enumerated through one’s sincere actions.

¹⁷ “Major Provisions of the First Step Act” *Congressional Digest* 98, no. 1 (2019): 11.

In other words, the inmost being of a person can only truly be changed by the supernatural. The prophet Ezekiel writes it this way, “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26, ESV). The authentic deeds of someone who is truly transformed will bear witness of the change through his or her actions. As the Apostle James expresses it, “Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works” (James 2:18, ESV).

While faith-based re-entry programming remains limited in scope, the BOP offers extensive opportunities for inmates to engage in mental health services, sex offender therapy, domestic violence programming, trauma-informed therapies, and re-entry services for individuals nearing release.¹⁸ Even within this broad base of therapeutic programming, there is little integration with faith or religion. In addition to the therapeutic programs, the BOP offers many individual educational opportunities to include General Education Development (GED), Occupational Education (OE), and English as a Second Language (ESL). However, if an inmate attempts to further his or her religious education through a college or university, there is no opportunity for the inmate to pursue his or her education.

Another issue of the First Step Act is that it fails to address rehabilitation for those inmates who have, at a minimum, a twenty-year sentence or those who have a longer sentence to include life sentences. Reform to 21 U.S.C. 841 and 851 does reduce some aspects to mandatory sentencing minimums, but maximum penalties remain in place.¹⁹ For the 180,000 inmates in

¹⁸ David B. Muhlhausen and Hugh J. Hurwitz, “First Step Act: Best Practices for Academic and Vocational Education for Offenders” *Federal Sentencing Reporter* 32, no. 1 (2019): 57.

¹⁹ “Major Provisions of the First Step Act,” 11.

Federal custody, only 4,600 will benefit from a reduced sentence.²⁰ What this means is that 16.7% of the prison population is not offered programming to effectually reduce their sentence, or any incentive to attempt worthwhile life improvement plans.

The further issue of the FSA concerns the collective inmate population in the United States. In 1980, the overall population within the Federal Prison system was approximately 25,000 inmates. With the “tough-on-crime” mantra through the 1980s, the prison population nearly tripled to 65,000 by 1990. By the turn of the millennium, the number of inmates more than doubled to 145,000. The inmate population peaked in 2013, with nearly 220,000 incarcerated in federal prison. By the time of the passage of the First Step Act in 2018, the reduced population leveled out at 180,000.²¹ These population numbers only represent the federal prison system. However, despite the apparent reduction of federal inmates, the United States still has the highest prison population (federal, state, and local correctional authorities), and the highest incarceration rate per 100,000 citizens in the national population than any other country in the world.²² What this means for the roughly two million incarcerated individuals in federal, state, and local correctional facilities, is that there will be no impact from the First Step Act.²³

Within the context of the Federal Prison system, along with the challenges of the First Step Act, there looms the additional hurdle with the continuity of spiritual leadership within each individual institution. There is a vast disparity of leadership, vision, and ultimate

²⁰ Cohen, “Justice, Not Jailbreak,” 1084.

²¹ “Statistics,” Federal Bureau of Prisons, accessed February 17, 2020, https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/population_statistics.jsp#old_pops.

²² “World Prison Brief Data,” United States of America | World Prison Brief, accessed February 17, 2020, <https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/united-states-america>.

²³ “The First Step Act Deserves Your Skepticism,” *Daily Intelligencer* (2018).

implementation of policy within the various locations of the 122 different BOP facilities.²⁴ Additionally, facility locations have a wide range of divergence pertaining to their placement. For instance, there may be a facility right in the middle of a major metropolitan area or a facility that is at least an hour from any semblance of a livable environment. As such, retention of staff becomes a difficulty, which includes the retention of Chaplains. Some institutions have not had a Chaplain for close to five years, while there are Chaplains that move every two years. The lack of continuity of spiritual leadership is disruptive to a confined population that does not accept change well. With the lack of steadiness in spiritual leadership and the insufficiency of re-entry and development for inmates with long sentences, the problem is that those who are in the current ministry context are not receiving the opportunity for development into future ministry leaders.

Purpose Statement

When the Pharisees asked Jesus which was the greatest of the commandments, Jesus answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Mt 22:37, ESV). The development of the heart, mind, and soul is of utmost importance behind the critical cultivation of spiritual leaders. The purpose of this DMIN action research thesis is to develop a program to provide leadership skills training to the incarcerated men at USP Canaan in Waymart, PA, specifically focusing on those who are serving long prison sentences. The thesis will draw upon experience, current leadership material, and new laws that will provide the impetus for change. Through the study of historical and biblical leaders, the examination of spiritual leadership principles, and the exploration of what it means to be an

²⁴ “About Our Facilities,” BOP, accessed July 1, 2020, https://www.bop.gov/about/agency/org_rsd.jsp.

undershepherd, this project will, in principle, generate the opportunity for inmates to see their potential for change and purpose in eternity through “heart change.” The transformation of an inmate’s soul is the paramount mission of any spiritual leader within the walls of a correctional facility.

Basic Assumptions

Through this course of study, this writer is assuming that the participants of the study want to change, and specifically desire eternal change. The transformation of the heart, mind, and soul only occurs when a person wholly submits to God through Jesus Christ as his or her Lord and Savior. This writer assumes that the chosen individuals are committed believers in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and that they are committed to transformation through the leading and guiding of the Holy Spirit.

Underscoring the basic assumptions is the idea of change while a ward of the state. It is easy to adhere to religious belief within the confines of a regimented institution. Otherwise known as “jailhouse religion,” an individual can claim any faith adherence that he or she chooses during incarceration. While inmates observe their overall practice of religion with relative ease, the underlying assumption of potential eternal transformation will only be known when the individual is ultimately released from custody. As Tanya Erzen puts it, “...self-autonomy and the ability to make your own decisions...is impossible in prison.”²⁵ The difficulty here is that inmates are wards of the state with the propensity to compromise good intentions and manipulate true change. However, with true “heart change” through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit,

²⁵ Tanya Erzen, *God in Captivity: The Rise of Faith-Based Prison Ministries in the Age of Mass Incarceration* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2017), 16.

this writer believes that there can be evidences of good works while in confinement that will bear themselves out in an environment of freedom.

Another assumption on the part of this writer is that the chosen individuals are committed to spiritual leadership growth without coercion. Within a prison setting, an inmate does not freely give an item of value to another inmate without expecting something in return. This writer assumes that the chosen individuals will wholeheartedly give of themselves because of what Jesus fully gave to each one of them. In return, the inmates will give to others not because of a future benefit, but out of compassion and devotion to God.

A further assumption is that the chosen individuals will allow this writer to be their shepherd through the totality of this project. As the singular Chaplain for the entire prison population at USP Canaan, this writer cannot show favoritism to one specific group. The guiding principles by which this writer will adhere are the time-tested correctional ideals of being firm, fair, and consistent with all groups and individuals. As such, mutual trust will be a vital economy between this writer and the chosen individuals throughout the course of this project.

Definitions

Several terms require definition in order for the reader to understand the context from which this writer is presenting. The first term is *sentence*. A sentence, in the context of prison work, is a length of time pronounced by a court or judge in a criminal proceeding and specifying the punishment inflicted upon the one convicted of a felony crime.²⁶ A life

²⁶ "Sentence," Merriam-Webster.com, Merriam-Webster, 2020.

sentence then is a sentence where the convicted felon is to spend the rest of his or her natural life within the confines of a correctional institution.

Within the prison system itself, there are terms germane to the culture of the institution. One term that is incidental to this thesis project is *high-security*. A high-security institution typically carries within its designation the term “*penitentiary*.” A high wall surrounds a penitentiary, with two rows of security fencing, and strategically placed armed guard towers around the perimeter. The inmates are limited in their movement in the institution, subject to numerous physical and electronic searches on a daily basis, and they are separated by quadrants so as to limit interaction and mass gatherings. An inmate sentenced to a penitentiary is one who has a history of violence in the committing of his crime.

Other terms of note within the prison system include incident report, lock-down, and compound. A correctional officer files an *incident report* when an inmate commits a code violation within the institution. An investigation takes place, and if the inmate committed the violation, the inmate faces the Discipline Hearing Officer (DHO). If the DHO finds the inmate complicit in the violation then a series of restrictions (i.e., loss of commissary, phone, or visiting privileges may be revoked) to include segregation from the general population in the Special Housing Unit (SHU), which is a separate housing unit for those who violate institution rules or are a danger to others in general population.

A *lock-down* occurs when a large-scale disruption of normal operations on the compound takes place. The *compound* is the general population yard of the institution. When the compound is open, the inmates are allowed out of their respective housing units to access programs (i.e., religious services, education, drug treatment), engage in recreational activities, and have relative freedom of movement within the institution. When a lock-down occurs, all

movement stops, the inmates are confined to their individually assigned cells, and investigations take place to determine the cause of the disruption. The lock-down stays in effect until the Warden determines that the institution is safe to resume normal operations on the compound.

A few more definitions are pertinent to this study and the overall achievement of the course of study. *Recidivism* is a term that follows a former inmate, who is rearrested, reconvicted, and reincarcerated. *Re-entry* is the process of leaving a correctional facility and re-entering society. Successful re-entry bears in mind that the former inmate is no longer a burden to society and one who is contributing to the benefit of his or her community. *Transformation*, for the purpose of this course of study, is defined from a biblical perspective. Applying the language found in Romans 12:2, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect,” and 2 Corinthians 3:18, “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit,” transformation is the idea of undergoing a complete metamorphosis from the former self to a new creation in Christ Jesus. A final term, *spiritual leadership*, comes from the Christian perspective, borrowing from Henry Blackaby, where he defines spiritual leadership as leadership, “...based on character and the working of the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit’s guiding, empowering presence, leaders may hold executive positions, but they are not spiritual leaders.”²⁷

²⁷ Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2011), 147.

Limitations

The scope of this thesis project is limited to one out of the 122 federal prisons. Within this singular prison, specifically USP Canaan, PA, the population will consist only of high-security male inmates. Out of the chosen individuals for this project, the education of level will be limited to the General Educational Development (GED) or high school equivalency.

Delimitations

From a population of approximately 1,200 inmates at USP Canaan, the target denizens will have anywhere between a twenty-year to a life sentence. The chosen individuals will have had no incident reports within a period of six months prior to the start of the project. Also, the chosen individuals will have had at least six to nine months of residency at the current institution. Each individual will also have completed at least five years of in-custody service on his record. Each individual will have completed his GED or have a high school equivalency. The level of crime committed will not be a consideration for this project. However, sex offenders will not be deemed eligible for selection. The exclusion of sex offenders will be discussed further in the Intervention Design portion of this dissertation.

Thesis Statement

If the correctional system teaches incarcerated Christian men leadership skills training, then there will be continuity of leadership in the absence of the current ministry leader, which is

this Chaplain. The primary motivating factor surrounds the use of time and energy to pour into the incarcerated men the necessary biblical knowledge and spiritual character that will produce leaders who lead from eternity. The Chaplain will provide spiritual leadership to those who have a permanence behind the prison walls. The provided leadership will be guided for the purpose of autonomy. In the absence of the Chaplain, the continuity of leadership will provide a permanency of what God is doing in the lives of the interned.

Chapter 2

Conceptual Framework

As a part of a comprehensive review of literature, the following will explore the insights of the various academic books and journal articles that explore this writer's presented problem. The compilation of reviewed literature revealed the themes of freedom, forgiveness, transformation, and redemption. The examination of these themes, coupled with the problem, will formulate a plan to meet the need and allow for a rational approach to the project.

Literature Review

Starting with the problem that this thesis is attempting to address, that those who are in the current ministry context are not receiving the opportunity for development into future ministry leaders who lead from an eternal perspective, the review of literature starts with the exploration of the First Step Act. Coming primarily from the *Federal Sentencing Reporter*, the writers focus on the First Step Act and its major provisions. Douglas Berman writes about the reforms proposed and the direction and scope of the federal statutes.²⁸ While Berman is surveying the basics of the First Step Act, David Muhlhausen and Hugh Hurwitz write about the educational programs and vocational technology that will contribute to an inmate's rehabilitation.

The exploration of Berman's observations of the First Step Act shows how this criminal

²⁸ Douglas A. Berman, "A First Look at the First Step Act" *Federal Sentencing Reporter* 32, no. 2 (2019): 63.

justice reform legislation is just a start and that there is much work to be done since this Act will “have a very limited impact on mass incarceration.”²⁹ Further, Bearman surveys the challenges of effective implementation of the Act, to include sentence reduction. Over the past ten years, Bearman has covered a broad range of sentence reforms and guidelines since the passage of the Fair Sentencing Act. These issues include statutory and structural issues, hearings, and guideline application.³⁰ However, despite ten years of reform, the First Step Act only offers “simply one meager stride in a required marathon to effect true change.”³¹ Another part of the Act explored by Muhlhausen looks at the myriad of evidence-based policymaking that will provide opportunities for inmates to participate in and contribute to their re-entry success.

A good portion of the material concerning the First Step Act has a positive outlook, but not everyone who is studying the progress is optimistic. Squaring with the positive note, Derek Cohen points to the Second Chance Act of 2004 with its re-entry and recidivism reduction initiatives as the precursor to the FSA. The Second Chance Act opened opportunities for post-conviction custody to allow a better transition back to society. This re-entry initiative allowed for reforms to “earned time” credits.³² With the opportunity to earn ten days of “earned time” credit for thirty days of recidivism-reducing programming and training, an inmate can gain good time credit for eventual transition to home confinement or a halfway house. Other positive notes in the FSA that Cohen notes are the de-escalation training in dealing with the mentally ill, prohibitive use of juvenile solitary confinement, and the increased use of medication-assisted

²⁹ Berman, “A First Look at the First Step Act,” 64.

³⁰ Douglas A. Berman, “Lots of Advice on Lots of Topics for the New (Post-Booker) U.S. Sentencing Commission” *Federal Sentencing Reporter* 23, no. 4 (04, 2011): 252.

³¹ Bearman, “A First Look at the First Step Act,” 64.

³² Cohen, “Justice, Not Jailbreak,” 1093.

treatment programs.³³ However, while Cohen hails the reform he also sees many shortfalls in its passage. Compared to Berman and Muhlhausen, Cohen does not see the First Step Act as beneficial to the inmate population as it seems. Cohen utilizes his acumen to chronicle the historical progression of the “tough-on-crime” mentality that led to the current legislation. Each of the authors lauds the justice aspect, but it is the path to freedom that Cohen criticizes. Cohen’s main contention involves the available programs for inmates and the effectiveness of the programs to provide a worthwhile way forward for successful re-entry back to society.³⁴ The prison environment bears first witness to a litany of social disorders. Any worker within the confined walls of a correctional facility will experience, according to Viviette Allen, “physical, psychological, and spiritual scars of abuse and neglect.”³⁵ Correctional workers deal with many stressors throughout their day-to-day interactions with inmates who are attempting to manage their many foibles. For inmates living in such an atmosphere, the stresses are even higher. Several areas of importance to an incarcerated person that become apparent in the review of literature are freedom, forgiveness, restoration, and transformation. According to the Bureau of Prisons statistical information, 74.5% of the inmates are between ages 26 to 50.³⁶ Out of this prison population, 16.7% have a prison sentence greater than twenty years with no possibility of parole.³⁷ With 58% of the inmate population that has a prison sentence less than twenty years,

³³ Cohen, “Justice, Not Jailbreak,” 1093.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1086.

³⁵ Viviette L. Allen, “Learned Optimism: A Balm for Social Worker Stress” *Social Work and Christianity* 44, no. 4 (2017): 83.

³⁶ “Statistics: Average Inmate Age,” Federal Bureau of Prisons, accessed June 27, 2020, https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/statistics_inmate_age.jsp.

³⁷ “Statistics: Sentences Imposed,” Federal Bureau of Prisons, accessed June 27, 2020, https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/statistics_inmate_sentences.jsp.

25.8% have an average sentence of 5 to 10 years.³⁸

Freedom

For nearly a third of the inmate population in the Bureau of Prisons, the first and foremost area of concern is freedom. Seán McConville is stark in his assessment when he plainly states, “Imprisonment is loss of freedom.”³⁹ The idea that McConville is pointing to is the isolating penalty that marks an individual with a ‘mass identity’ by removing personal power and self-worth. In a more subtle way, both Elizabeth Haysom and Abdu Murray talk about the freedom that comes from the inside by removing unnecessary restraints. Murray presents a freedom that is an act “in the interest of the greater idea.”⁴⁰ Murray’s take on freedom stems from the idea that freedom is all that people yearn for but can only truly find it and understand it through a right relationship with Jesus Christ. While Murray is coming from a philosophical perspective, Haysom proffers a freedom more specific to the prison setting. The search for freedom, when one loses external freedom, is one of the most significant challenges for an inmate. Haysom postulates a freedom that one can only find in the Holy Spirit.⁴¹ McConville agrees with Haysom with his valuation of understanding the triune God of love who can offer freedom in a relationship with Him. This notion points to a freedom that is more than corporeal, it is freedom from an eternal perspective. This idea is also carried forward by Michael Hallet

³⁸ “Statistics: Sentences Imposed,” Federal Bureau of Prisons, accessed June 27, 2020. https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/statistics_inmate_sentences.jsp.

³⁹ Seán McConville, *The Use of Punishment* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 3.

⁴⁰ Abdu Murray, *Saving Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 73.

⁴¹ Elizabeth Haysom, “Prison's Door to Freedom” *Dialog* 46, no. 2 (2007): 131.

with his notion that freedom found in the worship of God within the confining walls of the prison setting allows an individual to find eternal meaning and truth.⁴² Leslie Newbigin also echoes the necessity to “affirm the gospel as truth” in order to create an environment where freedom is possible.⁴³

Surprisingly, those who advocate in their writings for prison reform have little to say about freedom. R. M. Pinto, who pushes hard for leadership training and re-entry programs for the incarcerated, writes nothing about the importance of freedom in his initiatives.⁴⁴ Similarly, Eric Grommon’s focus on re-entry programming has nothing about the need for either spiritual or physical freedom.⁴⁵ Even with Andrew Denny’s effective prison programming characteristics, none of the characteristics pertain to the notion of freedom and the need for it in the life of a prisoner.⁴⁶

To create an atmosphere for the freedom to worship and to make sense of one’s confinement, there needs to be leadership. Henry Blackaby sheds light on the interplay between leadership, which represents power, and the necessary freedom to grow and fail. A leader is an influencer that can create the conditions for change that will lead to greater freedom. As Blackaby puts it,

⁴² Michael Hallet, *The Angola Prison Seminary Effects of Faith-Based Ministry on Identity Transformation, Desistance, and Rehabilitation*, Vol 1 (New York: Routledge, 2017), 183.

⁴³ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1989), 14.

⁴⁴ Pinto, R. M., R. Rahman, and A. Williams, “Policy Advocacy and Leadership Training for Formerly Incarcerated Women: An Empowerment Evaluation of ReConnect, a Program of the Women in Prison Project, Correctional Association of New York” *Evaluation and Program Planning* 47 (2014): 73.

⁴⁵ Eric L. Grommon, *Prisoner Reentry Programs: Penetrating the Black Box for Better Theory and Practice* (El Paso, TX: LFB Scholarly Pub., 2013), 37.

⁴⁶ Andrew S. Denney, “Prison Chaplains: Perceptions of Criminality, Effective Prison Programming Characteristics, and the Role of Religion in the Desistance from Crime,” *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 43, no. 3 (2018): 696.

