

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

**Project of Enhancing the Emotional Wellbeing of Church Leadership at Trinity  
Baptist Church**

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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September 2021

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Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

**Thesis Project Approval Sheet**

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## THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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Effective church leaders are efficient in management of their emotional health. Research has diagnosed that most churches maintain dysfunctional learning environments because of emotionally unhealthy leadership. Dysfunctional environments are conducive to acclimatizing members to ill doctrine: methods instead of the mission, events instead of evangelism, expositors instead of exposures, and promote rituals instead of a righteous Savior. Emotionally unhealthy church leaders' practice and promote democratic efforts instead of theocratic. Assessment instrumentation was utilized. The assessment implemented two credible tools, one for emotional maturity and the other for discipleship. Research invitations were distributed to twenty church leaders at Trinity Baptist Church in Natchitoches, Louisiana. The assessment was provided before and after the seven-week training on Emotionally Healthy Discipleship. Seven church leaders participated in the assessment, eight leaders volunteered for the questionnaire, and three leaders participated in the interviews. Findings displayed a significant difference between emotional maturity and four of seven Emotional Healthy Discipleship Marks: (a) Be Before You Do, (b) Follow the Crucified, Not the Americanized, Jesus, (c) Make Love the Measure of Maturity, and (d) Lead Out of Weakness and Vulnerability.

*Keywords:* leadership, emotional health, emotional maturity, discipleship, and spiritual disciplines.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate my research and this dissertation to my parents, David and Janie McGuffee, parents that have taught me ways of Scripture with guidance and love. I am gracefully grateful to my wife (Ashley) and my children (Ethan, Madison, and Isaac) for their support, patience, and open-mindedness as I limited time with them to finish my academical pursuit.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

The Doctor of Ministry project focuses on dysfunctional emotional qualities of church leadership that promote unproductivity among members. The commonalities of emotional instability are indigenous to church groups by dysfunctional church leaders. This project is designed to identify the emotional and cultural dynamics of church leadership at Trinity Baptist Church in Natchitoches, Louisiana. Church leadership that erodes discipleship prevents spiritual maturity within believers. Peter Scazzero suggests emotional immaturity, focus on doing instead of being with God, dismissing church history, and having a wrong definition of success is dysfunctional in leadership traits.<sup>1</sup> Jesus taught thousands and yet devoted time to disciple only twelve disciples. Emotionally healthy leaders commit to small groups for purposeful conversations, and mentorship known as discipleship.<sup>2</sup>

The creation story displays God creating life by making the heavens and the earth. The Bible reveals the world is empty, lifeless, and dark. Scripture tells God's character, displaying his all-powerful presence, creating light and life with his spoken word. The church demonstrates God creating hope by salvation for a sinful and dying world. The Bible reveals impactful church leaders subjugate parishioners with doctrines, consequentialism, and cultural dynamics. Scripture tells the theocratic approach is creating a healthy church environment conducive to mission-centric endeavors and holistic discipleship. In Acts 11, The Apostle Paul and Barnabas used a theocratic approach to discipleship by investing in citizens' lives at Antioch. The discipleship

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Scazzaro, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021), 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

model portrayed within scripture mirrored the ministry of Jesus Christ, and the citizens called them Christians.<sup>3</sup> Karla Kincannon compares a beautiful painting to the finished masterpiece of scripture that constantly reminds the observer that the creator bestows beauty.<sup>4</sup> An emotionally healthy environment conditioned by the Holy Spirit affirms that believers can be reimaged to the image of God to reveal beauty and hope.

Divine counsel from the word of God renders theocratic guidance, wisdom and adapts a healthy alternative. Scripture reveals godly counsel, "Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end."<sup>5</sup> Epistemology is a moral judgment based on the cultural specificity of religious leaders. Phenomenological analyses rationality says that through emotions, our environment is disclosed, impacting our reasoning and social engagements.<sup>6</sup> Relationship reasoning produces immense emotional anguish during anxious moments. Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves reported that 70% of people reasoning their relationships during stressful times had immense emotional distress.<sup>7</sup> Personal understanding of one's emotional well-being can affect behavior. Self-awareness is to have a sense that emotions are purposeful and react differently to various situations.<sup>8</sup> Lauren Freeman suggests that affective framing is an alternative way of discerning people's character based on internal emotions and cognitions. Pastoral guidance with scripture and phenomenological approach can help parishioners

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<sup>3</sup> Acts 11:21-26, English Standard Version (ESV). Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references in this thesis project will be from the English Standard Version of the Bible

<sup>4</sup> Karla Kincannon, *Creativity and Divine Surprise* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2005), 169.

<sup>5</sup> Proverbs 19:20, King James Version (KJV).

<sup>6</sup> Annette Davidsen, "Phenomenological Approaches in Psychology and Health Sciences," 10, no. 3 (2013): 318-39, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3627202/>.

<sup>7</sup> Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves, *Emotional Intelligence* (San Diego: Talent Smart, 2009), 45.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

understand emotional nature and spiritual purpose. Ignoring our feelings, no matter how insignificant, we eliminate the chance to enhance our emotional well-being.<sup>9</sup>

### **Ministry Context**

The researcher currently serves as the senior pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Natchitoches, Louisiana. Trinity was birthed out of a tent revival held February 21-26, 1952. During the revival, thirty-five believers came forward during the invitation to express a desire to establish a new church. The first gathering occurred on Sunday, March. 2, 1952, to formulate plans to start a Missionary Baptist Church. The charter members had the first worship service under a tent. Rev. E. E. Fields, Missionary Director, preached a message. Church leadership materialized with a few believers developing the necessary steps to formulate a church in East Natchitoches. The pastor assisted new members in adopting their Articles of Faith, and new members created a new congregation. The Church Covenant was written, read, and adopted by the assembly. Trinity is located geographically in northwest Louisiana and is located 60 miles southeast of Shreveport.

The City of Natchitoches was founded in 1714 as the oldest permanent settlement in the Louisiana Purchase territory.<sup>10</sup> Natchitoches Historic Landmark District, the famous front street, cast a shadow on Cane River. Front street is a 33-block zone that displays various historic commercial buildings, restaurants, stores, churches, and gardens.<sup>11</sup> The city is famous for the yearly Christmas festival known as the "Festival of Lights." Several movies were filmed

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<sup>9</sup> Bradberry and Greaves, *Emotional Intelligence*, 45.

<sup>10</sup> "Natchitoches," natchitoches.com, accessed April 17, 2021, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace. 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

downtown Natchitoches such as *The Man in the Moon*, *Steel Magnolia*, and *Horse Soldiers*.<sup>12</sup> The town of Natchitoches is a diverse community and varies with generations. “The ethnic groups in Natchitoches Parish, LA are White (52.4%), Black (41.6%), Other (1.57%), and Hispanic (1.27%).”<sup>13</sup> Citizens in Natchitoches Parish, LA, speak English, and 99.4% are U.S. citizens.<sup>14</sup>

Trinity Baptist has a diverse congregation consisting of primarily senior citizens. The church consists of a mixture of Protestant denominational members and former Catholics. Worship service has liturgical aspects with traditional hymns. Parishioners are conservative and charismatic in fellowship with other members. The Christian household celebrates faith with various rituals that are indigenous to inherited culture. Some of the most beloved traditions at Trinity Baptist Church are fellowship meals, which are more sacred than worship at times. Cultural dynamics of Trinity place religious values on generational church leaders and displace worth from God to beloved members. The Bylaws at Trinity establish four leadership groups under the direction of the pastor.<sup>15</sup> Four leadership groups of the church are the administration team, deacons, committees, and church council.<sup>16</sup> However, the selection of all committees is made by two non-rotated ladies within the congregation. The administration team is composed of deacons and the treasurer. According to the bylaws, deacons are servants of the church strictly under the leadership of the pastor.<sup>17</sup> However, the four leadership groups are controlled and

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<sup>12</sup> “Natchitoches,” natchitoches.com.

<sup>13</sup> “Natchitoches, Louisiana,” Data USA, accessed April 20, 2021, <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/natchitoches-parish-la>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>16</sup> “Natchitoches, Louisiana,” Data USA, accessed April 20, 2021, <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/natchitoches-parish-la>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

orchestrated by less than 10% of the congregation. Family rituals inspire membership, and keeping traditional values sustains Trinity's identity to the community. Church cultural dynamics present complications for pastors as they have an average pastoral tenure of four years. Trinity, established for sixty-eight years, out of which have had 15 pastors. Church leadership maintains traditional trends in worship service and religious rituals throughout the service.

The community acknowledges Trinity Baptist as an old traditional church not adaptive to positive change. Church traditions, rituals, democratic environment, and generational church leaders have plagued the church from growth. Trinity's philosophical perception that gathering together for ceremonial services connects the church to its mission. Numerous church activities are instrumental in shaping people who participate, but two activities shaping the people of Trinity are fellowship and Bible study. Trinity has involved membership in fellowship meals, senior adult luncheons, associational monthly prayer breakfast, and monthly church-wide meals. The church also has various Bible studies with Sunday School, Discipleship, Wednesday night, weekly, and small group Bible studies within members' homes. The average attendance at Trinity on Sunday morning is 130 in 2021. Consideration for church membership entails profession of faith, believers' baptism, and acceptance through church vote at the annual church business meeting.

Trinity Baptist Church is famous in the city for having a three-dimensional cross on its property. The cross of Trinity has been an emblem on church stationery, mailouts, website, and pamphlets passed around for special community events. A cross is an object of affection for church members. The fellowship hall has an entire wall dedicated to various types of crosses. In the sanctuary, the altar displays a wooden cross symbolic of the love Christ has for His Church.

Trinity implements cooperative decisions through the deacon board and numerous committees within the church body. Multiple committees and deacon bodies have a non-

rotational mindset that has created more of a democracy than a theocracy. Parishioners place great value on particular church leaders and are subjugated by their rules. The challenge would be educating church leaders about a subservient spirit through scriptural guidance. Theocratic leadership could aid members with encouragement and biblical principles to strive toward visionary goals.

Trinity Baptist desires new members and preferably younger membership; however, the church does not like traditional values and is not accepting of different cultures. The tenure of Trinity's ministers has tended to be brief due to cultural and democratic differences. Membership of Trinity has been mercurial due to democratic procedural processes and various church complexities. Church leaders who operate *being* before doing exercise from a state of spiritual and emotional vastness, intense awareness of themselves, people, and God.<sup>18</sup> As a result, their *being* with God is enough to sustain their *doing* for God.<sup>19</sup> In Luke 10, Mary and Martha display two different types of discipleship as they encounter Jesus. Martha is anxiously *doing* for Jesus as she prepares a meal and focuses on hospitality for her guest. Mary kneels at the feet of Jesus, *being* attentive to his lessons, and bathes his feet with perfume.<sup>20</sup> Peter Scazzero identifies Jesus implementing *being* discipleship model devoting time with God for thirty years before His three-year ministry.<sup>21</sup> Scazzero determines the traditional discipleship model *doing* is predictable, scalable, and easy to train believers.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Scazzaro, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 41.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Luke 10: 42.

<sup>21</sup> Scazzaro, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 43-45.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

Leadership dedicated to being before doing is a slower discipleship model that constantly reflects specific statements but has a more significant impact in churches. Personal reflective questions from the being discipleship model: “You cannot give what you do not possess, what you do is important, but who you are is even more important, and the state you are in is the state you give to others.”<sup>23</sup> A healthy learning environment with effective biblical teaching and mission-centric goals could positively turn people to God and others.<sup>24</sup> Reestablishing pastoral care with parishioners with purpose-driven and gospel-centric conversations, visits, counseling, rapport building, calls, and fellowship could gain trust. Trust communicates having others' best interests ahead of personal agenda.<sup>25</sup> Visitors attending a Trinity service could sense a Christian family atmosphere, and the worship could be more impactful. A healthy environment could entice more membership and encourage people to pursue brotherly affection and the Lord.

The author has an established relationship with members of the congregation. Members of the church desire a minister that offers visitation, prayer, counseling, and delivers inspiring sermons. Trinity has established a democratic leadership model that dismisses pastoral leadership. The pastor could display compassion guiding the church theocratically and maintaining the culture with love. A biblical vision promoting love and Biblical concepts to Trinity could offer emotional healing and healthy discipleship, adopting positive changes.<sup>26</sup> The author will suggest a strategy to enhance the emotional well-being of church leadership. Church leadership could provide a future visionary plan for members of Trinity to incorporate training that could improve their emotional well-being and implement discipleship. The administration of

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<sup>23</sup> Scazzaro, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 43-45.

<sup>24</sup> Daryl Eldridge, *The Teaching Ministry of the Church* (Nashville: Broadman, 1995), 262.

<sup>25</sup> Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 166-67.

<sup>26</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 150.



Trinity utilizing a family forum to discuss the church's emotional well-being and discipleship efforts could offer time for questions, answers, and excitement.

The family forum offers a moment for members to examine dysfunctional environmental trends and dream about the possibilities of adapting to healthy changes. Open-ended questions allow members the opportunity to collaborate and collectively make decisions together. When people communicate honestly and answer challenging problems together, there is a gift of discovering. As church members share ideas or concerns, active listening renders respect creating a sense of unity. Members place value in each other with honest communication, and they follow God through his refining process. The author suggesting a business meeting provides each member the opportunity to vote for new classes, service, and marriage enrichment programs. A unanimous vote would implement proactive steps to healthy changes at Trinity. A healthy learning environment would promote theoretical and practical learning objectives within the class to motivate modern-day discipleship. Environmental influences such as mapping a campus, enrichment classes, décor, and hospitality magnify the leadership of the organization.<sup>27</sup>

Currently, Trinity offers two-morning worship services, traditional at 9:00 am and contemporary at 11:00 a.m. central time on Sunday morning. Trinity has gained new members through a marriage enrichment program, new classes, and services. Purposeful commitment from members inspires and promotes a positive change for the church. Collectively and cooperatively, the church could make positive strides that could impact its future, create mission-centric endeavors, and reach the community with love. Church leaders could become servants and mentor members with biblical strategic mission-centered vision. The new contemporary service draws all age groups and has added the desired younger dimension to the church. Relationship

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<sup>27</sup> Peter Northouse, *Leadership Theory and Practice*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004), 49-52.

development and connectivity can drive church committees. Trinity has numerous resources available with finances, members influential within the community, and prime location hosting community-wide events. Church resources can aid in providing for congregational vision. As members share ideas, the vulnerability could pose an issue, but the minister's appreciation would protect them. Pastoral care could make a tremendous impact on parishioners by active listening and reflective dialogue during open dialogue. Cooperate gatherings can be purposeful if individuals see their lives through the theological lenses of scripture.

### **Problem Presented**

The problem is that church leadership at Trinity Baptist Church may lack knowledge of their emotional well-being that hinders discipleship. Dysfunctional homes can create dysfunctional church environments. However, core church leadership could discover their emotional well-being, a loving union with God, and create purposeful conversations at home that would impact a church environment.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this DMin study is to develop a strategy to enhance the emotional well-being of the leadership at Trinity Baptist Church. Church leadership incorporating intradisciplinary integration with teaching and spiritual disciplines may sustain emotionally healthy discipleship offering a positive change to Trinity Baptist Church. Parishioners who struggle with emotional outbursts can gain insight into healthy change through spiritual formation, coping strategies, and connecting with other believers. Dysfunctional environmental trends hinder spiritual growth and healthy relationships. Environments that experience a healthy

transformation receive spiritual guidance and reconnect with spiritual purpose. The research will ensure the biblical counsel for the emotional instability of church leadership.

### **Basic Assumptions**

The researcher has four primary assumptions in the Project. First, all church leaders are disciples of Christ. Church leadership spends devoted spiritual time with God. Jesus invested personal time with twelve disciples who transformed the cultural dynamics of the church.<sup>28</sup> Christian leaders invest personal time with people to establish emotionally healthy discipleship. The cultural dynamics of the church will adopt positive change as leaders practice discipleship. Hope is the central focus of Christian leadership, that new converts will implement emotionally healthy discipleship concepts of spiritual enrichment and practical discipleship with purposeful conversations.

The second assumption was that all members need to make disciples for Christ. Jesus commands his disciples to make disciples. “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.”<sup>29</sup> The Great Commission has three significant components; to share the word where one is planted, to baptize repenting believers in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and to teach people to obey the teachings of Christ He commanded. Leadership incorporating discipleship will prevent church complexities. Church leaders will provide emotionally healthy discipleship training to transform the cultural dynamics of the church. The

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<sup>28</sup> Scazzaro, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 218.

<sup>29</sup> Matthew 28:19-20.

Great Commission highlights a perpetual promise of God's presence, power, and provisions with believers making disciples.

The third assumption was promoting active involvement in church activities results in spiritual maturity, emotionally healthy discipleship, and good leadership. Peter Scazzero suggests emotionally healthy discipleship is structured on purposeful dedication to making authentic disciples for Christ.<sup>30</sup> The emotionally healthy discipleship model implemented by Jesus with His disciples was essential for the coming kingdom and His great mission. Church leadership that implements emotionally healthy discipleship invests time with the Lord for spiritual and emotional enrichment and develops emotionally healthy relationships by implementing purposeful conversations.<sup>31</sup>

### **Definitions**

*Holistic* or holism is descriptive of implementing care toward the whole person of mind, body, and Spirit.<sup>32</sup> Whole person healing occurs with body, mind, soul, and emotions with optimal health or proper balance in life. Holistic care could implement guided thoughts, meditation, and counseling with individuals. The whole person perspective consisting of interdependent parts with the right balance (physical, emotional, or spiritual) in their lives can positively affect their overall health. "The philosophy behind holism, which emphasizes that for human beings, the

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<sup>30</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 215.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>32</sup> Eva Strandberg, Ingvar Ovhed, Lars Borquist, and Susan Wilhemsson, "The Perceived Meaning of a (W)holistic View Among General Practitioners and District Nurses in Swedish Primary Care: A Qualitative Study," *BMC Family Practice* 8, no. 8 (March 8, 2007), <https://bmcfampract.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2296-8-8>.

whole is greater than the sum of its parts and that mind and spirit affect the body."<sup>33</sup> Christ displayed holistic discipleship as he healed a woman with an issue of Blood.<sup>34</sup> After Jesus performed a miracle, he spoke to the woman healed, "*Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made you whole; go in peace.*" Christ addressed the woman healed as "daughter," referencing her part of a spiritual family.

*Epistemology* is the technique of gathering intel and analyze information. Epistemology is studying knowledge, logic, or gaining valid reasoning, ethics, or analysis of right and wrong action.<sup>35</sup> Determining the nature and extent of human experience defines one's behavior.<sup>36</sup> "Epistemology derives from the Greek terms episteme and logos." "Episteme can be interpreted as knowledge or understanding or acquaintance, while "logos" can be translated as account or argument or reason."<sup>37</sup> In Ephesians 1:6, scripture reveals faith in Christ renders acceptance despite the sinful condition.<sup>38</sup> In 1 Corinthians 15:9, the Apostle Paul's decision-making displays epistemological components as he analyzes grace from Christ by his sinful state, revealing emotional instability. Paul states: "I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God."<sup>39</sup> Later on in scripture, Paul reveals valid reasoning

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<sup>33</sup> Vahid Zamanzadeah, Madineh Jasemi, Lella Valizadeh, and Brian Keogh, "Effective Factors in Providing Holistic Care: A Qualitative Study," *Indian Journal of Palliative Care* 21, no. 2 (May 2015): 214-24, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4441185/>.

<sup>34</sup> Luke 8:48.

<sup>35</sup> Jerzy Perzanowski, "Ontology: Its Role in Modern Philosophy," *Ontology.Co*, May 12, 2020, <https://www.ontology.co/>.

<sup>36</sup> Encyclopedia of Philosophy, s.v. "Epistemology," <https://iep.utm.edu/epistemo/>. 2000.

<sup>37</sup> Edward Zalta, ed., *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford, CA: Metaphysics Research Lab, 2005), s.v. "Epistemology."

<sup>38</sup> Ephesians 1:6.

<sup>39</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:9.

examining divine grace "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain."<sup>40</sup>

*Phenomenological* is a conscientious analysis of a particular phenomenon: literally, appearances instead of reality.<sup>41</sup> Phenomenology serves ethics by studies of empathy and sympathy. Empathy acknowledges an emotional balance of free will, happiness, value, worth, and concern for others.<sup>42</sup> Qualitative research centered on philosophy and the humanities is understood as a phenomenological approach. Phenomenological studies conceptualize emotional instabilities and qualitative analysis of the survey of research. Emotional stability occurs with consciousness, sensibilities, social and cultural preunderstandings. Phenomenology analysis helps to measure the emotional dynamics of an individual.<sup>43</sup> Jesus displays a phenomenological approach as he expressed emotions for a grieving family in a graveyard.<sup>44</sup> The depressed environment of a graveyard altered into an atmosphere of worship due to emotionally healthy discipleship displayed by Christ. Emotionally healthy leadership incorporates empathetic concern for the emotional complexities of others.

*Discipleship* defines a student, learner, and understudy that practically duplicates their taught lesson. A disciple implements practical lessons and adheres to the doctrines of another.<sup>45</sup> Discipleship could be interpreted as an individual with a realistic lifestyle that influences others

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<sup>40</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:10.

<sup>41</sup> C. A. Adams, "Phenomenology," Science Direct, accessed November 7, 2020, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/phenomenology>.

<sup>42</sup> Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, s.v. (Metaphysics research lab, Stanford University) "Phenomenology," <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/#WhatPhen>. 2018.

<sup>43</sup> C. A. Adams, "Phenomonology,"

<sup>44</sup> Luke 19:41.

<sup>45</sup> *Dictionary.com*, s.v. "discipleship," <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/discipleship>.

to incorporate joyous spiritual disciples. Healthy discipleship includes two vital Biblical concepts speaking the word of truth and incarnational listening.<sup>46</sup> Saying the word into an individual's life allows the healing essence of scripture to the wounded society. Incarnational listening is allowing the word to become flesh by listening for emotional complexities and displaying empathetic observation.<sup>47</sup> Jesus utilized intentional discipleship by allowing the Word to become flesh, caring for the needs of others with incarnational listening, and leading others to spiritual enrichment. "Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ."<sup>48</sup> In John 13, Jesus utilized practical discipleship washing his disciples' feet and inviting them to serve others.<sup>49</sup> Jesus utilized the servant leadership model to render practical lessons on discipleship. Kenneth Boa defines the process of discipleship with three main dynamics: exposing, equipping, and encouraging.<sup>50</sup> Exposure to believers spiritually enriched, joyful Spirit and someone that practices discipline could entice people with struggles.<sup>51</sup> Equipping is a discipleship process that involves both teaching and training. Encouragement promotes endurance and commitment toward an emotionally healthy, disciplined life.<sup>52</sup>

*Emotional Health* is defined as an individual's capacity to acknowledge and direct emotions through therapeutic exercises or self-disciplines.<sup>53</sup> Self-disciplines offer training to maintain an emotional state. Scripture instructs parental training to "train up a child in the way he

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<sup>46</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 150.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>49</sup> John 13:14-15.

<sup>50</sup> Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 377.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 380-82.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Eldridge, *The Teaching Ministry of the Church*, 9.

should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it."<sup>54</sup> The Hebrew term *train* means dedicate toward a lesson learned, rendering a consecrated life.<sup>55</sup> An emotionally healthy person can explore feelings during stressful moments. An emotionally healthy individual has a harmonious balance of the physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual aspects. "Emotional health incorporates both emotional intelligence and emotional regulation."<sup>56</sup> Understanding the emotional health of a disciple promotes hope for struggling believers and enables faith-driven spiritual enrichment. An emotionally healthy life does not result in tranquility in life but rather an awareness of one's emotions. Emotionally healthy people experience feelings of anger, love, and depression; however, an emotional balance is coping with negative feelings. Emotional health enables someone to function productively and cope with the pressures of everyday life.<sup>57</sup>

### **Limitations**

Research limitations could be anything that obstructs an investigator's topic of inquiry. The researcher has internal limitations to study due to time restraints of being a husband, father of three children, full-time pastor, part-time army national guard chaplain, student, and household chores. Research presented limitations for the author with the unavailability of church leadership participating with interviews and answering questionnaires.

The research project limitation could be non-participation with surveys, interviews, and questionnaires. Participatory efforts will have to acknowledge congregational complexities or

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<sup>54</sup> Proverbs 22:6.

<sup>55</sup> Eldridge, *The Teaching Ministry of the Church*, 149.

<sup>56</sup> Kelly Miller, "What Is Emotional Health?," *Positive Psychology*, February 22, 2021, <https://positivepsychology.com/emotional-health-activities/>.

