Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Shepherding Church Staff:
Stakeholders' perceptions of a Useful Leadership Development Plan

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to

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by

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT
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As leadership demands grow, churches need a way to develop more effective leaders.

Many pastors have received limited training in how to develop leaders and may not be aware of

stakeholders' expectations for leadership development. This thesis project reveals the importance

of intentional leadership development of those who have answered the calling to work in the

local church. The researcher believes the current shortage of lay leaders as well as consistent

burnout rates among staff and volunteers can be altered with the correct plan and people in place.

The researcher conducted open ended semi-structured interviews for those currently working in

full-time church leadership capacity to gain knowledge about what would be helpful in their

development. The responses should help those in high-level leadership positions understand what

people are craving from their leaders. The central finding from this study was that if stakeholders

are involved in developing a useful Leadership Development Plan (LDP), they recommend one

that strengthens relationships, develops more leaders, grows individuals, and aligns the team

with the mission of the church.

Keywords: Leadership | Development | Church | Ministry | Shepherding

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Finally, I want to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Your grace and mercy in my life has always given me the drive to be better. I pray this project will be used as a tool to love, encourage, and grow those who carry your calling.

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LDP   Leadership Development Program

CSB   Christian Standard Bible

Chapter 1

Introduction

Many lead pastors face high expectations from their congregations. Churchgoers look to them for spiritual leadership and vision for the church's direction, and they are also tasked with day-to-day operations and development of the church staff. Often, lead pastors discover that the pressure to perform consistently at a high level can become overbearing. Church leadership consultant William Carter says, "Administering a staff is never easy. There are many variables, and the expectations of constituents and coworkers are often so quixotic that evaluation and redirection appear to be necessary on an almost daily basis."[1]

A recent study indicates pastors are most satisfied with their roles when they are engaged in leadership development.[2] However, in some cases, the growth and shepherding of the team becomes a "back burner" issue. When there is no intentional plan to lead and develop the leadership team, the church can stagnate or even die. Anthony Hilder explains it this way: "Without clear church leadership responsibilities, governance across different levels is inconsistent, unclear or ineffective, and the church mission will be less likely to succeed."[3]

Kirkpatrick G. Cohall and Bruce Cooper indicate that leadership development seems to happen less during formal theological training, and more through the informal mentoring process.[4] Given that the staff team can raise or lower the quality of ministry, staff development

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[1] William J. Carter, *Team Spirituality: A Guide for Staff and Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 53.

[2] Kirkpatrick G. Cohall and Bruce Cooper, "Educating American Baptist Pastors: A National Survey of Church Leaders," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 19, no. 1 (2014): 27-55.

[3] Anthony Hilder, "15 keys to church health: Leadership effectiveness," accessed Sep 14, 2022, https://anthonyhilder.com/leadership/.

[4] Cohall and Cooper, "Educating American Baptist Pastors," 27-55.

should be highly regarded and practiced. In fact, the lack of attention assigned to leadership

development can create a negative culture within the staff. When staff members get frustrated

with the lack of vision, clarity, and development, their performance begins to suffer, friction in

their relationship with their supervisors can easily form; and many times, the staff member will

move to a new ministry. Beverly Kaye and Julie Winkle Giulioni give warning to leaders who

lack a strong development process:

> Ignore the development imperative at your own peril. Every day, employees who believe
> their careers are not getting the attention they deserve make the decision to leave. Some
> resign to pursue employment in other organizations that offer greater opportunity. Others
> decide the freelance life fits them better…but an equally dangerous situation occurs when
> employees stay put and withdraw their engagement, motivation, and enthusiasm for the
> work.[5]

Church leaders can move their teams from average to healthy and high functioning.[6] Of

course, to shepherd and grow influential leaders, senior leaders must be intentional about their

plans.[7] Actions like discipleship and shepherding do not usually take place without intent. The

apostle Paul developed this intentionality with Timothy and others. A handful of churches were

created from Paul's first missionary trip into Asia Minor (Acts 13-14 Christian Standard Bible).

At the kickoff of his second trip, he revisited his initial churches to confirm that they were

functioning biblically and that they were healthy. At the church in Lystra, he met Timothy (Acts

15:35-18:22, CSB) – a young man who had an all-star reputation among the local followers. Paul

took note of him and decided to invest in his life. He even recruited Timothy to join the team and

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[5] Beverly Kaye and Julie Winkle Giulioni, *Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go* (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2019), 2.

[6] F. S. Clark, "Increasing church vitality through leadership development: Promoting self-differentiation in laity as leaders in the Church" (D.Min. diss., Drew University, 1991), 87.

[7] C. Taylor, "Growing places: An exploratory study of lay leadership development in the local church" (D.Min. diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2014), 138, https://place.asburyseminary.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1606&context=ecommonsatsdissertations

begin a new journey of doing ministry (Acts 16:1-5, CSB). Paul walked with Timothy and shepherded him all along the way.

The journey of the Apostle Paul is relatable to those who are striving to follow Christ and lead people. Readers learn of Paul as one who is anti-Christian and seeks to endanger those who are. His heart is cold to the things of the Lord, and his self-righteousness is high. Paul's life was headed for the depths of hell until he had an encounter with the Lord. Many modern-day leaders have walked a similar path before coming to Christ. The similarities found in Paul's story draw people to learn from him. He is not a righteous, do-good, and never fail kind of person. His struggles and growth into becoming a great leader are what makes him attractive. Conceivably no one in all of history provides a better example of excellent leadership than the Apostle Paul. Megachurch Pastor Andy Stanley writes, "Paul did not limit his comments to matters of theology. His letters are packed with specific, as in exceedingly specific, instructions for how Christians were and are to conduct themselves both inside and outside the community of faith."[8]

Paul is generally credited with being the origin of the spread of Christianity. It is nearly impossible to overstate his impact on western civilization. An even more remarkable accomplishment would be that he provides today's leaders with an excellent model for modern leadership. In his article "The Apostle Paul: A Truly Great Modern Leader," author John Roulet says, "For us to consider Paul's Leadership great, three things must be true: 1) His

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[8] Andy Stanley, *Irresistible: Reclaiming the New that Jesus Unleashed for the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 201.

accomplishments as a leader were great. 2) He achieved what he did by using resources wisely. 3) He protected the values of those he led."[9]

Paul was passionate about leadership because he was the beneficiary of learning under a great leader. His mentor, Barnabas, had engaged him when no one else would (Acts 9:27, CSB). When Paul first came to Jerusalem and tried to join up with the disciples, they were all afraid of him and did not believe he was a true disciple (Acts 9:26, CSB). Barnabas decided to invest in Paul's life: He took Paul in, shepherded him, and led him to become a great man of God. Today's church leaders would do well to follow this same methodology.

Paul's heart for God and people was evident to many, but none more than the people in whom he invested his life. Not only did he show people respect, but he also cared for their lives. Paul was willing to be a leader, not to make his world better but to help make the world of others better. He went into cold regions of the world to preach to the people that there is a better way of life found in God. Along his journey, he exemplified one who cared for people. He healed a young boy who was severely injured by a fall from an upper-floor window (Acts 20:9-12, CSB). While on the shipwrecked boat, Paul encouraged and helped others:

> After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: "Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me." (Acts 27:21-25, New International Version)

Time after time, Paul showed his love for those around him.

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[9] John Roulet, "The Apostle Paul: A Truly Great Modern Leader," accessed, Feb 13, 2020, from http://storage.cloversites.com/brookridgecommunitychurch/documents/Leadership%2C%20Jesus%20and%20Paul.pdf.

Loving people is a cornerstone for ministry leaders. Pastors may be able to craft an excellent sermon or share an impactful leadership lesson, but if they do not love the people around them, they will fail as a leader. Author Bob Goff shares why loving others is the best approach:

> Because of our love for each other, I understand just a little more how God has pursued me in creative and whimsical ways, ways that initially did not get my attention. Nevertheless, he wouldn't stop. That's what love does---it pursues blindly, unflinchingly, and without end. When you go after something you love, you will do anything it takes to get it, even if it costs everything.[10]

Jesus gave His life to reach humanity. Paul gave his life to spread that Good News. Church leaders should use their life to reach the people in their community. Real biblical leadership starts with loving God and loving people.

The men and women who make up a church staff are there to make a difference in the world around them, but they need someone who believes in them and is willing to show that confidence. There is a story of a high-level businessman who was meeting privately in his office with a staff member. They were discussing several issues vital to them when the phone rang. The businessman ignored it. After three rings, the staff member looked at him and asked, "Aren't you going to get that?" He paused and remarked, "No. I don't know whether that call is important or not, but it can wait. I do know this meeting is important." Feeling valued, the staff member smiled, and they continued the conversation with new energy. It is crucial for every leader to understand that what gets attention and how the leader responds to things matters a great deal to the team. When people don't feel valued, they may lack trust in their leaders, and may not bother to bring issues forward. When leaders show their people that they are truly valued, strong teams

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[10] Bob Goff, *Love Does: Discover a Secretly Incredible Life in an Ordinary World* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2012), 52.

are formed and levels of effectiveness are raised. In his book, *The Speed of Trust*, Stephen M. R. Covey says, "a team with high trust will produce results faster and at lower cost."[11]

Church of the Highlands in Birmingham, Alabama is an excellent example of a church that is intentional about leadership development. They have created multiple ministries that help people on their journey in serving Christ. The "growth track" was created as a four-step process in which anyone could walk through and raise their level of spiritual and emotional health. This process is intended to give tools and strategies to help people along their journey of becoming a devoted follower of Christ. Highlands is committed to not only investing in their team but also into pastors around the globe. Their ARC (Association of Related Churches) ministry is one that teaches, encourages, and sends out those called to plant new churches. Highlands provides training, relationships, and financial resources for those who walk through their process. With Jesus leading the way, Highlands puts a high value on developing people. The fruit they have produced over the past twenty years offers evidence of their effectiveness. ARC has planted over five hundred churches, and Church of the Highlands currently has over 60,000 members on their church role.