“People pay attention to their (the leader’s) opinions.”⁴⁷ Robert Banks’ work adds to Blackaby’s thought that the concept of a leader is one who leads out of love. The idea of being vulnerable allows the leader to share his or her power. A leader who shares out of love builds an inclusive community that encourages accountability.⁴⁸ Like Newbigin, Banks focuses on the “interrelationality” found in the Triune God. Whereas Banks exclusively points to the Trinity, Newbigin sees the relationship play out in the worshipping congregation. Both point to the freedom found in the relationships developed through loving leadership, but one points to the spiritual/theological side while the other points to the spiritual/praxis side.

Forgiveness

Before granting freedom on any level, there has to be forgiveness; whether the forgiveness is a coping strategy to make sense of a skewed life vis-a-vis Robinson-Edwards,⁴⁹ it is the first step for a right relationship with God who forgives, according to Newbigin,⁵⁰ or as Ford Rowan’s understanding of freedom as an ongoing process of accepting responsibility for one’s actions and making amends, forgiveness is essential.⁵¹

For forgiveness to take place, there needs to be change. Rowan writes about how

⁴⁷ Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 227.

⁴⁸ Robert J. Banks and Bernice M. Ledbetter, *Reviewing Leadership: a Christian Evaluation of Current Approaches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 140.

⁴⁹ Shona Robinson-Edwards and Stephanie Kewley, “Faith-Based Intervention: Prison, Prayer, and Perseverance” *Religions* 9, no. 4 (2018): 130.

⁵⁰ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 108.

⁵¹ Ford Rowan, “Forgiveness and Healing in Prison” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 72, no. 3 (2018): 302.

forgiveness does not undo an inmate's misdeeds. Instead, forgiveness allows the inmate to enter a process by which he or she can find healing and begin a transformation in his or her life.

Rowan also points out that the opposite, unforgiveness, "...maintains feelings of resentment, hostility, anger, and hatred."⁵² However, by turning everything over to a forgiving God, and acknowledging one's sin, God is faithful and just to forgive the sin and provide the freedom for transformation and renewal (Is 1:18).⁵³

The forgiveness deemed essential by most of the writers in this student's matrix is not expressed by some who heavily support prison reform and re-entry programming. The same writers who are silent on prisoner freedom (Pinto, Grommon, and Denney) are just as silent on forgiveness as a necessary component to their programs and reforms. Even Charles McDaniel is wordless on forgiveness even though he is pursuing rehabilitation of the American penal system. The taciturnity of these authors flies in the face of Hallet's work inside Angola Prison. Hallet emphasizes the foundation of Christian forgiveness as the sole "meta-narrative" for the rehabilitation of incarcerated men and women.⁵⁴

For the incarcerated person to find the requisite forgiveness for transformation and renewal, a correctional facility needs to have proper spiritual leadership. According to Blackaby, a leader glorifies God and moves people towards His agenda.⁵⁵ R. M. Pinto, on the other hand, points to an empowerment component where knowledge and skill build up the incarcerated to

⁵² Rowan, "Forgiveness and Healing in Prison," 294.

⁵³ Allen E. Jones and Alan Scharn, "Prison and the Bible: Current Practices and Reflections from Isaiah" *International Journal of Public Theology* 10, no. 2 (2016): 223.

⁵⁴ Hallet, *The Angola Prison Seminary Effects of Faith-Based Ministry on Identity Transformation, Desistance, and Rehabilitation*, 10.

⁵⁵ Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 99.

become leaders and advocates.⁵⁶ The leader does not have to be perfect. Abraham Akih lends to the servant leader notion that a Chaplain needs to be within the correctional environment.⁵⁷ A leader who is real is a leader who first finds his or her own forgiveness even when he or she fails in the transformation process. Newbigin supports Blackaby's notion that sees failure as a learning tool, an opportunity to "turn our wrong choices to good ends."⁵⁸ Biblically speaking, Joshua Dubler chronicles the prostitute who cries as Jesus' feet (Luke 7:36-50) as the epitome of forgiveness shown by Jesus.⁵⁹

The notion that the worst of sinners, wrongdoers, criminals, or reprobates can have full access to God by asking for His forgiveness is foreign to the therapeutically minded. Rowan makes clear that the best secular approaches to forgiveness are but "cheap" shadows.⁶⁰ The struggle for forgiveness comes at the point of repentance. In the self-help world of the therapeutic, forgiveness is artificial since there is no true advocate but the self. Dietrich Bonhoeffer refers to this as "Cheap Grace."⁶¹ Hallet piggybacks on Rowan's idea by pointing out the way Western social science overlooks the "stronger foundation" of Christianity's forgiveness over and above the Social Gospel's attempt at self-transformation apart from repentance and forgiveness.⁶² As Akih observes concerning forgiveness from a faith perspective,

⁵⁶ Pinto, Rahman, and Williams, "Policy Advocacy and Leadership Training for Formerly Incarcerated Women," 73.

⁵⁷ Abraham K. Akih and Yolanda Dreyer, "Penal Reform in Africa: The Case of Prison Chaplaincy" *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 73, no. 3 (February 8, 2017): 8.

⁵⁸ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 108.

⁵⁹ Joshua Dubler, *Down in the Chapel: Religious Life in an American Prison* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013), 58.

⁶⁰ Rowan, "Forgiveness and Healing in Prison," 299.

⁶¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 44.

⁶² Hallet, *The Angola Prison Seminary Effects*, 233.

the greater emphasis on biblical forgiveness gives a person, particularly the inmate, a nurturing relationship with a living God.⁶³

Restoration

To live a life of fidelity, specifically with God, a person with a broken relationship needs restoration. Only forgiveness, according to Rowan, can restore communion with God.⁶⁴ In a prison setting, religious conversion presents the opportunity for an inmate to become new and create a new identity. Rowan continues, a religious conversion also provides a framework for forgiveness since it empowers the inmate with a new purpose and insight into a life that was once hollow.⁶⁵ From Akih's writing, it is in the sacred space of a correctional facility where the unselfish sacrifice of God is felt, seen dwelling in the darkness. In the sacred space, the Chaplain helps the inmate find the spiritual means for healing and restoration.⁶⁶ Joaquín Algranti observes that in the environs of the sacred space, "refugees" tend to find the freedom to gain leadership opportunities protected from the normal suspicions of the regular correctional confines.⁶⁷ In the sacred space, God's compassion flows into the path of restoration, a restoration for which Christ died.

Through the course of the history of the prison system, the Chaplain has mostly been the

⁶³ Akih and Dreyer, "Penal Reform in Africa," 7.

⁶⁴ Rowan, "Forgiveness and Healing in Prison," 299.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 294.

⁶⁶ Akih and Dreyer, "Penal Reform in Africa," 5.

⁶⁷ Joaquín Algranti, "The Making of an Evangelical Prison: Study on Neo-Pentecostalism and its Leadership Processes in the Argentine Penitentiary System" *Social Compass* 65, no. 5 (2018): 558.

one to lead the way through the path of restoration. From Norval Morris' writings, the Quakers, during the early years of prison reform, relied on personal contact to produce a consciousness of true religious principles. They believe that the social relationships established between the benevolent and the convict produced restoration.⁶⁸ Akih points out that the Chaplain's leadership is the foremost means of inculcating religious truth found in the gospel through a "variety of traditions, cultural backgrounds, and understandings of God."⁶⁹ An optimism built through the Chaplain provides a better "correctional" resource than the means of the correctional institution. The religious encounter provided by the Chaplain can influence the restorative process of the incarcerated and transform overall prison life and culture.⁷⁰ Unfortunately, as Denney notes, the administrative role of the Chaplain has increased over time, taking away from his or her primary responsibility of creating ways for inmates to find forgiveness, repentance, and restoration and towards ensuring that there are no violations of an inmate's religious rights.⁷¹

The religious and spiritual dimensions of inmate spirituality can be complex. Hence, the need for spiritual leadership through the Chaplain. Jennifer Graber writes that no other entity of a correctional facility will point out human sinfulness, Christ's atoning sacrifice, and the authority of God's word to facilitate the need for forgiveness and restoration.⁷² As Blackaby notes, leadership is more about who a person is and not only what a person does.⁷³ Chaplains, as

⁶⁸ Norval Morris and David J. Rothman, *The Oxford History of the Prison: The Practice of Punishment in Western Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 87.

⁶⁹ Akih and Dreyer, "Penal Reform in Africa," 4.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷¹ Denney, "Prison Chaplains," 696.

⁷² Jennifer Graber, *The Furnace of Affliction Prisons and Religion in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 22.

⁷³ Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 39.

spiritual leaders, contribute “diverse competencies” to the correctional system.⁷⁴ The ministry of presence that a Chaplain offers provides leadership and discipline that contribute to a redeemed and restored life. Charles McDaniel pulls from a study that demonstrates lowered crime and recidivism rates when inmates are involved with “moderate to high levels” of religious programming.⁷⁵ Dubler’s take is that American religious liberty opens up the door for inmate freedom through belief in a God who forgives and restores what the locusts have eaten.⁷⁶ Only four of the authors in this student’s matrix source the topic of restoration. As such, the material presented is minimal. However, when coupled with religious restoration, the theme is more apparent. The more significant idea in restoration, which is deemed necessary in the life of an inmate, is that it provides reconciliation with God.⁷⁷ The restoration with God and living in fidelity with Him requires a religious engagement, one in which the Chaplain plays a role in arranging.⁷⁸

Transformation

Concerning the Holy Spirit, Jesus says, “And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment” (Jn. 16:8, ESV). The need for repentance and forgiveness will provide the means for one to see transformation. Michael Cooper points out that in the same way that Jesus communicates high standards for His disciples to follow, His

⁷⁴ Akih and Dreyer, “Penal Reform in Africa,” 8.

⁷⁵ Charles McDaniel, Derek H. Davis, and Sabrina A. Neff, “Charitable Choice and Prison Ministries: Constitutional and Institutional Challenges to Rehabilitating the American Penal System” *Criminal Justice Policy Review* 16, no. 2 (2005): 167.

⁷⁶ Dubler, *Down in the Chapel*, 97.

⁷⁷ Rowan, “Forgiveness and Healing in Prison,” 299.

⁷⁸ Akih and Dreyer, “Penal Reform in Africa,” 7.

undershepherds (i.e., Chaplains) also need to communicate high expectations to be transformational leaders.⁷⁹ Real transformation within the prison walls, according to Akih, can come when the Chaplain involves the inmate population in patterns of thinking that directs the transformation of their lifestyle.⁸⁰ The change in lifestyle, however, does not come on a whim. A transformational leader finds the areas of improvement that each disciple needs and pays particular attention to the person and his or her individual need. Pinto's work finds that empowering inmate participants in participatory events gives them strength and support in their re-entry efforts.⁸¹ Hallet, on the other hand, points to religious faith in a prison context that can usually mask real spiritual transformation. In other words, inmates tend to hide behind religion for many reasons. Hallet writes about the inmates who embark on an authentic path of redemption, and not based on "false incentives" through one's proclamation of faith, will experience a rewarding personal transformation.⁸²

Hallet's work finds that for an inmate to realize true freedom, and shed the "stigmatized label of offender," the transformation needs to be a personal exile from the past.⁸³ The Apostle Paul's conversion in Acts 9 is a prime example of such a transformation. Rowan uses Paul's transformation as an antidote for the person to remember what he or she did in the past, but to not focus on his or her old self.⁸⁴ A Chaplain who believes in the inmate's reformation process

⁷⁹ Michael Cooper, "The Transformational Leadership of the Apostle Paul: A Contextual and Biblical Leadership for Contemporary Ministry" *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry* 2, no. 1 (2005): 57.

⁸⁰ Akih and Dreyer, "Penal Reform in Africa," 5.

⁸¹ Pinto, Rahman, and Williams, "Policy Advocacy and Leadership Training for Formerly Incarcerated Women," 76.

⁸² Hallet, *The Angola Prison Seminary Effects of Faith-Based Ministry on Identity Transformation*, 131.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Rowan, "Forgiveness and Healing in Prison," 303.

is powerful. As Newbigin points out, transformation in a person's life is transforming the self-centeredness of the human experience into a God-centeredness. The reality that one finds in the transformation process is what the Apostle Paul teaches when he writes, "be transformed by the renewal of your mind," (Rom. 12:2, ESV).⁸⁵ However, the power of the transformative process of the spiritual leadership of the Chaplain comes only from the Word of God. Haysom posits that the stale prison environment needs the freshness of the living Word of God to speak into and transform a person's life.⁸⁶ Grommon's study brings out the difficulty of cognitive change in confinement, which is only as successful as the individual's willingness to turn towards transformation.⁸⁷ Haysom further notes that if the transformation process were through self, people would not find their way to prison. Be that as it may, the Chaplain in the prison environment, according to Haysom's estimation, needs to apply the transforming power of God's Word in his or her prison theology to be the example that inmates need to see. Just as important, is for inmates to see that God works through the Chaplain's frailties, faults, and imperfections.⁸⁸

All but four of the authors in this student's matrix made significant contributions to the subject of transformation. While the transformation theme is not explicitly dealt with by each author, some areas imply the idea. For instance, Morris and Rothman chronicle the history of prison systems. In one epoch of their timeline, they speak of the power of the state and public execution. The state made many attempts to legitimize their sovereignty by enlisting meaning through religious authority.⁸⁹ Likewise, Graber recounts historical prison practices where

⁸⁵ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 129.

⁸⁶ Haysom, "Prison's Door to Freedom," 136.

⁸⁷ Grommon, *Prisoner Reentry Programs*, 149.

⁸⁸ Haysom, "Prison's Door to Freedom," 132.

⁸⁹ Morris and Rothman, *The Oxford History of the Prison*, 84.

inmates are restrained and forced to hear the gospel message.⁹⁰ Again, an attempt to transform the prisoner under the authority of the state. The transformation of the prison population, and society in general, sought by the state is much different than what modern reforms are attempting to accomplish today.

The transforming power of the Scriptures, as cited above in Haysom's work, is not rehabilitation. Dubler notes that the efforts of rehabilitation, whether by state-sponsored forces or therapeutic programs, merely focus on external behavior.⁹¹ Blackaby, on the other hand, uses the life of Josiah, the righteous king of Israel, to show that even his efforts and reforms could not transform the culture of his day.⁹² Only through the heart transformation, per Denny, of a freely accepted truth of the gospel can a prisoner "put on" a new identity.⁹³ Newbigin identifies the need of each individual to not just see conversion as an act of contrition, but a transformation of heart, mind, and soul. A transformation that incorporates the renewing of the mind that is no longer conformed to this world and culture is the aim.⁹⁴

The importance placed on freedom, forgiveness, restoration, and transformation in an inmate's life is crucial in understanding the need of incarcerated men and women within the walls of a correctional facility. The Chaplain is the spiritual leader tasked, both by prison leadership and by God, to inculcate within the sacred space of the chapel a spiritual realm where an inmate can find his or her way back to society. For those confined for the totality of their life, there needs to be the hope that God has not forgotten about them. The ministry of presence that

⁹⁰ Graber, *The Furnace of Affliction Prisons and Religion in Antebellum America*, 125.

⁹¹ Dubler, *Down in the Chapel*, 49.

⁹² Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 183.

⁹³ Denney, "Prison Chaplains," 711.

⁹⁴ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 34.

the Chaplain provides comes from a proper biblical theology and a spiritual leadership that brings freedom to the captive, forgiveness to the sinner, restoration to the weary, and transformation to the soul.

Theological Foundations

The denouement of Jesus' final teaching to his disciples on the Mount of Olives culminates when Jesus answers the question "Lord, when did we see you...?" (Matt. 25:37, ESV), and He answered them with, "as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me" (Matt. 25:40, ESV). The "least of these," ἐλαχίστων, literally translates to the least important one, unimportant, insignificant, inferior.⁹⁵ In other words, Jesus is teaching His disciples two things: first, everyone is important and second, God forgets no one. Whether one is hungry, thirsty, estranged, naked, or imprisoned, that person is important. Brad Young writes it this way, "Practical religion becomes the ultimate concern during the end-times judgment. A person's spirituality is measured in terms of humanitarian relief efforts and societal reform."⁹⁶ What Jesus is doing is preparing His disciples for His death, resurrection, and ascension, as well as what they need to be doing while He is away.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, Baker's Greek New Testament Library (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), BibleWorks, v.10.

⁹⁶ Brad H. Young, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 296.

⁹⁷ Richard P. Carlson, "Matthew 25:13–46," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 69, no. 3 (2015): 344.

Least of These

Jesus presents His judgment on those who do or do not commit to servanthood at the end of His Olivet Discourse (cf., Matthew 24-25; Mark 13; Luke 21). In the Gospel of Matthew, the Olivet Discourse precedes some lively debate with the Jewish leaders, a temple cleansing, and Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. Within the discourse, several parables describe a turbulent future and immediate actions that Jesus' disciples should be involved with as servants. A good servant, according to Jesus, is one whom "his master will find so doing when he comes" (Mat 24:46, ESV). Doing what? Doing what Jesus exhorts his disciples to do throughout the three and a half years He spent teaching them as is outlined in Matthew 25:35-36. The question and answer exchange between Jesus and His disciples includes a response to, "I was in prison and you came to me" (Matt. 25:36, ESV). Here Jesus is reminding His disciples that even though there are bad people in the world, and some of those people need separation from the rest of society, they are not to be wholesale ignored or forgotten.

The book of Genesis records the first criminal activity in the Bible. When Cain murdered Abel, God banished Cain from the rest of society and placed a mark on him as an identifier (Gen 4:12-16). Gordon Wenham's commentary on Genesis notes, "'To be driven away from the land' (cf. v 14) is to have all relationships, particularly with the family, broken. Moreover, it is to have one's relationship with the Lord broken."⁹⁸ While Cain was a murderer and received punishment from God, he was not forgotten about by God. Instead, Cain was able to live out his life in a city outside of the norm of societal bounds and was able to start his own family later. Again, Wenham observes, "As the clothing given to Adam and Eve after the fall served to remind them of their sin and God's mercy, so does the mark placed on Cain."⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 108.

Another prisoner that God did not forget about was Joseph. Genesis 39 chronicles the events that led to Joseph's incarceration. Although Potiphar imprisoned Joseph due to false testimony from Potiphar's wife (Gen 39:17-18), Joseph found mercy from the Lord and had "favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison," (Gen 39:21). This mercy led to further favor when Joseph's fellow prisoners had dreams, and then Pharaoh himself had a dream. The result of Joseph being empowered by God to understand Pharaoh's dream is that Joseph became second in command over the land of Egypt. Victor Hamilton writes, "Yahweh was a constant presence with Joseph before he was accused, and after he was jailed. The result of that presence was that Yahweh *brought* success or prospered every undertaking of Joseph."¹⁰⁰ Not only did God remember Joseph in prison, but God did not forget about Israel in their time of need. Bruce Waltke writes it this way, "Joseph arises from a succession of greater, unjust falls to higher advancements because of God's sovereign grace overriding his misadventures in the hands of people."¹⁰¹

Daniel is a further example of a prisoner who was not forgotten by God. Just as Joseph was in a foreign land, Daniel also had to navigate his walk with God while under pagan rule. Although Daniel endured the difficulties of at least five different kings, he faced a particular challenge with the administration of Darius the Great, King of Persia. In the sixth chapter of the book of Daniel, there is an account where a decree went out that stated, "that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king [Darius], shall be cast into the den of lions," (Dan. 6:7, ESV).