<sup>57</sup> "Keeping Your Emotional Health," *Family Doctor*, June 23, 2020, <https://familydoctor.org/mental-health-keeping-your-emotional-health/>.



cultural dynamics that hinder a healthy learning environment. Possible limitations may occur with a commitment to sustainable solutions presented from the analysis review. Scripture reveals the imperative need for a church to plan together visionary goals.<sup>58</sup>

Limitation in research could derive from parishioners having a pseudo-sense of church harmony being challenged to adapt to vibrant change. Differing doctrinal perspectives of the church's visionary goals could serve as a limitation. Research has limitations with church leadership availability, instruction comprehension with surveys, distractions during interviews, and transparent responses with questionnaires. The cultural dynamics could hinder accurate analysis of dysfunctional traits that hinder a healthy learning environment. Interviewees offering transparent answers could limit the clear perspective of church leadership hindering emotionally healthy discipleship. All collaboration has confidentiality and notes of discussion to be stored in a secure place.

### **Delimitations**

The author will focus on the research project on Trinity Baptist Church. The church leaders selected will be based on current roles, cultural influence, and more than five years of experience as church leaders. The research will evaluate the deacons and committee members as a delimiting factor of research. Therefore, selected church leadership utilized for this study to participate in the assessments needs to serve as a church leader, current committee member, and have done more than five years.

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<sup>58</sup> Proverbs 29:18, KJV.

## **Thesis Statement**

If the select leadership of Trinity Baptist Church receives counsel from their emotionally healthy discipleship training, they may understand their emotional well-being. If church leadership welcomes the counsel on their emotional health, the church could refocus on spiritual formation and direction. Core leadership implementing spiritual formation before offering counsel to the church is imperative to have success. Church leaders could implement holistic discipleship that will enrich leaders' spiritual maturity that incorporates emotionally healthy discipleship. Church leadership could provide at a later date emotionally healthy discipleship training to members of the congregation. The congregation gaining an understanding of emotional trends could lead to progressive steps in creating a healthy learning environment. Spiritual transformation of members gains spiritual growth, effective coping strategies, relationships, and spiritual direction. Theocratically, the church could establish a healthy learning environment that will impact the congregation's cultural dynamics with emotionally healthy discipleship.

## CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter two identifies the conceptual framework. The framework will include a literature review that magnifies the data confabulated in the thesis project proposal by inspecting the discovery of various researchers investigating identical areas of research on the emotional and cultural dynamics of the church leadership. The study's theological and theoretical framework establishes a normative foundation for why this research is advantageous toward healthy environmental trends within a church setting.

### Literature Review

Emotional healthy leaders implement teaching with spiritual directives. Mark McMinn suggests a heightened awareness of faulty perceptions and mercurial emotions resulting from no spiritual direction.<sup>59</sup> The problem with leadership at Trinity Baptist Church is a lack of understanding of their emotional health. The purpose of this DMIN action thesis is to incorporate intradisciplinary integration with Biblical precepts and implement spiritual disciplines that can offer council to the emotional health of Trinity Baptist Church. McMinn describes an effective counsel that includes effective teaching with intradisciplinary integration of psychology, theology, and spirituality.<sup>60</sup> If the select leadership of Trinity Baptist Church receives counsel from their emotionally healthy discipleship training, they may better understand their emotional well-being.

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<sup>59</sup> Mark McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishing, 2011), 15.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

Research reveals the symmetrical themes of the emotional-centric church: shame, vulnerability, distorted thoughts, and hopelessness. Peter Scazzero suggests sometimes dysfunctional trends incorporated in churches originate from unhealthy emotional leaders.<sup>61</sup> The solution is developing a healthy church environment that occurs when core leadership includes lifestyle disciplines to tame their emotions. Natural Church Development (NCD) conducted 93,000 surveys with over 70,000 churches in seventy-one countries.<sup>62</sup> To assess the Church's heart, they surveyed only 30 people of each congregation despite the size of the congregation. The core investigative groups met three criteria: a ministry team member, active in a committee, and committed to the Church's growth.<sup>63</sup>

#### Emotionally Healthy Leadership Begins with “Being” with Christ

Emotionally healthy leadership offers an integrated, spiritually devoted life with various ministry tasks.<sup>64</sup> Healthy church leaders could create a positive learning environment. An individual who exercises “being before doing” operates from a condition of spiritual and emotional wholeness, self-awareness, need of others, and understanding of God.<sup>65</sup> Dysfunctional and emotionally unhealthy church leadership works continuously in spiritual and emotional deficiency and neglectful spending time with God.<sup>66</sup> Cultural generalization was identified with selected resources of churches collected by various surveys, general analysis of individual ministers, and statistical research. The symmetry emotional and cognitive related themes

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<sup>61</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Relationships*, 14.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 302.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

identified with selected resources were vulnerability, shame, hopelessness, abandonment, and distorted thoughts. Positive steps to eliminate dysfunctional environment trends begin with acknowledging emotional instability and utilizing healthy spiritual disciplines. Matthew Stafford elaborates about toxic environments contributing to mental illness.<sup>67</sup> Stafford suggests environmental hindrances with exposure to contagious trends, hopeless reality, and false perceptions rendering sinfulness. Scott Floyd suggests identifying and meeting the needs of an individual removes the pseudo-understanding of abandonment.<sup>68</sup> Intradisciplinary integration incorporates psychology, theology, and spirituality to the emotional health of an individual.<sup>69</sup> The primary purpose of incorporating intradisciplinary integration in counseling and teaching is to meet people's holistic needs. Emotionally healthy church leaders create a healthy learning environment by practicing stress-reducing strategies. Tim Clinton identifies individuals struggling with mental illness often avoid churches because of shame.<sup>70</sup> Clinton suggests that the struggle for those with mental illness is a false sense of abandonment of relationships with God and people.<sup>71</sup>

### No Spiritual Focus Leads to Distorted Thoughts

Dr. Mark McMinn mentions that mapping individuals' spiritual and psychological health can help identify distorted thought patterns and mercurial emotions resulting from no spiritual direction.<sup>72</sup> Often a dysfunctional church environment acclimatizes a parishioner with unhealthy

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<sup>67</sup> Matthew Stanford, *Grace for the Afflicted* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 213.

<sup>68</sup> Scott Floyd, *Crisis Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 127.

<sup>69</sup> McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 29.

<sup>70</sup> Tim Clinton and Jared Pingleton, *The Struggle Is Real* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2019), 1-26.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-26.

<sup>72</sup> McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 40.

trends. McMinn identifies cognitive distortions originate with a self-sufficient perspective that often results from a wounded heart.<sup>73</sup> Self-sufficiency eventually is confronted with overwhelming challenges that arise in anguish. Church leadership identifying personal anxiety can utilize contemplative prayer and meditation to reduce stress levels. Often ministers minister from brokenness due to high levels of stress and carrying the burdens of the congregation. Analytical Bible studies, paired with private devotion, can impart spiritual wisdom to a gathering. Positive steps ministering to individuals with brokenness are identifying accurate awareness of self, need, and relationship.<sup>74</sup> Psychological and emotional health depends on correct spiritual perspectives and disciplines. Henry Philip highlights self-perception affects an individual cognitive, physical, and spiritual being.<sup>75</sup> Distorted perceptions can create a false sense of regrets or unresolved issues that hinders a healthy emotional state. Clark Campbell utilizes Integrative Psychotherapy by analyzing three views of Imago Dei: functional, structural, and relational.<sup>76</sup> The relational theory relates to an image of God noticed by intimate relationships.

### Unhealthy Church Leadership

Dysfunctional church environments often originate from unhealthy leadership. Research indicates ineffective church leaders serve beyond their spiritual maturity resulting in an emotional outburst. Ministers can fall into the trap of work overload and lose valuable time with family resulting in a dysfunctional home: hypocritical teaching and unrealistic expectations of

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<sup>73</sup> McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 41.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>75</sup> Henry Philip, Lori Figueroa, and David Miller, *The Christian Therapist's Notebook* (Routledge, NY: Haworth Press, 2007), 91.

<sup>76</sup> McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 67.

parishioners lead to dysfunctional trends within the congregation. Superficial ministers often isolate fear of exposure, flaws, controversial lifestyle, and avoidance of complicated issues. Leadership with narcissistic tendencies inspires strife with members resulting in division and hate in a church environment.<sup>77</sup> Peter Scazzero mentions an unhealthy leader displays chronic anger, narcissistic tendencies, passive, inauthentic, and isolation.<sup>78</sup> The emotionally unhealthy leader can adopt positive leadership traits and create a healthy learning environment. Peter Scazzero suggests five steps to emotionally strong leadership: awareness, ponder, value, prioritize, and own.<sup>79</sup>

Personal understanding of faulty perceptions, distorted thoughts, or dysfunctional traits through a generalized church survey can contribute to success. However, confrontation can cause shame and resentment that hinders spiritual growth. Pondering spiritual growth and disciplines can reveal spiritual deficit. Research shows vulnerability attributes to maladaptive behavior and spiritual disciplines alter distortions. Vulnerable is derived from the Latin term *vulnerare*, meaning “to wound.”<sup>80</sup> A vulnerable mind is required for a crisis to occur.<sup>81</sup> H. Norman Wright suggests that an individual who normalizes their emotions from grief or trauma will have faulty perceptions of divine purpose amid suffering. Peter Scazzero suggests that church leaders should lead out of vulnerability.<sup>82</sup> To lead out of vulnerability is to allow sorrow to be visible in

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<sup>77</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 42.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>80</sup> Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship* *Ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>81</sup> Norman Wright, *Crises* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2011), 130.

<sup>82</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 193.

ministry, admit to the team when overwhelmed with tasks, ask for prayer, seek the Lord's will, and admit weaknesses to the team.<sup>83</sup>

Church leaders rediscover authentic values or beliefs that will ignite conviction for spiritual disciplines. Kenneth Boa suggests we become exhausted when we attempt an abundantly more public ministry than we can offset in private devotion.<sup>84</sup> Leadership prioritizes schedules and establishes healthy boundaries to protect family time. Leaders teaching with a new adaptive lifestyle can inspire others to practice spiritual disciplines that create healthy trends.

### Sinful Behavior Hinders Emotionally Healthy Leaders

The Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde syndrome or a shadow erupt from suppressed emotions and faulty perceptions that influence behavior.<sup>85</sup> Jennie Allen reveals the danger of distortions as it develops an alternative paradox, one in which faulty reasoning seems to be logical.<sup>86</sup> An alternative paradox can reduce stress levels but isolation from the psychosocial network that provides accountability and healthy coping strategies. Distorted perception of personal appearance can create a sense of insecurity and shame. Shame enables suppressed emotions, and faulty perceptions can make sense of abandonment from psychosocial networks. Scazzero suggests everyone has a shadow of sinful behaviors, such as judgmental perfectionism, an outburst of anger, jealousy, resentment, lust, greed, or bitterness.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Boa, *Conformed to His Image*, 274.

<sup>85</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship* 55.

<sup>86</sup> Jennie Allen, *Get Out of Your Head* (Colorado Springs: Waterbook, 2020), 24.

<sup>87</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 55.



## Spiritual and Emotional Stress Coping Strategies

Good stress reducers like analytical Bible studies, meditation, prayer, and faith in Divine grace can subside the inner shadow. Paul, the Apostle, pleaded to God for help with his shadow, and the grace of God brought power to his weakness and protection to his vulnerable state. God answered Paul, "My grace is all you need, for my power is greatest when you are weak."<sup>88</sup> The word of God illuminates hope to the afflicted, and the power of his grace diminishes the darkness of a sinful shadow. Scazzero suggests spiritual growth heightens awareness of one's shadow.<sup>89</sup> Knowledge of one's shadow is needful for spiritual formation and strong leadership.

### Emotionally Healthy Leaders Implement Purposeful Conversations

The psychological and theological debate revolves around sin and sickness. The attributional theory's psychological perspective attributes a personal belief system that can alter emotions toward others' behavioral responses. McMinn discusses two types of attributions, internal and external.<sup>90</sup> Internal attribution relates to negative feelings toward another based on the consequences of sinful choices. External attribution refers to display empathy toward another based on sickness. The theological debacle is a sin, according to scripture, and relates to willful rebellion against God and not toward human instincts that lead to drastic consequences.<sup>91</sup> Adapting a theological perspective to attributional theory focuses on the effects of sin and shame due to a lack of conformity. Church leadership must acknowledge a secular outlook of the

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<sup>88</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:8-9, Good News Translation (GNT).

<sup>89</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 79.

<sup>90</sup> McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 161.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

attributional idea to offer healthy communication and spiritual guidance. Kenneth Boa suggests everything depends on the focus of our hearts.<sup>92</sup> The secular becomes spiritual when a soul awakens to eternity. Worldly-minded people have difficulty conforming to a spiritually driven life. A healthy spiritual learning environment is similar to personal spiritual formation. Research reveals that leaders with heavy workloads, numerous crises, and unscheduled interruptions have a hindered spiritual relationship. Judy Brown identified a life smothered with the cares of this world as to pile of wood that will not burn.<sup>93</sup> Woodblocks need adequate space to start a fire within a firepit, and air or fire will never kindle. Overloaded individuals will never process stress, be productive, or attain the emotional stability needed to maintain good behavior. Effective teaching can cause creative tension and propel healthy cognitions. Background information to the emotional instability within an individual relates to the inability to cope or manage stress. Gregory Hunt suggests self-management if one hopes to influence the congregation toward health.<sup>94</sup> Research proved that mercurial emotional nature adapts some control over challenges outside their control. Encouragement with creating a positive perspective with guided imagery, acknowledgment of aptitudes, and verbal confirmations with healthy lifestyle patterns can aid in a perceived control notion.

### Creating a Healthy Learning Environment

Various authors conveyed the imperative necessity of creating a healthy learning environment conducive to learning and adapting a positive change. A healthy learning environment would offer an atmosphere that would inspire life-altering change, a

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<sup>92</sup> Boa, *Conformed to His Image*, 214.

<sup>93</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 198.

<sup>94</sup> Gregory Hunt, *Leading Congregations Through a Crisis* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2012), 61.

curriculum that would inspire change, and create holistic healing. Findley Edge suggests a productive learning environment consists of the teacher being honest, caring, and relational.<sup>95</sup> In this relationship, the teacher says, "I share with you my life." Creating a learning environment depends on effective communication, mutual visionary goals, and "slow" steps. Effective communication addresses staff and leadership with dysfunctional trends and robust adaptive solutions. Anderson Tamara reveals that if teachers want to thrive genuinely, they must allow themselves to be known, limps, and all.<sup>96</sup> An essential component of this process is vulnerability. Open collaboration can create mutual visionary goals to address issues and terminology that motivate members with an adaptive, visionary solution. The family forum allows leadership to manage congregation members with mutual visionary goals and enables strong collaboration to propel healthy change. Establishing a healthy learning environment may take time to develop but will radically change dysfunctional trends.

#### Emotionally Healthy Discipleship Incorporates Practical Lessons

The enriching curriculum would be hope-centric, with discipleship classes ministering to holistic nature and providing proven active coping resources. Emotionally healthy discipleship is built on an unwavering commitment to make authentic disciples for Jesus to change the world.<sup>97</sup> Discipleship classes establish healthy learning modes, both relational and objective. Church leaders will gain insight into their emotional health as it relates to spirituality and relationships.

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<sup>95</sup> Findley Edge, *Teaching for Results* (Nashville: Broadman, 1999), 97.

<sup>96</sup> Tamara Anderson and Shelly Skinner, "Feelings: Discipleship That Understands the Affective Processes of a Disciple of Christ," *Christian Education Journal* 16, no. 1 (April 2019): 66-78.

<sup>97</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 215-19.

Practical disciple classes teach clear theology, relational skills, purposeful conversations, and caring presence.<sup>98</sup> Discipleship training uses analytical Bible studies that analyze the scriptural passage to discover theophanies and gain an interpretive understanding of God.<sup>99</sup> Interpretive understanding can help set visionary goals, enhanced prayer life, experience God's presence, and create healthy environments. Reflective Bible study is similar to meditation and contemplative thought.<sup>100</sup> Contemplative thought can serve an individual by setting healthy boundaries, coping with stress, and spiritual formation. If the church lacks a healthy learning environment and suitable life classes, maladaptive behavior communicates to a hopeless and abandoned community. Findley Edge illustrates two roads concerning the choices of individuals.<sup>101</sup> The high street of resistance few travels, and the lower path attracts most people who just want to enjoy life. However, the high road is the road that leads to God's will and will strengthen the faith of those who walk it. Making good choices with the right attitude is imperative to stay on the high road. Maintaining a healthy mindset is essential for leaders of a congregation. Various authors illuminated that having the right attitude heightens awareness of the problem's solution helps identify wisdom and purpose. Findley Edge suggests four factors of an effective teacher: having the right attitude toward the learner, the right attitude toward the material, the right attitude toward teaching, and the right personality.<sup>102</sup> Pastoral leadership can display the right mood with compassionate preaching and visitation with members.

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 129.

<sup>100</sup> McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 128.

<sup>101</sup> Edge, *Teaching for Results*, 105.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 91-97.

## Emotionally Healthy Leadership Will Examine Emotional Wounds

Emotional wounds can come about in many ways, such as from a dysfunctional family system with faulty early attachments, abuse, trauma, and loss.<sup>103</sup> The research revealed adapting healthy learning environments, and effective biblical teaching can inspire and motivate change. Biblical counseling can heighten awareness of the presence of God, scriptural guidance, and peace. The ministerial staff meeting the community's needs instead of just the congregation can implement a home-run rule. The home-run rule treats others how they need to be treated, not how one needs treatment.<sup>104</sup> Realizing God is present and God is always at work brings a sense of peace. Thought-provoking teaching style and curriculum outline provided during research adapt nutritional components to the dysfunctional learning environment and distorted thought patterns. A healthy learning environment and effective teaching can alter faulty perceptions and distorted thoughts. The triad of human life reveals the emotional nature can adapt a healthy balance by reframing distorted thoughts. Emotional stability occurs with positive cognitive patterns resulting in the absence of maladaptive behavior. Jesus utilized rhetorical questions to challenge an emotionally driven person's mental focus, resulting in a transformed mindset and a faith-driven focus. Daryl Eldridge describes the teacher's external influence can aid maladaptive behavior by heightening awareness of faulty perceptions.<sup>105</sup> Jesus utilized rhetorical questions, parables, and practical problems to illuminate humanity's intellectual and behavioral side.

### Lead Out of Vulnerability

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<sup>103</sup> Anderson and Skinner, "Feelings," 66-78.

<sup>104</sup> Bradbury and Graves, *Emotional Intelligence*, 150.

<sup>105</sup> Eldridge, *The Teaching Ministry of the Church*, 152.

The theme-centric problematic emotional and cognitive trends identified within the church's cultural generalization resulted from distorted doctrine and unhealthy learning environments. According to selected resources, research heightened awareness of maladaptive behavior within churches due to faulty perceptions and emotional trends. Maladaptive primary emotions are good defensive emotional traits that have become abnormal.<sup>106</sup> The cognitive nature of a congregation would center on distorted thoughts and a sense of abandonment. The themes display symmetry with interactions vulnerability is an emotional reaction to shame, and vulnerability with shame results in distorted perception rendering a sense of abandonment. Church leadership with emotional instability could experience healing with a healthy learning environment, discovering emotional health, discipleship classes, and enriching training. Church leaders could avoid faulty perceptions or distortions with emotionally healthy discipleship assessments. Distortion is intellectualism emphasizing rational over-emotional. Emotional learners emphasize emotional over-analytical.<sup>107</sup> Overcoming distortions is having a well-balanced emotional, reasonable, and behavioral response.<sup>108</sup>

Research connects to the purpose statement, an analytical discovery of the church's emotional welfare, and a practical approach to ministering to church leader's holistic needs. The useful, theoretical method of holistically meeting the church leader's emotional needs is identifying hope, emotional health training, and healthy coping strategies. Amy Simpson describes the hope for struggling mental health patients does not originate from a church offering friendships.<sup>109</sup> Hope for those in darkness comes from the power of divine grace and His

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<sup>106</sup> Anderson and Skinner, "Feelings," 66-78.

<sup>107</sup> Eldridge, *The Teaching Ministry of the Church*, 149.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Amy Simpson, *Troubled Minds* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 163.

presence that provides constant love. Research reveals a healthy learning environment with a congregation that displays grace toward all, identifies a hope-centric message, and maintains love, and unifies church leaders. Loving people in their dark places can bring shame and the fear of reproach.<sup>110</sup>

In conclusion, the literature presented unhealthy leadership traits, environmental trends, healthy coping strategies, and visionary steps to create a healthy learning environment. Research unveiled dysfunctional church environments are sometimes the result of emotionally unhealthy core leaders. Leadership gaining enrichment on emotionally healthy spiritual and relational health can aid against distorted perceptions and dysfunctional trends within the congregation. Henry Philips suggests even church leadership, during stressful times, struggles emotionally.<sup>111</sup> The analysis revealed through selected resources that church leadership cultural generalization lacks effectiveness in ministering to emotionally driven congregations' needs. The community often withdraws due to feelings of abandonment from the church. Mercurial emotional needs of the church are vulnerability, shame, hopelessness, abandonment, and distorted thoughts. The theological and practical approach presented with research heightened awareness of dysfunctionality, faulty perceptions, and distorted doctrine with psychological dynamics. The psychological dynamics of a healthy learning environment and emotionally healthy discipleship classes can positively alter the emotional well-being of church leadership. Pastoral leadership can utilize a family forum approach within leadership to address emotional trends that can hinder a healthy learning environment, effective teaching, and a hope-centric mission.

### **Theological Foundations**

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>111</sup> Philip, Henry, Figueroa, and Miller, *The Christian Therapist's Notebook*, 107-111.

Christian anthropology's analytical perception of humanity relates the social and physical features to the image of God. Scazzero suggests a commonality among most people when asked to describe the meaning of *formed in God's image*, and the general response focuses on spirituality.<sup>112</sup> *Imago Dei*, in Latin, refers to the similarities of society to their creator. "So, God created man in his image, in the image of God, he created him; male and female he created them."<sup>113</sup> The Creator created humankind in His image and delegated control over creation and creatures. "And God said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."<sup>114</sup>

#### Sinful Nature Deviates from God's Word

Triune creator created humanity in His likeness with a trichotomy consisting of mind, body, and Spirit. Theological, anthropological perspective views humanity manifest as trichotomy.<sup>115</sup> "Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature."<sup>116</sup> Trichotomy relates to the distinct human features inherited from our creator of Spirit, soul, and body as particular divine purposes. The creation story unveiled a trichotomist perspective when God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."<sup>117</sup> Sin originates cognitively through disobedience to God and disconnects relationships with the Creator because of self-interest. Scazzero suggests that

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<sup>112</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, 48.

<sup>113</sup> Genesis 1:27.

<sup>114</sup> Genesis 1:28.

<sup>115</sup> Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 537.

<sup>116</sup> Genesis 2:7.

<sup>117</sup> Genesis 1:26.



humankind's physical, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and social dimensions experience unhealthy growth when failing to understand we are made in God's image.<sup>118</sup> The creation story reveals a trichotomist view concerning God's image symmetry with the holistic nature of humanity. However, humankind's holistic nature is mercurial due to the neglect of fulfilling created purpose and avoiding set boundaries by the Creator. God established purpose for humanity, "And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and the livestock and all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."<sup>119</sup> The Lord blocks evil by establishing boundaries, "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."<sup>120</sup> Divine perimeters in the garden protected humanity from deception, sin, and a hindrance to the holistic nature.

### Sinful Nature Creates Distorted Thoughts

Intellectually, humanity can understand, acknowledge, and respond to a living God by the word of God. In Greek, the term *mind* νοῦς is the "Divine ability of an individual to *think* (reason); cognitive capacity to exercise reflective thinking."<sup>121</sup> Believers gain a sense of spiritual discernment to respond by faith to scriptural guidance. "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and

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<sup>118</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, 54.

<sup>119</sup> Genesis 1:26.

<sup>120</sup> Genesis. 2:16-17, KJV.

<sup>121</sup> Lambeth Phobe, ed., *NAS Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible with Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries* (La Habra, CA: Lockman Foundation, 1998), s.v. "Mind."

spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."<sup>122</sup>

The Spirit, soul, and body are interconnected. Paul identifies that the Spirit and mind are both the same. Human intellect, logic, free will, or relationships can never distinguish holiness because of sin nature. In Proverbs 3, scripture warns believers not to trust intelligence, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."<sup>123</sup> The transformed mindset of leaders occurs by applying biblical truths for spiritual growth and enhancing relational dynamics.<sup>124</sup> The pseudo religious perspective of holiness derives from self-afflicted deception.