Church of the Highlands developed the ARC ministry, emphasized small groups, and instituted their growth track because of the heart of the founding Pastor, Dr. Chris Hodges. The church notes,

> Pastor Chris has a deep passion for developing leaders and planting life-giving churches. He co-founded ARC (Association of Related Churches) in 2001, which has launched hundreds of churches across the United States. He also founded Grow, specializing in training and resourcing pastors and churches to help them break barriers and reach their

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[11] Stephen M. R. Covey, *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing that Changes Everything* (Salt Lake City, UT: Franklin Covey Publishing, 2008), 55.

growth potential. Chris is also the founder and Chancellor of Highlands College, a ministry training school that trains and launches students into full-time ministry careers.[12]

Church of the Highlands staff believe that when the leader has a desire for developing the congregation, the church will thrive. Today, the church has over twenty-four campuses throughout the Southern United States. They employ hundreds of ministers and staff and have sent out hundreds more to further the gospel. Much of their success stems from a desire to love people in a way that empowers them to grow and be all that God intended for them to be. The Church of the Highlands is an excellent model for anyone striving to develop leaders for the purpose of creating a healthy culture within the church.

Another example of a church that focused on developing leaders is Grace Baptist in Knoxville, Tennessee. The church was started in 1916 and had many years of fruitful ministry. In 1988, Grace Baptist called Dr. Ron Stewart as their new lead pastor. Dr. Stewart brought a desire and drive to train leaders. He used the ministries of the church to help people find their gifts and use them for the Lord. The growth of Grace Baptist was explosive. A Family Life Center and Education Center, which includes Sunday school classrooms, a gymnasium, kitchen, dining, and fellowship hall, was built in 1991. Each of these spaces was intentionally created to help develop people. The classrooms served as training areas for people to grow in their knowledge of the Lord and doing his work. The gymnasium was used as an avenue to bring the community into the building which acted as a bridge to reach more people with the gospel. People were also trained in the art of coaching and recreation ministry. The kitchen and dining facilities were not

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[12] "Why We Exist," Church of the Highlands, accessed Sep 13, 2022, https://www.churchofthehighlands.com/about/.

only utilized to bring people together over a meal, but to direct and develop those wanting to learn culinary skills. The entire facility was designed with future leaders in mind.

As the church continued to grow, Dr. Stewart's desire to influence leaders continued as well. In 1994 God called Grace Baptist Church to begin the new ministry of a Christian School. Grace Christian Academy (GCA) opened its doors for the 1997-1998 school year. God worked through sixty families and five staff members to make GCA more than a vision. In 2004, Grace Christian Academy received full accreditation from both the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Association of Christian Schools International for grades K-12. The Academy is the largest Southern Baptist-affiliated school in the state of Tennessee to receive dual accreditation. GCA still serves as a training ground to develop the leaders of tomorrow. GCA has developed a strong relationship within the Knoxville business and ministry community. Each semester students are tasked with choosing an area of interest to grow in. The students are then paired with a local business so they can spend time with the leaders of that company. The goal is to give the student hands on experience and opportunities for growth. This program has been a staple at GCA since its inception. In May 2005, the first senior class graduated from Grace Christian Academy, and groundbreaking work began for phase one of the new high school building and athletic fields, which opened in the fall of 2006. GCA is still functioning as a training ground for young leaders today.

Dr. Stewart was constantly looking for ways to get the gospel out into the world and to train and develop leaders. In the early 1990's he turned to radio to get God's Word to as many people as possible. Grace's radio broadcast, Words of Grace, is the longest running local religious program in Knoxville. Another avenue for Dr. Stewart and the leaders of GBC to train and develop people was founded overseas. Partnering with John Maxwell and the Equip

ministry, Grace Baptist went into dozens of countries to train and encourage local pastors. The team would spend a week at a time giving hands on ministry training as well as feeding them God's Word.

In 2017 Dr. Stewart retired as Senior Pastor of Grace Baptist, but his legacy of development continues. Before he departed, he put a plan into motion to build a modern student ministry building that would serve as a training ground for the students in the community. Dr. Stewart's impact will likely be felt for years to come. His example of investing in people and encouraging them to serve the Lord is being mimicked by many. As many of the staff have moved on to new areas of ministry, several of them use the lessons learned at Grace Baptist to intentionally develop others.

Ministry Context

According to many of the modern-day church researchers, the state of the American church is concerning. This is not a new trend. In 1988, Win Arn, a church growth leader, startled the church world with the following statement: "Today, of the approximately 350,000 churches in America, four out of five are either plateaued or declining. Many churches begin a plateau or slow decline about their fifteenth to eighteenth year. 80-85 [percent] are on the downside of this cycle."[13] For over thirty years this downward spiral has continued. The numerical growth of the church has simply not kept up with the growth of the population. Modern-day Church researcher Thom Rainer writes, "Eight out of ten of the approximately 400,000 churches in the United

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[13] https://malphursgroup.com/state-of-the-american-church-plateaued-declining/ Accessed Feb 13 2020.

States are declining or have plateaued"[14] He also says, "84 percent are declining or experiencing

a growth rate below the population growth rate for their communities. The latter is defined as a

plateaued church."[15]

These critical statistics must alarm the current church leaders that a new strategic

approach is needed. God has placed many pastors in their current roles to lead a generation of

people to Him. The team each leader builds and utilizes is vital in this fight. Leaders must fight

for the health of their team. The demands of the local church ministry can be extremely taxing on

the spiritual, emotional, and physical realms of life. One facet of changing the direction of the

current church is intentionally investing in the people who are laboring the most.

When the staff does not have buy in, due to lack of investment, coaching, or shepherding,

the turnover rate increases. Steve Caton, a member of the leadership team at Church Community

Builder in Redmon, Washington, says the average tenure of a staff member in the USA is

between three and four years. He explains, "When you consider that the average cost for

replacing a staff person is 20 to 22 percent the amount of their salary, this can quickly become a

serious financial issue. However, the actual cost is just one repercussion of turnover. The 'hidden

costs' can be just as detrimental."[16]

Unhealthiness can breed a lack of trust in leadership. People leave church for a variety of

reasons. However, a constantly revolving door of staff members can start to erode the trust level

of the church members and other staff. Another detriment due to the lack of intentional

shepherding is losing the ability to stay laser-focused on the mission. It can be difficult for a

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[14] Thom Rainer, *Breakout Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 254.
[15] Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 98.
[16] Steve Caton, "Three Secrets of a Healthy Church Culture," accessed Sep 13, 2022, https://churchtechtoday.com/healthy-church-culture/.

church to fulfill its mission and vision when leaders lose trust and begin to focus on the negative. The staff members start to notice and leave, but church members may also begin to depart if it is not handled well.

Modern-day leaders must redefine the meaning of a leader. In his book, *Servants of the Servant*, Don Howell creates a well-crafted definition of a biblical leader. He writes, "Biblical leadership is taking the initiative to influence people to grow in holiness and to passionately promote the extension of God's kingdom in the world."[17]

The calling from God on those who step into full-time vocational ministry should not be taken lightly. It is not simply a job to fill, but a high calling from God almighty. Authors Derek Prime and Alister Begg emphasize this important calling. They say, "The call to shepherd God's people and to teach them His Word is a special calling because of its strategic and unique importance for the spiritual well-being of Christ's flock."[18] The author of this project is passionate about seeing God's flock flourish! He has served in three local churches for over eighteen years, ranging in size from three hundred to three thousand in weekly attendance. Each church had its strengths and weaknesses, but all of them shared one thing in common: there was not an intentional plan or process for the staff to be developed. Staff members expressed frustration, distrust, and confusion in each of these contexts. These experiences exposed the leadership void that many churches face. This vacuum is not specific to the local church. Training and developing leaders within the church may help provide the stability and structure that is so desperately needed. The idea for this action research project was born through seeing

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[17] Don Howell, *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2003), vi.

[18] Derek Prime and Alister Begg, *On Being a Pastor Understanding Our Calling And Work* (Chicago, IL: Moody Pub, 2006), 17.

first-hand the effects of not having a plan. Developing the staff in accordance with the vision and

mission of the church is crucial for the health of the team.

Problem Presented

Church staff members are often assumed to be healthy spiritually, emotionally, and

physically; therefore, leaders may not take care to understand the various health needs of the

staff. Leaders may have a high level of expectation for their staff's performance, but a low level

of investment in the staff's health. A leader's lack of attention to the staff's growth is one factor

that leads to church staff burnout,[19] a lukewarm spirit, and even sin that disqualifies leaders from

serving.

According to the Focus on the Family ministry, there are a record number of pastors and

church employees leaving the ministry today.[20] The enemy has a field-day in distracting,

discouraging, and disqualifying men from remaining in local church ministry. The problem is not

a lack of access to better performance tips or how-to guides. The high attrition rate lies in the

health of the leaders. Throughout the past twenty years many scholars have seen that an

increased workload, unending conflict, and high levels of stress in clergy across a wide range of

denominations has resulted in high levels of burnout.[21] In his article "Statistics on Pastors," Dr.

Richard Krejcir found that 35% of the 8,000 pastors surveyed across America battled depression

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[19] R. G. Kalal, "The perceived factors deemed necessary for team effectiveness in multiple -staff evangelical churches in North America" (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2002), 254, https://www.proquest.com/pqdtglobal/docview/305510510/5EBF32B70B07412DPQ/1?accountid=12085 Accessed Oct 9, 2022.

[20] Focus on the Family, "Pastors, get your alive to thrive leader's guide," accessed Sep 13, 2022, https://www.focusonthefamily.com/church/alive-to-thrive-leaders-guide-for-pastor/.

[21] S. M. Frenk et al., "The Clergy Occupational Distress Index (CODI): Background and findings from two samples of clergy," *Journal of Religion and Health* 52, no. 2 (2013): 397-407.

and 43% showed stress, fatigue, and other signs of burnout.[22] Not only are clergy facing higher levels of burnout, but an increasing number of ministers are leaving the profession because of it.[23]

The Church must look at developing its people to stay in the fight. Reaching the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ demands that churches and leaders do whatever it takes to shepherd people to a healthy state so they can remain in fruitful ministry.

Author and pastor Paul David Tripp says, "The church is in desperate need of a leadership community whose function is not just structured to achieve with efficiency but is more deeply shaped by the comforts and calls of the gospel of Jesus Christ."[24] The Church today is crying out for effective leadership. Many of the issues and tensions that arise in a church or among members are due to the lack of effective leadership. Leaders must see the need for development and investment into the next generation of leaders. In his work, *The Vital Church Leader*, Robert Cueni states, "To be effective in ministry and mission, congregations need more than caring pastors, compelling preachers, insightful prophets, and wise teachers. They must have ministers who lead."[25]

For this reason, the local Church must invest in its staff. Communities across the world and the kingdom of God will be impacted in extraordinary ways as the staff grows, matures, and becomes a healthy team. Some churches have leadership development programs, but little

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[22] R. Krejcir, "Statistics on Pastors: 2016 Update," accessed February 9, 2022, http://www.churchleadership.org/apps/articles/default.asp?blogid=4545&view=post&articleid=Statistics-on-Pastors-2016-Update&link=1&fldKeywords=&fldAuthor=&fldTopic=0.