⁹⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 110.

¹⁰⁰ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990), 472.

¹⁰¹ Bruce K. Waltke, and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 522.

When Daniel heard the decree, “He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously,” (Dan. 6:10, ESV). As a result, Darius’s administration had Daniel thrown into a den of lions. After a night in the lion’s den, Darius, the king, personally came in the morning to bring Daniel out of the den. When the king inquired as to how Daniel survived the lions, Daniel answered, “My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm,” (Dan. 6:22, ESV). John Goldingay reminds his readers that, “God does grant a victory of life over death, of innocence over guilt, of justice over enmity, of hope over fear.”¹⁰² God did not forget Daniel.

The God in the Old Testament is the same God in the New Testament. The Apostle Luke records the events of the Apostle Peter’s imprisonment in the twelfth chapter of the book of Acts. As a part of the persecution of Christians, Herod seized Peter and put him in prison. Although Herod imprisoned Peter for serving God, “but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church,” (Acts 12:5, ESV). As with the other saints, God did not forget about Peter. Instead, an angel of the Lord came to Peter that night, roused him up, and escorted him out of the Prison (cf. Acts 12:7-9).

Similarly, the Apostles Paul and Silas found themselves in prison for doing God’s work. On the cusp of taking the Gospel message into Europe, in the city of Philippi, Paul and Silas contended with a demonic slave girl who was harassing “servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation,” (Acts 16:17, ESV). When Paul cast the demon out of the slave girl, her masters brought both servants up on charges, beat them, and secured them “into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks,” (Acts 16:24, ESV). However, in the

¹⁰² John Goldingay, *Daniel*, Vol. 30 (Word Books, Dallas, TX, 1989), 133.

midnight hour, God struck with a great earthquake, opened the doors, loosed the bonds, and made way for the men to be free. Not only did God not forget Paul and Silas, but He also remembered the Philippian jailer and his family that they may be saved. As F. F. Bruce writes it, “And perhaps Paul and Silas reckoned the rods and the stocks well worth enduring for the joy that they shared in the jailer’s house.”¹⁰³

Not everyone in the Bible who finds himself in prison experiences victory and freedom. Towards the end of the book of Acts, the Apostle Paul is once again arrested. This time though, Paul remains under house arrest while awaiting a hearing before Caesar. During this waiting period, while imprisoned, Paul continues the work that God called him to accomplish. In prison, Paul writes four letters to the churches in Ephesus, Philippi, and Colossae, and a personal letter to Philemon. Along with the letters, Paul continued proclaiming the Gospel message by “proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance,” (Acts 28:31, ESV). Even though Paul spent his latter ministry years in prison, God did not forget about him and continued to use him for His glory.

A final prisoner to note is the Apostle John, imprisoned on the island of Patmos. Patmos is located off the coast of modern-day Turkey, which was formally known as Asia Minor. According to Pliny the Elder, Patmos is reckoned as one of the Sporades and is a rocky and bare island in a section of the Aegean Sea known as the Icarian Sea.¹⁰⁴ Patmos is about twenty miles south of Samos, and about twenty-four miles off the coast of Asia Minor, near Miletus. Because of its isolation, the island was used, under the Roman empire, as a place of banishment. However, Joseph’s realization through his terrible ordeal, “you meant evil against me, but God

¹⁰³ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 318.

¹⁰⁴ Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, 4:23.

meant it for good,” (Gen. 50:20, ESV), can also be realized in John’s situation. Patmos is strategically located to fan out the letter to the seven churches in Asia Minor (Revelation 2:1-3:22). Ultimately, Jesus is using John’s exile to reach needy congregations. God does not forget John. Instead, He uses him to write the book of Revelation, the last adieu to the Church as the fledgling arbiters of the Gospel to carry out Jesus’ commission and await His second advent.

Eternity

One question that every person needs to answer for himself or herself is: why does God care about me? A reader of God’s word finds the simple answer to this question in the writings of Qoheleth. The writer of Ecclesiastes states, “I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end,” (Eccl 3:10-11, ESV). In reading this scripture, a discerning reader must now understand “eternity,” or עולם (olam). Defined simply as a long time, the Hebrew idea aligns more specifically with constancy.¹⁰⁵

Eternity is a difficult concept to grasp. The main reason the idea of eternity is vexing is because humans are finite beings. A person cannot place eternity into a box, a computer program, or under a microscope to study, cipher, or dissect in order to make sense of the concept. Even in the philosophical realm, the best minds posit their metaphysical hypotheses on eternity as “a permanent now.”¹⁰⁶ Every other realm of thought in academe relegates eternity to a

¹⁰⁵ William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Based upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner* (Leiden: Brill, 2000): BibleWorks, v.10.

symbol. The most ancient symbol for eternity is the ouroboros, which is depicted as a serpent eating its own tail. This symbol dates back to the 14th century BC as rendered in the Egyptian Enigmatic Book of the Netherworld.¹⁰⁷ Even in today's use, scientists such as Martin John Rees, a British cosmologist and astrophysicist, use the ouroboros to describe "the intimate links between the microworld and the cosmos."¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, with all of this high powered thinking, the idea of eternity is elusive.

The Hebrew concept of eternity is wrapped up in this important attribute of God, specifically in the name of God, אֵל עוֹלָם (El Olam - God Everlasting). The Hebrew word Olam with regards to God portrays the notion of "time beyond this temporal sphere."¹⁰⁹ Theologically speaking, Millard Erickson points out that God's eternal attribute represents "the relationship of his unlimited nature to the finite objects of the creation."¹¹⁰ Within this name of God, there are several implications. One implication is that El Olam is the God of history. While most religious traditions view time and eternity as cyclical and repeating, the Judeo-Christian concept of time and eternity is linear, as expressed by Solomon, "There is an appointed time for everything" (Eccl 3:1 ESV). God's creation and human history has a beginning and will have an end, which begs the questions: What was before? and, what is after?

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Hobbes, *Considerations upon the Reputation, Loyalty, Manners, & Religion of Thomas Hobbes of Malmsbury* (London: Printed for William Crooke, 1680), 50.

¹⁰⁷ Erik Hornung, *The Ancient Egyptian Books of the Afterlife* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), 38.

¹⁰⁸ Martin Rees, *Just Six Numbers: The Deep Forces That Shape The Universe* (London: Basic Books, 1999), 161.

¹⁰⁹ Warren Baker and Eugene E. Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003), 814.

¹¹⁰ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1996), 267.

The Apostle John records Jesus' words in his gospel, "For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself," (Jn. 5:26, ESV). This verse is essentially declaring that God is alive. As such, everything that God does exemplifies life. In his attempt to describe the God of life, Wayne Grudem writes, "God has no beginning, end, or succession of moments in his own being, and he sees all time equally vividly, yet God sees events in time and acts in time."¹¹¹ The view of a linear timeline within eternity lends to another implication that El Olam is self-existent. A God who is not reliant on anyone or anything to exist is a God who is transcendent. Transcendence with respect to God shows His relationship with the world as separate and independent of the created cosmos. A transcendent God who is not bound by time or space, but instead is one who is self-sustaining is a God who never tires, is inscrutable, and is everlasting (Is 40:28, ESV). This everlasting God is a God who is reliable and trustworthy, and thus a God who can sustain the ideas of freedom, forgiveness, restoration, and transformation. As expressed by Moses, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God," (Ps 90:2, ESV).

Freedom

In his address to the Areopagus, the Apostle Paul gave a solid discourse about the aseity of God to the "Men of Athens" (Acts 17:22-31). As the creator, possessor, and sustainer of the heavens and the earth, God does not need anything from the material world. The God of the Bible is not bound by time and space. Instead, "God [is] absolutely independent and self-existent by nature, and, consequently, all-perfect without any possibility of change from

¹¹¹ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 168.

all eternity.”¹¹² A God who is without limit is a God who is also free. As such, God graciously passes this freedom on to His creation.

God demonstrates freedom with His opening salvo in creation when He says, “Let there be light,” (Gen 1:3, ESV). Through the unfolding of the creation account, everything that God creates has the freedom to expand, flow, and find its place in the universe. On the sixth day, when God created man and woman, He blessed them to “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth,” (Gen 1:28, ESV). God’s sense of freedom for His creation flows from His nature and removes the need for man and woman to establish one’s own self-worth or security.

The freedom that God offers is not freedom for humanity to do as he or she pleases. Instead, freedom in God’s economy is the allowance for a person to freely do as he or she ought. As Alvin Plantinga states it, “If a person is free with respect to a given action, then he is free to perform that action and free to refrain...It is within his power, at the time in question, to perform the action, and within his power to refrain.”¹¹³ One finds the prime example of this freedom in the Garden of Eden. God gave Adam and Eve freedom to eat of any tree in the garden, “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat,” (Gen 2:17, ESV). In this epoch, God gave Adam and Eve the freedom to do right or violate His perfect will.

An inmate’s idea of freedom parallels much of what the prophet Jeremiah chronicles in his writings concerning Israel and her captors. God gives Jeremiah a word concerning being in captivity in Babylon for seventy years (Jeremiah 25). The reason for the captivity was due to

¹¹² George Sauvage, “Aseity,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907).

¹¹³ Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 166.

Israel's being disobedient to God. As the prophet Jeremiah writes it, "Turn now, every one of you, from his evil way and evil deeds, and dwell upon the land that the LORD has given to you and your fathers from of old and forever," (Jer. 25:5, ESV). Walter Kaiser explains it this way, "The call is for a reversal in their general lifestyle and from the general consensus of what 'practices' were acceptable and unacceptable."¹¹⁴ As a result, Israel is now under the control of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. However, despite the circumstances for the captivity, God promises freedom to return to the land of Israel at the end of the seventy years. In the same way, prison is about time.¹¹⁵ When liberty and freedom are revoked, captivity is invoked. This captivity will endure until freedom is cherished once again.

Forgiveness

One finds the lynchpin of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew's Gospel account, where he records Jesus saying, "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you," (Matt. 6:14, ESV). Jesus says this to emphasize the part of the prayer where He says, "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors," (Matt. 6:12, ESV). The idea that Jesus is stressing is that we are all in debt to God due to our sin. Only by asking for forgiveness will there be "grace commensurate with one's obedience in forgiving."¹¹⁶ On forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer, John Stott writes, "Forgiveness is an indispensable to the life

¹¹⁴ Walter C. Kaiser, and Tiberius Rata, *Walking the Ancient Paths: A Commentary on Jeremiah* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 221.

¹¹⁵ Tany Erzen, *God in Captivity: The Rise of Faith-Based Prison Ministries in the Age of Mass Incarceration* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2017), 2.

¹¹⁶ Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 223.

and health of the soul as food is for the body.”¹¹⁷ Tucked in between asking for daily bread and deliverance from evil, Jesus makes an implicit statement to His disciples that the only way forward in life is through forgiveness.

Although the prayer for forgiveness is a constant within the Lord’s Prayer, which is understood to be a regular and ongoing prayer, one offers prayer for forgiveness because God is a forgiving God. Going back to the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve sinned, God called out the offending pair to disclose their self-made covering for their nakedness. However, when God intervened in their affair, He covers them adequately and completely. In other words, when there is repentance, God wholly blots out the transgression and restores life. A psalm of David puts it this way, “For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us,” (Ps. 103:11-12, ESV).

The love that God has for His children is so great, He completed in one act what it would take any human being an eternity to do. When Jesus exclaimed, “It is finished” from the cross, He puts an end to the separation between humanity and God due to sin. The self-sacrifice of Jesus displays the love He has for humanity, and He expects each of His followers to display the same love through forgiveness. Demonstrating this truth, the Apostle Matthew records a conversation between the Apostle Peter and Jesus. Peter asked Jesus, “‘Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times,’” (Matt. 18:21-22, ESV).

Forgiveness is essential in the rehabilitation of the incarcerated. An inmate who is genuinely repentant of his or her misgivings must have a sense that society accepts his or her

¹¹⁷ John R. W. Stott, *Christian Counter Culture: The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), 149.

apology. This repentance is not just some exercise of public contrition. Instead, the penitence must first be received by an eternal source. By understanding what is truly right and wrong, a person will have a true sense of his or her offense. While the law that incarcerated the individual may define the offense, the inmate pays his or her debt to society by doing time. However, when the offending individual understands his or her standing before an eternal God, true repentance can take place, genuine forgiveness can be garnered, and true reformation can be obtained.

Restoration

In the Apostle Paul's final greeting and benediction to the Corinthian church, he writes, "Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you," (2 Cor. 13:11, ESV). The Greek word for restore, *καταρτίζω*, can be translated to put in order, restore to a former condition, mend, or repair.¹¹⁸ Restoration has been God's primary objective since Genesis 3. When God clothed Adam and Eve with animal skins, He began a process that culminated in the promise, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel," (Gen. 3:15, ESV). In his writing on restoration, Origen believed that there would be a universal restoration after a sufficient time of punishment where there will be enough of purification of humanity to have fellowship with God throughout the rest of eternity.¹¹⁹ While fellowship with God for eternity is possible, by humanity's efforts, it would take an eternity for any one person to accomplish this type of

¹¹⁸ Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, Baker's Greek New Testament Library (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), BibleWorks, v.10.

¹¹⁹ Origen, *De Principiis*, 1. 6. 2.

restoration. The restoration of fellowship with God is through Christ alone. In the Apostle John's Gospel, he records Jesus saying, "...apart from me you can do nothing," (Jn. 15:5, ESV). It is only through the restorative power of Jesus Christ through His atoning death on the cross that makes it possible for a person to have a right relationship with God.

Thankfully, the restoration God offers is immediate, just like the forgiveness of sins. God longs for the restoration of his creation. The restoration of God's creation that was marred due to Adam and Eve's disobedience is the same restoration offered to the convict in the prison cell. The Apostle Paul writes it this way to the Colossian church, "and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven," (Col. 1:20, NAS). God desires all tribes and peoples and languages to know His restorative power. So important is restoration to God, He makes it one of the earmarks of the Church. In writing to the Galatian church, Paul the Apostle entreats the believers with this, "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness," (Gal. 6:1, ESV). The restorative process of the soul is necessary for a person to understand their own worth and the weight of that worth in the light of eternity.

Transformation

The Apostle Matthew records an account in his Gospel where Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up to a high mountain and shows them His true nature. Also known as the transfiguration of Jesus (Matt. 17:1-2), the Greek word used in this passage, μεταμορφώθη (metamorphon), can also be translated as transformed.¹²⁰ The scene looked like this, "And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as

¹²⁰ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, *Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, BibleWorks, v.10.

light,” (Matt. 17:2, ESV). The change in Jesus was so striking and complete that the Apostle Peter wanted to make tabernacles, but instead found himself with the other two disciples “on their faces and were greatly afraid,” (Matt. 17:6, NKJ).

The transformation that Jesus undergoes reveals His divine glory. In much the same way, God wants to transform His children with the same effect. In his epistle to the Philippian church, the Apostle Paul writes, “who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself,” (Phil. 3:21, ESV). Paul writes similarly to the Corinthian church, where he reminds his readers, “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit,” (2 Cor. 3:18, ESV).

George Guthrie explains this verse this way,

Here he means primarily an open relationship with God once the Lord has removed the “veil” of unbelief. The thought conceptually parallels the idea of the “openness” (παρρησία, *parrēsia*) of Paul in his ministry. A veil restricts neither his life nor his ministry, and the gospel he proclaims liberates new-covenant believers through the power of the Spirit.¹²¹

This transformation comes about due to the eternal perspective that “our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil. 3:20, ESV).

For the prisoner in the confines of a correctional facility, the one recurring thought that continues to rattle his soul is the contemplation of finding a new way forward. If anything, the captive knows that he or she no longer wishes to be in captivity. Thus, whether for good or for evil, an inmate will devise a way forward to loosen the bonds and find freedom. However, without submission to the transcendent God and making Him imminent in his or her life, there will never be a positive change. The transformation of understanding, thinking, and living can

¹²¹ George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 226.

only come about as the Apostle Paul writes it to the Roman church, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect,” (Rom. 12:2, ESV). As Richard Longenecker puts it:

This remarkable “metamorphosis” that Paul speaks of here is not some pattern of external decorum or form of outward expression that believers in Jesus are to accept by way of a makeover of their lives and practices. Rather, it is a complete inner change of thought, will, and desires that Christians are to allow God by means of the ministry of his Holy Spirit to bring about in their lives, resulting in a recognizable external change of actions and conduct.¹²²

Only through this metamorphosis of the heart and mind can anyone, prisoner or otherwise, truly see the glory of God and not be ashamed.

Theoretical Foundations

Two of the seminal prison reform programs that have produced substantial results are the Angola Prison Seminary in the Louisiana State Penitentiary and Prison Fellowship. There are currently 17 states that have replicated the prison seminary idea. Prison Fellowship, on the other hand, is the largest non-profit Christian reform movement for inmates worldwide. Prison Fellowship is found in state prisons and local jails in all 50 states, which also includes the Federal Prison System.

Stretching all of the way back to the Christianization of the Roman Empire, the emperors recognized the spiritual authority of the bishops who “in the name of God,” determined the offense and appropriate penance for the correction and improvement of the offender.¹²³ Penance

¹²² Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 854.

is the Roman Catholic Medieval Latin term for an apology for a mistake that is either voluntary or ordered by someone else, usually a Catholic Bishop or Cardinal. The term penance lends to the concept of the penitentiary. In the early years of the United States, the Pennsylvania system of incarceration was one of isolation, obedience, and labor. The idea of solitary confinement is when an inmate is left alone with the Bible and his thoughts to bring about his repentance and reform. The creation of Eastern State Penitentiary was the world's first look into such a system of rehabilitation.¹²⁴

The theories of criminality and incarceration include such terms as rehabilitation, deterrence, incapacitation, and retribution. The idea of most Western correctional facilities is for the purpose of rehabilitation. The theory of rehabilitation revolves around change. Whether the change is behavioral, psychological, or spiritual, the point is to create a change in the offender and turn them into law-abiding members of society upon release. The theory of deterrence enacts punitive penalties with the hope of creating an unpleasant environment that deters the offending individual from committing another crime and returning to the disagreeable conditions. The incapacitation theory is one that basically locks an individual away from society and warehouses offenders to keep society safe from the individual's malevolent character. The final theory, the theory of retribution, is the idea of punishing an individual for his or her crime until he or she has fully paid back society for the wrongs committed.

Of these theories, the rehabilitation theory lines up most closely with the Christian ideal and ethic. Both, Angola's prison seminary program and Prison Fellowship operate under the rehabilitation theory. Angola's program is an "immersive" one that requires intense and

¹²³ Morris and Rothman, *The Oxford History of the Prison*, 25.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 107.

dogmatically structured religious instruction.¹²⁵ Prison Fellowship is an organization that brings about reform in a person's life through local community and peer-led support that includes work-release programs and halfway houses to create an avenue for re-entry back into society.¹²⁶ These leading programs in the American penal system produce great fruit, but they do not meet the needs of every prisoner who is seeking change. The 16.7% of the inmate population who have a prison sentence greater than twenty years with no possibility of parole is still left out; they are the "least of these." Yes, the programs do have something to offer this minority group, but each of the programs has a focus on re-entry back to society and little to offer for someone who is perpetually confined to the concrete, steel, and permanent fortification that inmates call life.