### Spiritual Devotion Leads to Renewed Mind

Spiritually renewed cognitions impact maladaptive behavior, nurtures holistic nature, and ignites visionary discernment. "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."<sup>125</sup> The key term *transformed* is a Greek compound word *metá*, "change after being with" and *morphóō*, "changing form in keeping with inner reality".<sup>126</sup> The English root word for transformed is metamorphosis.

Spiritual newness occurs with a renewed mind impacting emotional outbursts and decrease symptomology. Church members that struggle with emotional outbursts can gain an understanding of emotions and lifestyle change. Holistic nature experiences a healthy balance

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<sup>122</sup> Hebrews 4:12.

<sup>123</sup> Proverbs 3:5-6, KJV.

<sup>124</sup> Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 161.

<sup>125</sup> Romans 12:2.

<sup>126</sup> William Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1993), 317.

with scriptural guidance. "And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."<sup>127</sup> Spiritual enriched leadership can adapt tasks with a relational focus shaping the way people respond to issues.<sup>128</sup> Redemption and restoration to the image that portrays the likeness of God come by the Holy Spirit. Spiritual vision is descriptive as a believer discovers hope and understanding of the greatness of God.

"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what the hope of his calling is, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his right hand in the heavenly places."<sup>129</sup>

The spiritual gifts of enlightenment, wisdom and soulful knowledge can eliminate flawed perceptions that hinder scriptural guidance.<sup>130</sup> Emotional health significantly impacts spiritual health. The Greek term *flesh* σάρξ unveils the sensual nature of humanity, passionate instincts, and cravings which incite to sin.<sup>131</sup>

### Spiritual Devotion Leads to Holistic Care

Apostle Paul identifies an inner spiritual war that impacted his holistic nature. "For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold as a slave to sin.' 'For I do not understand what I am doing because I do not practice what I want to do, but I do what I hate.' 'Now, if I do what I do not want to do, I agree with the law that is good.' 'So now I am no

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<sup>127</sup> Ephesians 4:23-24, KJV.

<sup>128</sup> Hunt, *Leading Congregations Through a Crisis*, 17.

<sup>129</sup> Ephesians 1:18-20, KJV.

<sup>130</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes Notes On Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Book House, 1983), 31.

<sup>131</sup> Lambeth Phobe, ed., *NAS Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible with with Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries* (La Habra, CA: Lockman Foundation, 1998), s.v. "Flesh."

longer the one doing it, but it is a sin living in me."<sup>132</sup> John the Apostle encourages believers, "I pray that in all respects, you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers."<sup>133</sup> The emotional health of church leadership is contingent upon genuineness and transparency. In Jeremiah 17, scripture reveals the heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable—who can understand it?<sup>134</sup> The trickery of the human heart hides sinful habits; the sinful nature is rebellious to God and hinders a spiritual walk.<sup>135</sup> The heart births thoughts, intentions, wants, emotions, and morals which impact humanity's trichotomy. Scazzero suggests the church needs to reclaim the responsibility of addressing spiritual maturity related to emotional health.<sup>136</sup> Spiritual maturity could be gained through emotionally healthy discipleship and education on sinful nature that leads away from God's will.

### Emotional Healthy Leaders Follow Jesus Holistically

"Life-stressors like depression, stress, blended families, money management, addiction, marital issues, parenting conflicts, grief, domestic abuse, malice, divorce, no purpose, adjustment disorders, disasters, job loss, eating disorders, and spiritual dilemmas present an opportunity for spiritual growth that, with counseling aid, can have a positive result for the sufferer."<sup>137</sup> Victor Frankl, a holocaust survivor, stated, "Despair is suffering without meaning."<sup>138</sup> Jesus ministered with lifestyle practical lessons from sorrow and despair. He was despised and rejected by men, a

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<sup>132</sup> Romans 7:14-17, CSB.

<sup>133</sup> 3 John 1:2, New American Standard Bible (NASB).

<sup>134</sup> Jeremiah 17:9, Christian Standard Bible (CSB).

<sup>135</sup> Clifton Allen, *The Broadman Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1971), 101.

<sup>136</sup> Peter Scazzero and Warren Bird, *The Emotionally Healthy Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 18

<sup>137</sup> Jocelyn Rebisz, "The Emotional Well-Being and Spiritual Maturity Connection: A Study On the Relationship between Emotional Health and Spirituality," *Counselor Education Master's Theses* (2007): 87.

<sup>138</sup> Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning* (Cambridge: Perseus Books, 1975), 133.

man of suffering who knew what sickness was. He was like someone people turned away from; he was despised, and we didn't value him.<sup>139</sup> Peter Scazzero suggests emotional turbulence within believers provides for the providential intervention of unveiling the presence of God, developing compassion, patience, genuineness, and strengthening our witness.<sup>140</sup> In John 8, a lady is identified as depressed and hopeless, dying with an issue with her blood. The dying woman spent her life savings trying to save her life.<sup>141</sup> Jesus comes to town, the dying woman slides through the crowds to touch the hem of his garment, believing she would be healed. As a woman touched Jesus with faith, providential intervention occurred, and the woman was made whole. Jesus calls the woman healed and made whole daughter.<sup>142</sup> The woman healed from the issue of blood was made whole spiritually and emotionally by Christ.

#### Emotionally Healthy Leaders have Confidence in the Sovereignty of God

The spiritual transformation of disciples displays confidence that God's Spirit is actively providing for their holistic needs in every circumstance.<sup>143</sup> Exercising faith during suffering and complexities develops spiritual maturity. In James 1, believers are encouraged that our faith in trials produces endurance that attributes to spiritual maturity or completeness with no desires.<sup>144</sup> To have no passion for sinful nature reflects on the continual process of sanctification of each believer. Wayne Grudem defines sanctification as the internal moral transformation breaking

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<sup>139</sup> Isaiah 53:3, CSB.

<sup>140</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 129-30.

<sup>141</sup> John 8:43-48, CSB.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation, *Transformation Discipleship* (Nashville: Broadman, 2012), 134.

<sup>144</sup> James 1:2-4, CSB.

from the ruling power of temptations and yielding to the spiritual guidance of scripture.<sup>145</sup> The divine allowance of suffering creates divine attributes in believers. “Rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials so that the proven character of your faith—more valuable than gold which, though perishable, is refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”<sup>146</sup> The meaning of *trials* in the life of a believer is an allowance of experiencing evil and the opportunity to implement God’s goodness for Godly attributes.<sup>147</sup> Christian counsel can aid the mercurial emotions of believers that trials within life have impacted. Miraculous transitions occur in followers of Christ that discover the understanding of emotional suffering and maintain patience in divine intervention.<sup>148</sup>

#### Emotionally Healthy Leaders Have Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is essential for church leaders to maintain emotionally healthy discipleship. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it *are* the issues of life."<sup>149</sup> In Hebrew, life *issues* encapsulate two thoughts: conflictual extremities and the only escape is death.<sup>150</sup> Scazzero highlights that church leaders cannot grow an emotionally healthy church if we do not address issues deep beneath our lives' surface.<sup>151</sup> In Luke 15, a father provides an early inheritance to his demanding and rebellious son. The prodigal son pursued a sinful lifestyle until he was broke. The rebellious and broke son began to reflect on his father’s love and became

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<sup>145</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 747.

<sup>146</sup> 1 Peter 1:6-7, CSB.

<sup>147</sup> James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* (Grand Rapids: World Publishing, 2009), 1002.

<sup>148</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 128.

<sup>149</sup> Proverbs 4:23, KJV.

<sup>150</sup> Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, 553.

<sup>151</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 47.

repentant. “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!’”<sup>152</sup> The Greek term senses reflects on a moral feeling during temptations.<sup>153</sup> The prodigal son discovered issues deep beneath the surface, was spiritually convicted, and his cognitions altered to the road of recovery. Emotionally healthy church leadership must analyze what triggers emotional outbursts or influences maladaptive behavior. Redirecting cognitions during known emotional triggers could produce a positive reaction to environmental complexities.

Scripture provides holistic healing by redirecting our thoughts with meditation. “‘Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.’ ‘And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.’”<sup>154</sup> Scripture reveals worshipping God during complexities brings gladness and hope to a troubled soul. “Therefore, my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope,”<sup>155</sup> Scazzero suggests suppressed and unexpressed emotional anguish results in depression, anxiety, loneliness, and void.<sup>156</sup> Expressing emotional distress in prayer and worship allows for a healthy sorrowful release. In Psalms 51, King David struggles with emotional anguish because of sinful behavior and seeks God in a prayer of repentance. King David cried out to God for cleansing, healing, and joy. “God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Luke 15:17, New International Version (NIV).

<sup>153</sup> Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, 901.

<sup>154</sup> Philippians 4: 6-7, CSB.

<sup>155</sup> Psalms 16:9, KJV.

<sup>156</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 120.

<sup>157</sup> Psalms 51:10-12, CSB.

David displays healthy emotional leadership as he identifies the imperative need for God to sustain his needs. “Do not banish me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.”<sup>158</sup> The repetitive prayer of David acknowledges the joy that God brings with his fellowship. “Restore the joy of your salvation to me, and sustain me by giving me a willing spirit.”<sup>159</sup> Overwhelming circumstances, suffering, and resistance eliminate tempting coping components that hinder Christ-centric dependency.<sup>160</sup> God comforts the troubled heart of David, and with love, restores joy in his broken heart. Scazzero suggests the heart of David teaches a valuable lesson for leadership in the need to pay attention to personal emotional anguish and have an emotional release to God.<sup>161</sup>

One way of acknowledging emotional stress is to observe our reactionary behavior to others. Scazzero lays out three questions that, if personally applied daily, can aid during anxious moments: “Am I fully present or distracted? Am I loving or judging? and Am I open or close to being changed?”<sup>162</sup> Emotional connectivity is dependent upon face-to-face interactions and good eye contact.<sup>163</sup> Technology such as cell phones could significantly impact emotional instability with society and within a church environment. Effective interaction with people within an environment eliminates false perceptions and judgment by a broader understanding of differences. In John 9, Jesus led his disciples through a village and came across a blind man; and the disciples had a false perception that rendered judgment on a man in need. The disciples of

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Geiger, Kelley, and Nation, *Transformation Discipleship*, 150.

<sup>161</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 119.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.



Christ inquired from Jesus, the sinful nature of the blind man. “His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”<sup>164</sup> Jesus told the disciples that the sinful nature of man and physical impairments had no connection. “Neither this man nor his parents sinned.”<sup>165</sup> Jesus teaches a practical lesson to his disciples by healing a man to reveal the supernatural power of God. “This came about so that God’s works might be displayed in him.”<sup>166</sup> Jesus corrects the false perception and judgment of the disciples of the blind man. The disciples began to lead out of their wholeness in Christ and minister with emotionally healthy discipleship to the soul in need.

### Emotional healthy Leader Desires Spiritual Maturity

Humanity acknowledging the presence of God could lead to a desire for a spiritual relationship. The Creator delivered an eternal soul into each living being to gain understanding and connection. The Greek term *soul* ψυχή is the direct aftermath of God breathing the presence of life into an individual, making them an ensouled being.<sup>167</sup> Collectively believers gain corporate access to God as a church. Spiritual maturity and emotional health are married.<sup>168</sup> Spiritual maturity is an imperative need for a believer and the church to prevent mercurial emotions that render sin. Scazzero points out that church leaders rarely address spiritual maturity related to emotional health despite emphasizing spiritual formation.<sup>169</sup> Christ teaches believers

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<sup>164</sup> John 9:2-3, CSB.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Lambeth Phobe, ed., *NAS Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible with Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries* (La Habra, CA: Lockman Foundation, 1998), s.v. “Soul.”

<sup>168</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 138.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 18.

with discipleship how to grow in spiritual maturity by faith and love. "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind."<sup>170</sup> Scazzero integrates brokenness and wholeness in a disciple of Christ. Emotional brokenness lives with low self-esteem, fear, self-absorbed, dishonest, defensive, and at times dishonesty.<sup>171</sup> Through a relationship with Christ, a believer gains wholeness enabling a giving spirit, honesty, self-awareness, non-reactive, and spiritual insight from fellowship with the Spirit.<sup>172</sup> Scazzero suggests God uses our emotional brokenness to relate to people and wholeness to disciple others.<sup>173</sup>

### **Theoretical Foundations**

The Great Commission is an imperative command of making disciples from our spiritual enrichment. Discipleship could implement a theoretical approach to the Great Commission and discovering ontological spiritual precepts. Spiritual precepts could eliminate mercurial emotions and lead to a practical guide to fulfill the purpose of life. This project aims to develop a strategy to enhance the emotional well-being of the leadership at Trinity Baptist Church. Theoretical efforts showcase a holistic comprehension of research analysis of identified complexities and resolution strategy. Cooperative efforts portray purpose, creativity, emotional stability, unity, discipleship, and family-centric environmental trends.

The author will utilize a Rogerian technique during the interviews with the participants. Inquiries will use open-ended questions with reflective dialogue, empathetic observation and will

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<sup>170</sup> Matthew 22:37, KJV.

<sup>171</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 139.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 139.

reflect verbal segments of hope from the conversation. Carl Rogers's theory of an individual gaining inner strength from challenging environments by providing genuineness (openness and self-disclosure), acceptance (being seen with unconditional positive regard), and empathy (being listened to and understood).”<sup>174</sup> The Rogerian theory originated from beach cove in northern California. Rogers observed seaweed pounded by the ocean and how the seaweed adapted by bending flat; the leaves of the plant flowing in a single line with the current overcame the pounding waves. Rogers discovered the seaweed being in a hostile environment adapted, overcome, and grew strong. Also, the seaweed naturally gravitated toward the sun despite the hostility of the current and pounding waves.<sup>175</sup>

### Discipleship Starts with Being a Disciple

Discipleship begins with *being* a disciple in Christ devoted to the personal application of scripture. Based on Romans 12:2, scripture defines emotionally healthy discipleship as spiritual transformation by a renewed mind.<sup>176</sup> Spiritual transformation occurs by a believer spending prayerful time with the Lord and application of God’s word.<sup>177</sup> A renewed sense happens by rejecting worldly conformity, accepting circumstances to gain spiritual discernment, and seeking God's perfect will.<sup>178</sup> Lifestyle changes can be implemented through spiritual formation, coping strategies, and connecting with other believers.

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<sup>174</sup> Carl Mcleod, “Client Centered Therapy,” *Psychology Today* (2014), <https://www.simplypsychology.org/carl-rogers.html>.

<sup>175</sup> Kate Vitasek, “Carl Rogers and the Art of Achieving Full Potential,” *Psychology of Outsourcing* (2011): 1.

<sup>176</sup> Romans 12:2, CSB.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

## The Impact of Emotionally Healthy Discipleship

Fulton Sheen said, "Unity of the Christ and His Cross came when Christ kept the author very close to His Cross in dark and painful hours."<sup>179</sup> Jesus preached a silent message from the cross as he remained focused on his mission and God the Father. The message of love from the cross of Jesus has impacted millions of people. As apples ripening, they produce a gaseous hormone called *ethylene*, which is a ripening agent.<sup>180</sup> Research reveals that ripened apples can propel spontaneous ripening with other apples in a bushel. Scripture highlights that life can impact many, " 'Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.' 'So you will find favor and success in the sight of God and man.'"<sup>181</sup> The Biblical equation shows the influence and impacts a person can make in a negative society. In Matthew 22, Jesus reveals the spiritual law depends on two commandments to love God and to love others.<sup>182</sup> The measurement of love God desires is "loving God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."<sup>183</sup> Also, the depth of the love for others is described as to "love your neighbor as yourself."<sup>184</sup> Love is an obedient action toward a healthy, sustainable solution that can positively change a dysfunctional, emotionally driven society. Scripture encourages disciples of Christ to "consider one another to

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<sup>179</sup> Fulton Sheen, *Life of Christ* (New York City: McGraw Hill, 1958), 5.

<sup>180</sup> Matt Soniak, "Does One Bad Apple Really Spoil the Whole Bunch?" accessed November 12, 2020, . <https://www.mentalfloss.com/does-one-bad-apple-spoil-whole-bunch>.

<sup>181</sup> Proverbs 3:3-4.

<sup>182</sup> Matthew 22:37-38, CSB.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

provoke love and good works.”<sup>185</sup> Divine revelation of a genuine disciple of Christ is love; scripture says, by this, everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.”<sup>186</sup>

### Theoretical Research on Emotionally Healthy Discipleship

There is a Christ-centric path for emotionally healthy discipleship incorporating emotional, spiritual, and relational dynamics. This research highlights three theoretical theories about hindrances of *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship* in congregations: *Sanctification gap*, *lacking Emotionally Healthy Church*, and *Apathy*.

#### Theorist 1 Sanctification Gap

The conflictual complexity that hinders *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship* is the *Sanctification Gap* caused by distorted thoughts and unresolved emotional anguish.<sup>187</sup> The *Sanctification Gap* inhibits spiritual transformation and prevents a healthy emotional release. Dysfunctional emotional characteristics that hinder spiritual enrichment are shame, worry, fear, and anger.<sup>188</sup> Gaining an understanding of personal emotional traits and distorted thoughts can impact behaviorisms toward being a disciple. Dr. Kenneth Bough research focused on *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship* in six theological aspects: “(1) *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship and the Image of God*, (2) *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship and the Consequences of Sin*, (3) *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship and the Composition of the Heart*, (4) *Emotionally*

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<sup>185</sup> Hebrews 10:27, CSB.

<sup>186</sup> John 13:35, NIV.

<sup>187</sup> Kenneth Baugh, “*Emotionally Healthy Discipleship: A Process for Resolving the Spiritual and Emotional Conflicts That Hinder Sanctification*” (D.Min. diss., Talbot University, 2016), 22-52.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

Healthy Discipleship and the Sanctifying Work of the Holy Spirit, (5) Emotionally Healthy Discipleship and the Relational Context Essential for Growth, and (6) Emotionally Discipleship and the Role of Spiritual Disciplines.” The goal of the research project was to identify spiritual and emotional conflicts impacting their sanctification gap. This mixed study consisted of a six-week curriculum with small groups, lectures, discussions, and assessments to measure spiritual maturity.<sup>189</sup> Dr. Bough’s hypothesis for the research that hinders the sanctification gap for believers was distortions toward holistic discipleship. Distorted cognitions propel emotional trends of shame, fear, and sinful maladaptive behavior that increase the sanctification gap.<sup>190</sup> In conclusion, participatory efforts with training and assessments ended with a decrease of 20% of the sanctification gap for participants.<sup>191</sup>

#### Theorist 2 Emotionally Healthy Church

The church has a God-given responsibility to make disciples.<sup>192</sup> The current church displays spiritual immaturity and a lack of concern for making disciples.<sup>193</sup> Holistic discipleship would offer an emotional awareness of true discipleship and provide a spiritual vision for the church.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 103-04.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Kenneth Baugh, “Emotionally Healthy Discipleship: A Process for Resolving the Spiritual and Emotional Conflicts That Hinder Sanctification”, 114.

<sup>192</sup> Ralph Scherer, “Applying the Principles Taught in the Emotionally Healthy Church through a Discipleship Workshop of Christians Within the A,” (D.Min. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2020), 12.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

Dr. Ralph Scherer suggests discipleship programs have been geared toward spiritual maturity and making disciples.<sup>195</sup> Discipleship involves reading scripture, obedience to scripture, worship, evangelism, stewardship, and disciplines in life.<sup>196</sup> Disciples of Christ emulate their relationship to Jesus Christ and display spiritual gifts.<sup>197</sup> This research aims to implement a Discipleship workshop on the six principles in discipleship by Peter Scazzero. The study will consist of a three-month period, seven-week training, lectures, seminars on emotional awareness, assessments, and participants will be evaluated on any personal effect or effectiveness of the principles.<sup>198</sup> The research concluded with participants gaining a broader understanding of holistic discipleship, unhealthy emotional traits, and the emotionally healthy church.<sup>199</sup>

### Theorist 3 Apathy

The modern church could suffer from religious acclimatization and display impassivity toward a hopeless world. The problem with the church could be defined as *apathy*.<sup>200</sup> Faulty discipleship derives from a negative mindset and a lack of accountability toward the Great Commission.<sup>201</sup> Dr. Kevin Brooks suggests spiritually healthy people have the right attitude toward making disciples. The goal of this research is to move people toward a *Biblical Healthy Discipleship Model*. This research project will gather data from questionnaires from various

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 1-6.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ralph Scherer, "Applying the Principles Taught in the Emotionally Healthy Church through a Discipleship Workshop of Christians Within the A," 12.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 125."

<sup>200</sup> Kevin Brooks, "Moving People Towards a Biblical Healthy Discipleship Model" (D.Min. diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 1.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

pastors and church leaders on healthy discipleship.<sup>202</sup> The research concluded that church leaders and pastors both contribute to failure to produce disciples.<sup>203</sup> The church has led less biblically trained disciples in the church and more unchurched people in our communities.<sup>204</sup> Emotionally healthy churches are essential to vibrant discipleship.<sup>205</sup> A survey revealed 75% of the church's overall emotional health is affected by lack of use of spiritual gifts.<sup>206</sup> The survey indicated 86% of pastors believe that the church has room for improvement in the discipleship strategy.<sup>207</sup> Nearly 43% of church leaders' responses suggest that the church does not have effective discipleship.<sup>208</sup> Survey results showed that 57% of pastors believe members are serving roles they do not feel called to due to the lack of participation of other parishioners.<sup>209</sup> Research indicated 95% of members agree that God has given all believers at least one spiritual gift to be used.<sup>210</sup>

#### Emotionally Healthy Discipleship Offers Scriptural Guidance

Jesus addresses the emotional dilemmas of babies murdered in the city of David, tyrants leading society, and the church filled with Pharisees. "Nor should you be called 'Leader,' because your one and only leader is the Messiah."<sup>211</sup> Christ displayed compassion and boldness in

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 91-94.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 91-94.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Brooks, "Moving People Towards a Biblical Healthy Discipleship Model," 95.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Matthew 23:10, GNT.



addressing the emotional crisis in society. John Ortberg suggests God does not always produce the circumstances desired but is at work in dire circumstances.<sup>212</sup> The teachings of Christ focused on the emotional condition of humanity and directional spiritual guidance. In the Gospel of John, Jesus addresses the emotional crisis that occurred with the death of Lazarus. Jesus speaks to the broken-hearted Martha, "the resurrection and the life."<sup>213</sup> Christ encountered Mary beside the tomb weeping and *intensely moved* (ἐνεβριμήσατο) began to cry.<sup>214</sup> A reader encounters Jesus's divinity and humanity as he relates to the suffering of his friends. Driven by the Spirit, he led the broken-hearted with spiritual guidance to praise the Lord and performed the supernatural, raising Lazarus from the grave by his spoken word. Jesus conveys a calm ministry of presence, comforts the emotional, and spiritually guides the broken-hearted to wonders by his spoken word. Scripture comforts the broken-hearted and confronts dysfunctional people with spiritual guidance from the Holy Bible. The living voice of God enters the heart, bringing blessings and strength and awakening the response of a living faith that reaches back to the nature of God.<sup>215</sup>

#### Emotionally Healthy Discipleship Offers Spiritual Focus

Scriptural guidance brings counsel, comfort, and purposeful consecrated direction. The pastoral guidance notices areas that separate us from God with transparency admitting hidden flaws, requesting grace from God, and responding by applying scripture with meditation.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> John Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 20-31.

<sup>213</sup> John 11:25, KJV.

<sup>214</sup> John 11:33, KJV.

<sup>215</sup> Klaus Issler, *Living into the Life of Jesus* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 136.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

Personal understanding of hidden flaws that hinder spiritual growth is imperative for humility, repentance, and spiritual growth. The Lord brings encouragement to believers during emotional times "Finally, be strong in the Lord and the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil."<sup>217</sup> The armor of God is applied by faith by being theocratic in nature and prayer. The body of Christ is made strong by implementing the biblical principles in fellowship and purpose.

#### Implement Spiritual Mentorship with Purposeful Conversation.

The call to “make disciples” (mathēteusate) in Matthew 28:19 is a divine call to replicate oneself, and spiritual mentorship is practical teaching with purposeful conversations. A disciple is dedicated to a healthy spiritual companionship with another individual for purposeful life lessons and mutual accountability for spiritual growth in Jesus Christ. Theocratic instructions for spiritual discipleship are revealed as a process of long-term commitment during trials, spiritual enrichment, teaching, disciplines, witness, and modeling Christian character.<sup>218</sup> Becoming Christlike is a spiritual process of discipleship.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, there are several theoretical theories concerning Emotionally Healthy Discipleship, but most focus on making disciples apart from *being* a disciple first. The *Sanctification Gap* originates from unresolved emotional stress and distortions that hinder spiritual transformation. Spiritual enrichment is contingent upon a personal understanding of dysfunctional emotional trends like shame, worry, fear, and anger. The focus on offering holistic

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<sup>217</sup> Ephesians 6:10-11.