[23] Robert Elkington, "Adversity in Pastoral Leadership: Are Pastors Leaving the Ministry in Record Numbers, and If So, Why?," *Verbum Et Ecclesia* 34, no. 1 (2013): 1-13, doi: 10.4102/ve.v34i1.821.

[24] Paul David Tripp, *Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020): 29.

[25] R. Robert Cueni, *The Vital Church Leader* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1991), 43.

research has been done to understand what makes a useful leadership program. The problem this project will address is the need to understand stakeholders' perceptions of a useful and effective Leadership Development Plan (LDP).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN research project is to understand church leaders' perceptions of a useful LDP.

Practical Significance

An understanding of church leaders' perceptions of a useful LDP can help churches to develop LDPs that meet the needs of their staff. The development of such LDPs can have earthly and eternal significance. In his best-selling book, *Experiencing God*, Henry Blackaby offers a beautiful reminder about following God's ways. He says, "God wants us to adjust our lives to Him, so He can do through us what He wants to do. God is not our servant to make adjustments to our plans. We are His servants, and we adjust our lives to what He is about to do and to His ways of doing it."[26] Denying self and submitting to the Lord is foundational for an effective leader. Jesus gave the directive to His people to go and make disciples (Matt. 28:19-20, CSB). Training and equipping the church staff is part of the discipleship process. Each team member growing in his or her spiritual, emotional, and physical self has the potential to bring revival. In fact, as the world continues to change and get further and further away from the Lord, the

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[26] Henry Blackaby, *Experiencing God: How to Live the Full Adventure of Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishers, 1994), 67.

Church's responsibility grows more urgent. Outsiders may even notice the healthy team atmosphere and be drawn to the church.

This research may also have a trickle-down effect. Although this project focuses on leadership development within the church context, the findings may be transferrable to other contexts — especially where paid staff mobilize volunteers.

Basic Assumptions

A qualitative research paradigm was utilized by this author in which the following fundamental expectations were assumed:

1. Leadership development plans should be informed by the participants in the leadership training.
2. Leadership development is not unintentional; it can be planned out, measured, and improved.
3. There is no single "correct" leadership development plan; useful LDPs are constructed by their constituents.

Definitions

In this study, the following definitions are used.

Leadership is the influence of others. Church leaders are striving to influence people to love and serve Christ.

Leadership Development is growing a leader's level of effectiveness.

Local Church – Jesus established the Church as a Christian organization. He said, "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of

Hades will not overpower it" (Matt. 16:8, Christian Standard Bible). Jesus implemented the church to overcome darkness. The local church is designed for worship, growth, and fellowship.

Pastor - a minister in charge of a Christian church or congregation.

Discipleship is the biblical schooling that results in the equipping and deployment of a believer in Christ. Kenneth Nehrbass defines discipleship as, "The process of teaching people to obey all that Jesus commanded. Some have focused more on the teachings, and some focus more on the actions, but both aspects are essential."[27]

Shepherding is a pastor's lifestyle that entails teaching, overseeing, and leading the people God has entrusted to him.[28]

Limitations

While church leaders' perceptions of LDPs can be informative for those who are developing an LDP, this research cannot describe aspects of a development plan that will inevitably result in major growth for all church leaders. The age range, experiences, theologies, and backgrounds of churchgoers vary widely; therefore, there cannot be a one-size-fits-all plan.

Another limitation comes in the level of introspection of the participants: they may have had different levels of comfort talking about their growth, and some may not have shared vulnerable information. To address this limitation, the researcher developed rapport with them by showing them the benefits of the study, and by ensuring confidentiality.

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[27] Kenneth Nehrbass, *Advanced Missiology: How to Study Missions in Credible and Useful Ways* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2021), 200.

[28] John MacArthur, *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005), 24.

Delimitations

Qualitative research requires the involvement and feedback of human subjects.[29] This descriptive qualitative study is delimited to full time church staff in the United States. There were fourteen men and one woman interviewed. The participants' ages ranged from twenty-three to fifty-one. The range of experience in full-time local church ministry was one year to twenty-five years. Of the twelve churches the participants worked in, seven are a part of the Southern Baptist Convention, three are non-denominational, and two are independent evangelical.

The research topic is also delimited: it revolves around perceptions of a useful leadership program. Therefore, this study does not deliberately focus on other aspects of leadership, such as management, succession, or characteristics of a qualified leader. However, these concepts do appear at times in participants' descriptions of a useful LDP.

Thesis Statement

If stakeholders are asked about their perceptions of an effective leadership development program, then recommendations can be given for a useful LDP. The result of this project will offer recommendations for an LDP based on participant data and literature.

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[29] D. A. Schön, *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action* (New York, NY: Basic Books, Inc., 1983), 136.

Chapter 2

Conceptual framework

The topic of leadership encompasses almost every arena of life. Much has been written on leadership development, including development within the context of the local church. However, little research has been done on stakeholders' perceptions of growth plans for church leaders. The literature review below covers theoretical literature on leadership development in churches, and then it discusses literature on the theological foundations of leadership.

Theoretical Foundations

Virtually every God-instructed plan throughout the history of creation has been accomplished through the development of leaders. The Holy Scriptures are the greatest collection of leader biographies. It teaches that God consistently moves through the means of leadership. God used people from multiple backgrounds, ages, gender, races, and leadership styles.

He used Noah to build a ship and rescue others. He used Abraham's faith to lead and birth a nation. He used Joseph's pain to gain leadership in Egypt. God used a less than stellar group of fishermen to be His apostles. When God wants to accomplish a plan, he finds someone to lead and utilize as his tool.

The church was founded by a leader who invested most of his ministry time mentoring new leaders. The very mission of the church, to take the gospel to the entire world and teach every new believer everything that was handed down from Christ, implies leadership.[30]

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[30] Brian Keith Moss, "Leadership development in the local church: an intentional strategy for developing leaders at every level" (DMin. Thesis, Liberty University, 2014), 7.

The church was not a man-made establishment created to stroke the ego of those seeking power and prestige. God himself empowered leaders in the church for the purpose of accomplishing the intentional design of developing everyday people into fully devoted followers. Brian Keith Moss notes, "The church was established by and is perpetuated through leadership development."[31]

If the church aspires to thrive and grow, leaders must develop intentional growth processes for the staff. The need for skilled and spiritually mature church leaders will always be present. Jason Allen, President of Midwestern Seminary, argues the importance of solid church leadership. He states, "So goes the leadership, so goes the church."[32] This section examines critical lessons on the crisis of leadership, traits of a healthy leader, strategies for creating a healthy culture, creating a vision, and principles for developing a leadership plan.

<center>The Crisis of Leadership</center>

A common theme that runs throughout leadership studies (whether secular or Christian) is the claim that there is a crisis of solid leaders today. Many factors contribute to this situation. A key influence is that fewer people were born between 1960 and 1980, which means there are not enough people available who have similar work experience, longevity within a company or industry, or the qualifications to take over for the retiring baby boomers.[33] The local Church has not been immune to this low rate of producing leaders.

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[31] Moss, "Leadership development in the local church," 7.

[32] Jason K. Allen, *Discerning Your Call to Ministry* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2016), 46.

[33] William Vanderbloeman. *Culture Wins: The Roadmap to an Irresistible Workplace*. (Nashville, TN: Post Hill Press, 2018), 14.

The results have had an immense effect on the development of leaders within the church. As the pool of leaders dwindles, the chance of having or being a competent pastor or staff member declines proportionately.[34] A survey of one hundred pastors in America shows that 80% of new pastors leave the ministry within five years.[35] Gospel Coaches Tom Wood and Scott Thomas say,

> Ministry leaders tend to be the most under sourced members of the church, often receiving the least amount of attention and support. In light of this systemic problem in the leadership of the church, there is great need to recover a means of coaching and counseling others in the gospel, by the gospel, through the gospel, and for the sake of Christ.[36]

The lack of experienced leaders has a trickle-down effect on the development of others.

Christian literature on leadership also focuses on a spiritual crisis. Author and church growth consultant Bill Easum says, "the lack of knowledge and resources has played an integral role in church leaders' health."[37]

When the leader loses the sense of calling, unhealthiness can creep in. Remaining consistent and reliant upon the call of God may help leaders address the crisis. Tripp says, "The church is in desperate need of a leadership community whose function is not just structured to achieve with efficiency but is more deeply shaped by the comforts and calls of the gospel of Jesus Christ."[38]

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[34] Bill Easum and Bill Tenny-Brittian, *Effective Staffing for Vital Churches: The Essential Guide to Finding and Keeping the Right People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2012), 19.

[35] Chuck DeGroat, *Toughest People to Love: How to understand, lead, and love the difficult people in your life - Including yourself* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 17.

[36] Scott Thomas and Tom Wood, *Gospel Coach: Shepherding Leaders to Glorify God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. 2012), 12, 50.

[37] Bill Easum, *The Church Growth Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 82.

[38] Tripp, *Lead*, 29.

Due to the crisis, a major objective of every leader should be leader development. Sadly, if those who hold influence over others fail to lead toward the spiritual uplands, then surely the path to the lowlands will be well worn.[39] The impact that Christianity has on the world rests at the doorsteps of leaders. According to Oswald Sanders, if the world is to hear the church's voice today, leaders are needed who are authoritative, spiritual, and sacrificial.[40]

<p align="center">Traits of Healthy Leaders</p>

Literature on leadership has also focused on standards and character traits of leaders. This section looks at popular Christian literature on ethical leadership, servant leadership, and spiritual intimacy, and emotional health.

Ethical Leadership

In leadership theory, the approach of recognizing high values and morals as the foundation for the common good is known as ethical leadership. Tripp argued that the character of a leader is more important than structure or strategies he or she implements.[41] Placing a high value on ethical decision making, instead of the results, influences people to make good decisions. In his book *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ*, Paul Pettit says, "It is through our foundational character, whether good or bad, that

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[39] J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2007), 20.

[40] Ibid., 19.