This writer is coming from the perspective of leading from eternity. The eternal perspective is the healthiest way for a person to *do time*. Whether the time one is serving is behind a concertina fence or an oak desk, an individual needs to know his or her worth and how to posit that worth into something meaningful. The rehabilitation of an inmate starts with freedom. The ideal of freedom, though, is not just from physical captivity but also spiritual, emotional, and mental bondage. Starting with an eternal God who has an eternal plan for each of His children provides the impetus for change and reform, which starts with the transformation of the heart.

Within the Federal Prison System, there are two faith-based re-entry programs offered to inmates through the Religious Services Branch. The first program is the Life Connections Program. The Life Connections Program (LCP) is an eighteen-month long program that is

¹²⁵ Michael Hallett, Bryon Johnson, Joshua Hays, Sung Joon Jang, and Grant Duwe, "U.S. Prison Seminaries: Structural Charity, Religious Establishment, and Neoliberal Corrections," *The Prison Journal* 99, no. 2 (2019): 159.

¹²⁶ Kendrick Oliver, "'Hi, Fellas. Come on in.' Norman Carlson, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and the Rise of Prison Fellowship," *Journal of Church and State* 55, no. 4 (2013): 748.

offered in select institutions expressly set up to accommodate the program. The goal of the program is to develop an inmate's personal and spiritual transformation, and foster the learning of practical life skills for "successful transition back to the community."¹²⁷ At these designated institutions, there is an LCP Chaplain and volunteer corps that lead the inmates through their eighteen-month cohort. The second program is the Threshold program.

The Life Connections Program is open to all inmates, no matter their faith tradition, even to inmates with no faith adherence. The program holds to a base of general spirituality, and builds on secular and interfaith components designed to foster restoration with "family, community, self and God."¹²⁸ The Life Connections Program is comprised of three phases that are six-months in duration. The first phase is the general spirituality phase, and its primary goal is to bring a group of inmates from various faith and worldview backgrounds together to encourage them to coexist. The second phase is faith specific. This phase sees the inmates break down into their faith groups and find their better way forward according to the precepts of their faith tradition. The third phase pairs individual inmates up with mentors who are accessible at the inmate's release destination. This phase begins fostering the transition from incarceration back into society.

Inmates who are interested in LCP may apply for the program through their institution's Chaplain. Once the Chaplain receives a written request, he or she will check the inmate's records to see if the applicant meets the program selection criteria. Of the criteria, the inmate must be between 24 to 36 months of his or her projected release date, must have a GED or

¹²⁷ U.S. Department of Justice: Bureau of Prisons Operations Memorandum 003-2013, *Life Connections Program* (3/2013), 2.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

equivalent, and must have met ESL obligations.¹²⁹ If the inmate clears these basic criteria, he or she will begin a three-session orientation process that will give a brief overview of the program, provide a general spirituality survey, and culminate in an oral interview with the Chaplain. With the completion of the orientation process, the Chaplain will submit the necessary paperwork to the Life Connections Program Chaplain in the Central Office in Washington, D.C., for review and possible designation to the LCP site institution.

The second program, Threshold, is a compressed version of the above-described Life Connections Program. Threshold is a non-residential program that incorporates general spirituality and values-based instruction that is usually taught by the Chaplain or a trained religious volunteer at an inmate's designated institution. The Threshold program covers the same material as LCP, but the duration of the program is usually truncated to six to nine months. The primary purpose of the Threshold program is to provide the faith-based re-entry material of LCP to inmates who are not otherwise eligible for the residential program.

The Life Connection Program and the Threshold program both offer faith-based re-entry programming to the inmate population. Each of the programs help incarcerated individuals find a better way forward to a higher rate of successful re-entry back into society and less recidivism. The average total percentage of recidivism is steady at 40%.¹³⁰ On the other hand, inmates who participate in faith-based re-entry programs usually incur a 75 to 85% success rate of not recidivating and making a positive return back to society.¹³¹ However, in the same vein as the

¹²⁹ U.S. Department of Justice: Bureau of Prisons Operations Memorandum 003-2013, *Life Connections Program* (3/2013), 3.

¹³⁰ Janeen Buck Willison, Diana Brazzell, and KiDeuk Kim, *Faith-Based Corrections and Reentry Programs: Advancing a Conceptual Framework for Research and Evaluation* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center, 2010), 9.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

Angola Prison Seminary and Prison Fellowship, these BOP programs leave out the incarcerated individual who will not have the immediate opportunity to re-enter into society.

This thesis project will formulate a leadership program within the working parameters of the Federal Prison Chaplaincy program for those who will remain incarcerated. The “least of these” who are forgotten by society, not included in the First Step Act, and not considered in most faith-based re-entry programming will have the opportunity to see rehabilitation within the confines of a high-security penitentiary.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The problem that this writer poses from chapter one above is this, “With the lack of steadiness in spiritual leadership and the insufficiency of re-entry and development for inmates with long sentences, the problem is that those who are in the current ministry context are not receiving the opportunity for development into future ministry leaders.” The plan to address the problem will involve a twelve-week discipleship building program. The program aims to create a perpetuating leadership dynamic where inmates, who are not eligible for the benefits of the First Step Act, become a part of the process of preparing those who are eligible.

Intervention Design

The qualitative intervention plan starts with the selection of the project’s participants. The start of this plan was contingent on IRB approval. The chosen participants for this project will have at least a twenty-year to a life sentence. They will have had no incident reports within a period of six months prior to the start of the project. Also, they will have had at least six to nine months of residency at the current institution. Each participant will also have completed at least five years of in-custody on his record. Each individual will have completed his GED or have a high school equivalency. The level of crime committed will not be a consideration for this project. However, sex offenders will not be deemed eligible for selection. The basis for excluding sex offenders is due to the requirements within the BOP that necessitates different

programming standards. Further, due to the nature of the sexual offense indictment, the public safety factor pertaining to the individual is greatly enhanced.¹³²

The immediate plan is to start the intervention plan by the first week of September 2020, (pending IRB approval) and carry out the project through a period of twelve weeks. The project will begin with an initial evaluation, an overview of the course plan, and a review of the expectations and conditions of the project. The design of the intervention plan to last for a twelve-weeks period will give an adequate amount of time to implement the plan. Considering the nature of the correctional environment, the need to build in extra time for interruptions in the normal operations of the institution may be necessary. The twelve-week design will disseminate adequate information, provide ample time for change, and allow for appropriate evaluation.

For this project, this writer will choose ten participants. With a draw made from a list based on the BOP database for the institution, this writer will choose the participants who meet the above criteria and have previously completed the foundational course work (See below). After compiling the participant list, the writer will interview the participants to discuss the expectations of the project and to garner their consent. A portion of the interview process will include feedback from the participants to ascertain issues and concerns pertaining to what they hope to gain from the project. This writer will factor in the responses from the interview in to address the more significant needs of the participants.

The preparation work needed to qualify for participation will include three preliminary programs. The first program is a thirteen lesson fundamentals of faith curriculum. Vince Lombardi, speaking to his team at the start of training camp in 1961 once said: “‘Gentlemen,’ he

¹³² U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons Program Statement 5100.08, *Inmate Security Designation and Custody Classification* (September 12, 2006), 38.

declared, holding a pigskin in his hand, ‘This is a football.’”¹³³ So too, every good discipleship program should start with the basics of the Bible. The fundamentals of faith curriculum will include the subjects of knowing the Bible, God’s character and attributes, the person and work of Christ, the person, ministry, and giftings of the Holy Spirit, the history and purpose of the Church, God’s will and obedience of the believer, and evangelism and discipleship.

The second program sets the participants up to learn how to read the Bible. Reading comprehension of many people is enough to read words, but reading genres is different. It is essential for a student of God’s Word to know how God laid it out for our understanding. Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stewart’s book, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, is the basis for this program. Through this ten-session program, the participants will develop a cogent understanding of biblical interpretation. Participants will learn the basics of Biblical languages, hermeneutics, and the genres of the epistles, narratives, historical, parables, prophetic, and wisdom literature. The participants will learn to read and employ the corpus of biblical literature for further study, deeper learning, and everyday application.

The design of the third program is to help disciples think. Part apologetics, part theological, and part worldview orientation, the thirteen-week curriculum is intended to live out the admonition from the Apostle Paul who writes, “...not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect,” (Rom. 12:2, ESV). The third program will last thirteen weeks and utilize *The Truth Project* DVD series. *The Truth Project* will cover the subjects of philosophy, anthropology, theology, science, history, sociology, and community involvement.

¹³³ David Maraniss, *When Pride Still Mattered: A Life of Vince Lombardi* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1999), np.

With the above foundation in place, the intervention plan will build on what the participants learned so that they can begin formulating their own discipleship plan. The opinion of this writer is that leadership is not following a man-made program, but is rather learning to hear the voice of God through the Holy Spirit to do His will, and leading from an eternal perspective. The twelve-week program will be divided up into three sections. Each session of the program will meet once a week on Wednesday afternoons (1-3 PM) for a two-hour period of instruction in the chapel classroom.

The first section will include an overview of key leaders, their views, and the impact of their leadership. Another part of the program will detail what spiritual leadership is and how a leader in the Kingdom of God, who is empowered by the Holy Spirit, should function and behave. A final section will focus on being an undershepherd.

The first four weeks of section one will cover leaders in general. Within the first class, there will be a pre-assessment of each participant's leadership skill. The first lesson covers what it means to lead from eternity. Following the Apostle John, the participant will gain an understanding of their place in the universe before God and His purpose for each of their lives. Lesson two will cover historical leaders. Starting with Alexander the Great, the participants will learn how his powerful influence still reaches today's leader. Other leaders will include Ashoka and how the transformation in his life changed the course of the sub-Asian continent; Elizabeth I and how her power and grace created a world-dominating empire; George Washington and how his faith and courage led a fledgling new country in a new experiment with government; and Martin Luther King, Jr., and how he disobeyed to lead a movement while not losing the integrity of his faith. Lesson three will cover biblical leaders. The participants will examine the imperfect faith of King David, how Daniel lived his faith in a foreign context, and the Sola Fide of the

Apostle Paul. Lesson four will cover the character and integrity of Ronald Reagan (The Great Communicator) and Abraham Lincoln (The Great Emancipator).

The second session of four weeks will include looking at the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of leaders chronicled in the Bible who were empowered by the Holy Spirit to lead God's people and encourage future leaders. Coming from the Bible and focusing on God's elect will cultivate an eternal outlook to leadership. According to Blackaby, "The ultimate goal of spiritual leadership is not to achieve numerical results, to accomplish tasks with perfection, or to grow for growth's sake. It is to take their people from where they are to where God wants them to be."¹³⁴ Lesson five will explore Blackaby's book *Spiritual Leadership*, and how a spiritual leader solves problems. Lesson six will see the purpose of the Holy Spirit in a spiritual leader's life, and how through the Holy Spirit, a leader communicates God's truth, love, and salvation. Lesson seven will further examine the Holy Spirit's role in a spiritual leader's life by discovering how the Holy Spirit has uniquely gifted each person to function within God's Kingdom. Lesson eight will focus on discernment. The spiritual leader needs to be able to operate in whatever context God has placed him. By learning to perform rather than simply learn a new skill set, the spiritual leader can be a dynamic force in his setting.

The third session of four weeks will build on relevance, personalization, immersion, and emotional connection of being an undershepherd. Lesson nine will draw from John W. Frye's book, *Jesus the Pastor*. Here, the participants will incorporate their spiritual leadership into being undershepherds. Lesson ten will form the understanding of how, as undershepherds, the spiritual leader listens, learns, and follows the Chief Shepherd, who is Jesus Christ. Lesson eleven will follow the apostles as they each followed Christ, and where that led each of them.

¹³⁴ Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 119.

Lesson twelve, the last lesson, will bring the participants full circle back to the first program in the preparation phase, which is the fundamentals of faith. What the participants will do in this lesson is build relationships. The key to lesson twelve is to focus the participants on developing disciples in their specific setting. By developing undershepherds within a prison context, it will allow for those who do not qualify for First Step Act re-entry programming to be a part of a solution to the problem. As previously stated, “the problem is that those who are in the current ministry context are not receiving the opportunity for development into future ministry leaders.” The hopeful change to help alleviate this problem is that the 16.7% of the inmate population in federal custody who have a twenty year to life sentence will be able to see an eternal purpose in their lives. As spiritual leaders with an eternal focus, the impact they can have to disciple those who have shorter sentences can be tremendous.

The completion of the course will include a follow-up. The first part of the follow-up will include a post-assessment. The post-assessment will gather information about what the participants learned, how the project changed them, and what new direction each of the participants will now take. A second part of the follow-up will consist of a list, that the participants will produce, of individuals that God is leading them to disciple.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

The implementation of this project began under an unusual set of circumstances. The main issue to be addressed from the beginning dealt with managing the project while navigating the ebbs and flows of the COVID-19 pandemic protocols. The second issue involved the

religious makeup of the entire group. Both unique conditions created an opportunity to apply innovation in the project design and implementation.

Since the beginning of the enacting the COVID-19 pandemic protocols, which were initiated in March of 2020, programming for the Religious Services Department was essentially shut down. With nearly six months of inactivity in the Chapel and increased pressure from Central Office leadership to provide religious programming, the Warden accepted this writer's proposal to conduct a limited religious course of instruction provided that there was clearance from the infectious disease coordinator, the number of participants is limited no more than twelve, and that the course is open for participation by all faiths.

The initial announcement for the project yielded fifteen applicants. The final selection of the twelve participants was decided on who had served the most time to date. Of the twelve participants, ten were of the Christian faith, one was Muslim, and one was Pagan. All the participants understood from the beginning that this project was to come from a Christian perspective and that in no way was the project designed to interfere, deter, or convince otherwise from the participants' chosen faith. However, each participant was encouraged to utilize the information presented and adapt it to each one's own faith perspective so that they could apply what was taught to their situation.

The original plan was to conduct a weekly session by meeting once a week on Wednesday afternoons (1-3 PM) for a two-hour period of instruction in the chapel classroom. With the uncertainty of the fluid nature of the COVID-19 pandemic an adjustment was made to meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays (1-3 PM) of each week to provide as much time as feasibly possible for instruction. Further, as a contingency, if the participants could not come down to the Chapel, alternate meeting spaces were designated within the housing units in which to meet.

Session One

Session one of the project was scheduled to begin in the Chapel on Tuesday, October 6, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. At this point of the COVID-19 pandemic protocol, inmates were still confined to their housing units with no intermingling with other inmates from other housing units. As a result, this writer enacted his secondary meeting plan and took the material to the inmates. The breakdown of participants to housing units was delineated to two participants in one housing unit, three participants in another housing unit, and the other seven participants in a third housing unit. This required the writer to visit each housing unit and conduct three separate periods of instruction lasting approximately two hours each twice a week. The first housing unit was scheduled from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., the second housing unit was scheduled from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., and the third housing unit was scheduled from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The first session was conducted accordingly with all of the participants in attendance, albeit in their respective housing units. The first session's primary focus was to give a layout of the course of instruction, administer the pre-course questionnaire, and begin the discussion on basic leadership. The discussion on leadership centered on three ideals, which came from James Emery White's book, *What They Didn't Teach You in Seminary: 25 Lessons for Successful Ministry in Your Church*.¹³⁵ The first ideal is that a leader owns his or her mistakes. The second ideal is that a leader looks for patterns. The third ideal is that leaders learn from tested leaders.

Through the course of the discussion, the participants embraced the ideals of leadership. They began formulating topics pertaining to their first assignment, which was to pick a leader and provide general information about their chosen leader and explain why the participant chose that leader. A part of the discussion centered on the second ideal, looking for patterns. Having

¹³⁵ James Emery White, *What They Didn't Teach You in Seminary: 25 Lessons for Successful Ministry in Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012).

been incarcerated for most of their lives, each participant quickly understood patterns. An institutional setting is rife with them. However, during the discussion, the participants began changing their view of the monotony that is endemic to patterns. Instead, the participants opened their thinking by looking at their mistakes and the conditions (i.e., patterns) that lead to those mistakes. Then, the participants took the opportunity to not focus just on their own patterns but to look at the positive and negative patterns in others. This delineation of positive and negative patterns helped each participant choose a leader to research and emulate in their own leadership formulation.

The latter portion of the session dealt with what a leader is and the differences between leadership and management. Spring boarding off a widely used definition of leadership as the art of motivating a group of people to achieve a common goal, the participants engaged in group conversations on what leadership means and what characteristics make for a good leader. In particular, the participants and this writer discussed what it means for a leader to inspire others. The topic of inspiring others led to the overall theme of the project and what it means to lead from eternity. This final discussion, and the reminder to begin researching and writing a one-page outline on their chosen leader, concluded the session.

Session Two

Session two, like session one, was again conducted in the units. The go-ahead for normal operations on the compound was yet to be initiated. On Thursday, October 8, at 8:00 a.m., this writer began his trek to each of the three housing units to conduct the individual sessions. The second session picked-up from session one and recounted the qualities and characteristics of a good leader. From the list of assets that a good leader should possess, four categories emerged. The four categories included what a leader does, what a leader has, what a leader possesses, and

what a leader considers. Also, amidst the various discussions, the topic of good versus evil came up.

The first category to emerge from the attributes of a good leader centered on what a leader does. The participants' primary actions were that a leader sets the example, a leader personifies excellence, a leader influences, and as one participant noted, a leader is a trailblazer. On the topic of setting an example, each participant agreed that this characteristic was paramount for any leader. The leader sets the course and direction for the project. The tone, attitude, and confidence that the leader instills sets the environment in which all involved are immersed. If the leader is not setting the example for the team members to follow, the project will most likely devolve into chaos.

The second category listed as an attribute of a good leader is what a leader has. Through the course of discussions, the group's consensus found that a good leader has commitment, a shared vision/goal, perseverance, and motivation. The group made the point that a leader having these attributes makes for a cohesive unit that can accomplish its goal. Many of the participants utilized sports teams as examples of unified units. As a counterpoint to these qualities, several participants pointed to the 2004 Olympic basketball team as an example when leadership fails to employ these qualities. Since the introduction of professional basket players in the 1992 Olympics, the United States was undefeated. However, in 2004, the US basketball team suffered two losses that only made them eligible for the bronze medal. Despite having the best basketball players in the world on one team, the lack of commitment to the shared vision/goal relinquished them to a third-place finish overall.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Rick Maese, *The Orlando (Fla) Sentinel*, "Mystique around U.S. Team Fades: [Final Edition]" *Daily Press* (August 14, 2004), B4.

The next category pertains to what a leader possesses. In the second category, a leader *has* certain qualities that make him or her a good leader. However, as a leader, he or she possesses certain assets that can determine the difference between a good or bad leader. The assets a leader possesses are power, authority, and control. This part of the discussion led to exploring the topic of good versus evil. One of the participants' questions related to whether Adolph Hitler was a good leader or not. Referring the participants to Romans 13:1, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God," this writer explained that the individual leader chooses the power and authority that God has granted. While all the participants agreed with the overall sentiment that a good or bad leader could embody all the characteristics and attributes that a leader should have, they also concluded that a moral authority accompanies a leader's decision-making process. Ultimately, the participants agreed that a leader needs to assess his or her decisions and leadership based on an eternal perspective.