<sup>218</sup> 1 Thessalonians 2:7-13.

discipleship offers care for the whole person but negates private spiritual devotion. Identifying and labeling the church as apathetic seems childish. Religious acclimatization can hinder spiritual prayers, spiritual dependency, and spiritual mission or vision. Faulty discipleship derives from methods in making disciples apart from being with Christ and spiritual enrichment. EHD acknowledge distortions with Biblical truths, gain spiritual focus with private devotions, and carry out spiritual mentorship with purposeful conversations. The research theories were dealing with emotionally healthy discipleship focus on a holistic need to develop spiritual relationships. Spiritual relationships are essential to make disciples. However, before a believer can make disciples, they must be spiritually enriched by being a disciple of Christ. In this research study, the author will aid church leaders in discovering spiritual identity as a disciple by leadership completing an assessment on *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*. Selected leadership will participate in questionnaires and interviews. In chapter three, the researcher will present the methodology for action research with three phases: (a) Discovery phase, (b) Developmental phase, and (c) Determination phase. The researcher will utilize investigative tools with questionnaires, assessments, and interviews. Developmental training for church leaders will be provided by video and open discussion with the *Seven Marks of Emotionally Healthy Discipleship* by Peter Scazzero. At last, the author will present an academic presentation to church leaders of emotional maturity level and discipleship efforts from church leaders before and after research.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The Doctorate of Ministry action research thesis addresses the emotional dynamic and cultural complexities within church leadership. This Project used qualitative research to discuss emotional maturity and spiritual discipleship within church leadership. The problem is that church leadership at Trinity Baptist Church may lack understanding of their emotional health that hinders discipleship. National statistical review of church's rated 51% of church leaders report that having personal time for spiritual devotion is easy; however, 49% of church leaders report that prayer is impossible.<sup>219</sup> Church leaders reported 66% of their congregants to implement discipleship, and one-third or 33% of reports indicate a struggle for ongoing discipleship.<sup>220</sup> On a national average, seventy-four percent of church ministerial staff struggle with clinical depression.<sup>221</sup> Also, national polls showed 59% of counseling within the congregation had been diagnosed with acute mental illness.<sup>222</sup> Church polls indicate ninety percent of members believe the assembly has a moral and spiritual responsibility to provide resources to support members struggling with mental illness and unhealthy emotional traits.<sup>223</sup> National polls reveal that 49% of parishioners with mental illness report educational and spiritual material in churches never address emotional and cognitive complexities.<sup>224</sup>

The purpose of the study was to offer training that guided Christian leaders to be disciples and followers of Christ. The researcher provided a proactive, systematic methodology

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<sup>219</sup> George Barna, "Barna: State of the Church," [www.barna.com](http://www.barna.com), accessed May 24, 2021, <https://www.barna.com/research/mental-emotional-health-among-pastors/>.

<sup>220</sup> George Barna, 2021.

<sup>221</sup> Ed Stetzer, "The Church and Mental Health: What Do the Numbers Tell Us?" accessed May 24, 2021, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2018/april/church-and-mental-health.html>.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

involving a participatory effort to identify dysfunctional complexities hindering disciple-making, unhealthy emotional trends, and productive solution-based goals to implement for emotionally healthy discipleship. Implementation of phase one of the intervention started with a discovery stage in two to three weeks. The second phase of research implemented a developmental stage with a timeframe of two months. Finally, the last step, the determination stage, allowed proper evaluation of the action research, and lasted up to one week.

### **Intervention Design**

This chapter highlights the project design outline, a screening process for eligibility, intervention design, ethical considerations, three-phased intervention, intervention, project timeline, implementing healthy outcomes, and summary. Volunteers participated in the screening process for eligibility for research. The purpose and objective of the project's intervention was to equip church leadership with knowledge on emotional health utilizing EHD training. The EHD trainer and resources provided church leader participants insight of the correlation between healthy emotions and a healthy church relationship.

The author utilized a triangulated investigative research model using pre-and post-assessments, interviews, and questionnaires. Research data collected by the researcher was analyzed and synthesized. The author utilized an academic measurement tool to evaluate the emotional maturity of participants with the pre and post-assessments. The researcher used a pre-training EHD assessment to measure the emotional maturity level of church leadership. The author interviewed the candidates prior to participating to assess baseline knowledge of EHD. Questionnaires were then submitted to select leadership for completion and placed in a secured drop box within the hour.

Yarborough illustrates the psychological battle to a vessel in a treacherous storm, and the mission aids the captain as a compass.<sup>225</sup> Church leaders on a mission gained awareness of their psychological and emotional health during challenging times. The researcher provided seven weeks of EHD training to address the psychological and emotional issues that hindered healthy discipleship. The author provided leadership with a post-training assessment and reassessed the emotional maturity level. The resources for EHD training consisted of EHS video training and will utilize the seven marks of EHD. The training was conducted at Trinity Baptist Church in the fellowship hall on seven consistent Sunday nights at 5:00 pm. The final process of gathering the triangulated investigative findings were compiled into seven confidential interviews, gathered a percentage rate with the six questionnaires, and compared the percentage rates of the EHD assessments. Finally, the data was analyzed, compiled, graded for training effectiveness, and rendered useful and valid for this thesis project's study.

This project addressed the need for church leadership at Trinity Baptist Church to identify and gain insight of the relationship between unhealthy emotional trends with an evaluation process. After Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the author gave approval to administration team, staff, and church council to start research process at Trinity. Approval letter from IRB is submitted in Appendix E.<sup>226</sup> This study enhanced church leadership's effectiveness by providing them with opportunity to discover unhealthy emotional trends that correlated with dysfunctional actions (or non-action) within the congregation and replaced negative thoughts with positive, sustainable goals to fulfill the church mission.

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<sup>225</sup> Andrew Yarborough, "Psychological Health and Christian Leadership," accessed November 5, 2019, <https://www.arcchurches.com/psychological-health-and-christian-leadership>.

<sup>226</sup> Appendix E.

The EHD research project aimed to help participants in resolving emotional and spiritual complexities having the potential to handicap positive leadership traits. The project allowed participants to identify negative emotional aspects within leadership that impacted the overall church ministry as a whole. Emphasis was on holistic discipleship to enhance emotional state, physical health, and spiritual purpose. Leadership covered topics concerning emotional health with self-awareness with personal struggles, challenges with circumstances during emotional anguish, burnout, moral failure, and unhealthy cognitions. Church leaders displayed humility that inspired others to introspect their own personal flaws, which led to positive changes.

### Screening Questions

The screening criteria for participants in this study consisted of church affiliation and leadership role. Consent to participate in the research was verified a second time. The collective data from screening questions was retrieved and stored in a secured drop box in the pastor's study. The consent form is located in (Appendix J).<sup>227</sup> Any one of three responses prevented study participation:

1. Are you affiliated with Trinity Baptist Church? “No”
2. What role in church leadership do you serve? “None”
3. If I meet the criteria to participate, I give consent to do so... “No, I do not consent.”

All participants passing the screening the questions and rendering consent allowed participants' entry into the research. Selected church leaders participating in the study completed a three-part investigation on emotional health, including (a) *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*

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<sup>227</sup> Appendix F.

Assessment, (b) questionnaire, and (c) interviews. Participant instructions were provided for each part of the investigative research.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This author completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) social-behavioral educational (SBE) introductory course toward ethical research. The certificate is on file with Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) which authorized the author to start research on May 23, 2021 (Appendix E). This author cooperated with all standard federal mandates and university procedures. There are no known ethical concerns regarding the research. This researcher had no known issues of interest and sought no financial benefits from the study. Participants were told the purpose of the study and were asked to render consent to participate (Appendix J)<sup>228</sup>. No manipulation took place between the researcher and the participants concerning intent. The research did not gather identifiable data about participants. Completed inquiry responses will be kept in the church office until 2023 or two years after research completion. Computer files, such as word documents or spreadsheets, will be password-protected and controlled by the author at the same time. Physical data and related documents will be held in a locked box only accessed by the author and destroyed two years after research completion. Rules concerning confidentiality being jeopardized if criminal in nature incidents were exposed were understood by participants. The author utilized privileged communication during interviews that would not jeopardize confidentiality. The author notified the church of the research by clarification of action research letter (Appendix F)<sup>229</sup>, email to recruit participants (Appendix

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<sup>228</sup> Appendix J.

<sup>229</sup> Appendix F.



G)<sup>230</sup>, social media advertisement for volunteers (Appendix H)<sup>231</sup>, and flyer of advertising of future project research (Appendix I)<sup>232</sup>.

## **Implementation of the Intervention Design**

### The Role of the Researcher

The author led a family forum in an open assembly with church leadership addressing emotional and spiritual complexities that hinder discipleship and a healthy learning environment at Trinity Baptist Church. Also, sustainable solutions of action research were presented to church leaders to address the identified conflictual complexities. Solutions were based on three phases consisting of less than two months. After the presentation, the researcher provided time for questions and answers from members of leadership. Leadership conducted a vote to commitment toward action research and sustainable solutions. Entering the field for this project, the researcher will ask for permissible grace from the deacon body. Church leaders encouraged leadership to volunteer for interviews, assessments, and questionnaires. The researcher will gather data from various sources and offer counsel to leaders from the project research analysis. The collected data will reveal a collective census of emotional and spiritual dysfunctional elements that hinder discipleship within the congregation.

The researcher's notes during the open forum encompassed several discussed topics during training, such as democratic versus theocratic leaders, spiritual formation, emotional maturity, and Christian virtues. Believers have a theocratic obligation that "*love one another as I*

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<sup>230</sup> Appendix G.

<sup>231</sup> Appendix H.

<sup>232</sup> Appendix I.

*have loved you.*"<sup>233</sup> The author encouraged leaders there is a Christian obligation to love others as Jesus loves us. Leadership discussed the difference between love defined by the world and by God. Klaus Issler suggests Christian formation is not an adaptive behavior; instead, it is a dependency on the inner work of the Spirit of God."<sup>234</sup> Small group discussions covered one of the Christian virtues of love as being an action, not feeling. Issler describes the lifestyle evangelistic approach of Jesus as a practical witness of love empowered by divine grace.<sup>235</sup> The researcher discussed the topic of the difference between theocratic versus democratic leadership in open discussion. Various leaders suggested theocratic leadership serve with grace-filled empowerment following the scripture and influencing congregants to allow scripture to lead them.

The researcher performed an after-action review to gain take-a-ways from training, gather pros and cons from activity, readdress the emotional and cultural dynamics, and gain valuable, sustainable solutions for research data. The author observed healthy boundaries within leadership after training by no interruptions, respect, and concern during emotional responses, and verbal appreciation for the training upon completion of each training session. The proposed project can handle the emotional and spiritual needs of leaders and inspire a spiritual-driven purpose.

### **Phase 1 Discovery Stage**

The first phase of action research began with selected leadership participating in an investigative study to gain knowledge of their emotional maturity and relationship with various church members. Scuzzero suggests that most church leaders view the emotional nature of

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<sup>233</sup> John 15:12.

<sup>234</sup> Klaus Issler, *Living Into the Life of Jesus* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 12.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*

humanity as sinful. Ignoring our emotions is a denial of our divine makeup and refusal to gain fellowship with God.<sup>236</sup> Interviews allowed participants to speak about anguish, struggles, and challenges as leaders serving in a church environment. Christ encourages believers to speak from their heart or feelings to gain spiritual fellowship, empathy, healing, understanding, and spiritual enrichment. Scazzero mentions that emotions are the language of the soul and that the Lord will touch our emotions to connect with his creation.<sup>237</sup> In John 21, Jesus speaks to Peter on the sea of Galilee about love after his resurrection.<sup>238</sup> Jesus related Peter's denial of him three times to inquiry of his love for him three times.<sup>239</sup> Also, Jesus references a degree of love by comparing the love for possessions, friends, and hobbies to his love for Jesus.<sup>240</sup>

As Jesus struggled with persecution, he practiced lifestyle evangelism by caring for others that were suffering. Jesus modeled healthy emotional leadership by investing time with his spiritual Father and with purposeful conversations. Christian leaders recognize that healthy ministry requires knowledge of the Scriptures, empowerment of the Holy Spirit, and deterrence from relying on our strength.<sup>241</sup> Healthy leaders acknowledging emotional anguish aids toward spiritual enrichment and direction. Lack of spiritual insight leads to confusion and no purpose in ministry.<sup>242</sup> No spiritual path births psychological and emotional chaos. Amy Simpson, author and senior editor of *Leadership Journal*, suggests if the church remains silent to people

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<sup>236</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 6-10.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> John 21:15-17.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Yarborough, "Psychological Health and Christian Leadership."

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

struggling with emotional and mental issues, a clear message of no hope is understood.<sup>243</sup>

Silence tells hopeless people that God is not interested in their suffering, their problems have no place in the church, and our faith has no answers for challenges like theirs.<sup>244</sup> The pragmatic spiritual theophany is discovered with spiritual identity and purpose. Church leaders with no spiritual vision experience frustration, depression, anxiety, and a sense of defeat.<sup>245</sup> Sabotaging emotional struggles affect family and spiritual relationships within the church.

The discovery stage aided church leaders in discovering their emotional competence, environmental complexities, and dysfunctional relational traits. Volunteer participants have two weeks to complete consent forms. Selected church leaders of Trinity will participate in action research with questionnaires, assessments, and training. Action research addresses complex issues within church leadership and offers sustainable solutions. This investigative study utilized interviews, questionnaires, and assessments to address unhealthy complexities with leadership in a non-biased approach. The researcher used triangulation methods to analyze the accuracy of collected data. The triangulated methods of the research consisted of interviews, assessments, and questionnaires.

#### Anonymous Assessment

The anonymous assessment will be from Emotionally Healthy Discipleship (EHD) by Peter Scazzero.<sup>246</sup> The research assessments were conducted on the first Sunday afternoon after approval from IRB. The participatory efforts of church leaders with reviews will comprise the

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<sup>243</sup> Ed Stetzer, "The Church and Mental Health: What Do the Numbers Tell Us?"

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Peter Scazzero, "The EHD Personal Assessment," *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, accessed May 30, 2021, [http://www.emotionallyhealthy.org/personal assessment/](http://www.emotionallyhealthy.org/personal%20assessment/).

workshop training. The anonymous assessment was created to analyze each participant's current knowledge of and efforts in Emotionally Healthy Discipleship and each participant's understanding of emotional and spiritual maturity.

### Questionnaire Survey

The project meeting will include information about the investigative process and precisely the purpose of the questionnaires. Surveys will be completed at the second training meeting. Selected leadership of no more than six members will participate in a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire surveys will be analyzed and synthesized to gain a percentage rate on healthy and dysfunctional elements of the emotional dynamics of church leadership. Examination of the questionnaire inquiry concerning emotional dynamics of leadership can highlight the diversity and conflictual cultural dynamics. The project meeting will conclude with a question-and-answer time. The goal of the conference is to inform, investigate, and gather data for research. The timeframe will consist of one hour to complete questionnaires. Upon completing questionnaire surveys, participants will submit surveys in a locked box in the pastor's study.

### Research Interviews Analysis

Following the conclusion of the first three training modules, the researcher will interview a selected member of leadership. Interview sessions were conducted within the pastor's office for no longer than one hour. The purpose of the interviews will be to listen and reflect accurate data for the investigative research process. The researcher will encourage participants and reflect on the EHD principles to stay on the research target. Selected church leaders participated in an interview that complements the investigative research by completing a questionnaire survey

about emotional and spiritual health. Interviewees selected for action research of the church leadership are anonymous. All recorded interviews will be used for the research project and stored in a secured box in the pastor's office.

Candidates interviewed served presently on a committee, have at least five years of membership, and actively participate in church functions. Volunteer interviewee participants filled out a release form. The interview release form requested general demographic background information (Appendix A).<sup>247</sup> The participant's inquiry had open-ended questions about emotional and spiritual complexities. Volunteer interviewees for research met at the church office for an interview. Interview questions assisted leaders in exploring areas of struggle, confess weaknesses, and look toward solutions. Yarborough suggests confession agrees with Christ about our sin and struggles in faith that he will cleanse and restore.<sup>248</sup> The Greek word for admission is *homologous*, which means "to agree with."<sup>249</sup> Yarborough suggests healthy leadership is rooted in both victory (celebrating wins) and vulnerability (humility).<sup>250</sup>

Emotionally healthy administration has self-awareness, a repenting heart, seeks counsel, matures through the experience (sanctification), and rejoices at the goodness of God.<sup>251</sup> Scazzero suggests people like icebergs reveal only ten percent of what is internally going on within their lives.<sup>252</sup> Understanding sinful behavior may be ingrained from previous generations. We are implementing spiritual disciplines, such as putting off our biological families' sinful patterns and habits and being transformed to live as members of Christ's family. Church leaders gaining

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<sup>247</sup> Appendix A.

<sup>248</sup> Andrew Yarborough, "Psychological Health and Christian Leadership."

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 160-86.

insight into unhealthy sinful leadership traits could prevent the cycle of insanity in a church environment. Leadership training identifying sinful leadership traits could create a healthy learning environment with a positive change.

The interviewee had the liberty to speak freely during the inquiry process. Questions helped determine the relevance of staying on a focused topic by utilizing queries (Appendix A).<sup>253</sup> This process of gathering data by contacting and interviewing seven people took a total of three weeks. The interviewees were notified that the confidential data received will enhance a healthy learning environment and signed consent. The collected data from interviews had concise analysis and were documented without using the interviewee's name. Finally, the outcomes were analyzed, compiled, rated for percentages of similar responses, and relayed to enhance this thesis project's research.

The first question of research: What is the worst job you ever had? Identifying the worst job could aid participants to reflect on what evil looks like and how it impacted their lives. The worst job inquiry responses highlight dysfunctional environmental trends, maladaptive behavior, emotional outbursts, and unbalance of work duties.

The second question of research: What are three of your greatest strengths and weaknesses? Identifying the most significant weaknesses could contribute to participants reflecting on personal characteristics or flaws related to the response of others. The greatest strengths could be recognized as leaders reflect on compliments on behalf of their contributions. Scazzero suggests that emotionally unhealthy church leaders see success incorrectly with vertical

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<sup>253</sup> Appendix A.

faulty perception with more numbers, money, decisions, services, baptisms, prominent buildings, and bigger budgets.<sup>254</sup>

The third question of research: Please describe the role your vocation plays in leadership? Church leaders identifying vocation roles and leadership traits led to church leadership illuminated secular versus spiritual qualities in church duties. A second factor that may affect a person's ability to cope with stressful life moments is the emotional trait of personal control.<sup>255</sup>

The fourth question of research: For what reason is “No” a difficult word to say to a request or that risks overextending yourself? The study indicated participant’s responses to why “No” is hard to say mutually dealt with desires to be accepted by others, being of worth, value, and being reliable to those in need. Identifying the difficulty of saying “No” seemed to relate more with being accepted and gaining worth from others.

The fifth question of the research is in two parts: In what ways does everyone as a minister challenge you as a church leader? In what ways does it encourage you? The inquiry response indicated ministry is a calling, the ministry is leadership, and the ministry is cooperative. Individuals become weary when we attempt more church ministry than they can devote to personal spiritual growth.<sup>256</sup>

The sixth question of research: What beneath the surface issues, a weakness, a wound, or protective boundaries have most impacted your leadership in the past recently? The Lord addressed the church with three sins that hinder fellowship, love, being a disciple, and worship. “For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh, desires of the eyes, and the pride of life is

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<sup>254</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 20-25.

<sup>255</sup> Linda Brannon and Jess Feist, *Health Psychology*, p.207. 2000.

<sup>256</sup> Boa. *Conformed to His Image*, 274.



not from the father but is from the world.”<sup>257</sup> Daily confession involves admitting fault in self and strength in Christ. Normalizing an individual’s emotional wounds of loss, grief, and trauma adds to dysfunctional environments. To identify God’s presence amid suffering could illuminate hope in their dark world.

The seventh question of research: What three phases would you use to describe your response when it comes to confrontation or differing viewpoints? Identifying the three-phase response to conflict consisted of scriptural guidance, transparentness, and avoidance.

The eighth question of research: What are some similarities and differences are there between weakness and vulnerability? Identifying the similarities between weakness and vulnerability might reflect an easy target, timid character, avoidance, and fear. Differences between vulnerability and weakness may center around easily defeated, unpreparedness, and isolation. Peter Scazzero suggests that church leaders who are emotionally unhealthy struggle with being taught, insecurities, defensive, negative or critical of others, need attention or admiration, and have family struggles.<sup>258</sup>

The ninth question of research: To what degree is your life impacted by the approval and disapproval of others? Church leaders identified how emotional health is affected by the support and disapproval of others. In Judges 7, Gideon and the Israelites troops are lining up for battle, and the Lord tells the commander he has too many troops.<sup>259</sup> The disapproval of God of using a vast army in battle removes the divine dependency for strength, provisions, power, and salvation in their inner struggle.<sup>260</sup> Gideon’s army was reduced to 300 God-fearing dependent warriors

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<sup>257</sup> 1 John 2:16.

<sup>258</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 6-10.

<sup>259</sup> Judges 7.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*

trusting in the grace of God.<sup>261</sup> God was not looking for a general, colonel, major, or captain to lead his troops into battle. Gideon discovered that God was looking for someone big enough to be small enough to be used. A follower and disciple of Jesus lives life dependent on the grace of God.<sup>262</sup> Lessons could aid in discovering emotional trends that hinder spiritual enrichment and guidance. The study will ensure biblical advice for the emotional instability of church leadership.

### Pre-EHD Training Assessments

Selected leadership will complete the EHD assessment by Peter Scazzero (Appendix C).<sup>263</sup> The completion of the assessments will be after the completion of interviews. The completed assessment will rate each participant's emotional and spiritual maturity level before the EHD training. The research outcomes will be analyzed, compiled, and relayed to enhance this thesis project's research. Finally, the gathered data from research will be stored in a secured box in the pastor's office.

The timeline for the investigative process will consist of two to three weeks. After completion of investigation and training, the researcher will follow up with the interview participants to reveal findings. First, I want to hear feedback from one's experiences during the investigative process. Second, I would like to listen to any emotional or spiritual dynamics in their life that they feel they are maturing or struggling in. Third, inquiry about any moderations or takeaways that would enhance the research project. Finally, I would like to offer results from collective data to improve church leadership's emotional and spiritual dynamics.

### Phase 2 Developmental Stage

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<sup>261</sup> Judges 7.

<sup>262</sup> Daren Wride, *DNA of a Christ Follower* (Canada: Deep Wild Communications, 2016), 125

<sup>263</sup> Appendix C.

## Research Approach and Training Methods

The EHD training was led using three main components: Facilitated open discussion, video-driven study, and designated small cells to explore the emotional components of the lesson. Each participant signed informed consent with knowledge of triangulated inquiry methods, training, privileged communication, recorded dialogue, and research rhythm and timeline. The author emphasized that if the training process caused emotional duress, confidential counseling would be available. Documentation noted by the researcher for future church research projects a Christian counselor for emotional triggers from participants. The author notified participants about missing a training module with a special allowance of missing one session. The original group of church leaders participating was twelve, and only one could not complete the course. The research outcomes consisted of eleven pre and post-assessments that were completed and received by the researcher. An open discussion surveyed the outline and timeline for Emotionally Healthy Discipleship at a pre-training initial meeting. Each training session consisted of two hours in duration. The timeframe for the training consisted of less than two months.

### The EHD Training

The researcher offered training for selected leadership on the *Seven Marks of Emotionally Healthy Discipleship* by Peter Scazzero. The seven marks consist of “(1) Be Before You Do, (2) Follow the Crucified, Not the Americanized, Jesus, (3) Embrace God’s Gift of Limits, (4) Discover the Treasures Buried in Grief and Loss, (5) Make Love the Measure of Maturity, (6) Break the Power of the Past, and (7) Lead Out of Weakness and Vulnerability.”<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 37-187.

The purpose of the EHD training is to incorporate emotionally healthy disciples to make disciples for Christ. Paul became all things to all men that he might, by all means, save some. However, he did not alter the gospel. “To the weak, I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may, by all means, save some.”<sup>265</sup>

The training began with a facilitated open discussion covering each mark of EHD for ten minutes. Then, the class transitioned to the video-driven series of the *Seven Marks of Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, followed by questions and comments. Training incorporates intradisciplinary integration with teaching and spiritual disciplines to sustain emotionally healthy discipleship and positively change Trinity Baptist Church. Leaders who may struggle with emotional outbursts could learn spiritual disciplines, coping techniques, and relationships with other believers. Emotionally healthy disciples lead perpetually with a heightened awareness of their emotions and spiritual fullness.<sup>266</sup> The results of being with God are sufficient to maintain their doing for God.<sup>267</sup> Emotional fullness is manifested primarily by the alertness of feelings, weaknesses and limits the impact of past failures. Spiritual fullness displays a healthy balance between their being with God and doing for God as they receive from God more than they do for him.<sup>268</sup>

The seven weeks of EHD training challenged each participant to evaluate their emotional and spiritual maturity personally. The author provided a workshop forum presenting practical spiritual disciplines to implement within a personal devotion. The class was led into ten-minute training sessions on the seven marks of EHD. The author transitions to a five-minute lesson that

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<sup>265</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:22, KJV.