[41] Tripp, *Lead*, 100.

we develop a value system that helps make us ethical or unethical, moral or immoral, decisions about what actions to take in any given situation."[42]

To describe ethical leadership, S. M. Bray emphasizes the character principle. He says, "Character, not image, is what truly matters for a Christian leader. True Christian leadership flows from the inside out."[43]

Ethical leadership is both visible and invisible. The visible part is in the way the leader works with and treats others, in his behavior in public, in his statements and his actions. The invisible aspects of ethical leadership lie in the leader's character, in the leader's decision-making process, mindset, in the set of values and principles on which he or she draws, and in his or her courage to make ethical decisions in tough situations.[44]

Servant Leadership

The character of a church leader matters immensely, but so does the leader's attitude about servanthood. Degroat posited that leaders must guide others from a posture of self-sacrificial love — the deep secret of God's Kingdom — instead of from a posture of competition, control, and manipulation.[45] The gospel empowers people to serve. Thomas and Wood argue that the gospel gives a whole new motivational structure. Leaders will motivate with

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[42] Paul Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2008), 144.

[43] S.M. Bray, "A Strategic and Systematic Approach to Evaluating and Enhancing Church Staff Performance," (DMin. Thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2019), 34.

[44] Community Tool Box, "Section 6. Recognizing the Challenges of Leadership," Accessed May 22, 2021, https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/leadership-ideas/leadership-challenges/main.

[45] DeGroat, *Toughest People to Love*, 8.

the gospel, which sets them free to love and serve unconditionally in response to God's grace in

Christ.[46]

Servant leadership is a biblical concept that Jesus worked diligently to impress on His

disciples.[47] Tripp argues that every person who wants to occupy a seat of leadership must

recognize that a call to leadership in the church is a call to a life of willing sacrifice and service.[48]

The spiritual leader will choose the hidden path of sacrificial service and approval of the Lord

over the flamboyant self-advertising of the world.[49]

Spiritual Health

While character and servanthood are undoubtedly essential to the life of every church

leader, the relationship with the Lord through prayer is also important. Sanders believed that the

spiritual leader should outpace the rest of the church, above all, in prayer.[50] Prayer should be the

highest appeal of the leader—not simply for blessings and requests, but for intimacy and

guidance. The purpose of building intimacy with God is not to get His input on decisions so that

one will be a more successful leader. Success may be a result of reliance on God; but it is not

why spiritually healthy leaders pursue God. Marcus Warner and Jim Wilder posit that leaders

should pursue intimacy with God for the relational connection it brings, the healing it facilitates,

and the peace that comes from a deeper walk with Him.[51] When leaders neglect their interior life,

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[46] Thomas and Wood, *Gospel Coach*, 63.

[47] Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 179.

[48] Tripp, *Lead*, 128.

[49] Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 73.

[50] Ibid, 99.

[51] Marcus Warner and Jim Wilder, *Rare Leadership: 4 Uncommon Habits for Increasing Trust, Joy, and Engagement in the People You Lead* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2016), 136.

they run the risk of prostituting the sacred gift of leadership. And they run the risk of being

destructive instead of productive.[52] The reason leaders need to stop and be with God is so they

might create a continual and easy familiarity with God's presence.[53] Pastor Doug Fagerstrom

emphasizes how prayer is a vital trait of leadership. He says, "Leaders need to begin by ensuring

that each worker has actually had an encounter with the living Lord. Some workers with 40 years

of service in the church have just begun to learn to talk with Christ and listen to Him and know

His presence."[54]

If the leader is closely connected with King Jesus, his life will overflow onto his people.

Bray points out that a relationship with God must take priority over responsibilities for God.[55]

People take notice when someone spends time with Jesus. It is evident in their words and actions.

According to author and seasoned church leader Lance Witt, many pastors have

neglected the fact that a leader's greatest leadership tool is a healthy soul.[56] Witt believes the soul

of a pastor is the most valuable possession he has. There must be tending to the soul if one wants

to remain spiritually healthy.

Emotional health

The emotional health of the leaders is less discussed in the literature. Emotional

intelligence exemplifies the ability to understand one's own feelings as well as the feelings of

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[52] Lance Witt, *Replenish: Leading from a Healthy Soul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 19.

[53] Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 50.

[54] Doug Fagerstrom, "Caring For Church Workers, " accessed Sept.13, 2021, https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2009/november-online-only/caring-for-church-workers.html.

[55] Bray, "A Strategic and Systematic Approach to Evaluating and Enhancing Church Staff Performance," 29.

[56] Witt, *Replenish*, 11.

others.[57] Many of today's church leaders have a spiritual maturity about them, but when it comes to the emotional health, it is not discussed as frequently. Peter Scazzero believes that emotional health and spiritual maturity are inseparable.[58] If the leader of any organization, especially the local church, wants to develop healthy people, he or she must invest into the emotional health of the staff. A particularly common lid on most leaders is their emotional maturity.[59] Neglecting the emotional side of a leader may lead to an unhealthy individual. The emotional side of life must be a priority when developing people.

Witt discovered some staggering statistics when dealing with church leaders' emotional side: "Approximately 1500 pastors leave the ministry permanently each month in America. Eighty percent of pastors and eighty-five percent of spouses feel discouraged in their roles."[60] This is a sad reality that Christian leaders must face and refine. Shepherding emotions is vital to the long-term effectiveness of leaders. Minister Peter Brian writes of the importance and impact of healthy self-care. He says it will "ensure, as far as humanly possible, a wise and orderly work that conserves and lengthens a pastor's ministry."[61] Church leaders must care for their own emotional being as they care for others. This type of leadership development aims to incite a ministry-life balance that enables staff to minister from a refreshed body and soul and do so for a lifetime. Bringing harmony to ministry and emotional care increases effectiveness and thwarts burnout. Today's church leaders are working at an unsustainable pace without taking sufficient

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[57] Elizabeth Holloway and Mitchell Kusy, *Toxic Workplace! Managing Toxic Personalities and Their Systems of Power* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 11.

[58] Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, 12.

[59] Warner and Wilder, *Rare Leadership*, 50.

[60] Witt, *Replenish*, 18.

[61] Peter Brain, *Going the Distance: How to Stay Fit for a Lifetime of Ministry* (Kingsford NSW, Australia: Matthias Press, 2004), 24.

time for personal growth and refreshment. The heaviness of ministry can come crashing down on any leader at any time.

Table 1.1 summarizes literature on the traits of healthy leaders, as well as the disciplines to be used and developed.

Table 1.1. Traits of a Healthy Leader.

Ethical Leadership	Servant Leadership	Spiritual Health	Emotional Health
High Character	Humility	Prayer	Understanding
Morals matter	Sacrifice	Silence	Soul-Care
		Solitude	

Strategies for Creating a Healthy Culture

A healthy organizational culture shows the staff that proper care is given to the needs and development of the people who work there. Bill Easum and Bill Tenny-Brittian believe a paradigm shift can help ineffective staff become more effective. The actions of ineffective staff are determined by a paradigm that tells them, "Our role is to take care of people and to do ministry."[62] The actions of an effective staff are determined by a paradigm that tells them, "Our role is to transform people."[63] The section below discusses several aspects of organizational culture that leadership theorists have explored: creating a community of trust, shepherding the soul and addressing toxic patterns.

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[62] Easum and Tenny-Brittian, *Effective Staffing for Vital*, 169.

[63] Ibid.

Creating a Community of Trust

Creating a culture of love, trust, and grace does not happen overnight. There must be intentionality to form a healthy culture in any work environment. When the organizational culture is sick, no matter how talented the team or great the strategy, a team will never reach its potential.[64] When the culture aligns with and supports the growth and development, it creates a synergist tsunami, sweeping layers of leadership, policies and practices, and fundamental sensibilities up and washing them all over the organization.[65] A healthy culture cultivates genuine people. The leader should allow people to be real—to recognize they are real people, not super saints. Fagerstrom believes the leader's first concern is to help the staff realize they can cry, they can say "no" when there is too much on their plate, and they can take a day off without guilt. Healthy leaders want their team to remain genuine and spiritually healthy.[66]

Remaining steadfast and having a great team around is an essential piece to overcoming the leadership crisis. George Cladis argues that the most effective churches today are the ones that are developing team-based leadership, because Scripture emphasizes Spirit-led, Spirit-gifted, collaborative team fellowship.[67]

Leadership relationships are transformational in nature based on reciprocal trust, respect, and altruism.[68] Trust is built in many ways. Theorists have argued that a leader creates trust

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[64] Vanderbloeman, *Culture Wins*, 8.

[65] Kaye and Giulioni, *Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go*, 151.

[66] Fagerstrom, "Caring for Church Workers," accessed Sept.13, 2021, https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2009/november-online-only/caring-for-church-workers.html.

[67] George Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church: How Pastors and Church Staffs Can Grow Together Into a Powerful Fellowship of Leaders* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999), 22.

[68] D. C. Perkins, "An exploratory study of patterns of relationships within top management teams and church performance" (PhD diss., Regent University, 2004), 12.

through his or her own example. A wise leader does not rely solely on notes and memos to communicate with those he leads. The leader sees and is seen by those doing the work, allowing team members regular personal time and easy access to him or her whenever necessary.[69] In other words, the leader must start with his or her own personal example. When building a culture at the workplace, the leader often sets the tone. It is because of his or her example that people will act and react. If the leader embodies, pushes, and champions a healthy church culture, participates with the employees, and is visible and accessible, the organizational culture will thrive.[70]

A common desire for all people is to be heard. People want to know that what they have to say means something. Conversation has the power to touch employees' hearts and minds more deeply than well-intentioned steps you might take on their behalf.[71] Michael Stanier, author of *The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More, and Change the Way You Lead Forever*, says, "One of the most compelling things you can do after asking a question is to genuinely listen to the answer."[72] A leader who is willing to listen will develop a team who is willing to follow. When the leader is willing to share his or her life, not just the work of ministry, he sets an example for all to follow.[73]

This team-based focus requires building a community. P. Rabinowitz explains that developing and communicating a vision, planning the team's mission to match the vision,

[69] Fagerstrom, "Caring For Church Workers," accessed Sept.13, 2021, https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2009/november-online-only/caring-for-church-workers.html.
[70] Vanderbloeman, *Culture Wins*, 87.
[71] Kaye and Giulioni, *Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go*, 33.
[72] Michael Bungay Stanier, T*he Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More, and Change the Way You Lead Forever* (Toronto, Canada: Box of Crayons Press, 2016), 153.