The final category involves what a leader considers. This part of the discussion overwhelmed this writer. Every hardened inmate who was under high security, maximum custody, and was serving a life sentence iterated that a leader, first and foremost, considers others over self. In an environment that day in and day out inculcates individuals to look out for number one, survival of the fittest, and to trust no one, the participants had a unanimous focus that the care, safety, and well-being of another human being is of paramount importance. The integrity, honor, and faith that a leader exhibits allows for trust to be established, creating conditions for the leader to lead people. Along with considering others over self, the participants also alighted to the need for a leader to consider communication, wisdom, strength, and love.

Session Three

After a week hiatus due to previously scheduled appointments, the third session resumed on Tuesday, October 20, at 1:00 p.m. This was the first session that allowed for all the participants to meet together in the chapel. Unfortunately, the group was down by one participant since he was transferred to another institution to deal with a writ, which is a formal written order issued by the court to determine the constitutionality of a criminal conviction. This session's opening began with the announcement that each participant was to pick a leader and be ready to present on their chosen leader for the next session. The entirety of this session dealt with historical leaders.

The leaders that this writer chose to present included Alexander the Great, Ashoka, Elizabeth I, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Ronald Reagan. Each leader was chosen because of their unique place in history as unifiers. Alexander the Great was selected mainly because there are events within his short history that he implemented, many of which still effect the world today. From the young age of 20, Alexander the Great conquered the renowned Persian Empire and began unifying his Grecian kingdom through his cultural diffusion and syncretism of one language and one culture.

Another ancient leader that was discussed was Ashoka: a relatively obscure historical figure who had a tremendous impact that continues to effects India two thousand years after his reign. Ashoka unified the Indian subcontinent from Afghanistan to Bangladesh and was deemed the Chakravarti. A Chakravarti refers to the ideal universal ruler, a secular counterpart to Buddha. With his focus on dharma, the Buddhist idea of right behavior and social order, Ashoka brought a divided land together. All but one of the participants were unfamiliar with Ashoka

since he is outside of normal Western teaching. However, the participants were intrigued by this historical overview and the accomplishments of this leader.

The third, not so ancient, leader was Queen Elizabeth I. Many of the participants recognized her as King Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn's daughter and that she reigned in the sixteenth century. Although the participants had a basic understanding of her relative goodness as a queen, they were unfamiliar with her accomplishments over the forty-four years of sitting on the throne of England. As the one who laid down the foundation for the unification of the Kingdom of Great Britain, Queen Elizabeth solidified her reign with the Spanish Armada's defeat. Through this discussion, the participants and this writer talked about the age-old idea of kings' divine right. While Queen Elizabeth inherited her father's, King Henry VII, declaration that he is the Supreme Head of the Church of England, she also understood that a monarch needs to rule by popular consent of the people. By surrounding herself with good and trusted counselors, Queen Elizabeth established her era with poise and integrity.

The fourth leader on the list was George Washington. All the participants were familiar with the first president of the United States of America. They knew that Washington was the first commander in chief of the Continental Army and fought in the Revolutionary War against the British Empire. The participants learned that Washington was an intuitive leader who was chosen because he would keep his "ambition in check." They also learned that Washington became an international icon for liberation and nationalism. With half of the participants from an African-American background the latter part of the discussion centered around slavery and why Washington did not deal with the issue at the inception of the United States of America. Ultimately, George Washington united a large group of independent colonists to wage war against the mightiest empire at the time unto defeat.

Session Four

Session four commenced on Thursday, October 22, in the chapel at 1:00 p.m. This session picked up where session three left off and resumed the discussion on historical leaders. The discussion began with a quick recap of Washington's slavery issue, culminating in the Civil War. This introduced the next leader for discussion, Abraham Lincoln.

Again, all of the participants knew about Abraham Lincoln. They knew that Lincoln was president during the Civil War, that he opposed slavery, and was subsequently assassinated by the Confederate sympathizer, John Wilkes Booth. They also know that Lincoln was a man of faith who prayed for God's wisdom and discernment through the trying time of this country's history. The gist of the discussion on Lincoln was fixed on his leadership to unite a divided country. This part of the discussion also gave pause to the current events within the United States at the time. The parallels of unrest, racial tension, and confused leadership were apt discussion on the character and conviction of leadership required to lead to a better way forward.

From the Civil War to the Civil Rights movement, the next leader on the list was Martin Luther King, Jr. Aside from the general discussion of how Martin Luther King, Jr. combatted racial inequality through nonviolent resistance and his unifying role during the Civil Rights movement, many of the participants had some misgivings about what he really accomplished. This writer's selection of Martin Luther King, Jr. as an important leader was primarily due to the overall theme of leaders who were overall unifiers in history. A second reason for King's selection involved his faith perspective. However, the participants had a different perspective on King.

As noted earlier, half of the participants are from an African-American background. In the discussions about the life, actions, and beliefs of Martin Luther King, Jr., most of the

consternation revolved around how far back he set the black community. The primary gripe was that with the implementation of desegregation, where many black communities already had thriving businesses, practices, and enterprises, these entities were swept away. Another grievance about King that the participants put forward was how he melded Eastern religion with his Christian background. This muddled view of beliefs caused the participants to not be as forgiving towards King despite his efforts. In the view of most participants, the nonviolent resistance approach did not work due primarily to the hatred towards people of color. As one participant exclaimed, “one cannot make a moral appeal to an amoral society.” Further, the participants believed in the right to protect themselves and their families against tyranny and injustice, even if that meant physical altercation.

The last on the list of leaders was Ronald Reagan. Like Abraham Lincoln, Reagan was a man of conviction and faith. Although a popular president, Reagan faced a difficult congress, challenging domestic issues, and the height of the Cold War. It was through these times that Reagan stood in the face of opposition. Reagan was known as the great communicator, and through his tenure as President, he inspired a nation through his optimism and patriotism. Most of all, Reagan unified the Western world against Communism and its aggressive posturing.

The whole of the discussion concerning Reagan was very positive. However, about a third of the participants were not old enough to remember his time as president. Many of the participants did voice their displeasure with the policy on the war on drugs and the racial disparities that it produced. This writer closed the session by sharing a story about Ronald Reagan’s career as a lifeguard. Finding an article from when Regan was governor of California in 1969, it is reported that while hosting a party with over 200 people at the governor’s mansion, he jumped into the pool to save a seven-year-old girl from drowning. While this is credited to

his keen instincts formed from his former job as a lifeguard, what is more to the point is that this little girl was the daughter of one of his employees who worked the governor's office, and she was black. Alicia Berry was not able to swim but was playing in the pool nonetheless. When she slipped in and went under, Reagan immediately went in after her and lifted her out of the water, all while still wearing his suit. This seventy-eighth career save as a lifeguard showed this man's selflessness no matter who the person was.¹³⁷

In assessing these first four sessions, this writer came away with a few observations. Through the study of ancient leaders, the participants expanded their horizons about the influence of men and women through history. Although the participants had trivial knowledge about some of the leaders, they were not fully aware of the overall impact that these key leaders had on overall world history. For instance, when the participants linked the victory of Queen Elizabeth I over the Spanish Armada they had more respect to looking at overall history rather than just at the individual person.

Another observation includes the notion that whether male or female, old world or new world, the same leadership principles seemed to be prevalent no matter the culture or background. The participants noticed the patterns of good leaders and began to express their desire to mirror those patterns in their own lives. Also, regarding the more modern leaders, the more recent the memory, the more critical the participants were of the leader. As the discussion drew closer to contemporary history the more the participants resonated with the sentiment that minority history is usually left out of the overall discussion of historical events and thus producing more criticism.

¹³⁷ Edmund Morris, *Dutch: A Memoir of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Random House, 1999), np.

Finally, racial figures are not always as successful as society projects them to be. While the idea in the selection of the historical leaders for this project was to be fair and inclusive, the overall reaction of the participants was not overwhelmingly positive. All of the participants appreciated the idea of the chosen leaders, but some focused on differing issues with some of the leaders. The issues were stronger when the leaders were closer in historical reference. A case in point is the discussion with Martin Luther King, Jr., and some of the sentiment from the Black participants that King reversed the progress of the Black community.

Session Five

On Tuesday, October 27, classes were conducted in the units. Due to a shortage of correctional staff, inmates could not come down to the chapel area. As a result, this writer reverted to his secondary plan to continue the programming. This session covered biblical leaders.

With most of the participants coming from a biblical Christian perspective, they were very familiar with the three chosen leaders: King David, Daniel, and the Apostle Paul. From a non-Christian perspective, the two participants understood this writer's intention in presenting these leaders and were interested in these leaders. The two participants also knew that this writer had no intention of persuading them otherwise and were encouraged to offer similar leadership examples from their faith perspective.

Starting with King David, this writer explained the selection process of how God chose David to lead the nation of Israel. Beginning with the classic historical account of David and Goliath, this writer showed the progression of David's selection as king and how he patiently waited for his time to rule. Ultimately, David's rule unified Israel and established a powerhouse

in the Middle East that rivaled some of the greatest kingdoms on earth.¹³⁸ The participants did question how David was considered a man after God's own heart despite the egregious sins he committed. This led the discussion to the theological subjects of God's mercy and grace. By understanding how God's attributes contribute to a leader and his or her leadership, the participants gained a better understanding of how the examples of leaders found in the Bible, though imperfect, can still be used by God to do great things.

The second leader discussed was Daniel. Daniel's example of steadfast faith in a foreign land is replete in the annals that bear his name. This writer did back the discussion up before Daniel to discuss the historical decisions of kings who did not honor God that led to Israel's demise and eventual captivity into Babylon. Although in captivity, Daniel and his three friends banded together and maintained their faith amidst a hostile government. So much so was Daniel's renown throughout Babylon that he was readily referred to as the one "in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God," (Daniel 5:11, ESV). This distinction above the other governors of the land, and the magicians, astrologers, and sorcerers, allowed Daniel to maintain a level of leadership that spanned the five different administrations of Israel's captivity. As a result of Daniel's leadership, he unified the Jewish people and helped them to maintain their faith until their return from captivity.

The third leader was the Apostle Paul. The discussion on Paul started with his vehemence against the fledgling Christian church. This writer explained how God dealt with Paul on the road to Damascus and his subsequent commitment to the Church through Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. A part of this discussion broached the subject of non-spiritual leaders. The participants' questions centered around if non-spiritual (i.e., Atheists) can be good

¹³⁸ Robert G. Boling, *Judges* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), xxi.

leaders, and if God places leaders in their positions, then what about the likes of Hitler as an effective leader. Citing Romans 13:1, “For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God,” this writer explained that while God does place people into positions of leadership, each leader must make a choice as to what kind of leader he or she will be. If a leader submits to God and purposes in his or her heart to be a good leader, that person will be a faithful leader and a blessing to the people. However, if a leader does not recognize God and forsakes His goodness towards his or her position of authority, the people and the mission will suffer. Ultimately, a good leader is one who is led, guided, directed, and submitted to the will of God. This session ended with an assignment to write about one crucial character trait from one of the leaders presented.

Session Six

On Thursday, October 29, class was able to resume in the Chapel. Having all of the participants in one area was much less tedious than stringing three separate classes together. Also, the interaction amongst the participants was more robust and thought-provoking. After each participant presented their papers, the participants engaged in some general discussion on how the character traits of each chosen leader impacted the historical milieu of the leader and how the character trait is important for the participants in the here and now. The discussion then led to Blackaby’s book, *Spiritual Leadership*.

For the purpose of this project, the whole of Blackaby’s book was not fully explored. Instead, a few ideas were reaped from the material in order for the participants to understand what spiritual leadership entails. The first tidbit from Blackaby that this writer presented was the idea that “Using people to achieve organizational goals is the antithesis of spiritual

leadership.”¹³⁹ To explore this notion, this writer asked the participants to describe the difference between leadership and management. Through the distillation of the character traits that each of the participants already explored in their papers and pulling from the earlier discussions of this course, the participants deduced that managers deal with assets and leaders deal with people. More so, the participants saw that the manager typically emphasizes control over things while a leader has concern and empathy for the people of which he or she is leading.

The second snippet pulled from Blackaby’s book was, “The ultimate goal of spiritual leadership is not to achieve numerical results, to accomplish tasks with perfection, or to grow for growth’s sake. It is to take their people from where they are to where God wants them to be.”¹⁴⁰ No matter the leader’s ultimate objective, the primary goal is to hear from God and be obedient to His will. This part of the discussion began to explore what leading from eternity is all about. Without an eternal perspective, one is resigned to operating inside a closed system and is left with a meaningless task. If that is the case, the lack of hope will lead to despair and continue a life of destructive behaviors. However, from the eternal perspective, one can draw on something greater than him or herself, something transcendent. Drawing on a transcendent and eternal God allows one to be able to lead with endless possibilities.

The third and final morsel of knowledge from Blackaby maintains that “Spiritual leaders should have a third goal for their organizations, one which is the ultimate aspiration of any organization—to glorify God.”¹⁴¹ Each one of us is created to worship. In his epistle, Paul exhorts the Colossians in this way, “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for

¹³⁹ Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 119.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

men,” (Col. 3:23, ESV). A leader may be handed many tasks and objectives, but if the leader is not keen on God’s purpose for the task or objective, the leader will fail in the definitive goal of why God made that individual a leader.

This session ended with Blackaby’s notion that “Spiritual leadership is based on character and the working of the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit's guiding, empowering presence, leaders may hold executive positions, but they are not spiritual leaders.”¹⁴² The requirement of a spiritual leader to love the Lord with one’s whole heart, mind, soul, and spirit are paramount. If this vertical alignment is not in tune with the eternal God, then the horizontal orientation towards one’s neighbor will be skewed. If these two axes of a leader’s ambit do not coincide with one another, the leader’s goals and ambitions will not produce the appropriate outcome that will be faithful to God.

Session Seven

On Thursday, November 5, class once again resumed in the Chapel. Due to a precautionary lockdown earlier in the week, the class on Tuesday did not take place. The participants are anxious about if they will be able to get through all the sessions without any further interruption. The goal for completion at this point is to finish all the sessions by November 19, prior to Thanksgiving week. This session introduced the role of the Holy Spirit in the leader’s life.

This session began to introduce exclusively Christian themes, of which this writer reminded the participants that this course is designed for a Christian audience. The sole Muslim and Pagan participants both acknowledged the fact and were encouraged by this writer to offer a similar teaching from their own faith traditions. The opening discussion for this session sought

¹⁴² Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 147.

to garner the varying ideas about the third person of the Trinity. The varying opinions were accompanied by the many analogies that attempt to describe the Holy Spirit and the Trinity. The two comparisons that produced the most discussion were the associations of the Trinity to the three phases of water and an egg.

The discussion for this session was prefaced with the caveat that an attempt to understand the Trinity is difficult at best and that within the confines of our finite being, we will never fully comprehend the infinite nature of God. Subsequently, in our attempt to understand the Trinity, it is OK to acknowledge mystery and have faith in what God does give His children through His word, understanding, and revelation.

Spring boarding from the last session and Blackaby's statement that "Spiritual leadership is based on character and the working of the Holy Spirit,"¹⁴³ this writer provided Scriptural insights into the character and attributes of the Holy Spirit and how the third person of the Trinity operates through the Old and New Testaments. Before explaining what is recorded in Acts 2, this writer started in Genesis 1:1-2 and how the Holy Spirit is preexistent, was with the Father and the Son, and was instrumental in creation. The other scriptures that were explored were Genesis 41:38 where Joseph, who was filled with the Spirit of God, interprets Pharaoh's dream; Exodus 31 & 35, where Bezalel and Oholiab were "filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship" (Exod. 31:3 ESV), to construct the tabernacle and priestly garments; Numbers 24 describes Balaam being filled with the Holy Spirit to prophecy; the writings of Daniel show him in every situation where the Spirit of God was upon him; Joel 2 describes the coming day when God's Spirit will fall on everyone without discrimination as the Christ-followers would experience later in Acts 2.

¹⁴³ Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 147.

The rest of the discussion focused on the fundamental nature of prayer and the necessity of being filled with the Holy Spirit. In the Apostle Paul's writings to the Ephesian church, two things are clear about the Holy Spirit. The first thing that is clear is that it is God's will for believers be filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul writes, "Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is," (Eph. 5:17, ESV). This part of the discussion explored the how, when, and in what capacity the Holy Spirit enters one's life and how complete a person is when filled with the Holy Spirit. The second that that is clear is that only God can fill one with the Holy Spirit. Again, Paul writes, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit," (Eph. 5:18, ESV). The Holy Spirit comes into a person's life through prayer. One is filled and sanctified by the Holy Spirit of God at salvation, but only through continued prayer and obedience can a spiritual leader "walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16, ESV), and thus be equipped to do the greater things that God calls each one to do. As Blackaby puts it, "While all Christians have the Holy Spirit's presence in their lives, the condition of being filled by the Holy Spirit comes through concentrated, fervent, sanctified prayer."¹⁴⁴ The session ended with the assignment to read 1 Corinthians 12-14 and Ephesians 5:22.

Session Eight

Session Eight resumed on Wednesday, November 18, after a two-week hiatus. Due to some extracurricular activities in the unit with the most participants, the institution was placed on lockdown. The group met together in the Chapel, this time on a Wednesday since the first part of the week was a modified lifting of lockdown, and normal programming would be interrupted on the regularly scheduled Thursday. At the start of this session, the group lost another

¹⁴⁴ Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 181.

participant due to a charge that he received that put him under investigation, which relocated him to the Special Housing Unit.

The start of this session began with a group reading of the assigned scripture readings. The discussion centered around spiritual gifts and their necessity in the life of the spiritual leader. The participant's concept of spiritual gifts showed great understanding, especially when understood through the Apostle Paul's analogy of the body (1 Corinthians 12:14-27). However, the greater part of the discussion focused on Paul's "more excellent way" (1 Cor. 12:31, ESV) and his treatise on love from 1 Corinthians 13. The topic of love was handled through C. S. Lewis's book *The Four Loves*.

In *The Four Loves*, Lewis presents four types of love. The four Greek words for love, as presented by Lewis, are *στοργή* (storge), *φιλία* (philia), *ἔρως* (eros), and *ἀγάπη* (agape). Storge love is the empathy or familial love, as Lewis put it "affection."¹⁴⁵ This love is the emotive love based on familiarity. The philia love is the friendship love. Lewis uses the relational bond between David and Jonathan (1 Samuel 18:1-5) to demonstrate philia love.¹⁴⁶ The third love presented is eros love. This form of love is the erotic love, or as Lewis describes it, the more physical form of love.¹⁴⁷ The final love is charity, or agape love. According to Lewis, this love is the greatest of the four loves and the one that is the most distinctly Christian.¹⁴⁸ Agape love is the fellowship love that is ultimately found in a right relationship with God. This is the love that Paul writes about in 1 Corinthians 13.

¹⁴⁵ C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2018), 31.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

The latter part of this session ended with a discussion of Galatians 5:22-23, which outlines the fruit of the Spirit. While Galatians 5:22-23 gives a litany of fruit, “joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control,” the totality of these fruits is wrapped up in love, agape love. As Paul wrote, “against such things there is no law” (Gal. 5:23), which literally means that the fruit of the Spirit is limitless, or more specifically eternal. A spiritual leader needs to operate in the Spirit, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit,” (Gal. 5:25, NKJ) to produce the fruit of the Spirit. The primary way that the spiritual leader conducts his or her leadership is ultimately through love, specifically agape love.