<sup>266</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 6-25.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

focused on practical discipleship on the topic of love for seven consistent weeks. The researcher utilized segments from the good Samaritan parable to identify love during emotional chaos. The parable of the good Samaritan reveals humility and compassion toward a stranger. The Samaritan's care demonstrated the measurement of God's love needed for a local Jewish man.<sup>269</sup>

Religious leadership fails to carry out love from God to the needs of people because of lacking love. Love is the proof that we are following Christ and testifies that Christ is genuine. Jesus mentions that our love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."<sup>270</sup> Jesus even commands people of faith to love one another as he has loved us."<sup>271</sup> Jesus commands believers to love not with words or worldly standards but with how he has loved us. Training reveals emotional maturity leads others to the same spiritual source for salvation, utilizes daily practice Biblical precepts, and focuses on the mission instead of the methods.<sup>272</sup> Church leaders ministering out of love toward others function out of wholeness in Christ. The researcher implemented a lesson on the seven marks of EHD each session for ten minutes. Comments from participants followed the ten-minute training session.

The EHD training utilized the video-driven series on Emotionally Healthy Spirituality EHS by Peter Scazzero. Modern-day discipleship places great emphasis on learning Biblical precepts, making disciples, and bypassing having a relationship with the Lord. Scazzero suggests a believer must be a disciple before they can make a disciple. The video training series showcased one video seminar for seven consistent Sunday night's averaging twenty minutes. The EHS focuses on being a disciple in a seven-part video training series: "(1.) The Problem of

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<sup>269</sup> Luke 10:25-37.

<sup>270</sup> John 13:35, NLT.

<sup>271</sup> John 15:12.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality, (2.) Know Yourself That You May Know God, (3.) Going Back To Go Forward, (4.) Journey Through The Wall, (5.) Enlarging Your Soul through Grief and Loss, (6.) Discover The Rhythm Of The Daily Office & Sabbath, and (7.) Grow into an Emotionally Mature Adult.” After the video training, the participants provided feedback and rendered comments. The researcher provided handouts with questions and allowed five minutes for participants to fill out. The training video-driven workshop was followed by a small group discussion for thirty minutes. The first three nights, the researcher gave instructions for both small groups to discuss completed handouts for ten minutes and pick someone to record takeaways from the discussion. The author collected handouts and group notes for research.

The researcher provided a topic of discussion covering healthy boundaries in relationships, wholeness, and reconciliation. Scazzero suggests believers neglect loving God by not loving people.<sup>273</sup> The next four training nights, small groups were allowed to discuss completed handouts for twenty minutes. The researcher gathered small groups for the last ten minutes to open a class forum to compare and contrast group discussions. The open forum allowed participants to personally evaluate their spiritual life and gain insight into healthy relational dynamics techniques. Scazzero conveys that our emotional response is evidence of a spiritual notion.<sup>274</sup> Church leaders participated with passionate responses and appropriate questions during the workshop forum.

Upon the request of confident church leaders, the author developed a sermon series utilizing components of the seven marks of EHD. The researcher provided sermons a sermon series on EHD for seven consistent Sunday mornings. The author incorporated the four failures

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<sup>273</sup> John 15:12.

<sup>274</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 6-15.

of healthy discipleship included in a church environment: “(1.) We tolerate emotional immaturity, (2.) We emphasize doing for God over being with God, (3.) We ignore the treasures of church history, and (4.) We define success incorrectly.”<sup>275</sup> The sermon series taught the congregation how emotional dynamics could hinder or elevate true discipleship. The author identified spiritual disciplines that could enhance emotional and spiritual maturity. The gathering was attentive to the sermon series and was responsive to the message.

### **Phase 3 Determination Stage**

The last phase of the action research will be the determination stage. The determination stage consisted of selected leadership retaking the EHD assessment. Post-training completed assessment rated the emotional and spiritual maturity level of each participant. The researcher met with all action research participants to relay the percentages from questionnaires, interviews, and assessments. The timeline for the determination phase consisted of one week. Research results were censored and documented to present to the leadership at the agreed time. Church notification of research results occurred after the completion of the research project. In Genesis 37, Joseph tells his family about a God-given dream, and his family retaliates with mockery. The brothers of Joseph devise a plan to get rid of him. Joseph, betrayed by his family and sold into slavery, yet God uses the pit of despair to fulfill his God-given dream.<sup>276</sup> Scripture reveals God as sovereign: “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”<sup>277</sup> Church leaders could consider setbacks or loss as God’s way of bringing about His will. The research served as a visionary approach to address

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 6-25.

<sup>276</sup> Genesis 38-39.

<sup>277</sup> Genesis 50:20, NIV.

setbacks and dysfunctional emotional trends hindering discipleship. Church leadership recapped significant takeaways from the study and determined usage for the congregation at a later date.

Church leadership participated in an open dialogue of completed research, developing and incorporating new agendas, ideas, practical antidotes, and aspirations that fielded the complexities. The researcher notified the leadership of the results of the EHD pre and post-assessment. The research gathered dysfunctional data, presented insightful sustainable solutions, resources, and implemented practical steps to address the needs. Collected data from interviews by volunteered leadership revealed emotional and spiritual trends that could hinder disciple-making. Investigative research questions enhanced this project's value and enriched the collective data; suggested research questions were submitted (Appendix D).<sup>278</sup> Participants were receptive to collect research data and displayed excitement to implement EHD within the congregation.

Confident church leaders desired to use collective data to enhance leadership traits to minister to cultural differences within an acclimated church body. The sustainable solutions from training could adopt an emotionally healthy approach to make disciples and create a healthy learning environment. The researcher utilized collective analysis to counsel leadership about emotional maturity stages and dysfunctional cultural dynamics. Miller suggests maintaining integrity and kindness during challenges displays an emotionally healthy individual.<sup>279</sup> The author addressing complexities provides an opportunity to entertain sustainable solutions and implement solutions with unified visionary agendas. Participants reported notable post research takeaways during an open collaboration, such as clashing cultural differences hindering

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<sup>278</sup> Appendix D.

<sup>279</sup> Appendix D.



emotional maturity, the need for self-awareness to EHD, and lacking Christ's type of love to invest in others.

Church leaders' participation with open dialogue discusses clashing cultural dynamics that cripple the church's emotional dynamics and spiritual maturity. Positive coping techniques promote resiliency and emotional balance during challenging times.<sup>280</sup> The EHD training allowed participants to understand their emotional dynamics, maladaptive behavior, spiritual growth, and impactful coping techniques. Miller mentions living with purpose thoughts are guided to personal wisdom, and experience can overcome circumstances.<sup>281</sup> The collective census indicated that EHD training with practical small-group exercises could incorporate unity, healthy emotional trends, spiritual enrichment, and emotionally healthy discipleship with future leaders. Kelly Miller suggests emotional and cognitive practical exercises and coping strategies enhance emotional health.<sup>282</sup> The project proposal is to utilize research participants to equip church members with EHD concepts. The researcher trained the church leaders with training resources and encouraged them with scripture for visionary guidance. Various church leaders discussed ways to integrate different cultures into small groups and inventive ways to incorporate training modules to bring unity.

Self-awareness is a beneficial discipline that can redirect emotions and understand complexities to navigate distress. The open forum allowed the researcher to encourage participants with progressive evaluation results and commonality toward visionary purpose.

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<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Miller, "What Is Emotional Health?"

The post-assessment indicated that leadership gained self-awareness of emotional complexities and an understanding of practical self-disciplines to bring positive change. Scazzero highlights the life of Paul encountering God's grace in his weak state displayed the power of God in his life.<sup>283</sup> Paul, the apostle, pleads with God three times to remove the weakness within his life. First, God speaks to the heart of Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”<sup>284</sup> Second, Paul brags to people about his weakness, believing that God’s power would be displayed and be his testimony.<sup>285</sup> Church leaders reported during small group time to have gained self-awareness of how personal struggles could hinder spiritual enrichment. Circumstances can challenge the emotional and cognitive health of individuals. Maintaining focus on the purpose of life contributes to positive cognitions.

Emotionally healthy people possess self-awareness acknowledging emotional or cognitive flaws and the need for help during adversity.<sup>286</sup> Participants discussed ideas on using EHS within life groups that could heighten self-awareness of emotional and spiritual maturity.

Spiritual investing in people offers healthy discipleship that can meet holistic needs and promote a healthy change. Healthy discipleship could utilize beneficial relational components as incarnational listening and caring for an individual’s needs. Church leaders identified incarnational listening, meeting the needs of people, and taking time to have gospel conversations. For example, in James 1, “My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”<sup>287</sup> Allowing

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<sup>283</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 187-208.

<sup>284</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:8.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Miller, “What Is Emotional Health?”

<sup>287</sup> James 1:19, NIV.

Scripture to guide cognitions and practice spiritual disciplines could keep emotions in check. Scazzero suggests incarnational listening by eliminating advice or quick solutions, taming body language, and promoting reflective dialogue with hopeful concepts.<sup>288</sup>

Various leaders reported investing in people with acts of love and incarnational listening could bring a healthy change. Healthy discipleship cares for the needs of others “he who is wise wins souls.”<sup>289</sup> Paul’s willing adjustment of his living to identify with those to whom he witnessed was part of what today we call pre-evangelism. What he did in this regard was not a part of the gospel; it had nothing to do with the gospel. But it helped many unbelievers to listen to the gospel and be more open to receiving it. Trinity's understanding of healthy leadership, biblical foundation, and holistic discipleship promote mission-centric efforts with a healthy learning environment.

### **Timeline for Conducting the Project**

The EHD project began on May 23, 2021. The participants were asked to complete the EHD Personal Assessment in person before the first training module to be conducted that night. Over seven consecutive weeks, the research and training took place, including video lessons, open-discussion, questionnaires, and interviews. No homework was given to the participants. Each training session was one hour long and consisting of thirty minutes of video and open discussion followed by thirty minutes of small cell discussion. During the last week of the training, participants were allowed thirty minutes to complete the post-training EHD assessment.

### **Project Timeline**

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<sup>288</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 134-59.

<sup>289</sup> Proverbs 11:30, KJV.

The EHD project began on May 23, 2021. Church leaders participated in the personal EHD assessment and completed the first training session. The second week of training concluded with the completion of the investigative questionnaires. The third through sixth week began with training and one interview with one church leader each night. The last training consisted of training and concluded with a post-training assessment. The course took place over seven consistent weeks and included video training and facilitated group discussion.

The EHD training started with an hour workshop. First, the researcher taught a five-minute devotion each session about love utilizing the parable of the good Samaritan. Second, the author instructed a ten-minute study each session through the seven marks of EHD. Third, Church leaders observed the EHD video training series each night consisting of an average time of twenty minutes. At last, the class participated in an open forum to ask questions and render comments.

The open forum workshop was followed by small group training. First, the researcher presented discussion topics to small groups to be discussed and recorded for twenty minutes. Second, each small group was given handouts to be completed, discussed as a group, and left on the table for research data. The training for small groups averaged thirty minutes.

The researcher notified the leadership of the results of the EHD pre and post-assessment. The research gathered dysfunctional data, presented insightful sustainable solutions, resources, and implement practical steps to address the needs. Collected data from interviews by volunteered leadership revealed emotional and spiritual trends that could hinder disciple-making.

Documentation noted by the author for future church research studies there should be trained Christian counselors available for emotional triggers from church members. The author notified participants about missing a training session with special permission of missing one meeting.

The initial gathering of participants was twelve, and only one could not complete the project.

## Chapter Summary

The importance of emotional health in church leaders is essential for spiritual growth conducive to impact the community. Emotional health cannot be removed from spiritual maturity.<sup>290</sup> As a believer gains knowledge of their emotional health, their spiritual maturity is magnified. Dysfunctional environmental trends can slowly be adjusted by identifying unhealthy emotional trends hindering spiritual maturity. The identified habitual rituals or movements of the church can cripple the theocratic efforts of believers.<sup>291</sup> This research project heightens an awareness that most participants struggled with emotional infant and child stages with their leadership role within the church. The intensive EHD training incorporated material that equipped leaders in discovering emotional weaknesses and the need for spiritual maturity. The post-training assessments with participants displayed higher scores with emotional maturity. The stages of research were the discovery, developmental, and determination stages.

The discovery stage served as a research tool to examine the emotional dynamics of church leadership that could hinder spiritual enrichment or discipleship efforts of the church. The focus group of interest consisted of lay leaders at Trinity Baptist Church in Natchitoches, Louisiana. This research was a quantitative correlational study that analyzed the responses of church leaders to understand the emotional dynamics and environmental trends at Trinity. The author provided invitations to all church leaders resulting in seven completed assessments. The researcher utilized a scoring gauge from Peter Scazzero's book to analyze and rate the scores from the evaluations. The investigative process began with volunteers participating in two weeks of completing consent forms. Church leadership that participated in the action research utilized

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<sup>290</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 134-59.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 111-34.

questionnaires, assessments, and interviews. Action research addressed the complexities of the emotional dynamics of church leadership and presented sustainable solutions toward healthy discipleship. The researcher used triangulation concepts to analyze the accuracy of gathered data. The researcher used investigative tools for research such as interviews, pre-training assessments, and questionnaires.

The developmental stage of research offered participants seven weeks of intensive EHD training. Intensive training on emotional health could resolve dysfunctional coping strategies and create healthy coping techniques. Cognitive Dissonance discomforts the belief system of an individual and offers positive variables to render harmony. Dr. Yarborough suggests souls comprise the mind, will, and emotions, and psychological health pertains to the maximum functioning of all three elements.<sup>292</sup> The EHD training consisted of an open forum discussion covering the topic of love, the seven marks of EHD, video-driven discussion on EHS, and followed with comments. Small group time consisting of thirty minutes followed the open forum workshop. The author submitted a focus for meeting the first three sessions highlighting healthy boundaries in relationships, wholeness, and reconciliation. The next four training nights, small groups were permitted to discuss completed handouts for twenty minutes. The author collected both small groups for the last few minutes of their discussion to compare and contrast various views from each small group. The open forum allowed leaders to personally examine their spiritual walk and gain knowledge into healthy relational enhancement options.

The determination phase was the implementation process of participants to integrate research and training into practice. Selected leadership retook the EHD post-training assessment. Post-training completed assessment graded the emotional and spiritual dynamics of each church

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<sup>292</sup> Yarborough, "Psychological Health and Christian Leadership."

leader. The author relayed research outcomes to the participants. The timeline for the determination process lasted one week. Study findings were censored, noted, and presented to church leaders. Church notification of research will occur after the dissertation is submitted.

Research findings will be displayed in Chapter Four. The following two chapters complement the research data and share gathered results. Detailed grading percentages, comparing and contrasting notes with questionnaires, interviews, and assessments were documented. Correlational findings identified if healthy relationships existed between conflictual variables, and if so, whether or not insightful guidance with training could contribute to the direction and strengths of those relationships. Inferential findings provided information about the relational relevance of the study results. Lastly, the connotation and abstraction of detections will be discussed, and implications for further study could be considered.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The research challenged church leaders to examine their emotional nature as it relates to discipleship and leading. Church leadership is always in the limelight, but never more so than during a trial.<sup>293</sup> The Emotionally Healthy Discipleship (EHD) research was conducted as discussed in church leadership. Eleven participants completed the seven-week training, and eight contributed to pre-and post-session assessments. If leaders distinguish themselves in stressful moments, they will reap an elevated level of trust and honor.<sup>294</sup> The selected leadership was very engaged with the discussion and efforts in the inquiry process. The quantitative research layout triggered objective findings of the connection between two concepts: (a) emotional maturity and (b) Christian discipleship.

The research results are listed in detail in three stages the discovery stage, developmental stage, and determination stage. The collected data from research was analyzed and synthesized to form a concise presentation to leadership. The discovery phase was an investigative stage of the project consisting of a triangulated inquiry using assessments, questionnaires, and interviews over six weeks; the developmental phase consisted of seven weeks of training on emotional maturity and discipleship. The researcher recruited fifteen church leaders to participate in the research, comprised of seven ladies and eight men. The questionnaire participants consisted of four men and two ladies aged from the twenties to the sixties. The investigative interviews required more than two leadership roles within the church consisting of two ladies and one man. The Emotionally Healthy Discipleship (EHD) assessments were completed by six men and two

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<sup>293</sup> Steve Echols and Allen England, *Catastrophic Crisis* (B & H Publishing, Nashville, Tn., 2009), 132.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.



ladies from church leadership. The findings rendered a general census from the interview, percentage total from the assessments, and identified complexities within the questionnaire.

Evaluation of emotional health allows the participant to gain insight into how environments could contribute to distortions. While the assessment responses were valid and trustworthy, collected answers were graded with an academic tool for evaluation. The developmental stage highlighted lesson takeaways from leadership, post-training assessment results, and a census from small group discussions. Healthy churches with impactful ministries equip members to handle self-care in a crisis and aid others through a problem.<sup>295</sup> The determination phase findings relay the impact the research had on leadership, directional focus from participants, and discoveries leadership gained. Participants portrayed a need for validation and were socially accepted, hindering accurate responses or slightly off reactions.

### **Research Pre-Training Questionnaire Discoveries**

The questionnaires encapsulated a general analysis of the emotional health of church leadership. The investigative aim of the inquiry was to trigger emotional moments that hinder spiritual progression and purpose. The completion of surveys occurred at the second training meeting. Selected leadership of no more than six members participated in the questionnaire inquiry. The questionnaire surveys were analyzed and synthesized, gaining a percentage rate on healthy and dysfunctional elements of the emotional dynamics of church leaders. Examination of the inquiry related to the diverse emotional dynamics of leadership and highlighted conflictual cultural dynamics.

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<sup>295</sup> Echols and England, *Catastrophic Crisis*, 132.

Gaining an understanding of a disciple's emotional health or the role of emotional health or dysfunction serves in spiritual disciplines in the areas of psychology, neurobiology, and philosophy.<sup>296</sup> Furthermore, through their individual practices, ministers and Christian leaders have come to be grateful for the need for emotional health in their members.<sup>297</sup> Edge Findley suggests complexities among leadership hinder rapport and the mission of the organization.<sup>298</sup> Conflicts originate from personal antipathies developed by the people outside the group.<sup>299</sup> The emotional dynamics within church leadership displayed an average positive level of emotional maturity. The questionnaire presented nine questions that aimed to trigger emotional and spiritual responses of church leadership. The survey was graded with a classification either positive or negative of the reactions. The research challenged the emotional health of Christian leaders and aimed to strengthen or enrich their relationship with God. Anderson suggests that spirituality can be harmful to self, relationship with God, and community without education on emotional health.<sup>300</sup> Emotional triggers were retrieved by recalling painful memories from the past, and emotional responses unveiled the origins of personality traits and defensive mechanisms. The author used sensory receptors to observe body language and identify the tone of voice of participants.

Conflictual cultural dynamics can create dysfunctional social status distinctions or differences in economic and social class. Conversely, healthy learning environments are conducive to boundaries that hinder social differences and distinctions from influencing the

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<sup>296</sup> Anderson and Skinner, "Feelings," 66-78.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Edge, *Teaching for Results*, 40.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

collective group.<sup>301</sup> The investigative inquiry revealed mutual responses within the cultural dynamics of leadership, possibly identifying condition environmental trends. The table below displays the category from the questionnaire.

**Table-1.1 Pre-Training Questionnaire Analysis and Discoveries**

*(Questions are listed in numerical order from top left to right, and percentages are listed on the left side of the graph.)*

Questions	Q-1	Q-2	Q-3	Q-4	Q-5	Q-6	Q-7	Q-8	Q-9
Positive	100%	100%	100%	100%	1/6=16%	0%	2/6=33%	3/3=50	4/6=66%
Negative	0%	0%	0%	0%	5/6=83%	100%	4/6=66%	3/3=50	2/6=33%

Percentages indicated that church leaders have a mutual understanding of complexities and sustainable solutions. However, the disadvantages of mutual knowledge of social complexities and solutions could be acclimatization within the cultural dynamics. Triangulated investigative research could offer a more intensive examination of church leadership's emotional and cultural dynamics. The interview inquiry will consist of three church leaders answering questions from the questionnaire. The research could elaborate on the emotional dynamics and gain insightful knowledge of how current church leaders conduct decisions. For example, a religious leader who becomes keenly conscious of some apparent sinful behavior could create hostility in addressing the conduct.<sup>302</sup> If the leader desires to utilize his religion to confront sinful

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<sup>301</sup> Edge, *Teaching for Results*, 40.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

behavior, the environment will become hostile, resulting in a distinct cultural group.<sup>303</sup> On the other hand, if sinful behavior is not addressed in a church environment, members could be acclimatized to prevent emotionally healthy discipleship.<sup>304</sup>

### **Research Interview's Discoveries**

Interview inquiry investigated church leadership's emotional health concerning the level of emotional maturity and discipleship dynamics. Questions that evolved around emotional health were drawn from *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship* by Peter Scazzero. The interview questionnaire is displayed in this research (Appendix D). The researcher utilized responses from the interview questionnaire to compile a collective census of the emotional dynamics of church leadership. The interviewees were given the freedom to expound on internal struggles or emotional anguish that hindered their spiritual enrichment. Participants were allowed appropriate time to answer questions during the interview process. Questions asked determined the relevance of staying focused on spiritual direction and keeping tabs on emotional nature during trials. The author accomplished the method of gathering data. The interviewees were notified that the interview was confidential and that the data received would enhance a healthy learning environment. The collected data from interviews had a concise analysis and was documented without using the interviewee's name.

The researcher utilized nine questions for an investigative interview of emotionally healthy or negative trends within church leadership. Participants identified environmental complexities in work environments that contributed towards unresolved emotional anguish. Interview responses indicated unhealthy boundaries were not identified between co-workers

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<sup>303</sup> Edge, *Teaching for Results*, 105.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

contributing to arguments and avoidance among employees. The researcher discussed defensive mechanisms to promote healthy emotional boundaries that could contribute to a healthy mindset. The inquiry allowed the author to gain an understanding of the weaknesses and strengths of church leadership. Participants mutually agreed of struggling to minister to congregants with emotional outbursts, crossing boundaries, and narcissistic tendencies. Church leaders mutually indicated during interviews that their vocation roles complement tasks at church with high performance, following higher leadership, maintain a controlled environment, practical work ethic, commitment, goal orientation, and having the right attitude contributes to a healthy environment at church.

The inquiry revealed that leadership struggled to create healthy boundaries, be over-tasked, and tell church members “No.” The findings indicated that not saying “No” increased stress levels and contributed to emotional turmoil with church leadership. Participants mutually agreed that church members participating in ministry would be positive, build rapport, impact a community, and reduce stress to current administration. However, interview results indicated that issues with everyone being a minister could cheapen the call to ministry and everyone labeled a minister with conflictual lifestyles. Church leaders open up to emotional wounds that impacted their interaction with people in the congregation. Interviews indicated that unresolved emotional wounds cripple relational dynamics and hinder discipleship efforts. Identifying what is beneath the surface responses revealed painful words expressed, isolation by members, temptations, and justifying acts of faith are elements that create protective boundaries.

Normalizing an individual’s emotional wounds of loss, grief, and trauma adds to dysfunctional environmental trends. Interview findings revealed unresolved emotional wounds create dysfunctional environmental trends that condition the cultural dynamics of leadership. Condition leadership could display underlying democratic control that could hinder mission

endeavors. The rate of church leadership that enforces a democratic rule is augmentative toward those that present visionary theological concepts. Interviewees indicated that communication is limited toward the congregation concerning creative pursuits. Church leaders highlighted being a hard worker, committing to church tasks, and maintaining unity as they lead essential. Finally, interview responses indicated that gaining approval and disapproval of others is imperative for church leaders.

In the table below, percentages grade the positive and negative emotional viewpoints of church leaders. Measurements indicated that church leaders share mutual decision-making viewpoints. The joint agreement suggests a robust cultural dynamic that might oppose various cultural dynamics.