[73] Fagerstrom, "Caring For Church Workers," accessed Sept.13, 2021, https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2009/november-online-only/caring-for-church-workers.html.

working out how people will function together, and then fine-tuning the vision over time are only some of the elements of team building.[74] A healthy team creates a community of trust. In fact, Bray explained that a community is the best environment for development to occur, and it is essential for ministry longevity.[75] Community rallies people together. In an effective church, every staff person, including office and custodial personnel, has but one goal in mind: the transformation of individuals, the community, and the world.[76] Not only is community an essential strategy for healthy teams, but it is also modeled from God. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit represent the community those in the church are called to imitate.[77]

Several leadership theorists argue that every human has a longing to belong, and leaders must tap into that desire and build a strong group. The first step is defining the team. Rabinowitz says that a team is a group of people with a commitment to one another, to the team, to a high level of achievement, to a common goal, and to a common vision. They understand that team success depends on the work of every member.[78] There is no higher calling than carrying the gospel of Jesus to the world. Happy workers are crystal clear on their ministry's purpose. They can tell you not only why their team exists, but also why that cause is important.[79] In other words, leaders are those who invest in others and equip them to do the job and train others.

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[74] P. Rabinowitz," Recognizing the Challenges of Leadership," accessed September 13, 2022, https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/leadership-ideas/leadership-challenges/main.

[75] Bray, "A Strategic and Systematic Approach to Evaluating and Enhancing Church Staff Performance," 29.

[76] Easum and Tenny-Brittian, *Effective Staffing for Vital Churches*, 36.

[77] Warren S. Benson, "Leading the Team-Based Church: How Pastors and Church Staffs can Grow Together into a Powerful Fellowship of Leaders," *Christian Education Journal* 4, no. 1 (2000): 125.

[78] Rabinowitz, "Recognizing the Challenges of Leadership."

[79] Fagerstrom, "Caring For Church Workers," accessed Sept.13, 2021, https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2009/november-online-only/caring-for-church-workers.html.

Pastor Michael Fletcher is passionate about creating leaders within the church. He says, "doers respond to a need where leaders respond to a vision."[80]

As pastors lead the way for their staff and congregations, one of the strongest and lasting examples he can show is his love of people. The way a leader treats people echoes endlessly to the people watching. Employees care deeply about what their managers feel and think about them. As a result, their ability to hear a tough message depends on the care the staff member has received and how the message is delivered by the leader.[81]

A community of trust can be developed through mentoring. Pastors should walk through seasons of mentoring and investing. A mentoring relationship results when the leader who has advanced experience and knowledge commits to providing support for a protégé with whom the leader has a good relationship.[82]

Shepherding the Soul

Shepherding the soul is intentionally caring for the "heart" of people. All of life flows from the depths of one's heart. When the soul of a church staff is cared for and shepherded well, it can have a lasting impact. What leaders need is someone to shepherd their souls so that they, in turn, can lead others to the chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ.[83]

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[80] Michael Fletcher, *Empowering Leadership* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2018), 111.

[81] Kaye and Giulioni, *Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go*, 77.

[82] Perkins, "An exploratory study of patterns of relationships within top management teams and church performance," 12.

[83] Scott Thomas and Tom Wood, *Gospel Coach: Shepherding Leaders to Glorify God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 27.

The soul of every leader has a high value. Author Lance Witt writes, "Our soul is far and away the most valuable possession we have. Just as you need to tend to your body to be physically healthy, you must tend to your soul if you want to be spiritually healthy."[84]

The Bible defines the role of a pastor as an under-shepherd. It is a calling from God to shepherd, protect and feed God's people the Word of God. The pastors are to be a servant in the Lord's house. Peter addresses pastoral duties in his first letter.:

> I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder and witness to the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory about to be revealed: Shepherd God's flock among you, not overseeing out of compulsion but willingly, as God would have you; not out of greed for money but eagerly; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. In the same way, you who are younger, be subject to the elders (1 Pet. 5:1-4, CSB).

The top leaders in the organization must take a portion of their time to shepherd the shepherds. The pastoral role is a great responsibility, but it is also an incredible privilege. As undeserving as a pastor is, God has entrusted him with the charge to shepherd His flock. Jesus died for all people and having the calling of God to shepherd those same people is an enormous blessing. Shepherding well is excellent stewardship. Larry Osborne write, "With an entrustment comes responsibility. Leaders must faithfully care for those in their sphere of influence, remembering that they are accountable to the Chief Shepherd for how they treat His sheep."[85]

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[84] Witt, *Replenish*, 26.
[85] Larry Osborne, *Lead Like a Shepherd: The Secret to Leading Well* (Nashville, TN; Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2018), 37.

Addressing Toxic Patterns

Yet every church or business still faces challenges with toxic people. Toxic personalities

are part of a complex system that empowers unhealthy behaviors. Leadership scholar Jean

Lipman-Blumen offers a well-studied definition of toxic leadership. She writes,

> …leaders who engage in numerous destructive behavior and who exhibit certain
> dysfunctional personal characteristics. To count as toxic, these behaviors and qualities of
> character must inflict some reasonably serious and enduring harm on their followers and
> their organizations. The intent to harm others or to enhance the self at the expense of
> others distinguishes seriously toxic leaders from the careless or unintentional toxic
> leaders, who also cause negative effects.[86]
> Therefore, a solid grounding in systems dynamics is required to combat the forces of

toxic patterns of behavior.[87] Warner and Wilder argue that unhealthy people can be transformed

through the organizational culture and through Christ. Transformation is created when the weak

and the strong interact with one another in a culture in which they can share a common identity

and a common sense of belonging.[88]

Creating a Vision

Often leadership studies explain that the vision-caster of the organization is the executive

leader. In a church, the Lead Pastor must lead the people by casting a vision. Proverbs 29:18,

King James Version says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." It is vital to the

movement and success of the church that vision is present. Visionary leadership is not reactive. It

refuses to arrogantly offer the right solution or give the right answer. Rather, leading with vision

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[86] Jean Lipman-Blumen, *The Allure of Toxic Leaders: Why We Follow Destructive Bosses and Corrupt Politicians – and How We Can Survive Them* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2005), 18.
[87] Holloway and Kusy, *Toxic Workplace*, 23.

[88] Warner and Wilder, *Rare Leadership*, 70.

requires that one relates to people.[89] Happy workers are crystal clear on their ministry's purpose.

They can tell you not only why their team exists, but also why that cause is important.[90] As the

leader casts vision, his direct reports aid him in carrying out that vision. The ministerial staff is

the upper-level leadership in the local church setting. Development of that leadership team

directly affects the ability of the church to make its vision become reality.[91]

Stanley brings much to the table on the topic of leading with vision. In his work entitled,

Visioneering, Stanley highlights and uses examples of Jesus and the Biblical story of Nehemiah

to bring forth principles for visionary leadership. He explains the importance of a leader having

vision for his people by showing how Jesus did. He writes,

> Jesus shocked his audience when he announced, "You are the salt of the earth… You are
> the light of the world." (Matthew 5:13-14). To which they probably responded, "We are?
> You've got to be kidding." At the moment they were no more "salt" and "light" than
> Peter was a "rock". But Jesus was comfortable speaking to their potential while
> overlooking their performance. He spoke to what they could be, what they should be, and
> for a handful, what they would become. Apparently, he was convinced this was the best
> approach to bringing about change in his audience.[92]

Pastors should strive to develop and maintain a God-sized vision in their personal life as well as

the church they lead.

But leadership does not have to be a lonely business. Pastors train their staff and

congregation to competently share in responsibilities, vision, and commitment.[93] When Christ

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[89] Degroat, *Toughest People to Love*, 21.

[90] Fagerstrom, "Caring For Church Workers," accessed Sept.13, 2021,
https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2009/november-online-only/caring-for-church-workers.html.

[91] Perkins, "An exploratory study of patterns of relationships within top management teams and church
performance," 15.

[92] Andy Stanley, *Visioneering: God's Blueprint for Developing and Maintaining Vision*. (Colorado Springs,
CO; Multnomah, 2016), 118.

[93] Rabinowitz, "Recognizing the Challenges of Leadership,"

calls leaders to Christian ministry He intends to develop them to their full potential. Each

Christian person in leadership is responsible to continue developing in accordance with God's

processing of their life. That is why leadership development should be a central activity for any

leader.[94] The job of a manager and a leader is to help create the space for people to have learning

moments.[95] In those spaces is where true development happens.

Principles for Developing Leadership Plans

Methods for developing a church staff vary in mode and length of time. A common goal

for these plans is getting individuals to grow into the healthy leader God designed them to be.

One example of a leadership plan was formed from a group named Serge.[96] Serge is a collection

of Christ followers who send out and care for missionaries, mentor and equip ministry leaders

around the world, and develop resources for on-going spiritual renewal. Their core values are the

centrality of the gospel, ministry from weakness, kingdom centered prayers, and love for people.

Serge's Church leader development program centers around personal coaching provided

by a certified Sonship mentor with years of pastoral experience in local church ministry. The

program is designed to help church leaders integrate transformative gospel principles into every

area of ministry resulting in healthy, gospel-centered organizations that are missionally engaged.

Another leadership development program can be found at North Baptist Church in

Corning, New York. The church refers to the program as The Eagles Program. The Eagles

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[94] Ibid.

[95] Stanier, *The Coaching Habit*, 56.

[96] "Serge," accessed August 10, 2021, https://serge.org/.

Program is designed to provide leadership training to both current and potential leaders. The plan combines a focus on four important areas:

1) Character development.

2) Spiritual formation.

3) Learning leadership principles and skills.

4) Developing group unity and accountability.

The goals of the LDP are:

1) To have participants develop a clear understanding of and appreciation for sound leadership;

2) To have participants develop their full leadership potential;

3) To have graduates use their leadership abilities in the various ministries at North Baptist Church, in other local Christian ministries, in community organizations, and in their workplaces;

4) To encourage spiritual growth;

5) To enhance a sense of community within the leadership of the church;

6) To prepare future leaders; and,

7) To strengthen the ministry as a whole.

The Eagles Program is a one- or two-year program that begins in the month of January. It includes a variety of different activities. Each activity is designed to promote specific learning and development.

Group Meetings

The monthly group meeting is the core of the Eagles Program. It is here that the group is taught leadership lessons and principles. Discussions concerning various related topics will draw participants to interact with the materials. The group will gain a sense of unity as it meets each month.

Meals And Refreshments

The group will have dinner each time it meets. This will build fellowship.