The latter half of this session explored how love, and spiritual gifts, are expressed in the Islamic and Pagan religious contexts. The Muslim perspective sees Allah as one who loves unconditionally but the Muslim participant could not point to any of Allah’s ninety-nine names that expressly point to Allah being loving. Instead, the participant would refer to Allah’s infinite mercy, which is not based solely on love but is bestowed on those who earn it. As the Qur’an states, “but do good; for Allah loveth those who do good.”¹⁴⁹ This is contrary to the Apostle John’s affirmation, “Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love,” (1 Jn. 4:8, ESV). Similarly, from the Pagan perspective, the greatest ideal of love is found in a humility that expresses itself in the storge, or familial, type of love. Moreover, while each of the participants attempted to reconcile their ideals around the biblical concept of love, neither could express an eternal, perfect, and fully satisfied love in God alone.

The final part of this session closed with a discussion on discernment. Applying the Apostle Paul’s consideration to, “...test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil,” (1 Thess. 5:21-22, ESV), this writer discussed the responsibility for each spiritual

¹⁴⁹ Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Qur’an: Translation* (Elmhurst, NY: Tahrike Tarsile Qur’an, 2001), Surah 2:195.

leader to be discerning. According to the New Testament teaching, discernment for the spiritual leader is not optional; it is required. The Apostle John supports this notion when he writes in his epistle, "...do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God," (1 Jn. 4:1, ESV). The ability to distinguish between truth and error, good and evil, can only rightly be discerned through the truth in God's word. As spiritual leaders, it is imperative to discern right from wrong and hold to one's integrity. This point is driven home in Paul's epistle to the Philippians where he writes, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me-- practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you," (Phil. 4:8-9, ESV).

Session Nine

Restarting on January 26, 2021, session nine comes from a significant delay due to a severe outbreak of COVID-19 at the institution that occurred during the week of November 22. After a two-month delay, the best that could be done to complete this project was to meet in one unit with the most participants. Since the COVID-19 pandemic protocols did not allow for units to intermingle, this was the only option to complete the final sessions of this project. As a result, the group was reduced to seven participants.

Session nine began with the discussion on John Frye's book, *Jesus the Pastor: Leading Others in the Character & Power of Christ*. The opening thought from Frye's book is, "Guiding and accompanying souls to live as they were intended, to 'the praise of His glory.'"¹⁵⁰

Harkening back to the previous sessions that outlined the characteristics of a spiritual leader and

¹⁵⁰ John W. Frye, *Jesus the Pastor: Leading Others in the Character & Power of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 9.

the spiritual leader's overall goal to glorify God, the participants began to formulate their ideas of how to go about investing in the lives of others. This was accomplished by understanding Frye's notion of the spiritual leader not being grounded "in current trends or social sciences, but in ancient truths and scriptural personalities."¹⁵¹ In other words, the participants already have models, mentors, and examples of godly lives found in scripture. Several times in scripture, the Apostle Paul reminds his readers to "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ," (1 Cor. 11:1, ESV), and "It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate," (2 Thess. 3:9, ESV). Furthermore, the writer of Hebrews writes, "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith," (Heb. 13:7, ESV). The examples from Scripture allow each participant to have a ready access to tried-and-true examples for each one to follow. As each participant matures, then he can be the example for the next disciple.

The rest of the discussion centered around Frye's notion of being an undershepherd. As the chief example and shepherd, Jesus is the definitive example for any follower. In Frye's journey as a pastor, he came to view everything he did as *prima facie* for following Christ. Frye's primary focus was to see everything with regards to his relationship with Christ, with Jesus being the chief shepherd and Frye being the undershepherd. Several times in the New Testament, Jesus is called the good shepherd. The Apostle John records Jesus saying, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep," (Jn. 10:11, ESV). Again, in John's writing, it is recorded, "For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water," (Rev. 7:17, ESV). Finally, Peter relates to Christ-followers in leadership positions by writing,

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of

¹⁵¹ Frye, *Jesus the Pastor*, 40.

the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain (1 Pet. 5:1-2, ESV).

As the participants began to take hold of their task as a spiritual leader, each one began to express how he sees his role within their current ministry setting as an undershepherd. They formulated ideals centered around their spheres of influence and took ownership of their areas of responsibility. The last part of the discussion from Frye's book came from his quip, "Pastor-teaching becomes truly effective when revealed truth is honestly communicated from a life that is under constant transformation."¹⁵² With the participants now seeing their role as undershepherds, they pulled together the concept of leading from eternity and the role of Jesus as the chief shepherd. The close of this session left the participants with the assignment to now develop a discipleship plan where God is giving them 1-3 individuals in whom they will now invest their lives and lead into eternity.

Session Ten

On Thursday, January 28, 2021, the last group session took place. Again, still under the pandemic protocol, this writer met with the seven remaining participants in a program room in their unit. The last session assignment was granted an extension since the participants wanted to really develop a quality plan. Since a follow-up session would be conducted in the near future to complete the post-course questionnaire and issue certificates of completion, this writer felt an extension was warranted. Although the original plan was to have twelve sessions, this writer truncated the curriculum to meet necessary deadlines and to accommodate the adjustments due to the various anomalies encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹⁵² Frye, *Jesus the Pastor*, 122.

The final session followed up with the undershepherd theme and what a disciple maker looks like. The focus of this discussion was the twelve apostles. The three things discussed about the apostles were that they were sent ones, they were each called by Jesus, and they were commissioned to preach the Gospel and make disciples. The last part that this session covered was the traditions that surrounded each of the apostles' deaths.

The term apostle comes from the Greek word ἀπόστολος, which means one who is sent on a mission with full authority.¹⁵³ Each of the apostles had the full authority of Jesus Christ to go and make disciples. The group explored Matthew 28:18-20, “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’” Most of the participants understood this as the Great Commission but asked questions concerning the full import as to its meaning and implication. This writer pointed the participants to other scriptures that outline Jesus' commission but refocused on the authority given to the apostles and how they carried out their mission.

The other scriptures that the group explored concerning the apostles dealt with their calling and commission. For this part of the discussion, this writer utilized Kurt Aland's *Synopsis of the Four Gospels*.¹⁵⁴ By looking at how Jesus approached and called each of the disciples synoptically, the participants were able to see a clear picture of how Jesus operated and how His followers responded. Then, the group examined what it means to be called and

¹⁵³ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, *Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, v.10.

¹⁵⁴ Kurt Aland, *Synopsis of the Four Gospels: Greek-English Edition of the Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, on the Basis of the Greek Text of Nestle- Aland 27th Edition and Greek New Testament 4th Revised Edition, the English Text Is the Second Edition of the Revised Standard Version Thirteenth edition. (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 2007).

commissioned. Each participant expressed what he thought calling meant and shared personal insights into how they experienced Jesus' calling on their lives. They also explored how the apostles were commissioned and what Jesus' commission looks like for their own lives. The participants' accounts were further fleshed out pertaining to how their calling and commission are now to be carried out as an undershepherd and how their perspectives have changed when their calling is now looked at considering leading from eternity.

The final part of the discussion looked at the traditions surrounding the deaths of the apostles. Many of the participants were familiar with Peter being crucified by the hands of Nero, John's exile to Patmos (Revelation 1:9), and Judas Iscariot's death by hanging (Matthew 27:3-10).¹⁵⁵ Although Paul was not one of the original twelve, he was an apostle by his own right, and like Peter, also suffered a martyr's death by Nero's consent.¹⁵⁶ The rest of the apostles, however, were a bit more foreign to the group. There was a good discussion about James, son of Zebedee, and the different Jameses found in the scriptures, which led to a discussion about James, the brother of Jesus. The session ended with an exposition on doubting Thomas (John 20:24-29). The participants knew of his reticence about the resurrected Christ until he put his fingers in the holes of Jesus' hands and side, and they learned of his travel and subsequent martyrdom in India.¹⁵⁷ The wrap up of this session pointed to the apostles' willingness to go to the ends of the earth, despite the prospects of death, to take the most important message in the universe and lead others into eternity.

¹⁵⁵ John Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* (Lanham, MD: Dancing Unicorn Books, 2016), 15.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

Summary

With the completion of the sessions there was a collective sigh of relief. After numerous delays due to institutional operations and maneuvering through the COVID-19 pandemic protocols, the belabored work of the sessions was completed. The overall sense from the group was that they could now begin implementing what they learned. Some of the participants already had pending appeals for reduced sentencing and wanted to submit completion information to their respective legal teams for the judge's review. Moreover, the participants now had an appreciation of their current situation in the pandemic of a greater need to develop future leaders through their individual discipleship plans. A final note that this writer was left with at the conclusion of this project was the requests from other inmates who wanted to take the course based on the recommendations of the participants.

Chapter 4

Results

One of the main goals for any incarcerated individual is to get out of prison. However, for a good percentage of the prison population they will not see the outside of the prison walls as a free person for the rest of their life. For those individuals with life-long sentences there is little motivation for any sort of self-improvement beyond surviving one's time of incarceration.

The purpose of this study was to develop a program to address the lack of acknowledgment of incentivized programming from the First Step Act for incarcerated individuals with sentences ranging from twenty years to life. The goals of the project were to develop a continuity of leadership in the absence of the primary ministry leader (i.e., the Chaplain), develop an understanding of the undershepherd concept, and to develop an understanding of the implications of an eternal self. This chapter contains the results of the phenomenological study conducted to address the problem and goals of this research project.

This writer used the qualitative phenomenological research method to collect data through an oral questionnaire of open-ended questions, pre- and post-course questionnaire, lecture studies, and written assignments. This chapter will cover the analysis of the phenomenological study and how it addresses the research question. In addition, this chapter includes a demographic breakdown of the participants and an explanation of how the analysis was accomplished. The use of thematic coding allowed this writer the opportunity to see the development of the participants in the achievement of the set goals.

Setting

Each participant involved in this study is a current resident at the United States Penitentiary Canaan in Waymart, Pennsylvania. Each participant was recruited through a flyer that was posted on an internal electronic communication system. Each participant consented in writing to the research project, each of which in turn were selected based on their oral interview questions. Data collection commenced as outlined in Chapter 3. The set of questions were the same for each applicant, although follow-up questions varied. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured for each participant. The entirety of the research project was conducted while simultaneously navigating COVID-19 pandemic protocols.

Demographics

There were twelve (N=12) participants for this research project. Each of the participants met the required criteria of having at least a twenty-year to a life sentence, clear conduct prior to the start of the project with at least five years of in-custody on his record, and adequate residency at the current institution. All the participants have at least a GED or High School education, with five participants obtaining education past High School. The following table is a breakdown of the selected participants (see table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Participant Information (N=12)

Participant	Race	Age	Sentence Length	Time Served
P1	Black	45	Life	21 yrs
P2	Black	48	Life	22 yrs
P3	White	53	240 mos	13 yrs
P4	Black	39	Life	17 yrs
P5	Black	45	Life	19 yrs
P6	White	64	Life	5 yrs
P7	Hispanic	53	Life	23 yrs
P8	Hispanic	46	Life	24 yrs
P9	Black	37	Life	12 yrs

P10	Black	51	Life	24 yrs
P11	Black	50	Life	29 yrs
P12	Hispanic	68	Life	31 yrs

Source: USP Canaan Data

The representation of the group is fairly consistent with the overall population make up of USP Canaan. Based on SENTRY statistics, 59% of the inmate population is Black, 36% is White, and 22% is Hispanic. For this project, 58% of the participants are Black, two percent are White, and 25% are Hispanic. Out of a population of about 1,200 inmates, 310 are serving a sentence of twenty years to life, or 26% of the total population. The life sentence percentage is slightly higher than the overall average of 16.9% of the total BOP.

Data Collection

The IRB approved the study on September 30, 2020, and the data collection process began on October 1, 2020. The recruitment flyer was sent via the internal electronic communication network for the inmate population, and the oral interview questions were conducted with the first fifteen applicants by October 3, 2020. Each participant consented to an interview with me after each participant responded with consent to participate. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic protocols, this writer could only choose twelve participants. Once the participant list was narrowed down to twelve, the first session took place on October 6, 2020. The three participants who were not included were excluded primarily because their criteria metric was not as robust as the selected participants. Each participant was willing to submit to this writer's leadership throughout this course of study.

Data was collected from three sources to facilitate data triangulation for this project. The first sources of data were pulled from the pre- and post-questionnaires, which were administered to the participants at the beginning of the project, and again at the conclusion of the project, respectively. A total of twelve participants provided data for the pre-questionnaire, but only

seven participants provided data for the post-questionnaire. The reasons for the loss of five participants is described above in the Implementation phase. The second data source comes from the session discussions. There were ten sessions for this project with an average time in each session of two hours. Session comments notes were carefully recorded by this writer and later transcribed into a Word document. The third data source consisted of four different writing assignments pertaining to this project. The writing assignments were used to gather the understanding of participants pertaining to the disseminated information from the project.

Revealed Themes

Qualitative analysis can be very subjective if a researcher is not observant to the dynamics of his or her project. As already mentioned, this writer utilized the pre- and post-course questionnaire, the oral interview questions, the notes of the extensive dialogue that occurred during the project sessions, and the participant's written assignments to thoroughly piece together a thematic analysis. The original plan involved uploading the transcripts to ATLAS.ti, and through thematic coding assess the accomplishment of the stated goals for this project. However, this writer was able to noticeably discern four overall themes based on word regularity through the pre- and post-questionnaire, the various writing assignments, and the careful notes from the session discussions. The common themes that emerged are 1.) the necessity of love for leadership to be affective, 2.) the understanding of eternity in order to lead a meaningful life, 3.) the concept of the undershepherd as a way of discipling others, and 4.) the essential nature of servanthood as a vital aspect of leadership (see figure 4.1).

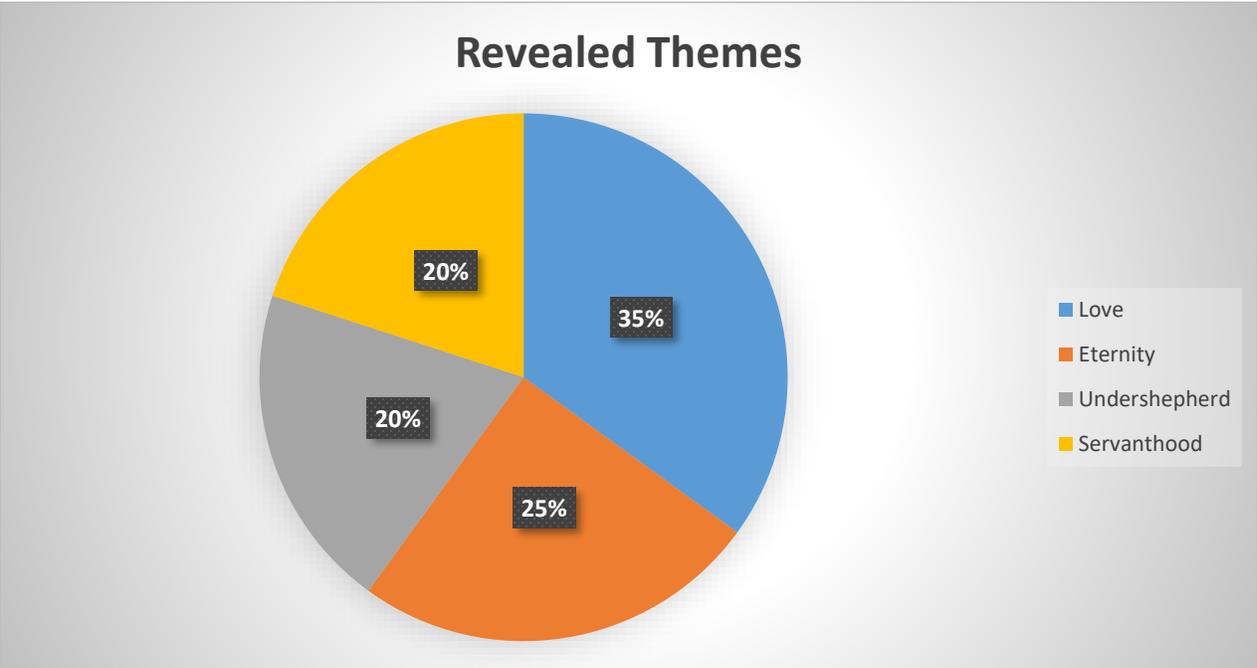


Figure 4.1: Revealed Themes
 Source: USP Canaan Data

Necessity of Love

The first session of this project asked the question “What is a leader?” Out of the various responses and musing of the participants, when all of the characteristics and traits of a leader were written on the classroom white board, the prevailing theme that each participant saw was love. Interestingly, none of the participants mentioned love as being a key attribute of a leader, yet the theme emerged out of the nearly thirty stated qualities of a leader. The bulk of the discussion about the necessity of love did not take place until session eight.

In session eight, the discussion centered on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The two primary texts used for the discussion were 1 Corinthians 12-14 and Galatians 5:22-23. Encased between chapters 12 and 14 of the first letter to the Corinthian church is chapter 13, which follows the Apostle Paul’s admonition to “earnestly desire the greater gift,” (1 Corinthians 12:31, NKJV).

The “greater gift” that Paul alludes to is love of which 1 Corinthians 13 exclusively discusses. The same emphasis on love is found in Galatians 5:22-23, where the primary fruit of the Spirit is love. The bulk of the discussion for this session centered around the four loves: *στοργή* (storge), *φιλία* (philia), *ἔρως* (eros), and *ἀγάπη* (agape).

The predominance of the love theme resulted from the various written assignments that were presented by the participants. Aside from the session discussions, there was no intimation of the love theme. Even in the pre- and post-questionnaire, the participants were not asked about their understanding of the concept of love. However, the theme emerged quickly, as was noted above, within the first session, and then dealt with further in the succeeding discussions. The following extracts show the participant’s various comments concerning the theme of love. One comment by P7 states, “In the same way that you cannot accomplish anything apart from Christ, you cannot be a leader without His love.” Another comment by P12 is, “Look at the responses to what makes up a leader!’ ‘Without love none of the traits make sense.” P6 states, “Love makes and completes the leader.” A further comment by P9 is, “It would seem that love has to be the make or break point between a good leader and a poor leader.” A final comment by P8 is, “If you love God but hate your brother, you make God a liar.”

Further discussion emerged during the latter discussions on love that surrounded the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as the concepts of good and evil. Specifically, the question was asked by P5, “Does God love Satan?” Admittedly, this question caught this writer off guard. However, the question really explored how deep God’s love is for His creation, for each creature, and for each of us as human beings. Through the discussion, the group and this writer explored the theological concept of good vs. evil, God’s justice and holiness, and how each one of us is separated from God because of sin.

The first of the statements comes from P1 where he states, “God can’t love Satan because the devil is a liar, murder, and thief.” Another statement by P4 is, “If God is love then He should love everyone, including the devil.” A rejoinder to P4 comes from P8 who states, “God cannot love a perpetual sinner who does not seek forgiveness.” A follow-up statement by P9 is, “Agape love is fellowship love, light cannot have fellowship with darkness.” And, a final statement by P3 is, “Without love there is no justice, and God is a just God. Therefore, God’s love is for everyone, including the devil, but God cannot make you love Him and there is a reckoning for those who do not love God.”

In the written assignments, again the theme of love emerged. One of the written assignments involved writing about one important character trait from the leaders that were presented during sessions three through five. From the writing assignment, 64% of the participants expressed love as the predominant character trait of a leader (see figure 4.2).