**Table-1.2 Pre-Training Interviews Analysis and Discoveries**

*(Questions are listed in numerical order from top left to right, and percentages are listed on the left side of the graph.)*

Questions	Q-1	Q-2	Q-3	Q-4	Q-5	Q-6	Q-7	Q-8	Q-9
Positive	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%	0%	1/3=33.3%	100%	2/3=66.6%
Negative	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%	2/3=66.6%	0%	1/3=33.3%

Research results displayed notable and positive commandry between emotional dynamics within church leaders. The positive correlation means that the inquiry responses revealed that church leaders displayed emotionally healthy leadership traits while carrying out specific tasks. Leadership practices included in this research: (a) sensory receptors concerning dysfunctional environments, (b) self-identity concerning personal strengths and weaknesses, (c) vocation play in a leadership role at church, and (d) comfortable saying “no” to people that overextend them at church. Further, the substantial percentages indicate that the relationships between these

practices and emotional maturity levels are not coincidental. The relationship between emotional dynamics within church leaders displayed a togetherness and influence toward a common task. The additional analysis discovered commonalities and differences with emotional dynamics to enhance this study.

Project findings showed negative correlations between emotional maturity and three of the leadership practices: (a) acknowledging all members as part of the decision-making process, (b) identifying weaknesses and wounds that hinder ministry, and (c) allowing defensive boundaries to hinder fellowship with other members. The mutual agreement with the interview's inquiries appeared similar to the general questionnaire responses but labeled members as outside their cultural dynamic. Interviews indicated possible trust issues with various members, control issues with the current leadership, and lack of knowledge of emotional nature and wounds. The lesson from emotional anguish is discovering a higher hope as the remedy, adjusting cognitions to rise above circumstances, and obtaining peace.<sup>305</sup> Meaningful consequences of the research heightened awareness of the dysfunctional environmental influence and how distortions can impact emotional health. Individuals with anxiety can gain relief with an emotional release that frees a soul of negative distortions.<sup>306</sup>

### **Research Pre-Training Assessment Discoveries**

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<sup>305</sup> Edge, *Teaching for Results*, 105.

<sup>306</sup> Judith Orloff, *Emotional Freedom* (New York: Harmony Books, 2009), 269.

The research question for this doctoral project is “Will church leaders score higher on EHD Personal Assessment by Peter Scazzero before or after participating in the EHD training?”

The assessment enabled participants to evaluate their pre-and-post perspectives regarding the stage of spiritual and emotional health. The evaluation included series of questions focusing on Emotionally Healthy Discipleship. Each question was comprised of a response that could be graded on a scale of one to four. A one represented “Not Very True,” a two represented “Sometimes True,” a three represented “Mostly True,” and a four represented “Very True.” The assessment concluded at the end of Part A, and each principle in the Part B line provided the participant a tool to total the score. The score provided a scaling percentage of the assessment and enabled the researcher to tally an overall participation rate. The researcher encouraged participants with mercurial scores from evaluations. The author's observance did not notice any emotional response from the participants from low scores. Concluding the seven-week training, a follow-up assessment was administered to the same participants, and the score percentages were compared to week 1.

The researcher utilized a grading tool to evaluate the emotionally healthy discipleship assessments. The evaluation revealed the emotional maturity level of each participant with infant stage, child stage, adolescent stage, and adult stage.<sup>307</sup> The emotional infant stage in a Christian life classifies an individual dependent on others to resolve complexities in a shared environment and leans upon others for spiritual growth.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 33-34.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*



The infant stage refers to a person introverted in nature, never isolates, demands self-worth from others, and focuses on self-gratification.<sup>309</sup> The emotional infant stage reveals people that can never handle hardship without complaining, leaving the church, and finding a new church that works best for them.<sup>310</sup> They go to church to spend time with God and leave the church without God. The emotional child stage discovered in church leadership reveals that everything is excellent as long as everything goes its way.<sup>311</sup> However, if opposing views or thoughts enter an equation, the individual responds with an emotional outburst and maladaptive behavior.<sup>312</sup>

In the child stage, an individual desires praise and attention from others. Deceitful tendencies are noted within one's character, such as manipulation, complaining, withdrawal, sarcastic, and vengefulness.<sup>313</sup> Scazzero suggests emotional maturity is noticed by love and commitment to the will of God.<sup>314</sup>

The emotional adolescent stage reveals a believer that opposes others when questioned.<sup>315</sup> Character flaws identified in the adolescent stage are avoiding others in need, lacking listening skills, never forgetting issues, struggling with forgiving others, and being preoccupied with personal agendas. The person takes constructive criticism personally and attempts to divide organizations for personal acceptance or benefits in the adolescent stage.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 33-34.

<sup>310</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 33-34.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-10.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-25.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-10.

Christian life replaces personal spiritual devotion time with religious deeds such as going to church, meetings, committees, and activities.<sup>317</sup>

The emotional adult stage reveals leadership that sincerely loves people without having to fix them or be condemned.<sup>318</sup> A person of conviction that lives by Biblical guidance without social influence. The emotional adult stage reveals a person that is a lifetime disciple of Christ, and their love for others measures their love for God.<sup>319</sup>

The emotional maturity gauge dictates the findings from research between emotional maturity and practical discipleship for church leaders at Trinity Baptist Church; the author utilized an assessment gauge for emotional health provided in *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship (EHD)* book by Peter Scazzero. The completed assessment resulted in scores on emotional maturity and practical discipleship for each participant. Correlational measurement rated percentages for participants with contrasting scores to identify acclimatized environment. Emotional maturity scores were listed in Tables 1.3 and 1.4. Collective research findings discussed are assembled by EHD assessment. Table 1.3 examines the detailed review for church leaders at Trinity Baptist Church regarding emotional health. The table displays emotional health classification scores for emotional maturity. The EHD assessment for church leadership was conducted on May 23, 2021.

### **Table 1.3 Pre-Training Assessments**

*(Assessment inquiry numerical marks from left to right and the emotional maturity level from top left to bottom left.)*

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<sup>317</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 6-10.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 6-10.

Variables	Mark 1	Mark 2	Mark 3	Mark 4	Mark 5	Mark 6	Mark 7
Emotional Infant	7/8=87.5 %		2/8=25%	5/8=62.5 %	8/8=100 %	4/8=50 %	7/8=87.5 %
Emotional Child	1/8=12.5 %	2/8=25 %	4/8=50%	3/8=37.5 %		2/8=25 %	
Emotional Adolescent			1/8=12.5 %				1/8=12.5 %
Emotional Adult		6/8=75 %	1/8=12.5 %			2/8=25 %	

The percentages of the emotional maturity assessment indicated various emotional maturity levels of church members. However, the emotional maturity percentages on five out of the seven marks showed mutually emotional maturity levels. Emotions can move us to action, and reason guides us to safety.<sup>320</sup> Emotions can prioritize the thought process, focus on critical objectives, influence judgment from others, and promote flexibility with free-thinking.<sup>321</sup> The emotional maturity overall percentage findings revealed leadership decisions were conducted fifty-eight percent on emotional infant level, twenty-one percent on child level, three percent on an adolescent group, and sixteen percent on an adult level. Assessment scores indicated a need for the personal spiritual enrichment of being a disciple to be taught and understood.

### **Phase 2 Developmental Stage Discoveries**

The Developmental stage of the study provided training with collective feedback that benefitted the research findings and participants. The methodology for the EHD training consisted of four training intensives. The EHD training began with a five-minute lesson on love utilizing a Biblical parable, ten-minute training on the EHD seven marks, seven video-driven

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<sup>320</sup> Anderson and Skinner, "Feelings," 66-78.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

open discussions with EHS, and small group workshops that encompassed the emotional and spiritual dynamics of discipleship. Effective ministry begins with emotional health training and becomes fruitful during a crisis.<sup>322</sup> The spiritual life directs us away from illusions of competence and causes us to confront our utter helplessness and dependence on our gracious God. The small group discussion allowed participants to identify and collaborate on emotional weaknesses and spiritual sustainment personally. When we recognize our fault, then Christ's strength can work through us.<sup>323</sup> Holistic Bible study advises the student with emotional Biblical precepts that are easy to remember, understand, respond to, relate with the material, and adapt Theocratic truths.<sup>324</sup>

The training material pinpointed emotional distress resulted from controlling dysfunctional environmental trends and lacking spiritual dependency. Dr. Yarborough suggests emotionally and psychologically healthy leadership is rooted in holistic self-care.<sup>325</sup> Holistic self-care is stewardship of emotional health, physical health, spiritual enrichment, purposeful relationships, healthy boundaries, and personal time.<sup>326</sup> Self-care for church leadership is often a lost concept due to the high demands of the congregation. Emotional health awareness can serve as a gauge for distorted cognitions and abnormal behavior. Emotional awareness aids spiritual identity by gaining an understanding of sinful tendencies. Religious manipulated detours away from our true identity come from pseudo perceptions. John Ortberg suggests altered perceptions

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<sup>322</sup> Wright, *Crises counseling*, 135.

<sup>323</sup> McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality*, 336.

<sup>324</sup> Eldridge, *The Teaching Ministry of the Church*, 297.

<sup>325</sup> Yarborough, "Psychological Health and Christian Leadership."

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*

alter an individual's true identity with false image, fantasy, selfishness, religious ideation, focus on failures, and lacking fellowship with God.<sup>327</sup>

### **Emotionally Healthy Discipleship Training**

The EHD training implemented reconciliation and wholeness with church leaders in small groups. Scazzero mentions that Jesus radically altered the Jewish tradition of reconciling with one's neighbor by prescribing believers to reconcile with one's neighbor before going to worship.<sup>328</sup> Various participants agreed that cultural dynamics sometimes conflict with reconciliation because of favoritism toward people and not worth in the person of Christ. In addition, leadership understood how environmental complexities hinder spiritual enrichment and sustain abnormal emotional traits among members. Church leaders gaining an understanding of success from a worldly perception highlights the imperative need for scriptural guidance. Success defined by a sophisticated standard measures the more concept in every equation of humankind. "Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant."<sup>329</sup> Church leaders could share personal stories related to reconciliation and even displayed humility in their responses to one another.

The open forum training taught the importance of personal devotion that leads to spiritual and emotional maturity. Scazzero suggests that making disciples without disciple spins daily routines out of control, removes self-care time, and creates an emotionally chaotic life.<sup>330</sup> In Romans 11, God conveys to Israel and the Gentiles like wild branches grafted into the holy tree

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<sup>327</sup> Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be*, 15.

<sup>328</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 6-10.

<sup>329</sup> Luke 22:36, NLT.

<sup>330</sup> , *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 6-15.

by faith.<sup>331</sup> The branches or believers tap into the root system of the sacred tree and receive an empowering grace to be fruitful.<sup>332</sup> A branch with no root equals no fruit. The root system of the olive tree supports the stability and fruitfulness of the tree.<sup>333</sup> The olive tree's unseen root system or the bloodline is three times bigger than the canopy.<sup>334</sup> An individual connected by faith to God operates from a state of emotional and spiritual fullness with an awareness of God and themselves. The EHD training provided an opportunity for church leaders to analyze their emotional and spiritual maturity personally. Church leaders were allowed to ask questions, render comments, and mention take-a-ways from each workshop

The five-minute opening lesson on love utilizing the parable of the Good Samaritan gave an insightful observation of a disciple of Christ. Leadership traits that display wholeness in Christ have an approachable nature, emotional awareness, non-defensive, relational, compassion, honesty, and service.<sup>335</sup> Participants explored the concept of love expressed with actions and not with words. The author presented key doctrinal terms that enhanced loving relationships, such as reconciliation, propitiation, and restoration.

The Christ-centric lesson highlighted the measurement of love toward God was the level of love displayed toward others.<sup>336</sup> In Matthew 5, Jesus commands, "If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First, be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your

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<sup>331</sup> Romans 11:16-24.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid.

<sup>333</sup> "It's All About the Roots," [www.myolivetree.com](https://www.myolivetree.com), June 25, 2014, <https://www.myolivetree.com/its-all-about-the-roots/>.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid.

<sup>335</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 134-59.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid., 6-10.

gift.”<sup>337</sup> Historically, Christians believe that believers should gain knowledge of God, reconcile differences, share his love toward others, study his word, and focus on the cross every day.<sup>338</sup> Participants gained insight into faulty perceptions, weaknesses, cultural distortions, and scriptural guidance. Various leaders agreed that serving others out of love derives out of spiritual intimacy with Christ. Also, leadership mentioned a lost focus on loving others from discipleship material taught in the church. The administration agreed that the two prioritized commandments Jesus gave, which are loving God and others, always places self-third.

The story of the prodigal son and his father highlight attributes of love in propitiation and restoration. In Luke 15, the father’s emotional reactions to his repetitive son returning home defined propitiation as grace, forgiveness, and favor.<sup>339</sup> The wandering son returned home with brokenness and attracted resentment from his brother, neighbors' anger, and restoration from his father's love.<sup>340</sup> Dr. Nell Farber suggests that a natural stimulus reaction has a connection to a universal energy force.<sup>341</sup> The natural law is the idea that instincts and emotional drive attract similar corresponding environmental energy.<sup>342</sup> Negative thoughts attract negative happenings, and positive reviews attract positive outcomes.<sup>343</sup> Peter Scazzero suggests that the prodigal son returns in brokenness and the older son leave the scene with resentment.<sup>344</sup> In theory, attractional hindrances could sustain healthy discipleship; however, the EHD curriculum highlights

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<sup>337</sup> Matthew 5:23-24.

<sup>338</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 6-15.

<sup>339</sup> Luke 15:11-32.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

<sup>341</sup> Nell Farber, “The Truth About the Law of Attraction,” *Psychological Today* (September 18, 2016), <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-blame-game/201609/the-truth-about-the-law-attraction>.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 187-208.

misconceptions of discipleship by incorporating positive environmental trends. The researcher noted the participants were taking notes and displayed conviction by verbal responses. In addition, church leaders contributed to open discussion on preventative techniques of avoiding people in emotional turmoil, sustaining healthy boundaries within relationships, and providing scriptural guided imagery to reduce stress.

Church leadership training utilized the seven marks of EHD by Peter Scazzero to enhance emotional maturity and spiritual focus. The training timeframe for each session consisted of seven consecutive Sundays for ten minutes. Church leaders were attentive during training and verbally responsive during gathered group time. Participants displayed good eye contact, empathy toward one another and responded to exercise in a positive perspective. In addition, church leaders spoke with sincerity and compassion through challenging topics. During training, the author observed participants displaying emotional maturity by respectful comments toward one another, focusing on improving spiritual walk with God, and identifying dysfunctional emotional trends in the church.

In the EHD training covering the seven marks, the leadership learned the imperative need of being a disciple of Christ. During the open discussion, participants highlighted the top five takeaways from training with the need for personal spiritual devotion, personal disciplines, benefits of spiritual fullness, noticeable benefits of emotional fullness, and purpose-driven life. In addition, church leaders identified false perceptions of discipleship and devotion as an enemy that hinders an authentic spiritual walk with God. Emotional fullness is manifested by gauging feelings, experiencing normalcy during challenging moments, and staying focused on objectives.

Leadership was able to identify and define what healthy boundaries promoted spiritually and emotionally. Participants agreed sinful habits hinder spiritual and emotional maturity in a believer's life. Church leaders noted that spiritual blessings could be in jeopardy without spiritual



disciplines addressing temptations. Also, identified healthy boundaries or limits eliminate reoccurring sinful patterns in a believer's life. Participants were offered an opportunity to examine personal triggers that cause emotional pain. Participants were able to identify emotional moments that crippled relationships within the church environment. In addition, various church leaders noted that controlling church endeavors is preventative to eliminate cultural clashes and church leadership attacked by members.

Small group discussions revealed a general agreement on creating healthy social boundaries that prevent emotional chaos. Stafford suggests the darkness of this evil world contributes to the dysfunctional environment of the mentally ill.<sup>345</sup> The training session offered leadership the opportunity of exploring that compassion toward others. The training addressed the sinful patterns that become generational hindrances within the church. Sinful tendencies are biological, and we live in a dark climate infected by evil ones.<sup>346</sup> The author presented to the small group's topic of discussion each night of training to collaborate and document responses for research. Two small groups participated in the research project. The training session examined the cause and effects of sinful patterns and emotional chaos. The practical lesson highlighted emotional practices, concern for others, church discipline to sinful habits, and the necessity of educating members about emotional health in a church environment. Confident leaders pointed out that understanding maladaptive emotional sinful patterns could hinder membership and spiritual growth. The subject of debate covered EHD principles such as healthy boundaries in relationships, wholeness, and reconciliation.

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<sup>345</sup> Stanford, *Grace for the Afflicted*, 446-47.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*

Small group findings revealed participants utilized Biblical stories to compare spiritual sustainment and emotional complexities. Studies show that students of emotionalism value emotional nature over-analytical.<sup>347</sup> Emotional maturity serves a significant role in impactful leadership. Group members highlighted the mercurial emotional dynamics of King David led to his God moments. In Psalms 42, David appears to be a shattered man of God desiring for God's presence and fellowship.<sup>348</sup> King David recognized constant threats from his enemies and appeared to be in emotional chaos.<sup>349</sup> David repents to God his sinful behavior and reflects on scripture. Instantly, David remembers previous victories of the Israelites, miracles, and hope-centric worship of his people.<sup>350</sup> David requested God to remedy his enemies and to comfort his spirit.<sup>351</sup> Participants discussed and documented that the Lord heals the thoughts of David to reflect on the light of divine fellowship and guidance from scripture.<sup>352</sup> David reflects on how his emotions detour him away from God and returns attention to his sacred purpose. Cognitive distortions with the triad of human life are intellectualism emphasize rational over-emotional.<sup>353</sup>

Church leaders identified proactive efforts to gain numbers in church promote faulty a perception, social acceptance and eliminate true discipleship. Participants noted that overcoming faulty perceptions is having a well-balanced understanding of the emotional, rational, and behavioral response to circumstances.

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<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

<sup>348</sup> Psalm 42:9-11.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> Psalm 42:9-11.

<sup>351</sup> Psalm 43:3-5.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid.

<sup>353</sup> Eldridge, *The Teaching Ministry of the Church*, 49.

The second small group of the EHD training utilized reconciliation and wholeness working together. In Luke 10, Martha and Mary displayed emotionally and spiritually focused ladies in two different perspectives.<sup>354</sup> Martha invited Jesus into her home but was distracted by the task that prevented her from being present with Christ.<sup>355</sup> Mary was present with Jesus and was negligent in preparation for the honored guest. Martha, in emotional turmoil, displayed maladaptive behavior judging Mary in the presence of Jesus. Peter Scazzero suggests that church leaders spiritually focused should reflect on three questions: “(1.) Am I fully present or distracted? (2.) Am I loving or judging?, and (3.) Am I open or close to being changed?”<sup>356</sup> Church leaders provided insightful comments about the disadvantage of being distracted and judgmental at church. Jesus acknowledges the emotional state of Martha and the proper worshipful position of Mary.<sup>357</sup> Selected group members noted reconciliation with wholeness offset maladaptive behaviorism and could bring spiritual restoration. Leadership identified emotional weakness avoids opportunities to mend relationships. Participating members identified emotional anguish leads to sinful maladaptive behavior and avoidance of spiritual enrichment. Therefore, an antidote for spiritual enrichment is caring for the emotional health incorporated in Christ-centric discipleship. This holistic approach is the essence of the Emotionally Healthy Discipleship EHD project.

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<sup>354</sup> Luke 10:38-42.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

## Class Structure and Content

This project originated from emotional complexities within church leadership that hinder discipleship and a healthy, productive environment. Emotional and Spiritual maturity hinders a believer's love toward God and others. This holistic approach to discipleship includes understanding spiritual enrichment or being with the Lord and relational dynamics of purposeful conversations. The author suggested on two reflection questions from EHD training to consider concerning discipleship: “(1.) What limits do I need to receive and submit to joyfully as God’s invitation to trust him?, and (2.) What limits is God asking me to break through by faith so that others might know him, or so that I might become the person he intends?”<sup>358</sup> Distorted perceptions of modern discipleship of learning about God to share conflicts with spiritual enrichment with self-care. These cognitive aspects of discipleship are essential in addressing the emotional dynamics affected by dysfunctional environmental trends.

The training was conducted for seven consecutive weeks as planned. Each training seminar had a timetable of one hour and thirty minutes. The training started with a video on the seven marks of emotionally healthy discipleship, a thirty-minute small group open discussion, and concluding with a thirty-minute lecture for the overall group. The lecture section utilized teaching segments out of the book *The Emotionally Healthy Discipleship* by Peter Scazzero. Participants were interactive with the material and were not hesitant to give personal reflections and ask intriguing questions throughout each training session. The small groups consisted of three groups of five participants. The topic of discussion for the small group was to render personal reflections of valuable takeaways from the handouts and the thirty-minute training video. The informal small group time appeared to be relaxed, safe, and open to various

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<sup>358</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 111-34.

viewpoints. All participants appeared to be positive and open to the action research to enhance the emotional well-being of the leadership of Trinity Baptist Church. The researcher encouraged participants throughout the three study phases and witnessed a unified effort to complete the project. After the EHD training, the researcher presented the post-training assessment. The post-training assessment results are listed in Table 1.4.

**Table 1.4 Post-Training Assessments**

*Emotional Maturity Scores of Church Leaders at Trinity Baptist Church*

Variables	Mark 1	Mark 2	Mark 3	Mark 4	Mark 5	Mark 6	Mark 7
Emotional Infant					1/8=12.5%		
Emotional Child	1/8=12.5%		2/8=25%		4/8=50%	1/8=12.5%	
Emotional Adolescent	7/8=87.5%	8/8=100%	5/8=62.5%	6/8=75%	1/8=12.5%	6/8=75%	2/8=25%
Emotional Adult			1/8=12.5%	2/8=25%	2/8=25%	1/8=12.5%	6/8=75%

The post research percentages of the emotional maturity assessment indicated progressive emotional maturity levels of church leaders. The fifth mark of the assessment results indicated some leaders advanced in their emotional maturity level but had the least progression. Research findings showed mutual emotional maturity levels with church leaders in six of the seven marks of the emotionally healthy discipleship assessment. Practical training and counsel impacted the emotional maturity of church leaders and appeared to direct a mutual response to progressive agendas. Church leaders appeared to be positively completing the assessments and at a faster pace.

The overall post percentage findings on the emotional maturity revealed leadership decisions were conducted one percent on emotional infant level, fourteen percent on child level, sixty-two percent on an adolescent group, and twenty-one percent on an adult level. Assessment scores indicated a productive outcome with training, elevated emotional maturity level percentages, and personal spiritual enrichment of church leadership in discipleship.

### **Validity Concerns**

The Emotionally Healthy Discipleship (EHD) Personal Assessment is a tool to evaluate the emotional dynamics that hinder discipleship by Peter Scazzero. This tool is a measuring gauge for identifying potential areas of emotional anguish that could curb relationships or spiritual enrichment. As of May 30, 2021, seven church leaders took the emotionally healthy discipleship assessment in the fellowship hall of Trinity Baptist Church. No concerns or issues were detected or communicated to the researcher from participants. The results from collected data and various inquiries will be discussed in chapter 5.

### **Phase 3 Determination Stage Discoveries**

An imperative element of training was to identify abnormalities with emotional health and understand a dysfunctional acclimatizing environment. The evidence of church leaders identifying and understanding hindering factors of emotional health occurred during the determination phase. The determination phase allowed church leaders to utilize training on emotional health to evaluate personal pre-and post-assessments findings. The participants discovered that the post-assessments displayed significant progression in understanding their emotional health related to discipleship within the church environment. Participants discussed a possible future church-wide training to promote emotional and spiritual health for all members.

Church leaders open discussion displayed positive reflective dialogue, empathy, and appreciation of various views from the action research. Church leaders could offer congregational care by providing resources for emotional management, gaining insight into the faith during testing moments, and adopting a healthy learning environment.<sup>359</sup> The last phase of the project study will be the determination stage.

The determination phase consists of re-assessing church leaders with the *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship* assessment. Implications of findings for practice enhanced the participants' emotional maturity, cognitive competencies, and spiritual direction. Emotional maturity identified with the post-assessment revealed academical and theological solution-based training heightens an emotional awareness of environmental complexities hindering their leadership. Cognitive competencies aided false perceptions, distortions, and understanding of dysfunctional environmental acclimatization. Emotionally healthy church leaders gained self-awareness and discernment to spiritual direction.<sup>360</sup> Individuals emotionally mature in Christ move into a new spiritually enriched relationship.<sup>361</sup> As Lord of our lives, God transforms our spiritual core so that our feelings no longer rule us. A more substantial spiritual body enables spiritual virtues. Spiritual virtues shape our emotions and character with joy, gratitude, hope, repentance, peace, and compassion identified best as the fruits of the Holy Spirit.<sup>362</sup>

Completion of the assessment will rate the emotional maturity grade of each leader after training. The author met with all the project participants and relayed the emotional maturity percentages of the assessments, percentages from the questionnaires, and interviews. The

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<sup>359</sup> Hunt, *Leading Congregations Through a Crisis*, 167.