Accountability

The valuable tool of accountability will be utilized by allowing the individual group to decide on appropriate accountability questions to be asked by the instructor to the group each meeting.

Assignments

Each month there will be at least one homework assignment required to be completed by the participants. The assignments may include reading a portion of a book, listening to an audiotape, preparing a presentation, or providing the session's refreshments or meal.

Projects

The group will have several projects to work on together throughout the year. They will be based on the purposes of the church. Each group will discuss and choose their projects.

Prayer Partners

Each participant will be paired with a partner. The partners are to contact one another once each week between group meetings. The purpose is to ensure that both individuals are keeping up with their reading and accountability areas.

Developing a Growth Plan

- Every spiritual, emotional, and physical growth plan must be intentional and look to develop the whole person.

- The leadership development process must be relevant to staff members with years of experience, as well as to those who are new to ministry.

- The plan should also be reproducible. Every church leader should transfer their learning experience to their team, volunteers, and even their family. Leaders must be willing to be flexible and willing to adjust. Successful leaders and healthy organizations discern what kind of leadership is needed and adjust their structures accordingly.[97]

- Development must have a healing and restoration process. Many people struggle with past hurts and wounds that create barriers to growth. The leadership of the church must address these types of emotional needs. The repercussions of not addressing these pains will cause people to take those wounds into their ministries. God's Word reminds believers, "Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life" (Prov. 4:23, CSB). There are many resources within the Christian community to aid this process. A church staff member who walks through this healing process will be well-equipped to journey

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[97] Osborne, *Lead Like a Shepherd*, 79.

with others. The downfall of skipping this step is the risk of having unhealthy leaders

leading.

- Finally, every staff member to have an awareness of the biblical calling. This awareness

   should push them forward in seeking to please the Lord and being effective in their

   ministry.

- When leaders take this calling to heart, there should be an inner desire to grow and

   remain healthy.

Theological Foundations

As a church looks to implement a leadership development process, leaders must be clear

about biblical concepts of leadership. The section below looks at two themes in the Old

Testament: reliance on God and the empowerment of the laity. Then the focus moves to New

Testament aspects of leadership development, including developing through relationship,

developing heralds, development as modeling, and development as differentiating.

Reliance on God

A remarkable feature of the Old Testament is that it shows not only the successes but also

the flaws in Israel's leaders. Leaders may have noble intentions, and they may possess

knowledge and wisdom; but the hearts of men and women are unfortunately tainted by sin, and

this shows up in their leadership. Therefore, all leader development processes will be flawed

unless redeemed by the Lord.

A quintessential example of a flawed leader was King David, whose sins included

adultery and murder (see 2 Samuel 11). P. Kyle McCarter notes, "Seeing David in historical

perspective means to see Israel's greatest king as a military commander superior to all others of his region, yet strangely flawed in personal and governmental affairs."[98] In light of his egregious sins, he repented, and the people followed him.

Solomon had his flaws as well and did not try to hide them. In his article, "Succession Plans: Is there a Biblical Template", author Ben Pugh writes, "Solomon is profoundly conscious of his unfittedness for the task, necessitating a new and fresh charisma that must come directly from God: Solomon's charisma would give him a 'discerning heart' (1 Kings 3:9; cf. 3:28, CSB), and would result, initially, in a time of great prosperity for Israel."[99]

The flaws of David and Solomon did not detour God's plan. Although neither was ever formally taught the art of leadership development, they relied heavily upon the Spirit of the Lord. Their reliance upon God serves as an example to all those who step into key leadership roles. Developing a process for leaders to walk through can be healthy and beneficial but leaning upon the Lord must be the primary ingredient.

<center>Empowering the Laity</center>

Various examples of leadership development mentioned in the Scriptures are useful for designing a LDP. Leadership development began as early as the Garden of Eden, when God gave Adam the commandment to moderate and have dominion over all the earth (Gen 1:28, CSB).[100] Additional instances include Elijah and Elisha, David and Solomon, and Paul and Timothy. The

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[98] P. Kyle McCarter, "The Historical David," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 40, no. 2 (1986): 117.

[99] Ben Pugh, "Succession Plans: Is there a Biblical Template?," *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 36, no. 2 (2016): 127.

[100] David Jobling, "And Have Dominion: The Interpretation of Genesis 1:28 in Philo Judaeus," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 8, no. 1 (1977): 50.

story of Moses will be used to establish the biblical underpinnings for a process of leadership

development. The role of the church, the example of Jesus, and the ultimate purpose of

leadership will be discussed as well.

The example of Moses in Exodus 18 highlights the empowerment of others to provide

leadership. Moses seemed to be struggling to keep up with the demands of leading the Israelites.

He sent his family away to his father-in-law so he could focus on his "work." Jethro, Moses's

father-in-law, brought the family back to where Moses was. As Jethro watched Moses work and

interact with the people, he knew that something needed to happen. Moses was on the verge of

burning out due to the high demands of his ministry. Jethro challenged Moses,

> When Moses's father-in-law saw everything he was doing for them, he asked, "What is this you're doing for the people? Why are you alone sitting as judge while all the people stand around you from morning until evening?"…Moses wanted to do his best to help God's chosen people; however, the burden was too much for one man to bear. The wisdom of Jethro shined through as he said to Moses, "What you're doing is not good," Moses's father-in-law said to him. "You will certainly wear out both yourself and these people who are with you because the task is too heavy for you. You can't do it alone" (Exod. 18:14, 17-18, CSB).

Jethro counseled Moses to select faithful men of God and disciple them to handle the

people's cases. Professor Viktor Ber, who has authored numerous articles in the realms of

philosophy and religion, wrote about the history and context of Exodus 18. He submits, "Jethro

then rightly becomes the central figure of Exod. 18. He takes care of Moses' wife and sons, and

he enthusiastically accepts the report of the Lord's action on behalf of Israel. Jethro acts as a

priest even before Moses and Aaron, and he gives his best advice in administrative matters."[101]

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[101] Viktor Ber, "Moses and Jethro: Harmony and Conflict in the Interpretation of Exodus 18," *Communio Viatorum* 50, no. 2 (2008): 149.

This delegation of leadership not only benefited Moses; it was beneficial for the people of Israel. The waiting line was reduced dramatically, and the people did not have to deal with an exhausted leader. Moses was able to focus on the more complex cases, and his workload was adequately reduced. The association of this plan with the church today is essential to maintain proper emotional health and a well-balanced lifestyle. Leaders can help their staff bring balance to the areas of life that are clearly out of bounds.

The role of leadership in the life of God's people is also found in the life of Hezekiah. God used Hezekiah to rebuild a culture of honor toward his people. Throughout his tenure, described in 2 Chronicles 31, Hezekiah directed a comprehensive reform and revitalization of the worship parameters and practices in the temple. An emphasis was placed on reinstituting giving towards the needs of the priests. Hezekiah believed that those staffed in the temple needed to be reminded of the ways of the law. Previously, King Ahaz had been a negative influence during his reign. Richard Pratt notes, "For this reason, [he] hoped that the people of Jerusalem would relieve the temple personnel from all responsibilities except temple service and the Law."[102] This same concept of leadership-distribution is found in the book of Nehemiah. Those returning from exile to Jerusalem give their word to provide offerings to the Levitical priests. The people worked hard to re-establish the correct process for leaders and worship prescribed by the law. They had to restore "the maintenance of temple service itself. The most important part of this [was] the temple personnel. For them, food must be provided."[103]

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[102] Richard L. Pratt Jr., *1 & 2 Chronicles, Mentor Commentary* (Fearn, Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2006), 619–620.

[103] Charles F. Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 240–41.

These Old Testament concepts of leadership have a consistent pattern. Empowerment and delegation run throughout. When leaders invest in the people around them strong relationships and trust is formed. Moses and Joshua have one of the rarest relationships in scripture. Moses leads the people of Israel out of Egypt and through the desert for forty years. It is Joshua, who after observing, following, and absorbing life from Moses, leads the nation into the Promised Land. Joshua's years of preparation at the side of his mentor, Moses, equipped him for the task that was before him.

<div style="text-align:center">Leadership Development in the New Testament</div>

Jesus spent his time on earth in a strategic and intentional way. He was always proclaiming the Kingdom of God to the masses, but he gathered a few (the disciples) to Himself. He trained and equipped them to continue in ministry once He was gone.[104] The book of Matthew gives many examples of Jesus' strategy for leadership. Jesus taught his disciples the standards of the Kingdom through what is called the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7, CSB). He showed them the way to serve people through helpful and healing deeds. He sent his followers out to minister to people after giving them instructions on what to do (Matt. 10). It seems as if one of Jesus' primary goals was to make certain the disciples would continue to lead and grow the church once Jesus was resurrected from the grave and ascended into heaven.

Developing through Relationship

Jesus often emphasized to His disciples that a relationship with Himself was crucial. He gave them space to make decisions and give correction along the way. Anytime the disciples

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[104] William Maxfield Garrott, "How Jesus Trained Leaders," *Review & Expositor* 38 no. 4 (1979): 401.

failed Him, He would restore them. The apostle Peter was a prime example. Before the trial and murder of Jesus, Peter bragged arrogantly about his allegiance, that he would never reject Jesus (Matt. 26:5, CSB). He ended up denying Jesus multiple times, but Jesus did not reject him. Jesus made sure Peter was restored and loved (John 21, CSB).

This type of relationally focused leadership was for the purpose of growing His people and church.[105] Jesus laid a beautiful foundation for every leader to strive after. His development of his disciples was used to carry on his legacy and mission. Church leaders of today can continue this type of leadership through following Jesus' ways.

Developing Heralds

The New Testament also delegates leadership to the people of God. The word "church" comes from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which translates to a public assemblage summoned by a herald.[106] Jesus introduced the word *ekklesia* in the book of Matthew when Jesus spoke to Peter, saying, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18, New International Version). When Jesus gave this statement, his vision was to see God's people herald the good news of Jesus throughout the world. The church would become so strong that not even the gates of hell could overcome it. The church is the body of Christ that works in unity to spread the Gospel message. Having a clear understanding of the church is essential for creating a leadership development plan.

The Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20, CSB) makes it clear that the duty of the church is to train and equip others to help carry out the ultimate vision. Some churches can get this

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[105] Shane Roberson, "Relational Leadership: The Leadership Style of Jesus for the Emerging Church," (PhD diss, George Fox University, 2005), 12.