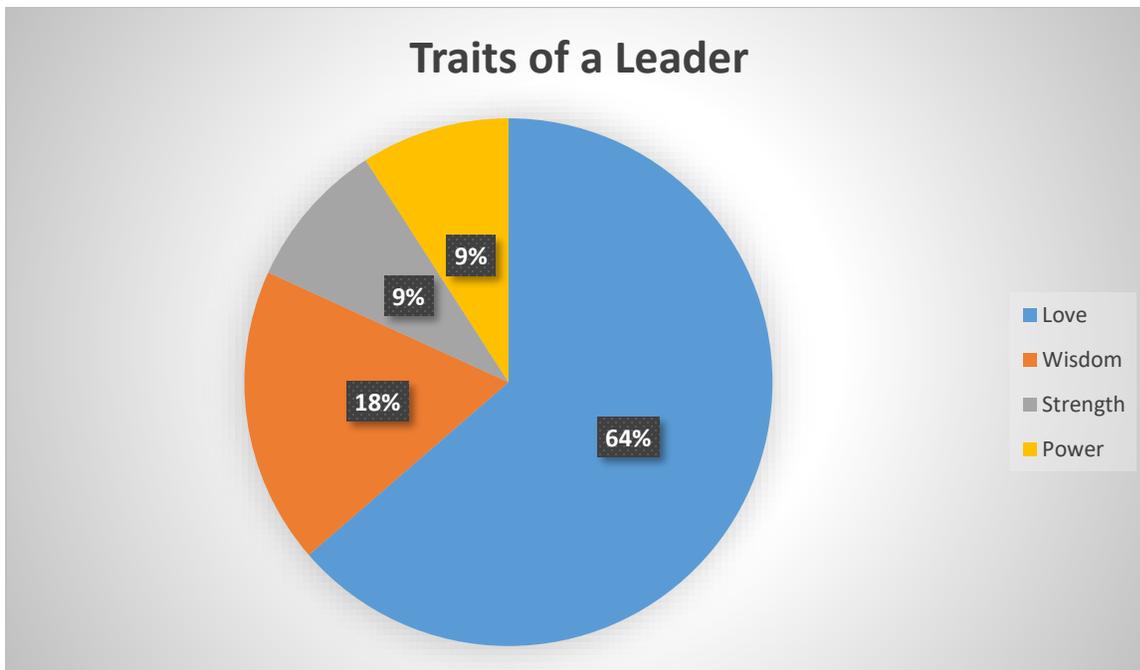


Figure 4.2: One Important Character Trait of a Leader
Source: USP Canaan Data

Through the writing assignments, there were various tie-ins where love was the dominant theme. In his concluding remarks on Martin Luther King, Jr., P4 wrote, “A great leader must have vision and be able to lead in love. MLK is the epitome of both by uniting different cultures and races and economic backgrounds.” In another paper on Queen Elizabeth I, P6 writes, “She (Queen Elizabeth I) had two goals as a ruler: to avoid marriage and to avoid war. Through her love for country and countrymen, she emanated mystery and desirability to accomplish her goals.” Further there were three separate papers that pertained to Jesus Christ as their spiritual leader. In one paper, P8 wrote about Jesus’ love for mankind that inspired him to be more like Jesus. Another, P4, writes, “Jesus to me was the greatest example of faith and righteousness and love.” The third paper by P12 states, “Jesus would say ‘Don’t be afraid’ for us to trust in God, surrender to God, never sway on faith because then we will love and be loved. We will know God’s mercy and power is unlimited and there for us.” A final paper was about Gideon. In his paper, P7 writes, “Gideon was able to lead because he was being lead [sic] by inspiration of divine love. Every step of the way, even on how to pick the men with he overcame the Midianites, was bound in love.”

The emergence of the necessity of love as a leading theme for this project was an unintended consequence. This writer did not intentionally design the curriculum to specifically deal with love other than what was expressed in session eight during the discussion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Instead, the necessity of love appeared as a leitmotif from the beginning discussions and carried through the heart of this project. The love theme was expressed by the participants to be the primary motive for their leadership and how love can only be manifested through the eternity of the living God.

Understanding of Eternity

The whole of this project was based on the aspect that one's understanding of eternity will result in changed action and develop a better outlook on life. The theme of eternity revealed itself as the primary motif of this project's undertaking. Beginning with the recruitment flyer, applicants were aware of the project title: Leading from Eternity. In the pre- and post-course questionnaire a specific question asks: "In one sentence, what is your understanding of eternity." Furthermore, the opening session explored what leading from eternity entailed. From these initial stages of development, the leading from eternity theme was a consistent topic throughout the session discussions. Yet, the understanding of eternity theme played second fiddle to the larger theme of love.

In the pre-course questionnaire, 100% of the participants had an answer to the question pertaining to eternity. Albeit, the answers varied and some were not very cogent, there was an answer and a reflection about eternity. Of the varied responses in the pre-questionnaire the participants provided their best idea of what eternity means. A display of the varied answers from all the participants grouped by their general meaning can be seen in figure 4.3.

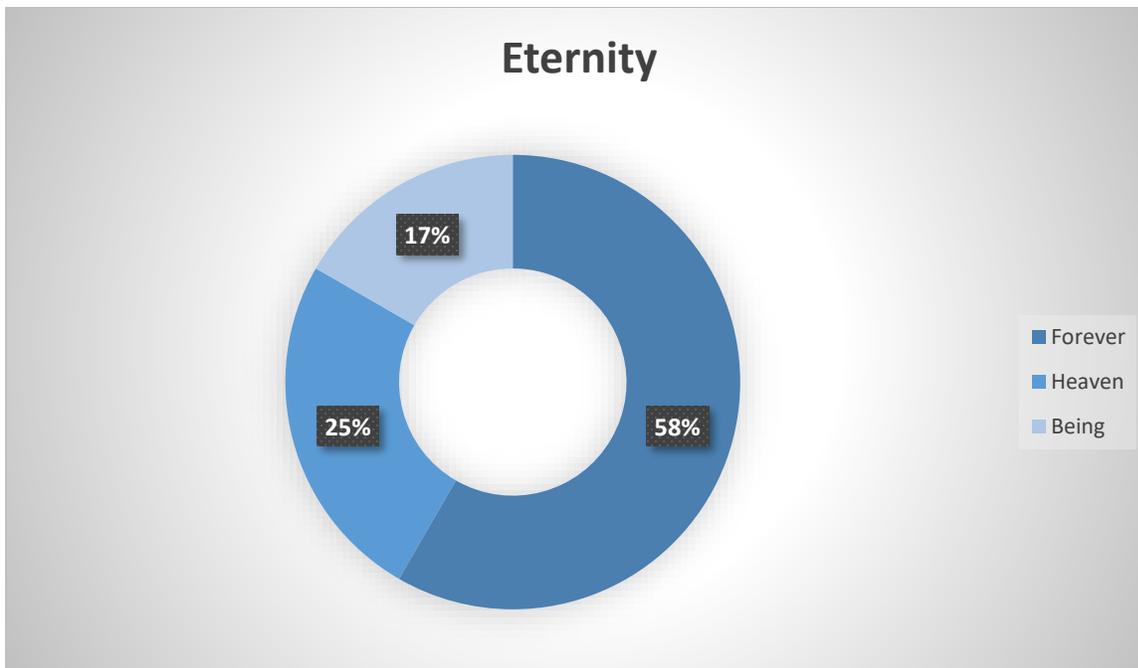


Figure 4.3: General Understanding of Eternity
 Source: USP Canaan Data

Some of the answers prevalent to the question are as follows. For instance, P1 answered, “Eternity is forever, the afterlife.” Another response, by P4, “Eternity is life in heaven.” P3 responded with, “Eternity to me is something everlasting whether spiritually or physically.” A response by P5 is, “[Eternity] is forever, either as a resurrected believer or as a transformed believer.” A similar response by P9 is, “My life forever, after this one.” A final response by P12 is, “You will be here today and tomorrow alive with God in heaven.” These responses were fleshed more fully during the session discussions. Aside from this writer’s emphasis on eternal matters, there was not a lot of lively discussion about eternity until session six, which explored Blackaby’s book *Spiritual Leadership*.

During the course of discussion on spiritual leadership, the one quote from Blackaby that this writer used that grabbed everyone’s attention was: “While investing in institutions may allow leaders to extend their influence beyond their lifetime, only by channeling their energy into

the kingdom of God can leaders elongate their influence into eternity.”¹⁵⁸ To a handful of incarcerated men who have already invested an average of twenty years of their lives in an institution, they began to wake up to the fact that their life, even while incarcerated, can mean much more in light of eternity, which sparked a flurry of discussion points.

The initial comment by P5 asks, “So, leading from eternity starts with recognizing what it means to be human?” The question was followed up by P12 who stated, “Understanding eternity involves understanding what it means to have God’s image on you.” Then, P7 made this statement, “A God who can supply all of your needs from His riches and glory can do this only if he is eternal.” In addition, P6 added to P7 where he states, “A God who is all powerful, all knowing, and everywhere present has to be eternal.” More profoundly, P4 adds, “Understanding eternity means that it will take eternity to understand the eternal God.” The discussion was closed out with a statement by P1 where he states, “Leading others from an eternal perspective necessitates an intimate knowledge of an eternal God.”

Along with the discussions the theme of understanding eternity came out in the writing assignments. One of the writing assignments was to write about a religious leader that was not discussed in the sessions. Of the submissions, P7 wrote about Joshua from the Bible. In his paper P7 wrote about Joshua’s encounter with the commander of the army of the Lord. P7 made the link between the eternal God and the “necessity of obedience as a leader in leading others into the Promised Land (as in the case of Joshua), but also the eternal promise land that is to come.” Another submission by P3, which came from a different perspective, displayed the eternal power of the “All Father” (according to Pagan tradition), and how everything that emanates from him fills our eternal being. A third submission by P6 was about Job. In his

¹⁵⁸ Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 239.

writing, P6 explained how the whole of the book seemed to him to be a metaphor of eternity. He demonstrated how Job’s faithfulness flowed from God’s faithfulness that ultimately kept “Job from sin and from charging God with wrongdoing.” Because of Job’s faithfulness God restored more to him than what he had from the beginning. In the same way, P6 writes: “In eternity God gives us what we don’t deserve, defeats the devil, and blesses our faithfulness.”

Through the discussions and writing assignments the participants attempted to wrap their finite minds around the infinite idea of eternity. From the discussion points the participants formulated ideas of what it means to be human, what the image of God entails, and how temporal this life is. The concluding remarks in understanding eternity came from the post-questionnaire. The post-questionnaire revealed, like the pre-questionnaire, that 100% of the participants have an understanding concerning eternity. The difference between the pre- and post-questionnaire is that the answers were more thoughtful and intelligible (see table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Post-questionnaire remarks on understanding eternity

Participant	Reponses
P1	“God is eternal and plants eternity in our hearts. We are created for an eternal relationship with Him.”
P2	“Through God eternity is a perpetual existence that goes beyond the beginning and the end of our current existence.”
P3	“The everlasting God gives us an eternal forever. In Him we each can know His infinite character when viewed through His eyes.”
P4	“God’s timeless forever allows for us to have an eternal existence with Him. Without Him there is an eternal separation for whoever rejects His free gift of grace.”
P5	“God is without beginning or end, and He offers a never ending future through His eternal love for each of us.”
P6	“God offers salvation by being re-born in the Spirit. In that salvation is an eternal blessing of being in His presence forever.”
P7	“God offers forever time for all those who choose to follow His son Jesus Christ. The eternal life offered to all those who follow Him will know life without end.”

Source: USP Canaan Data

The Concept of the Undershepherd

The notion of an undershepherd was a familiar concept to most of the participants. From the pre-course questionnaire 71% of the participants answered yes to the question: “Are you familiar with the term ‘undershepherd?’” The percentage of participant’s familiarity with the concept of an undershepherd jumped to 100% in the post-course questionnaire. The concept of the undershepherd was not introduced until session nine. It was in session nine that the discussion focused on what it means to be a shepherd in general. The participants understood that a shepherd is to protect the flock, lead the flock to good pastures and water, and to provide for the flock’s shelter. The shepherding idea was then seen through the lens of Psalm 23, and ultimately translated to Jesus Christ who is the Good Shepherd. Finally, the vision of an undershepherd materialized with Frye’s description from his book *Jesus the Pastor*, where he writes, “As shepherds we are apprenticed to the Chief Shepherd and are invited to live with the same empowerment that Jesus had.”¹⁵⁹

During the session nine discussion the participants readily reacted to Frye’s elucidation of what it feels like to be an undershepherd. Frye expresses the feeling by writing, “Deep-felt compassion is one of the primary and controlling emotions of pastoral ministry. Jesus felt it and, as Chief Shepherd, modeled it for all who would pastor.”¹⁶⁰ The participants’ reactions are insightful.

One reaction to Frye’s exposition of the undershepherd concept is found in a statement by P4 where he states, “When Christ’s compassion hits us we learn how to help ourselves, not in a selfish way, but in a way where we learn to love our selves. That is when we learn to be an

¹⁵⁹ Frye, *Jesus the Pastor*, 55.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

undershepherd.” A further comment by P7 is, “An undershepherd who acts compassionately seeks to help those with short sentences since we have learned how to live our long ones.” A final remark by P6 is, “A shepherd cannot force the sheep go through the sheep gate. Only the shepherd can bring them through. Jesus said that the sheep hear His voice. When we, as undershepherds, are listening to Jesus’ voice, we can lead the flock that He gives us.” A turn in the discussion came when P5 asked, “Why be an undershepherd when Jesus went to the cross to die?” This was quickly answered by P3, who said, “Leadership requires sacrifice.” Most of the rest of the participants quickly recited Jesus’ words that are recorded in John’s Gospel, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends,” (John 15:13, NKJV). The rest of the discussion teased the material for session ten that includes the sacrifices that each of the Apostles endured being undershepherds of Christ.

Another area where the participants showed their understanding of being an undershepherd was in their final writing project. The final writing project tasked the participants to develop a plan that involves three to five people to which they can be undershepherds. In that writing assignment the participants expressed their desire to be undershepherds to Christ.

In one of the submitted papers, P3 writes, “As a leader, I need to be a knowledgeable undershepherd in the area for which I am leading. Help others who are seeking to achieve the goals of the Chief Shepherd by being His undershepherd.” In another submission, P12 writes, “...being the example as an undershepherd so that the path you are on is leading others with a strong sense of necessity that is full of passion and surrender, a strong belief and faith in Christ.” Further, P1 writes, “An undershepherd demonstrates a supreme example when abiding in the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and

self-control.” A final extract from the writing of P7 is, “As an undershepherd I influence the men around me by my example. Showing Christ in everything I do.”

A corollary to the undershepherd theme is found in the pre- and post-questionnaire concerning discipleship. In the pre-questionnaire only four participants out of the original twelve (33%) answered the question “How important is discipleship?” and the follow-up question “How many discipling relationships are you currently engaged in?” In the post-questionnaire the percentage nearly tripled to 86% with six out of the seven participants answering. While the overall importance of discipleship only showed a slight difference, 8.1 disciples per participant in the pre-questionnaire to 8.14 disciples per participant in the post-questionnaire, the number of disciples in which the participants are now engaged with in comparison to when they first started the project jumped considerably (see figure 4.4).

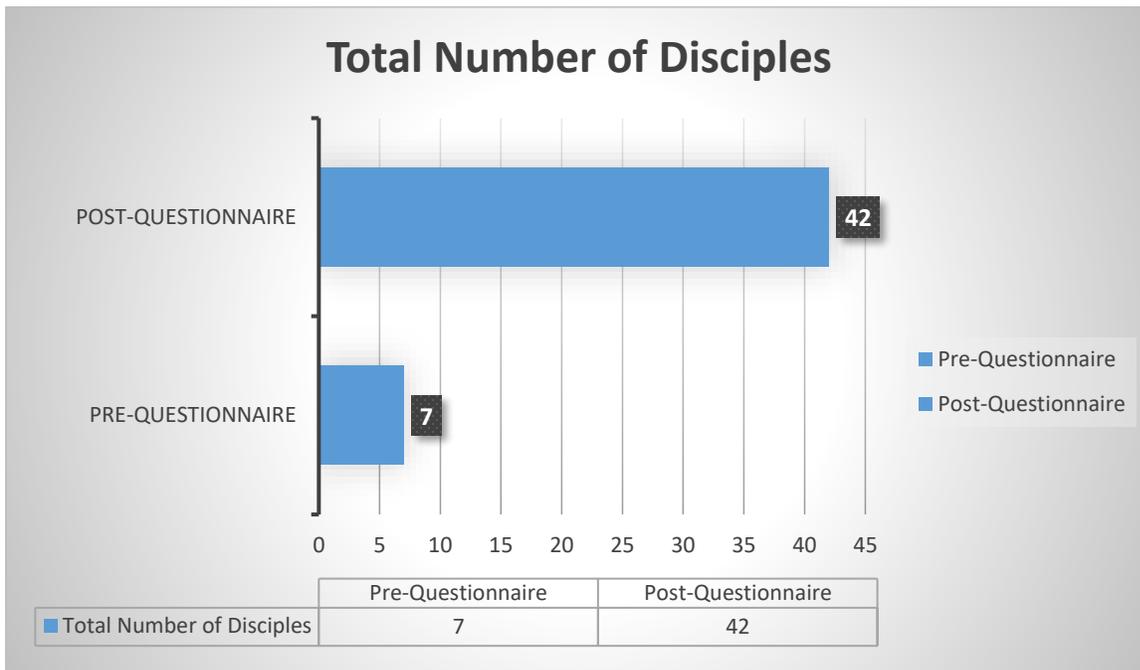


Figure 4.4: Overall Importance of Discipleship
 Source: *USP Canaan*

The role of an undershepherd became clear to the participants as they saw their role as a leader. As P8 put it, “leaders cannot be blind leading the blind.” In other words, they

understood that leading from eternity required an eternal outlook. By taking on the role of undershepherd the participants also felt the weight of what the Chief Shepherd is asking of them. P9 quoted from the epistle of James that, “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness” (James 3:1, ESV). This scripture gave the solemnity to each of the participants’ idea of leadership and the task of being an undershepherd.

Servanthood as a Vital Aspect of Leadership

A final theme that emerged in this project was the idea that servanthood is a vital aspect of leadership. During the oral interview questions most of the participants understood what it means to be a servant. The various answers to the question: “What is your understanding of being a servant?” pointed to a good understanding. Of the responses recorded, P3 stated, “A servant is one who is willing to sacrifice for another.” Another reply to the question came from P5 where he states, “A servant loves other like himself.” Again, another response is recorded from P6, “A servant is one who follows Christ who came to be a servant.” A final comment comes from P12 where he states, “A servant lays down his own self-interest for others.”

The theme of servanthood also occurred within the opening sessions of this project. During the second discussion, as the characteristics and traits of the leader were being noted on the whiteboard, the notion of servanthood could be seen in what a leader does, what a leader has, what a leader possesses, and what a leader considers. The final consensus of the group at the end of the session was that a leader must be a servant in order to lead. In each of the four categories the idea of one who serves, servanthood, and servant spirit showed to be the dominant characteristic/trait of a leader (see figure 4.5).