<sup>360</sup> Anderson and Skinner, "Feelings," 66-78.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

determination phase was complete in one week. Study findings were censored, documented, and was presented to church leaders. The study served as a visionary solution for addressing dysfunctional emotional trends hindering discipleship within the church. All participants completed the investigative inquiry with an understanding of the training material, sincerity, and honesty. The results were noteworthy as there was a positive indication of emotional and spiritual growth in church leadership. The completion of the research could indicate a necessity to present a church-wide training on emotional health concerning discipleship to gain visionary aid to holistic care and the Great Commission.

The researcher offered an opportunity for church leaders to participate in an open discussion of the completed study, implementing proactive plans, concepts, and practical solutions toward mission endeavors within the congregation. Church leaders were able to identify four takeaways after the completion of the research: (1) Tendencies to control complexities within the church environment, (2) Poor communication, (3) Emotional outburst hindered relationships, and (4) Blaming others. Gathered collective data from participants' responses appeared to adapt toward similar cultural dynamics. Solution-based proponents in training seem to trigger creative tension and a healthy emotional reaction to accepting various cultural dynamics.

The author encouraged church leaders to acknowledge emotional complexities that hindered discipleship and dysfunctional cultural dynamics. The researcher offered counsel toward sustainable solutions and encouraged unified visionary agendas. Holistic comprehension from research contributed to the resolution strategy. Church leaders were encouraged with training, research, new purpose, creativity, emotional stability, unified efforts, discipleship, and a Christ-centric atmosphere. Church leaders gained insightful understanding to avoid tendencies of



rushing the emotional healing process.<sup>363</sup> Leadership gaining experience of emotional anguish through trials and how they impact an environment and hinder normalcy in a spiritual system.<sup>364</sup>

### Summary of Research

This chapter summarizes the results of the research project for enhancing the emotional dynamics of church leaders to incorporate healthy discipleship. Research findings with interviews, assessments, questionnaires, and comments with training revealed unhealthy emotional trends hindering spiritual growth. Cognitive distortions have a demonic influence, contributing to faulty spiritual perceptions between natural illness and demonic infirmity.<sup>365</sup> In the discovery stage, the predominant themes from participants were identifying emotional complexities: shame, vulnerability, and hopelessness. Scientifically, hope acts as a natural stress reducer, relaxing your gut, blood vessels, and bronchioles.<sup>366</sup> Science suggests that hope lessens pain by increasing levels of endorphins, the feel-good biochemicals.<sup>367</sup> Hope restructures one's biology and aids toward a positive mindset. Being positive increases serotonin and reduces levels of stress hormones.<sup>368</sup> Emotional complexities contribute to suppressed inner wounds rendering a dysfunctional environment.<sup>369</sup>

The developmental phase incorporated training in emotionally healthy discipleship, enhancing emotional maturity and spiritual focus. Effective ways of overcoming dysfunctional environments are academically educating leadership on emotional health, self-discoveries,

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<sup>363</sup> Hunt, *Leading Congregations Through a Crisis*, 167.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

<sup>365</sup> Hunt, *Leading Congregations Through a Crisis*, 167.

<sup>366</sup> Judith Orloff, *Emotional Freedom* (New York: Harmony Books, 2009), 269.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

<sup>369</sup> Anderson and Skinner, "Feelings," 66-78.

impactful training, and collective visionary goals. Holistic healing occurs when the emotionally wounded discover unhealthy patterns and defensive walls that prevent life-changing discipleship. The problematization for emotional complexities within a church environment is both an academic and theological solution-based approach. Academically, the researcher could present a triangulated investigative inquiry using assessments, questionnaires, and interviews to pinpoint common dysfunctional traits. Practical training appeared to heighten awareness of healthy solutions and exercises that could reduce emotional anguish.

The determination phase incorporated the researcher's feedback from findings concerning emotional health to the participants. The author explained the methodology of emotional complexities through a triangulated investigative inquiry, helped understand emotional health with solution-based training, and gained insight through percentages after completed research. Theologically, theocratic principles seemed to resonate with leaders with positive comments concerning self-disciplines, the need for spiritual enrichment, and limits with emotional maturity. The author suggests distorted cognitions and emotional complexities are biological products but, in some instances, are produced in specific environments.<sup>370</sup> Case in point, those diagnosed with a mental illness, a neurochemical abnormality in mind (physical), results in distorted thoughts and emotions (mental), leading to severed relationships (relational) and difficulty connecting with God and other believers.<sup>371</sup> This research project aimed to enhance the emotional well-being of church leaders and incorporate healthy discipleship. The researcher suggested that dysfunctional environments could be established as a defensive boundary preventing therapeutic and healing care or emotionally healthy discipleship.<sup>372</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> Stanford. *Grace for the Afflicted*, 148.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

### Overview

The completed action research concerning improving discipleship efforts of Trinity Baptist Church by enhancing the emotional wellbeing of church leaders achieved the desired outcomes. This chapter will encompass the similarities of the project proposal and the research results. It is clear from the study findings in chapters 1, 2, and 3 that the dysfunctional cultural trends with church leaders were caused by emotional immaturity and turmoil. The research project utilized an investigative of the emotional dynamics of participants with a triangulated method, offered EHD training to enhance emotional awareness, and gained visionary concepts from research to incorporate at the church. Measurements with church leaders' emotional health indicated a lack of emotional maturity and deficiency in making disciples. Various church leaders struggle with the defensive controlling nature of control. Sinful tendencies identified as emotional immaturity hinder spiritual growth, sanctification, and the work of the Holy Spirit. Scazzero suggests church leaders see success incorrectly with vertical faulty perception with more numbers, more money, more decisions, more services, more baptisms, bigger buildings, and bigger budgets.<sup>373</sup> According to the literature, negative thoughts promote harmful feelings, and both affect the will and ultimately influence behavior. A surprisingly high number of participants struggle with destructive emotional issues, including shame, the fear of disconnection, depression, unrighteous anger, and chronic anxiety.

The literature review suggests many leaders do not realize that the driving factor for sinful behavior and emotional turmoil is unresolved emotional pain. Also, emotional pain promotes destructive emotions and deceptive brain messages that contribute to the spiritual and

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<sup>373</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 20-25.

emotional conflicts that impede sanctification. Therefore, this project addressed these inhibiting factors for sanctification by identifying the cause-and-effect relationship between unresolved emotional pain and sinful behavior and presented a process that leads to emotional health and spiritual growth. Unresolved feelings could contribute to the spiritual and emotional conflicts that hinder sanctification. In addition to destructive emotions, unresolved emotional pain can also produce deceptive brain messages that manipulate the truth of God's word. The investigative tool of interviews offered worth to the hurting participants by acknowledging their experiences with empathy. While it is true that the Holy Spirit is the primary agent for emotional healing and spiritual growth, he often works through God's people as conduits of his love. Ultimately, God's love heals the human heart and resolves the spiritual and emotional conflicts that hinder sanctification.

The relevance of this research is that church leaders gained knowledge of how emotional health could impact the congregation negatively or positively. Participants gained knowledge of their emotional health through a triangulated investigative method, EHD training, and open collaboration from the author of the research findings. Study results revealed participants struggled with self-awareness of dysfunctional emotional trends, ministering out of wholeness, and developing solid relationships. The researcher noted that the study showed some participants were victims of their thoughts. Research findings indicated healthy cognitions produce healthy emotional trends, while faulty perceptions result in emotional turmoil. Therefore, identifying Biblical principles with guided imagery could alter faulty perceptions and emotional wellbeing. During the determination phase of the study, Church leaders identified gaining a heightened awareness of distorted perceptions of their emotional health and a stronger desire for personal spiritual devotion. Research participants suggested that the root of dysfunctional environmental trends such as faulty perceptions, rumors, and emotional outbursts could be eliminated with

healthy relational clear communication. The study rendered applicable spiritual life lessons that could strengthen leadership's emotional health, such as spiritual devotion, meditation, prayer life, healthy boundaries, and practical communication skills.

The efficiency of this study is participants were equipped with training that could develop their emotional wellbeing and impact healthy relational discipleship within the congregation. Participants acknowledged spiritual growth elevated their awareness of the broken emotional condition of the church and the need for emotionally healthy leadership. Participants suggest and apropos application of EHD for congregants could be in a sermon series. The author utilized a sermon series on the seven marks of EHD for the congregation during the training stage of the research project. The researcher noted that participants displayed good rapport, healthy communication skills, and excitement discussing visionary spiritual goals. Church leaders utilizing spiritual life lessons could avoid being overwhelmed by complexities, burnout, integrity issues, and unhealthy behavioral patterns. Church leaders displayed humility that inspired others to acknowledge personal flaws, which created an environment conducive to positive change. The efficiency of emotionally healthy disciples is that they lead continually with emotional awareness, spiritual wholeness, and loving, relational skills.

The results of this research have similarities to the spiritual transformation of a new believer in Christ. The study indicated that every participant has the creative power to develop and impact a lifestyle change from environmental and hereditary influences. The author could play a counselor's role during research by providing knowledge about emotional health and creating a unique paradox by reframing small group collaboration to a heightened awareness of social influences. The researcher recognized each participant's thought process, behavior traits, and emotional triggers during open forum discussions. The Bible reveals spiritual knowledge develops Christian characteristics that could adjust unhealthy environmental complexities and

inspire others to spiritual pursuits. Scripture tells humanity being created in the image of God capable of producing emotional maturity with spiritual growth during chaotic moments.<sup>374</sup>

However, holistic healing for humankind is contingent upon faith in God's word and grace. The sinful tendencies of humanity create unhealthy cultural dynamics that influence dysfunctional environmental trends in society.

This study identified participants with mercurial emotional dynamics conditioned by dysfunctional environmental complexities sustaining acclimatized behaviorisms. The sustainable solution for dysfunctional environments is adapting scriptural guidance, acknowledging sinful tendencies, and strengthen relational dynamics. The findings indicated sinful tendencies hinder emotional maturity and limit spiritual pursuits. Research findings indicated complexities impact psychosocial networks with distortions, false perceptions, mercurial emotional traits, faulty values, and dysfunctional activities within cultural systems. The EHD assessments and interviews results revealed the need for cultural awareness and knowledge about emotional health to impact our community. Qualitative research gains wisdom through collected findings and the community affected by the complexities. The author discovered sensory receptors could identify emotional stressors or triggers within individuals during small group discussions. Discovered cultural dilemmas can be identified by emotional anguish and defense mechanisms within social networks. Scripture suggests that believers' spiritual transformation renews cognitions and implements practical spiritual disciplines to reduce conformity to sinful dreams.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Genesis 1:27.

<sup>375</sup> Romans 12:2.

The replication of this research could be conducted in most church environments and Christian companies. Team leadership could incorporate EHD training by using the pre-training assessments to identify the emotional maturity of current leadership, observe and discuss the EHS training video, and discuss the seven marks of EHD in small groups. The EHD training implements holistic discipleship, enhancing emotional maturity, spiritual purpose, and relational dynamics. Intensive EHD training could highlight hindrances to one's emotional health, aid coping strategies, and incorporate spiritual disciplines. The enriching training material provides hope-centric coping strategies, assists in identifying unhealthy limitations to one's emotional health, and adapts discipleship with group participation. Discipleship classes establish healthy learning modes, both relational and objective; church leaders will gain insight into their emotional health related to spirituality and relationships. Practical disciple classes teach clear theology, relational skills, purposeful conversations, and caring presence. The study findings revealed Christian leadership identifying sinful tendencies that render emotional turmoil and gaining spiritual renewal promotes healthy relational dynamics. This study could be used in Christian churches due to sinful tendencies of humanity, faith in Biblical principles, and spiritual renewal with leadership. The author introduced the congregation to the seven marks EHD with a sermon series at the request of research participants.

The completion of the research project exposed some glaring relational and training issues. The participants discovered that the post-assessments displayed significant progression in understanding their emotional health related to discipleship within the church environment. The relational complications with research dealt with not communication but clarity. The author compiled two post-research questions to investigate dealing with relational dynamics: (1.) Is there an efficient way of giving instructions to multicultural and diverse groups? and (2.) Is there an art of interpreting body language or gestures? Participants discussed a possible future church-

wide training to promote emotional and spiritual health for all members. Church leaders open discussion displayed positive reflective dialogue, empathy, and appreciation of various views from the action research. Church-wide EHD training could create a healthy emotional maturity and spiritual focus with members. The researcher compiled two research questions for congregants: (1.) How could spiritual discipleship impact emotional maturity? and (2.) Would emotional boundaries create a healthy learning environment?

### **Research Purpose**

This DMin study aims to develop a strategy to enhance the emotional well-being of the leadership at Trinity Baptist Church. Church leadership incorporating intradisciplinary integration with training and practical spiritual exercise as sustainable solutions for emotionally healthy discipleship. Sustainable solutions integrated training could offer a positive relational change to the cultural dynamics at Trinity Baptist Church. Participants that struggled with emotional outbursts could gain insight into effective change through spiritual growth, coping strategies, creating healthy boundaries, and connecting with other believers. Leadership identifying and eliminating dysfunctional environmental trends hindering spiritual growth and healthy relationships. The research will ensure the biblical council for the emotional instability of church leadership and adapt adaptive discipleship components with leadership.

### **Research Question**

The research question for this project was: “Will a participant scores a higher percentage on the Emotionally Healthy Discipleship Assessment by Peter Scazzero after completion of the EHD training?”



## Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications

### Research Conclusions

The researcher discovered three primary conclusions from the research: (1.) Investigative inquiry from the study revealed traces of emotional anguish and dysfunctional trends with leadership, (2.) The EHD training effectively highlighted healthy emotional traits and enhanced emotional health, and (3.) The post-research rendered positive collaboration and healthy takeaways for leadership. All volunteering church leaders displayed a willingness to participate in the triangulated investigative research. Research findings from open forum discussions indicated holistic health is dependent upon emotional and spiritual enrichment. The emotional and spiritual challenge of Christ was to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."<sup>376</sup> A healthy emotional and spiritual lifestyle depends on spiritual devotion, scriptural obedience, and healthy emotional boundaries. Emotional wellbeing can be hindered with good intentions. "Emotionally unhealthy leaders are chronically overextended with activities for God rather than time spent with God."<sup>377</sup> Time spent with God should be the top priority for believers.

The first conclusion from the investigative inquiry revealed the beneficial need for church leaders leading without emotional anguish or cognitive distortions. The triangulated research challenged participants to identify traces of dysfunctional trends, emotional turmoil, and unhealthy coping mechanisms. Interviewees unveiled few church leaders functioning out of

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<sup>376</sup> Mark 12:30 (ESV)

<sup>377</sup> Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 31.

emotional turmoil resulting in narcissistic tendencies with church endeavors. Some participants indicated through questionnaires of adapting harmful leadership traits from secular jobs. Small group discussion collaborated on the topic of the dangers of leading with faulty perceptions. Distortions invalidate leadership, causing ineffective workers and tragic outcomes. Leadership suggested that communication with clarity, functioning from facts, and servant leadership could offer healthy discipleship.

The second conclusion from EHD training identified the imperative need for leadership to devote spiritual time with God. The EHS video training discussion allowed participants to personally evaluate their alone time with God, emotional maturity, and spiritual growth. During training, the open forum indicated leaders invest less personal time with God and more time with congregants to accomplish perpetual church goals, life group class, and service. Emotionally healthy discipleship. The seven marks of EHD highlighted emotional immaturity with leaders and dysfunctional cultural dynamics that could hinder discipleship efforts and the church.

The third conclusion derives from the post-research collaboration of the congregation lacking knowledge of emotional health, the imperative need of being a disciple, and effective discipleship. Peter Scazzero suggests church leadership struggles with being unteachable, insecure, defensive, critical of others, need to be admired, and could have family struggles.<sup>378</sup> Scazzero mentions most church leaders struggle with disconnection of emotional health from spiritual health.<sup>379</sup> The beneficial elements of this study were character development and affirmation of church leaders. Research indicated participants conveying a sense of worth, assurance, and personal victory by overcoming emotional turmoil. Collectively all church leaders

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<sup>378</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 6-10.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid.

developed a bond by understanding cultural differences and emotional triggers within their community. Participants gaining a purposeful emotional and cultural knowledge of each other seemed to enhance healthy environmental trends of compassion, respect, value, and appreciation for one another. Church leadership implementing EHD training at Trinity Baptist Church could eliminate democratic cultural dynamics, unify proactive efforts, enhance healthy relationships, identify emotional health concerns, and provide sustainable solutions for a healthy learning environment.

The EHD training model implemented spiritually enriched people to heighten their emotions and more robust relational dynamics. Various church leaders referenced the Biblical account of Peter walking on water demonstrated spiritual and emotional strength from his time with Christ in his storm. All participants narrowed down three take-a-ways from training: emotional maturity comes from a spiritually enriched life, the Lord uses problems and promises to train his disciples, and effective discipleship comes from personal testimonies. Participants portrayed empathy toward one another during open collaboration and displayed respect for differing opinions. Church leaders implementing EHD training could serve as prevention to dysfunctional cultural dynamics and solution to environmental complexities. The Great Commission highlights a perpetual promise of God's presence, power, and provisions with believers making disciples.

### **Practical Implications and Application**

The theocratic visionary direction could promote Biblical principles that could offer emotional healing and healthy spiritual discipleship. However, it is clear from the content in chapters 1, 2, and 3 that the emotional wellbeing of church leadership needed to be analyzed,

discovering unhealthy trends and synthesized with sustainable solutions toward emotional maturity.

Chapter one results identified that many church leaders struggle with unhealthy relational boundaries, the ability to say “*No*” to being overtasked, unresolved emotional pain, sinful habits, and unhealthy defensive strategies. In addition, unresolved emotional turmoil contributes to maladaptive behavior and emotional anguish. Also, the role of the author is to present practical discipleship to church leaders that can provide holistic healing and promote purposeful relationships. Participants of investigative study would offer the opportunity to construct life-changing visions with productive outcomes. The author could encourage participants to complete the action research to promote unity and train leaders to provide productive, sustainable solutions for congregation members.

Chapter two research findings displayed church leaders were willing to discover education on emotional health and open for counsel. Leadership during training offered Christian participants insight into personal time for spiritual devotion and rediscovering a love for God. Personal spiritual faith could create the passion of being a disciple learning from God’s word before efforts are made to make disciples. The training highlighted sinful tendencies that hinder spiritual devotion and renders emotional immaturity in believers.

Chapter three findings highlighted harmful negative feelings affect emotional wellbeing and ultimately influence maladaptive behavior. In addition, the literature review suggested distorted cognitions increase emotional turmoil and promote dysfunctional relational dynamics.

Chapter four revealed the results of the triangulated investigative research. The EHD training with small group discussions and discoveries revealed the need for unity, knowledge of emotional health, affirmation, and Biblical sustainable solutions. Research findings indicated participants could experience stress reduction from a Biblical perspective by utilizing

mindfulness and self-as-context with Biblical precepts. Therapeutic cognitive exercises reduce emotional anguish, provide holistic self-care, enhance relational dynamics, and create healthy environmental trends. Scripture reveals therapeutic cognitive activities that eliminate stress with meditational worship, centering prayer, and utilizing guided imagery to discover divine blessings.

Social awareness is an emotional skill set that can develop conflictual relationships. The Bible illustrates social awareness by King David that brought him in favor with God and others. "David behaved himself wisely in all his ways, and the LORD was with him.' 'Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him.'"<sup>380</sup> David's controlled behavior impacted his relationship with the king and the kingdom. Growing in favor of God and others depends on heightened awareness of emotional nature and controlled response. Personally, adopting a healthy lifestyle is incorporating a spiritual mindset. Visionary goals of adapting promote emotional awareness begin with private devotion to God. Various restorative holistic self-care steps are exercise, healthy diet, meditation, prayer, rest, and relaxation. Observing the body language and tone of voice of others could help heighten awareness of the emotional state of others. At last, offering a calm, non-anxious presence, speaking with a low-tone voice, and highlighting positive aspects can help adapt peacefulness in a hostile environment.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Research findings reveal Biblical principles are essential to resolving spiritual and emotional conflicts that hinder emotional well-being of individuals. Cognitive restructuring replaces distorted thought patterns and with facts or Biblical truths that could create healthy thinking. Small group collaboration revealed that emotionally healthy cognitions are essential for

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<sup>380</sup> 1 Sam. 18: 14-15 (KJV)

personal sanctification, self-control, eliminating faulty perspectives, and promoting healthy, purposeful conversations. Research findings during small group discussions indicated devotion time spent with God should be the top priority for believers. "Emotionally immature church leaders are often overextended with activities for God rather than spending time with God."<sup>381</sup> In scripture, God often leads his people to the wilderness for spiritual and emotional maturity. "The wilderness has Biblical identity as a place for emotional maturity, spiritual growth, sanctification, and transformation."<sup>382</sup> Spiritual growth occurs during personal spiritual devotion with God, and God sees their sacrificial love. Jesus sent multitudes away; he went up into a mountain alone to pray.<sup>383</sup> Meditative prayer centers on the presence of God and isolates the issues of this world.<sup>384</sup> Seeking the Lord in prayer and gaining spiritual direction reveals a harmonious relationship. Divine benefits of fellowship with God are being in his will, accomplishing his purpose, and experiencing provisions from his riches in glory.

### **Empirical Implications**

Various interviewees displayed remorse during the inquiry. Participants' dialogue reflected painful life moments resulting in emotional turmoil, disconnection, and distortions that hindered spiritual and emotional growth. Also, leaders participated in a discussion concerning unresolved conflictual issues that resulted in emotional anguish, spiritual conflicts, and relational problems with congregants. Small group times seem to heighten awareness to one common point per group and noticed more participants silent versus was interactive.

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<sup>381</sup> Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 31.

<sup>382</sup> Peter Scazzero, 133.

<sup>383</sup> Matt. 14:23 (KJV)

<sup>384</sup> Bruce Epperly, *A Center in the Cyclone* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 105-18.

## **Research Contribution**

The Emotionally Healthy Discipleship EHD project was completed as a viable remedy to the emotional well-being of church leaders. This EHD project consisted of a seven-week curriculum created to aid leaders in highlighting possible unresolved emotional triggers and contributed to the spiritual and emotional transformation.

The EHD project contributed to the discipleship process linking spiritual enrichment and purposeful conversations. In some cases, the research identified those sinful tendencies of church leaders contributing to unresolved emotional pain. Questionnaires indicated participants expressing emotional pain within church utilized a defensive strategy of avoidance to eliminate a congregational census toward change, non-rotational deaconship, and selecting committee members that follow current leadership. Emotionally Healthy Discipleship EHD training provided sustainable solutions toward mercurial emotional patterns that negatively impact a learning environment. At last, church leaders determined to present research findings to Trinity Baptist Church to create a congregational desire for church-wide training enhancing the emotional wellbeing of the church.

## **Research Limitations**

Research limitations revolved around internal regulations to study due to time restraints of being a husband, father of three children, full-time pastor, committee meetings, mentoring two young ministers, marriage counseling, part-time army national guard chaplain, student, COVID-19 hindering triangulated investigative research, and household chores. The researcher was limited in compiling research findings due to restraints with military activation with Hurricane Ida. The study had limitations with church leadership availability during training. The research findings are being analyzed and synthesized to compile the measured reports.

The EHD post-assessment findings revealed some positive emotional maturity with participants that could be implemented in future training efforts for congregants. First, post-training assessments displayed an overall increase in emotional maturity that the pre-training assessments. Second, the pre-training versus post-training assessments indicated that church leaders were challenged to express their feelings before training. Church leaders being able to express emotional anguish prevents dysfunctional defensive trends and promotes healthy relational communication skills. Third, the intensive EHD seven-week training is efficient to highlight dysfunctional emotional trends, seven marks of EHD, and open dialogue from small groups with topical concepts of emotional health. The seven marks of EHD could be utilized in lectures, facilitated lessons, and a sermon series could highlight emotionally healthy ideas of the seven marks. Small group discussions develop relational skills, enhance the EHD program with personal stories, and addresses unresolved emotional anguish. Fourth, leadership teams could properly evaluate pre and post-training assessments with confidentiality and dispose of findings after a church-wide project.