[106] Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 246.

principle out of order. Many churchgoers leave the pastor and staff to be the ones who execute this God-given mandate. In some cases, the church is holding the paid pastor responsible for the discipleship making process when, in all actuality, it is his job to train the saints for the work of the ministry.[107] The church staff must be willing, and in a healthy state, to lead this charge. Paul gave this same warning to the church at Colossae, "We proclaim him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ" (Col. 1:28, CSB).

Within the Bible, Jesus modeled intentional leadership development. Jesus would come to chosen men and invite them to follow him. This approach to mentorship follows a historical method of many rabbis. A rabbi would find a young man who had the potential to one day become a rabbi and tell him to "follow me." In the Greek language, this phrase meant to join or to accompany. Jesus was considered by many as a rabbi, so when he told his future disciples to follow him, they knew what he was meaning. David Csinos, says, "Some of Jesus' followers, including Peter and Judas, referred to Jesus as a rabbi, a religious teacher of Judaism. They saw him as one who offered advice and instruction on how to appropriately live in his community of practice."[108] As Jesus served those around him, his disciples were often present, observing how this master-teacher imparted knowledge and brought about transformative development in others.

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[107] Francis Chan and Mark Beuving, *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2012), 34.

[108] David M. Csinos, "'Come, Follow Me': Apprenticeship in Jesus' Approach to Education," *Religious Education* 105, no. 1 (2010): 45.

Developing through Modeling

One educational method Jesus used was modeling: He lived a life of piety and

compassion. K. Nehrbass and J. Rhodes wrote,

> Jesus described images the disciples could relate to from their lived experience, such as harvests and sheep and even the cross; and He drew on their own religious heritage experiences and knowledge when He gave instructions about austerity and self-sacrifice. He effectively used their previous experiences and knowledge. Further, the tasks He gave them for the internship (healing and exorcisms) fit within their expectations of the impending kingdom of God.[109]

Once Jesus left the earth, the disciples continued to do precisely what Jesus taught them.

His plan for their growth and development rested upon experience and his intentional instruction.

These same principles can be applied to the leadership development process within church

leadership today. Leadership enthusiast John Maxwell tags this plan as the "law of the picture."

This law is based upon the premise that people do what they see.[110]

Developing by Differentiating

Christian leadership development also involves helping people recognize their unique

gifts. Scripture explains that God has implanted special gifts into every human that will

contribute to his kingdom. Every person, male and female, has a divine purpose. Helping people

identify their gifts and use them for God's glory is precisely what leadership is. In Romans 12:6-

8, the apostle Paul writes,

> According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the proportion of one's faith; if service, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching; if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness (CSB).

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[109] K. Nehrbass. and J. Rhoades, "Jesus' use of experiential learning in the sending of the seventy: Implications for ministry practicums," *Christian Education Journal* 18 no. 1 (2021):

[110] John Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishing, 2007), 155.

Every believer's purpose in life has been affirmed through the impartation of their spiritual gifts. They were given this gift to benefit the body of Christ. Furthermore, Paul suggests that those in the church embrace their giftedness and engage their gifts correctly. Brian Devries discusses the proper use of spiritual gifts in his article, "Spiritual Gifts for Biblical Church Growth." He states, "The Holy Spirit empowers believers with spiritual giftedness in order to build up the body of Christ. This goal, in short, is the purpose for which the triune God has given and is distributing spiritual gifts. Church staff leaders can gain insight to help his or her team discover their God-given spiritual gifts."[111] Once those gifts have been found, the leader can provide opportunities and experiences to develop the gifts. The feedback and critique during the developmental phase can be monumental to growth. Once a staff member's gifts have been discovered and developed, they can be deployed to do the same with others.

The Ultimate Purpose of Leadership

Last, with so much focus on leadership, leaders must be careful to not turn leadership into an idol.[112] The goal is not simply to be a competent leader. The goal is to be a healthy leader for the sake of the gospel. The gospel is not merely the way we enter the kingdom; it is also the way we make all progress in kingdom living.[113] Scott Thomas and Tom Wood explain, "The gospel empowers us to serve. The gospel gives us a whole new motivational structure. We will motivate

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[111] Brian Devries, "Spiritual Gifts for Biblical Church Growth," in *die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 50, no. 1 (July 29, 2016), https://indieskriflig.org.za/index.php/skriflig/article/view/2090/3855.

[112] Witt, *Replenish*, 12.

[113] Thomas and Wood, *Gospel Coach*, 63.

with the gospel, which sets us free to love and serve unconditionally in response to God's grace in Christ."[114]

A love for the gospel starts on the inside. Godly leadership is always inside out. God always has, and always will, choose to smile on men and women who are healthy, holy, and humble.[115]

Conclusion

This literature review considers different philosophies and practices for developing leaders and expresses the need for such a leadership development process in the local church. The process should be informed by scripture and by the best practices in leadership. Every context has differing needs therefore these principles need to be adapted to fit within each local body. Veteran church growth expert Eddie Gibbs writes,

> In order to identify and facilitate the next generation of leadership, we must provide training that (1) is accessible (location and time), (2) is appropriate in terms of the topics addressed and the manner in which courses are taught, (3) demonstrates connectedness between theory and the practice of ministry, and (4) is affordable for younger leaders. The selection process needs to be more proactive, identifying the people on the grounds that are showing the most potential in ministry.[116]

Leadership gurus have different views and principles for how to accomplish and develop church leaders; and the approaches, when taken together, show that churches should develop their staff and laity holistically. The church must not neglect the importance of an empowering culture, leadership development, and a strategic process.

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[114] Ibid., 67.

[115] Witt, *Replenish*, 20.

[116] Eddie Gibbs, *Leadership Next: Changing Leaders in a Changing Culture* (Philippines: Acts 29 Publishing, 2011), 192.

Though plans of shepherding and discipleship are important, creating cultures of shepherding and discipleship is essential. The primary job of the pastor can be debated, but many agree that pastors should always model shepherding to the staff and congregation. The lead pastor should take the lead in discipling others in one-on-one settings. Jonathan Leeman once asked Dever, "True or False: If the lead pastor is not deliberately investing himself in one-on-one relationships, the rest of the church will less likely do it?" Dever responded by saying, "Yes. That's been my experience."[117]

It seems that pastors spend too much of their time attending to other matters and do not enable and model shepherding relationships. Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation suggest, "We have learned to do many things as church leaders and members. We build buildings. We design programs. We staff our churches. We put on events. We rally people around new initiatives…But are we making disciples? Have we become proficient in many things while simultaneously becoming deficient in the one thing that matters most?"[118]

Evangelist and Church-planter Dr. Don Fanning has over thirty years of ministry experience in various contexts. He contends that the methods created by the Western world to train ministry leaders has become too complex and lacks the environment for practical experience and direct observation. Fanning believes that leadership development must take place within the local church. The church provides the ability to experience real-world situations for

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[117] Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, "Episode 36: On Discipling," 9 Marks, January 23, 2018, accessed Sep 13, 2022, https://www.9marks.org/conversations/ep36/.

[118] Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley and Philip Nation, *Transformational Discipleship: How People Really Grow* (Nashville, TN: B & H Pub., 2012), 11.

leaders. Fanning firmly believes direct observation and experience will provide the best teaching and development.[119]

It is pivotal for pastors and church staff members to exhibit the competency of being able to shepherd and disciple someone. Many do not because they have never been taught. They may ask, "How do I go about shepherding someone?" Mark Dever argues that it requires the initiation of a relationship. It does not passively happen. Within the relationship, one is to teach, correct, model, love, and show humility to the other while guiding him or her towards heaven.[120]

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[119] Don Fanning, "Church Based Training for Leaders," *Themes of Theology that Impacts Missions* 5, accessed September 4, 2022, http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgm_theo/5.

[120] Mark Dever, *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 35-44.

Chapter 3

Methodology

In the previous chapter, theoretical and biblical literature related to leadership development were discussed. This chapter will explain the methodology and strategic steps taken to organize this research project from literature review to discovery. This project utilizes a qualitative research approach, which is the recommended methodology for a Doctor of Ministry major project.

The purpose of this DMIN research project is to understand church leaders' perceptions of a useful leadership development program. Experienced pastors and church staff were interviewed to help develop this understanding. The interviews were transcribed and coded thought-by-thought, and then categorized into themes (chapter 4). Literature was discussed in respect to each major theme that emerged (chapter 5). The final analysis of literature and participants' perspectives helped point to implications for the development of a useful Leadership Development Plan (also in chapter 5).

Implementation of the Intervention Design

The first phase was to discover relevant information in literature regarding leading and developing others. Several themes emerged from the literature: the current leadership crisis, traits of healthy leaders, pathways for creating a healthy culture, essential ingredients of a healthy staff, and the principles for developing an LDP (chapter 2). The second phase in the project was to investigate biblical themes related to leadership. Biblical themes included reliance on God, relationship, heralding, modeling, and differentiating (also in chapter 2). These theoretical and biblical themes certainly impact the ultimate design of an LDP.

The next phase was to carry out empirical research to answer the research question. Qualitative research was the best match for this project. The use of the qualitative research approach allows for more than seeing the basic concepts that are already present in the literature. Qualitative research scholar John Creswell explains qualitative research as "exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem."[121] This research explored the wants, needs, and desires of current church staff members for the purpose of gaining knowledge of developing a church leadership process.

Creswell also noted the benefit of using qualitative research: "Qualitative research is exploratory and is useful when the researcher does not know the important variables to examine."[122] The qualitative approach allowed this author to explore the actual thoughts, feelings, and emotions that church staff members carry every day. This research does not rely on quantifying or measuring a phenomenon; rather it tries to unpack practical wisdom and themes that come from real people. Using this approach involves a smaller sampling size but allows the researcher to dig deeper into the significance of themes that arise regarding the research question. Creswell speaks to this importance when he states, "The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites that will best help the researcher understand the problem and research question."[123] This type of laser focus makes way for simple yet practical outcomes. By interviewing church staff members and exploring current church training programs this author will compile and analyze materials germane to the topic. The product is a resource and rationale for creating and implementing a leadership development program.

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[121] John W. Creswell, *Research Design,* 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003), 4.

[122] Ibid., 22.

[123] Ibid., 185.

See Appendix 4 for IRB approval.