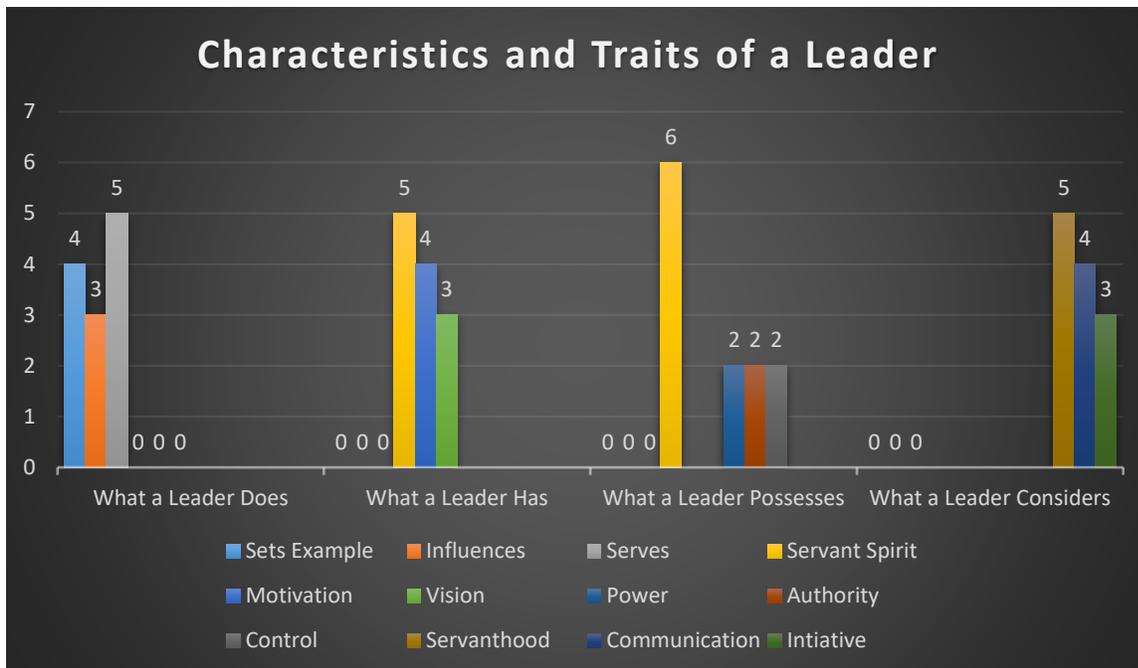


Figure 4.5: Noted Characteristics and Traits of a Leader
 Source: USP Canaan Data

Throughout the several writing assignments the subject of servanthood was prevalent. Most of the participants, whether writing about secular leaders or biblical leaders, noted the idea of the leader being a servant. In his writing on the biblical figure Joshua, P7 wrote, “Joshua wouldn’t have been successful if he wasn’t a servant to God and His people.” Another instance of the servanthood theme is recognized in the downfall of Julius Caesar where P6 writes, “The Great Caesar’s demise came when he stopped being a servant to the people.” In writing about George Washington, P8 writes, “During the years 1759-75, Washington concentrated on managing his land around Mount Vernon and served in the Virginia House of Burgesses. At this time he and other landowners felt increasingly exploited by British regulations, and Washington turned back to his civil duty to serve the people.” Writing about the Apostle Paul, P11 writes “His [Paul’s] ability to relate to people from all walks of life as in his own words ‘I became all things to all people in order to gain some to Christ,’ which meant sometimes he was a father, brother, a listener, an advisor, but more importantly a servant.” A final excerpt from a paper that

P4 wrote, “Jesus is my spiritual leader because I want and need that faith. God is great, God is unlimited and Jesus always showed how great, merciful, and powerful God is by becoming a servant.”

Concerning servant leadership Blackaby notes, “Perhaps the greatest Christian influence on leadership theory has been in the area of ‘servant leadership.’ Jesus' example has become the model not just for Christian leaders but also for secular leaders. In all of literature there is no better example of servant leadership than that of Christ on the night of his crucifixion.”¹⁶¹

Through their discourse in the session discussions, writing examples, and general knowledge the participants have a good understanding of this leadership concept. The participants were able to relate the notion of servanthood not just to the leadership context, but they were also able to see how an undershepherd needs to be a servant, first of the Chief Shepherd and then to their followers. Also, the participants understood Qohelet’s admonition in Ecclesiastes that a servant has an eternal factor to, “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man,” (Ecclesiastes 12:13, ESV). More so, the participants expressed the necessity of a leader to be a servant.

Summary

Working with individuals who have nothing more to look forward to than another day inside a maximum-security prison is a tough row to hoe. The harder aspect of working with individuals in such a context is developing an interest in which incarcerated men with long prison sentences develop the initiative to invest their lives in others. In this project, *Leading from Eternity*, a dozen men who have been incarnated so far for an average of twenty years developed a fortitude within themselves to want to see a change in a changeless environment.

¹⁶¹ Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 132.

Through this project, each participant developed a sense of leadership that can be implemented in a setting where a Chaplain may not be readily available. Each participant recognized the importance of being an undershepherd to the Chief Shepherd in which they can shepherd others through a discipling relationship. More so, each participant matured in their understanding of eternity, an eternal God, and the implications of eternity as it pertains to their individual self. Finally, through this project the participants garnered a healthy way of spending their time being encased in a correctional institution that will ultimately bare itself out in light of eternity.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In his book, *Call Sign Chaos: Learning to Lead*, Jim Mattis retells an incident in his life prior to his storied military career where he was often in jail for underage drinking. One weekend, Mattis found himself in a cell that had a window overlooking a muddy parking lot. In that cell was a seasoned convict who asked Mattis what he was looking at through the window. When Mattis told him about the muddy parking lot, the old convict who was laying on his bunk looking up through the window said, “From down here, I see stars in the night sky... You can [choose] to look at stars or mud.”¹⁶² From that point on, Mattis changed his thinking from that of being a victim of one’s circumstances to choosing how he would respond to his situation. Specifically, Mattis writes, “You don’t always control your circumstances, but you can always control your response.”¹⁶³

Creating a program in a prison environment is easy. There is a plethora of programs to keep inmates occupied while they serve their sentences. Some of the programs are meaningful. There is the General Education Diploma, the Residential Drug Abuse Program, and the Life Connections Program, each of which are proven evidenced based programs within the Federal Bureau of Prisons. However, none of the mentioned programs offer any future hope to an incarcerated individual with a life sentence.

¹⁶² James Mattis and Francis West, *Call Sign Chaos* (New York: Random House, 2019), 6.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

This chapter will evaluate this project in relation to similar faith based re-entry projects, examine this project's success, develop conclusions about this project, provide guidance for other prison ministries that are looking for viable faith based re-entry programs, and suggest future research recommendations.

Comparing Results

One of the most notable faith-based re-entry prison programs is that which is conducted at Angola Prison in Louisiana by New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS). Angola Prison is the largest maximum security state prison in the United States with the highest per capita incarceration rate.¹⁶⁴ Compared to the Federal Prison System's 16.9% of inmates who have twenty years to life, 80% of Angola's prison population is serving a life sentence.¹⁶⁵ As a result, NOBTS has a primary focus to serve inmates with a life sentence. Unlike the BOP, state prisons like Angola are not under the mandates of the First Step Act, which produces programming that is inclusive. However, Angola can operate their system under NOBTS as an exclusive program from a Christian perspective.

Aside from a few state prisons that imposed faith-based housing units, the only other program offered to help reduce recidivism through faith-based means is the InnerChange Freedom Initiative. Again, in comparison to the BOP, these faith-based enterprises are faith specific, almost exclusively Christian, and do not garner any hope of relief through the First Step Act. A steadily held statistic that 72% of released prisoners will recidivate in three to five years compared to 80-90% who complete faith-based re-entry programs typically transition to and are

¹⁶⁴ Hallet, *The Angola Prison Seminary Effects of Faith-Based Ministry on Identity Transformation*, 3.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

successful in society.¹⁶⁶ Despite these figures, faith-based programming is limited, mainly due to issues of inclusivity and providing programming that is geared more to general spirituality.

The overall impact of *Leading from Eternity*, compared to other programs, is that while it is not exclusively faith specific, it is thoroughly Christian. The program is applicable to practitioners of other faiths provided they translate the material to their own faith background and teaching. Also, *Leading from Eternity*, is established to meet a tremendous gap produced by the First Step Act. While programs like the one provided by NOBTS at Angola ministers to and develops life sentences prisoners, *Leading from Eternity* is designed to build a leadership cadre geared towards freedom, and despite a long sentence, release.

Success versus Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to teach incarcerated Christian men leadership skills training, to develop continuity of leadership in the absence of the current ministry leader, which is this Chaplain. The primary motivating factor surrounds the use of time and energy to pour into the incarcerated men the necessary biblical knowledge and spiritual character that will produce leaders who lead from an eternal understanding. The spiritual leadership provided by the Chaplain, and passed on to those who will remain behind the prison walls long after he or she moves on, will provide a permanency of what God is doing in the lives of the confined.

Through the trials and tribulations that this project endured, it would seem that the clear results demonstrate a successful research project. The three goals of the project are to establish a continuity of leadership, understand the undershepherd concept, and discern the implications of the eternal self. By means of the course discussion groups, the various written assignments, and

¹⁶⁶ Matthew R. Durose, Alexia D. Cooper, Ph.D., and Howard N. Snyder, BJS Statisticians, *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 30 States in 2005: Patterns from 2005 to 2010*, US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, April 2014, (accessed July 1, 2020).

the received responses on both the pre- and post-questionnaires, all the participants moved from a level of perceived or limited knowledge of leadership to one of competence. From this assessment, the project was successful.

Conclusions

The overall success of this project is due mainly to a desire by individuals with long sentences to change. For nearly thirty years the current incarceration mantra is to keep adding time. At some point an individual can only handle so much. When an act or law is enacted that offers a level of hope, but then turns out to be nothing more than a ruse, there is very little incentive for an incarcerated individual to want to continue to do well. The lack of motivation contributes to a loss of meaningfulness in life. As a result, the initiative to program is also lost.

For a handful of participants who are bound by life sentences and have been stuck for the most part for the past twenty years, the tentativeness to participate in “another program” was palpable. However, with the overall design and the potential benefit explained, the participants put their trust in this writer, as their Chaplain, to lead them to a higher ground. Each one of the participants sank their heart and soul into this project and produced a result that led to changed lives. No longer do the participants see themselves as inmate so-and-so, or registration number 12345, but as human beings created in the image of God with a purpose of living this life in light of eternity.

Along with the participants’ willingness to contribute to this project each one of them developed a basis for leadership that is independent from this writer as their Chaplain. While each one still relies on this writer’s role as their Chaplain, they now have a boosted confidence of leadership that is beneficial to others. Whereas before the participants were followers, now they

each want to develop others to lead. Their self-perpetuating style takes the burden of any one person and distributes the weight of responsibility across a spectrum of strengths that makes more people successful in any assigned venture.

A further contribution to the success of this project is that each individual took on the role of the undershepherd. The concept of the undershepherd produced a strong identity in the participants. By following the Chief Shepherd the participants knew that they had a shepherd who would not let them down. Through love and servanthood, the participants established themselves as undershepherds in a model that was not made for failure. Instead, they understood the Chief Shepherd as one who will not fail, but “will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus,” (Phil 4:19, ESV).

A final contributing factor that produced successful results for this project was the understanding for the implications of eternity. While eternity is an ambitious subject, it is one that is worth delving into for the sake of understanding oneself however minute that might be. Again, the participants embarked on an exploration of the self in light of eternity and found an unshakeable center. Once they understood how they fit into an eternal plan, the participants relinquished control of their circumstances and began developing a plan of purpose for their lives. The implication of the eternal self had the participants resonating with Marcus Aurelius where he writes, “What we do now echoes in eternity.”¹⁶⁷

Recommendations for Future Study

There are two areas of recommendation for future study. One area is furthering the study to develop evidenced-based faith-based re-entry programming. The second area is studying the effects of faith-based re-entry programming after incarceration. Both ideas have their

¹⁶⁷ Marcus Aurelius, Emperor of Rome, *Meditations* (Project Gutenberg, 2001): np.

difficulties, but with an ardent emphasis on these two areas there could be the creation of restorative programming that will lead to life change instead of programs designed to just pass the time.

Developing faith based re-entry programming that is evidence based should be a primary goal. Currently, the re-entry sector focuses on the needs of the individual. The primary re-entry needs that almost all the offered prison programs revolve around employment through vocational training and assistance programs, physical and behavioral health in the form of therapeutic communities and cognitive behavioral therapy, housing, and social support. For these many re-entry needs there is a whole catalogue with programs that are evidence based. However, in comparison, there are only two programs: the InnerChange Freedom Initiative and the Life Connections Program that are proven programs of a faith-based nature. Further, each of these programs only have one study attached to them that gives them any credibility in the larger re-entry forum.

The development of faith based re-entry programs that are studied and shown to be proven will enhance inmate re-entry and significantly reduce recidivism. The whole hope behind the *Leading from Eternity* project is to provide programming from a faith perspective that will assist in the re-entry effort. Through further studies and program development there can be an enrichment of the re-entry programming that will benefit an individual beyond the temporal. Though there are many faith groups that have a stake to claim, and rightfully so, there is only one faith that will matter in eternity. It is the development of programming that helps individuals to look past the secular and find greater meaning in life beyond this life that will change the nature of not only the prison yard but the back yard as well.

A second area to recommend for future study is studying the effects of faith based re-

entry programming after incarceration. This is the harder aspect of incarceration to study. As mentioned in chapter 1, the underlying assumption is that only when an individual is released from custody will the effects of transformation be known. In the controlled environment of a prison setting self-governance is nearly impossible. While there are many who do program with good intentions there are just as many who want to manipulate the system to get their own way. In either case, each participant of the system is attempting to garner one thing: freedom!

The only real study of the effects of programming after incarceration usually comes back in the form of the recidivism rate. This negative metric is not beneficial in developing useful programs that will lead to life change. By engaging in a study that is aimed at following an individual's post-incarceration there can be a better knowledge base built to encourage institutions and incarcerated individuals to focus on that which is meaningful. Specifically, by studying the impact of faith based programming in the lives of the formerly interned there can be a renewed effort in the transformation of the individual rather than allowing an inmate to simply bide his or her time. This type of study is more intensive since it is no longer contained in a controlled environment. However, this type of study is beneficial because it will hopefully provide a venue of change with an impact beyond the walls and into the lives of families and communities.

Recommendations for Correctional Chaplains

As a correctional Chaplain with over eighteen years of experience "behind the wall," the foremost recommendation is to remain innovative. The correctional environment is predictable. Ask any staff member or inmate what he or she dislikes about prison and one of the first answers will include that of change. Anything that is out of the ordinary is considered suspect. However, that does not mean that a Chaplain must remain the same in practice.

As a Christian Chaplain this writer understands “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever,” (Hebrews 13:8, ESV). At the same time there is the old adage that is usually attributed to Heraclitus from Plato’s work, *Cratylus*, where he writes, “Heraclitus, I believe, says that all things pass and nothing stays, and comparing existing things to the flow of a river, he says you could not step twice into the same river.”¹⁶⁸ However, there is a difference between this world’s wisdom and godly wisdom as the Apostle James notes concerning wisdom, “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere,” (James 3:17, ESV). With this understanding it is prudent for a Chaplain to seek the necessary transformation of one’s soul amidst the stoic sanctums of the cell block.

The need for innovation needs to go beyond the familiar. Most of the written works on correctional Chaplaincy are replete with standard practice. If there is an opportunity for change it is usually found in individual correctional settings like Angola mentioned above. Further, Chaplains as a whole soak in a rich tradition that is carried over thirteen centuries as keepers of the cloak.¹⁶⁹ However, in today’s global climate where, as Abdu Murray puts it, “The post-truth Culture of Confusion elevates preferences and feelings over facts and truth,” a Chaplain needs to make the case with regards to his or her significance in society.¹⁷⁰ In a “me centered” culture, a Chaplain who redirects his or her ministry from that of preference and transmutes it in the direction of felt needs that touch the heart and the mind will find new ground. The sacred will not touch the secular unless the Chaplain is there to fill in the gap.

¹⁶⁸ Plato, *Cratylus* (Project Gutenberg, 1999), np.

¹⁶⁹ Thomas W. Beckner, *Correctional Chaplains: Keepers of the Cloak* (Orlando, FL: Cappella Press, 2012), 2.

¹⁷⁰ Murray, *Saving Truth*, 33.

In an environment that is set on status quo for operational security, there are times when chaos ensues. This project was no exception. Maintaining a level of innovation not just in project design, but in implementation of the project proved essential. While the probability of dealing with the lockdown was high, the bigger issue was in dealing with COVID-19 pandemic protocols. The pandemic interruption was not unique to USP Canaan, but was felt throughout the local, state, and federal prison systems.¹⁷¹ However, unlike many schools and tele-commute work options, inmates do not have internet or social media access. Also, any volunteer support required for programming was immediately halted. The innovation required to ensure protocols were adhered allowed for this writer to complete his project and set a standard for other program managers to follow.

Final Summary

The end result of this research project was to provide meaningful programming that is beyond the norm of the standard fare and to address a need that is not addressed in the reformative First Step Act. By developing a program that affects approximately 20% of the Federal Prison population the hope is that the hopeless will feel hopeful. This writer's heart for the duration of this project has focused on the needs of men who may never see another day as a free individual. As a result, there are now a little more than a handful of individuals who are now doing transformative work where there was very little before the start of this project.

The four revealed themes that emerged due this project are the earmarks of the worth of this project. The necessity of love within leadership to be effective points to the overall importance that each man in this project needs. To show love in a loveless society, specifically a maximum-security prison, helps to shape attitudes and provide outcomes in relationships that are

¹⁷¹ *COVID-19 Hampers Seminary Education in Prisons*, www.baptiststandard.com/news/bapstists/COVID-19-hampers-seminary-education-in-prisons, April 17, 2020, (accessed April 20, 2020).

beneficial for a safe and secure environment. The development from an understanding of eternity to leading a meaningful life allowed for the men to see themselves as an image-bearer of God. This switch in outlook provides a greater means by which each man can live his life with meaning. The concept of the undershepherd as a way of discipling others helps to form a strong basis to follow the Chief Shepherd in developing relationships and seeing the eventual change in others. Finally, the essential nature of servanthood as a vital aspect of leadership caused each individual to look circumspectly at their own lives. Whereas at one point these men had self-serving motives as their common denominator, now they see the bigger picture that is not about themselves and can focus their energies in producing something good.

King David is apt when he writes, “Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup...” (Psalm 16:5, NIV). For an incarcerated individual who recognizes his or her wrong doing, repents, and wants to do what is right, he or she understands the idea of what is meant for evil God turns around for His glory (Genesis 50:20). A turnaround of this nature provides a person the glimmer of hope needed to do time in a correctional facility. An understanding that changes the perspective of incarceration from the viewpoint of banishment to a viewpoint towards a new life is always a right outlook on the way to the eternal viewpoint. With an eternal perspective in one’s life, built with meaning from the Eternal God, it will help that person lead from eternity.

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LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 30, 2020

Richard Kowalczyk
Brent Kelly

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY19-20-393 Leading from Eternity

Dear Richard Kowalczyk, Brent Kelly:

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the date of the IRB meeting at which the protocol was approved: September 30, 2020. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make modifications in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update submission to the IRB. These submissions can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

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

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

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

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional
Research **Research Ethics Office**