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APPENDIX A

**INTERVIEWEE RELEASE FORM**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Roles Served at Trinity: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Years of Membership: \_\_\_\_\_

List Greatest needs of Trinity: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

List Greatest challenges of Trinity: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

List Greatest Strengths of Trinity: \_\_\_\_\_

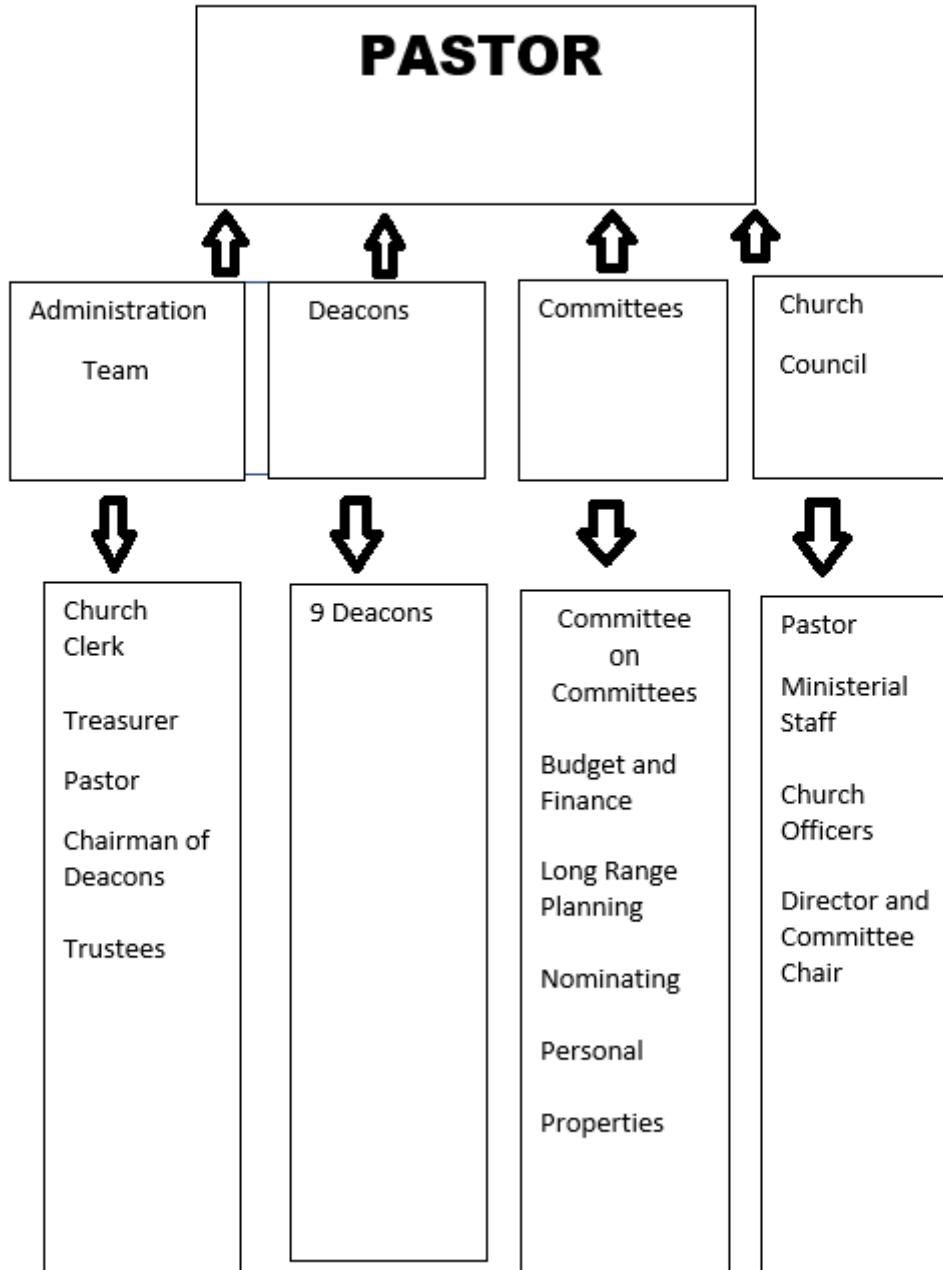
\_\_\_\_\_

Permission to release data for research (sign):

\_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B

TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH BYLAWS



## **THE PASTOR**

- I. Primary Leader under the headship of Jesus Christ
  
- II. Primary duties:
  - A. Prayer
  - B. Bible Study
  - C. Preparation & Delivery of Sermons based on the inerrant Word of God
  - D. Provide leadership to the church and its deacons, officers, staff members, directors, committees and volunteers.
  
- III. Responsibilities
  - A. Responsible to serve, lead and live in a manner that pleases and brings glory to God
  - B. Responsible for overall leadership and direction of the Church
  - C. Responsible to seek God's guidance in all matters through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God
  - D. Responsible for providing for the spiritual leadership, love, and guidance of his family
  - E. Responsible for teaching, exhorting, and refuting false doctrines
  - F. Responsible for providing instruction to foster unity among the members of the church
  - G. Responsible for exercising at least general oversight of church financial matters
  - H. Responsible for providing instructions to the Church regarding the nomination and election of deacons
  - I. Responsible for setting a Christ-like example to those under his care
  - J. Responsible for providing oversight of church discipline

## **DEACONS**

- I. Are to be servants of the Church (Acts 6:1-3)
- II. Serve the Church and assist the Pastor and the Ministerial Staff while wholeheartedly supporting the mission of the Church.
- III. Successfully connect with and pray for the persons assigned to Deacon Family Ministry
- IV. Place special emphasis on ministering to widows and orphans as mandated in (James 1:27)
- V. Will look after the business appointed to them in a manner that better enables the Pastor and Ministerial Staff to give themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word
- VI. Obtain ministers for pulpit supply when the Church is without a pastor
- VII. The Pastor, Chairman of Deacon, and Vice Chairman of Deacons shall discuss with each nominee the qualifications and duties of the office of a deacon when the need for additional deacons arises.
- VIII. Prior to the election of deacons, the Screening Committee shall notify in writing of the men nominated, qualified, and willing to serve.
- IX. Active Deacons shall be the committee to count the ballots

## APPENDIX C



## **CHURCH PERMISSION TO USE EHD ASSESSMENTS**

The Emotionally Healthy Discipleship Personal Assessment  
By Peter Scazzero.

The following Appendix is a copy of the Emotionally Healthy Discipleship (EHD) Personal Assessment that was used by the participants of the Emotionally Healthy Discipleship Project. Each participant completed a pre and post-course assessment.

It should be noted that permission was granted to use the EHS Personal Assessment by citing the following:

“Permission is granted for any purchaser of this book to make copies of this assessment as long as it is not changed or sold for a profit, and this credit is included: Taken from Pete Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church: Updated and Expanded Edition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021). For more information and further resources, contact [www.emotionallyhealthy.org](http://www.emotionallyhealthy.org).

## APPENDIX D

### EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY DISCIPLESHIP ASSESSMENT

**EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY DISCIPLESHIP  
PERSONAL ASSESSMENT**



#### How Emotionally Healthy Are You?

Next to each statement below circle the number that best describes your response.

##### Mark 1: Be Before You Do

- |                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                          | Not very true<br>Somewhat true<br>Mostly true<br>Very true |
| 1. I spend sufficient time alone with God to sustain my work for God so that I live out of a cup that overflows ( <i>Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12</i> ).                                         | 1 2 3 4                                                    |
| 2. It is easy for me to identify what I am feeling inside ( <i>Luke 19:41-44; John 11:33-35</i> ).                                                                                       | 1 2 3 4                                                    |
| 3. When I become anxious or feel like I have too much to do in too little time, I stop and slow down to be with God and myself as a way to recenter ( <i>Luke 4:42; Luke 10:38-42</i> ). | 1 2 3 4                                                    |
| 4. I set apart a twenty-four-hour period each week for Sabbath-keeping — to stop, to rest, to delight, and to contemplate God ( <i>Exodus 20:8-11</i> ).                                 | 1 2 3 4                                                    |
| 5. People close to me would describe me as content, non-defensive, and free from the approval or disapproval of others ( <i>Philippians 4:11-12; John 5:44</i> ).                        | 1 2 3 4                                                    |
| 6. I regularly spend time in solitude and silence. This enables me to be still and undistracted in God's presence ( <i>Habaakuk 2:1-4; Psalm 46:10</i> ).                                | 1 2 3 4                                                    |

*Mark 1 Total:* \_\_\_\_\_

##### Mark 2: Follow the Crucified, Not the Americanized, Jesus

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Not very true<br>Somewhat true<br>Mostly true<br>Very true |
| 1. I have rejected the world's definition of success (e.g., bigger is better, be popular, attain earthly security) to become the person God has called me to become and to do what God has called me to do ( <i>John 4:34; Mark 14:35-39</i> ). | 1 2 3 4                                                    |
| 2. I rarely change the way I act so others will think highly of me or to assure a particular outcome ( <i>Matthew 6:1-2; Galatians 1:10</i> ).                                                                                                  | 1 2 3 4                                                    |
| 3. I take a lot of time to carefully discern when my plans and ambitions are legitimately for the glory of God and when they cross the line into my own desire for greatness ( <i>Jeremiah 45:5; Mark 10:42-45</i> ).                           | 1 2 3 4                                                    |
| 4. Listening to Jesus and surrendering my will to his will is more important than any other project, program, or cause ( <i>Matthew 17:5; John 16:13</i> ).                                                                                     | 1 2 3 4                                                    |
| 5. People close to me would describe me as patient and calm during failures, disappointments, and setbacks ( <i>Isaiah 30:15; John 15:10-11</i> ).                                                                                              | 1 2 3 4                                                    |

*Mark 2 Total:* \_\_\_\_\_

##### Mark 3: Embrace God's Gift of Limits

- |                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                    | Not very true<br>Somewhat true<br>Mostly true<br>Very true |
| 1. I've never been accused of "trying to do it all" or of biting off more than I could chew ( <i>Matthew 4:1-11</i> ).                                                             | 1 2 3 4                                                    |
| 2. I am regularly able to say no to requests and opportunities rather than risk overextending myself ( <i>Mark 6:30-32</i> ).                                                      | 1 2 3 4                                                    |
| 3. I recognize the different situations where my unique, God-given personality can be either a help or a hindrance in responding appropriately ( <i>Psalms 139; Romans 12:3</i> ). | 1 2 3 4                                                    |

Not very true  
 Sometimes true  
 Mostly true  
 Very true

- |                                                                                                                                                                                         |         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 4. It's easy for me to distinguish the difference between when to help carry someone else's burden and when to let it go so they can carry their own burden ( <i>Galatians 6:2-5</i> ). | 1 2 3 4 |
| 5. I have a good sense of my emotional, relational, physical, and spiritual capacities, intentionally pulling back to rest and replenish ( <i>Mark 1:21-39</i> ).                       | 1 2 3 4 |
| 6. Those close to me would say that I am good at balancing family, rest, work, and play in a biblical way ( <i>Exodus 20:5</i> ).                                                       | 1 2 3 4 |

*Mark 3 Total:* \_\_\_\_\_

### Mark 4: Discover the Hidden Treasures Buried in Grief and Loss

- |                                                                                                                                                                                         |         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 1. I openly admit my losses and disappointments ( <i>Psalms 3, 5</i> ).                                                                                                                 | 1 2 3 4 |
| 2. When I go through a disappointment or a loss, I reflect on how I'm feeling rather than pretend that nothing is wrong ( <i>2 Samuel 1:4, 17-27; Psalm 51:1-17</i> ).                  | 1 2 3 4 |
| 3. I take time to grieve my losses as David and Jesus did ( <i>Psalms 69; Matthew 26:39; John 11:35; 12:27</i> ).                                                                       | 1 2 3 4 |
| 4. People who are in great pain and sorrow tend to seek me out because it's clear to them that I am in touch with the losses and sorrows in my own life ( <i>2 Corinthians 1:3-7</i> ). | 1 2 3 4 |
| 5. I am able to cry and experience depression or sadness, explore the reasons behind it, and allow God to work in me through it ( <i>Psalms 42; Matthew 26:36-46</i> ).                 | 1 2 3 4 |

*Mark 4 Total:* \_\_\_\_\_

### Mark 5: Make Love the Measure of Spiritual Maturity

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 1. I am regularly able to enter into the experiences and feelings of other people, connecting deeply with them and taking time to imagine what it feels like to live in their shoes ( <i>John 1:1-14; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:3-5</i> ).    | 1 2 3 4 |
| 2. People close to me would describe me as a responsive listener ( <i>Proverbs 10:19; 29:11; James 1:19</i> ).                                                                                                                                       | 1 2 3 4 |
| 3. When I confront someone who has hurt or wronged me, I speak more in the first person ("I" and "me") about how I am feeling rather than speak in blaming tones ("you" or "they") about what was done ( <i>Proverbs 25:11; Ephesians 4:29-32</i> ). | 1 2 3 4 |
| 4. I have little interest in making snap judgments about other people ( <i>Matthew 7:1-5</i> ).                                                                                                                                                      | 1 2 3 4 |
| 5. People would describe me as someone who makes "loving well" my number one aim ( <i>John 13:34-35; 1 Corinthians 13</i> ).                                                                                                                         | 1 2 3 4 |

*Mark 5 Total:* \_\_\_\_\_

### Mark 6: Break the Power of the Past

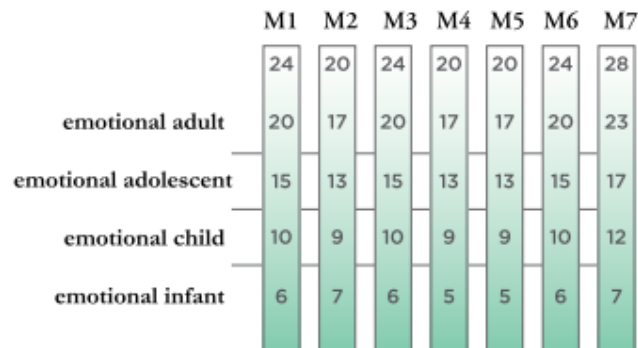
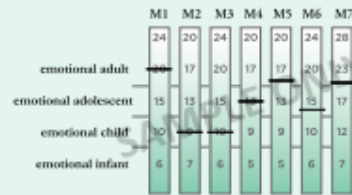
- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 1. I resolve conflict in a clear, direct, and respectful way, avoiding unhealthy behaviors I may have learned growing up in my family, such as painful putdowns, avoidance, escalating tensions, or going to a third party rather than to the person directly ( <i>Matthew 18:15-18</i> ). | 1 2 3 4 |
| 2. I am intentional at working through the impact of significant "earthquake" events from the past that have shaped my present, such as the death of a family member, an unexpected pregnancy, divorce, addiction, or financial disaster ( <i>Genesis 50:20; Psalm 51</i> ).               | 1 2 3 4 |

## SAMPLE

### Marks of Emotionally Healthy Discipleship

- Mark 1. Be Before You Do
- Mark 2. Follow the Crucified, Not the Americanized, Jesus
- Mark 3. Receive God's Gift of Limits
- Mark 4. Discover the Treasures Buried in Grief and Loss
- Mark 5. Make Love the Measure of Spiritual Maturity
- Mark 6. Break the Power of the Past
- Mark 7. Lead out of Weakness and Vulnerability

Totals
<u>20</u> / 24
<u>9</u> / 20
<u>10</u> / 24
<u>15</u> / 20
<u>6</u> / 20
<u>14</u> / 24
<u>21</u> / 28



## UNDERSTANDING YOUR ASSESSMENT: LEVELS OF EMOTIONAL MATURITY

Being an emotionally healthy disciple is not an all-or-nothing condition; it operates on a continuum that ranges from mild to severe, and may change from one season of life and ministry to the next. As you read through the descriptions below, what stands out to you? Wherever you find yourself, the good news is that you can make progress and become an increasingly more mature disciple. So even if your current state of discipleship is sobering, don't be discouraged. You can learn and grow through failures and mistakes, and it is possible for anyone to make progress. Here are some observations to help you better understand your assessment results.

### EMOTIONAL INFANT

I look for other people to take care of me emotionally and spiritually. I often have difficulty in describing and experiencing my feelings in healthy ways and rarely enter the emotional world of others. I am consistently driven by a need for instant gratification, often using others as objects to meet my needs. People sometimes perceive me as inconsiderate and insensitive. I am uncomfortable with silence or being alone. When trials, hardships, or difficulties come, I want to quit God and the Christian life. I sometimes experience God at church and when I am with other Christians, but rarely when I am at work or home.

## EMOTIONAL CHILD

When life is going my way, I am content. However, as soon as disappointment or stress enter the picture, I quickly unravel inside. I often take things personally, interpreting disagreements or criticism as a personal offense. When I don't get my way, I often complain, withdraw, manipulate, drag my feet, become sarcastic, or take revenge. I often end up living off the spirituality of other people because I am so overloaded and distracted. My prayer life is primarily talking to God, telling him what to do and how to fix my problems. Prayer is more a duty than a delight.

## EMOTIONAL ADOLESCENT

I don't like it when others question me. I often make quick judgments and interpretations of people's behavior. I withhold forgiveness from those who sin against me, avoiding or cutting them off when they do something to hurt me. I subconsciously keep records on the love I give out. I have trouble really listening to another person's pain, disappointments, or needs without becoming preoccupied with myself. I sometimes find myself too busy to spend adequate time nourishing my spiritual life. I attend church and serve others but enjoy few delights in Christ. My Christian life is still primarily about doing, not being with him. Prayer continues to be mostly me talking with little silence, solitude, or listening to God.

## EMOTIONAL ADULT

I respect and love others without having to change them or becoming judgmental. I value people for who they are, not for what they can give me or how they behave. I take responsibility for my own thoughts, feelings, goals, and actions. I can state my own beliefs and values to those who disagree with me—without becoming adversarial. I am able to accurately self-assess my limits, strengths, and weaknesses. I am deeply convinced that I am absolutely loved by Christ and do not look to others to tell me I'm okay. I am able to integrate *doing* for God and *being* with him (Mary and Martha). My Christian life has moved beyond simply serving Christ to loving him and enjoying communion with him.

*Permission is granted for any purchaser of this book to make copies of this inventory as long as it is not changed or sold for a profit, and this credit is included. Taken from Peter Scoggero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, Zondervan 2021. For more information and further resources, contact [emotionallyhealthy.org](http://emotionallyhealthy.org).*



## APPENDIX E

### PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRES

1. What is the worst job you ever had?
2. What are three of your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
3. Please describe the role of your vocation plays in leadership.
4. For what reason is “No” a difficult word to say to request and opportunities that risk overextending yourself.
5. In what ways does the concept everyone is a minister challenge you as a church leader? In what ways does it encourage you?
6. What beneath-the-surface issues—a weakness, a wound, or protective boundaries—have most impacted your leadership in the past recently?
7. What three phrases would you use to describe your personal response when it comes to confrontation or differing viewpoints?
8. What are some similarities and differences are there between weakness and vulnerability?
9. To what degree is your life impacted by approval and disapproval of others?

APPENDIX F

**IRB APPLICATION/APPROVAL**

May 18, 2021

Arron McGuffee  
Michael Williams

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY20-21-808 Developing a strategy to enhance the emotional wellbeing of the leadership at Trinity Baptist Church

Dear Arron McGuffee and Michael Williams,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

**Decision: No Human Subjects Research**

**Explanation:** Your study is not considered human subjects research for the following reason: Your project will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word *research* with the word *project* throughout both documents.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**

*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*

**Research Ethics Office**

APPENDIX G

**PARTICIPATION SCREENING QUESTIONS**

May 15, 2021

Members of Trinity Baptist Church  
Pastor  
Trinity Baptist Church  
108 Lakefront Dr.  
Natchitoches, La. 71457

Dear Arron McGuffee:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled the *Strategy to enhance the emotional wellbeing of the leadership at Trinity Baptist Church*, we have decided to grant you permission to begin research: conduct your study at Trinity.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

- The requested data WILL BE STRIPPED of all identifying information before it is provided to the researcher.
- The requested data WILL NOT BE STRIPPED of identifying information before it is provided to the researcher.
- We are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,

Arron McGuffee  
Pastor  
Trinity Baptist Church



## APPENDIX H

### PARTICIPANT EMAIL INVITATION

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March 15, 2021

Members of Trinity Baptist Church  
Pastor  
Trinity Baptist Church  
108 Lakefront Dr.  
Natchitoches, La. 71457

Dear Parishioners:

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am researching to understand Trinity Baptist Church's emotional well-being better. My research aims to explore the emotional dynamics of Trinity, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be a church leader at Trinity Baptist Church. Participants, if willing, will be asked to sign a consent form, complete a survey and submit in locked box in pastor's office. Completing the requested tasks should take approximately 10 minutes to complete the procedure[s] listed. Also, interviews are needed for action research. Interviews will be based from questions from *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship* by Peter Scazzero. All interviews will be confidential, participants will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

Sincerely,

Arron McGuffee  
Pastor

## APPENDIX I

### SOCIAL-MEDIA ADVERTISEMENT

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ATTENTION Trinity: I am researching as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to enhance the emotional well-being of church leaders at Trinity Baptist Church. Participants will be presented with informed consent information before participating. The researcher will recruit five church leaders to participate in an interview with questions from the *Emotional Healthy Discipleship* book by Peter Scazzero. Volunteers will be issued a copy of Peter Scazzero's new book. Also, participants will be handed the *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship* survey to complete and drop in a locked box in the pastor's office. Completion of the survey is approximately 10 minutes. Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time. To participate, you must be a church leader at Trinity Baptist Church.

## APPENDIX J

### CHURCH NEWSLETTER ADVERTISEMENT

#### Emotional Wellbeing of Trinity Baptist Church Study Research Participants Needed:

- Are you a church leader at Trinity Baptist Church?
- Would you like to discover Emotionally Healthy Discipleship can impact your life?

If you answered **yes** to either of these questions, you might be eligible to participate in an action research study.

The purpose of this research study is to enhance the emotional well-being of church leaders at Trinity.

Church leadership can participate in *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship Personal Assessment* by Peter Scazzero. The researcher will utilize seven volunteered participants from church leadership. Participating members will be instructed with guidance on how to fill out the assessment.

The researcher will recruit five church leaders to participate in an interview based on Emotionally Healthy Discipleship book questions. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

Participating members will be instructed with guidance on how to fill out a survey.

The study is being conducted at Trinity Baptist Church  
527 Howard Street  
Natchitoches, LA 71457

**Arron McGuffee**, a **student/doctoral candidate** in the **School of Divinity** at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

## APPENDIX K

### PARTICIPANT GENERAL CONSENT FORM

**Consent: Developing a strategy to enhance the emotional wellbeing of the leadership at  
Trinity Baptist Church**

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**Title of the Project:** Developing a strategy to enhance the emotional wellbeing of the leadership at Trinity Baptist Church.

**Principal Investigator:** Arron D. McGuffee, MDiv, Liberty University

#### Invitation to be part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be in current leadership at Trinity Baptist Church. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

#### What is the study about, and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is developing a strategy to enhance the emotional wellbeing of the leadership at Trinity Baptist Church. Action research will consist of various investigative tools such as surveys and interviews. Participatory church leadership efforts will consist of taking the Emotionally Healthy Discipleship Personal Assessment and conducting five church leadership interviews. Interview questions will be selected from *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*. Research is being undertaken to heighten awareness of the emotional wellbeing of church leadership. Also, church leadership could utilize research to offer future training of emotional healthy discipleship for the congregation.

#### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. The researcher will recruit seven church leaders to participate in action research. The timeframe for research will consist of two weeks for advertisement and recruitment, twenty minutes for taking the assessment, and twenty-four hours of grading the assessments. The church will provide a copy of *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship* to each participant. Participants will take the *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship* assessment. Upon completing the evaluation, participants will submit the completed evaluation in a lockbox within the pastor's office.
2. The author will recruit five church leaders to interview for the action research. The timeframe for interviews will consist of two weeks for advertisement and recruitment, one week of scheduling and meeting with volunteers, thirty minutes for interview questions, and three days to analyze the collective data. Interview questions will be selected from *Emotional Healthy*

*Discipleship* assessment. The researcher will analysis responses from interview questions to discover commonalities and differences with church leadership.

3. The researcher will utilize six training sessions from *Emotional Healthy Discipleship* to enhance church leadership's emotional dynamics. The timeframe for training will consist of seven Sunday nights with one hour training seminars. Positive outcomes of enhanced training leaders will define what church health is, understand environmental trends within the church, creative direction, and guidance to gain emotionally healthy discipleship. No post test will be given after training. However, the researcher will provide time for after action review AAR to highlight positive takeaways form the training.

#### **How could you or others benefit from this study?**

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study are discovering personal emotional dynamics, training in emotional healthy discipleship, gaining insight into church leadership's emotional well-being, spiritual enrichment, and visionary goals for future congregational training. Participants should not expect to receive a direct compensatory benefit from taking part in this study.

#### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study include are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life or during the performance of routine assessments or interviews.

#### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the documents.

#### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

#### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation and not submit your study materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact Pastor Arron McGuffee.

**Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher[s], **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu)

**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you agree to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. A copy of this document will be issued for your records. The researcher will keep a copy of the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

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Printed Subject Name

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Signature & Date