Population and Recruiting Participants

Purposive convenience sampling was used to recruit the participants. The author was seeking a "typical case"[124], namely, evangelical churches with several people on staff. Participants were recruited through the network of friends, leaders, and those recommended to the author. The author created an interview process that gave the participants the opportunity to give their opinion. See Appendix 1 for interview questions. The author allowed each participant to elaborate on their feelings toward each portion of the interview without bias or assumption. Where applicable, the author gained facts of the context of the participant to better understand their answers. The participants' answers were recorded and coded.

The sample size of fifteen participants allows for multiple opinions and common themes to be brought forth. Twelve churches (all in the southern United States) were represented.

Table 3.1. Participants in the Study with Attached Pseudonyms.

Pseudonym	Church	Role
Michael	Scranton Baptist Church	Worship Pastor
Creed	Scranton Baptist Church	Student pastor
Bob	Utica Baptist Church	Kids Pastor
Oscar	Utica Baptist Church	Family Pastor
Stanley	Nashua Baptist Church	Student Pastor
Packer	New York Bible Church	Lead Pastor
Darrell	Electric City Church	Executive Pastor
Toby	Rocky Top Church	Executive Pastor
Jim	Third Baptist Church	Student Pastor
Troy	Red Rocks Baptist Church	Student Pastor
Kobe	King Street Baptist	Next Gen Pastor
Dwight	The Community Church	Lead Pastor
Larry	Wexford Church	Communications Pastor

[124] Ted Palys, "Purposive Sampling." *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. 2008. SAGE Publications.

| Kevin | Palmetto Church | Student Intern |
| Pam | Shruteville Baptist Church | Hospitality Coordinator |

In addition to lead and executive pastors, the research involved church staff members on every level. Gaining insights from those who have been in ministry for many years as well as those who are new to the ministry proved to be profitable for understanding an effective LDP. Additionally, any plan to develop staff at a local church must start with the buy-in from the lead and executive pastors. They are tasked with authority to shepherd and train. To get buy-in, everyone involved in the process must feel as if they are a contributing factor. Ernest Stringer explained the leaders and other stakeholders must have a major role in action research:

> Researchers, therefore, need to ensure that all stakeholders—people whose lives are affected—participate in defining and exploring the problem or service under investigation. Although all people can't be thus engaged, it is imperative that all stakeholder groups feel that someone is speaking for their interests and is in a position to inform them of what is going on.[125]

Each church staffer received an email explaining the research project and asking for a phone interview date and time. The interview was scheduled to last approximately forty-five minutes. A semi-structured discussion was the chosen method. There was a desire to explore each participants' interactions and experiences when it came to leadership, but a foundation had been laid by sending participants a list of sample questions to help them prepare for the interview. The interviews were designed to have a natural feel to help the participants be at ease and speak from the heart.

The open-ended nature of the interviews gave the researcher a flexibility to steer the conversation. Carol Bailey writes to the importance of researchers having flexibility in their work. She noted, "Researchers who enjoy some level of flexibility regarding how an interview is

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[125] Ernest Stringer, *Action Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2021), 77.

administered but who wish to maintain some structure over its parameters might prefer a semi-

structured interview."[126] This approach gives freedom to discovering themes that were specific to

each person. The recruitment email and interview guide can be found in Appendix 1 and 2.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted after the conclusion of the gathering phase. This phase

applied the method of interpretational analysis. Creswell labels the method of interpretation as

abstracting out the codes and themes to the larger meaning of the data. "It is a process that begins

with the development of the codes, the formation of themes from the codes, and then the

organization of themes into larger units of abstraction to make sense of the data."[127]

The following data analysis procedure was used in this study:

1. Code the transcripts thought-by-thought in Dedoose Software.

2. Categorize the initial codes into themes.

3. Organize the findings chapter around the major themes, and provide thick, rich
   description from participants, related to each theme.

4. Discuss each of them in the discussion theme, considering literature.

5. Provide recommendations for church leaders who will implement a Leadership
   Development Program.

   Initial and Thematic coding are discussed further below.

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[126] Carol Bailey, *A Guide to Qualitative Field Research*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2007), 200.

[127] Creswell, *Research Design*, 187.

Initial Coding

The fifteen transcripts were coded thought-by-thought, resulting in 297 unique excerpts.

These excerpts were then categorized into seventy parent codes.

Thematic Coding

The initial codes were then categorized into seven themes, which are the main headings

of the findings chapter. This inductive step helped make sense of the interview data, so that the

research question could be answered. In *Applying Education Research*, M. D. Gall, Joyce Gall,

and Walter Borg explain interpretational analysis as "the process of closely grouping elements in

a case study data to fully describe, evaluate, or explain the phenomenon being studied. The goal

of interpretational analysis is to identify constructs, themes, and patterns that best make meaning

of the data from a case study."[128]

Trustworthiness

John Creswell and Vicki Clark explain the importance of trustworthiness in a research

process. They say, "validity strategies are procedures used by qualitative researchers to

demonstrate the accuracy of their data collection and findings."[129] This action research project

engaged a variety of methods for demonstrating trustworthiness. Creswell offers eight strategies

to show validity in research:[130]

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[128] M. D. Gall, Joyce P. Gall, and Walter R. Borg, *Applying Educational Research*, 6th ed. (Boston, MA: Pearson Education, 2010), 350.

[129] John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2011), 416.

[130] John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five* Approaches, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2013), 250-253.

1. Prolonged engagement and persistent observation;

2. Triangulation of data;

3. Peer review and debriefing;

4. Negative case analysis;

5. Clarification of researcher bias;

6. Member checking;

7. Thick description; and,

8. External audits.

This project utilized member checking, prolonged engagement, clarification of researcher bias, and thick, rich description. These methods are described below.

Member Checking

The interview guide was created with a deliberate quest to allow authentic answers and feedback. The researcher also engaged in member-checking to support the accuracy of the project. For member-checking, a table of the results was sent to three participants via e-mail. The three participants were asked to review the findings and offer feedback for possible corrections (see Appendix 3). Each participant offered constructive feedback. Each of the three agreed that the goals in mind were right on track with developing a healthy work environment and culture. When discussing any changes that needed to be made, Lead Pastor Packer said, "The idea of an outsider running the LDP could possibly work, but I see potential pitfalls there if that person is not totally aligned with the vision of the church. That person would also need the total trust of the pastor, which could be difficult if he's an outsider." Pastor Darrell mentioned the importance of a good structure: "In my opinion the structure would be the most vital to get correct. The

reason for this thought is because if you can get that correct it will make everything else a little

smoother to fall into place."

Prolonged Engagement

The author of this project had an active role in collecting all data for this study.

According to R. K. Yin, the author of *Case Study Research Design and Methods*, "the role of the

researcher in qualitative studies is paramount, because the researcher possesses the ability to

listen carefully to responses, can adjust questions to produce rich data, and has the ability to

understand the specific data connected to the study."[131]

This researcher has over nineteen years of local church and leadership experience. His

roles include volunteering, coaching, teaching, Student Pastor, Associate Pastor, and Lead

Pastor. He has been a part of three denominations: Independent Baptist, Southern Baptist, and

Non-Denominational. Therefore, he has a deep understanding of the terminology, staff

environment, culture, and day-to-day workings of the local church and its leadership. His

experience in the local church makes a unique contribution to helping create an effective LDP.

Clarification of Researcher Bias

The research for this type of program was born out of a desire to see local church pastors

be shepherded and cared for as they shepherd and care for others. This researcher endeavored to

be impartial and unbiased when conducting each interview.

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[131] R. K. Yin, *Case Study Research Design and Methods*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2014), 15.

This researcher set the principles for the process of selection of participants. He collected all data through a one-on-one interview process. He was the sole agent for coding and analyzing the received data. Through phone call interviews he gathered data from different men and women who have held or currently hold a staff position within a local church. The information gathered regarded their perceptions of an effective leadership development plan. He had a previous knowledge of all the people interviewed minus one individual. Each participant voluntarily gave their contribution to help gain a better understanding of an effective LDP. To equipoise any potential bias, this study allowed themes to emerge from participant data, rather than from the researcher's preconceived notions.

<div align="center">Thick Description</div>

Thick description is used to demonstrate trustworthiness of the findings. Understanding the usage of thick description allows readers to gain insight and knowledge to the results of the research.

> Clifford Geertz, who coined the term thick description, meant two things by it. The first practical meaning of asking an observer to write a "thick description" is to ask him not only to account for what he sees but also to try and find the context which will account for what he sees. The second theoretical meaning of Geertz's thick description is that social behavior should be understood "deeply," that it to understand that any behavior is rooted in elaborate social and cultural constraints that the researcher must bring into account if he wants to accurately portray a society.[132]

The findings chapter provides verbatim interview data, as well as the context and background of the participants.

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[132] "Thick Description," Culture Reader, accessed September 13, 2022, https://culturalstudiesnow.blogspot.com/2017/10/thick-description-definition.html.

Summary

In this chapter, the author reported the research methodology and the system for completing the research project. The qualitative methods described in this chapter are suitable for answering the research question. The remaining two chapters of this project provide the findings and discussion of the findings, as well as the conclusions derived from this descriptive qualitative study.

Chapter 4

Results

Chapter 1 explained that the purpose of this study: to understand church leaders'

perceptions of a useful LDP. In Chapter 2, literature on church leadership was discussed, but the

review demonstrated a gap in the literature on church people's perceptions of what would

comprise a useful LDP. In Chapter 3, the research methods for this project were addressed. In

this chapter, the findings of the research will be discussed.

The central finding from this study was that participants see a useful LDP as one that

helps people come to know Jesus Christ, and that helps the church flourish. The consistent theme

that church leaders view as vital to a successful LDP is relationships. The methods, programs,

and processes they described had some variation, but the common theme is built around trust-

filled relationships with the people on the team. One hundred percent of the participants agreed

that having an LDP would be beneficial to the staff and the church.

Setting the Goals

Identifying a goal for any program or process is a must before getting started. This aligns

people within the process to have the same ending in mind. A major observation taken from the

goals portion of the interviews was that 100% of the interviewees agreed that setting goals was

not only essential but the primary way to identify if the LDP is being effective. One participant

explained, "The health of the church is dependent on the health of the staff and the quality of

leadership. Setting goals for the staff to reach for will enhance their growth as well as the entire

church body." Bob, who is the Children's Pastor at First Baptist Hendersonville in

Hendersonville, Tennessee discussed the importance of goal setting. He stated, "Setting goals is

a way to get to know what your leader is looking for. Goal setting is a must because it defines to everyone what you are striving for."

Another observation when discussing goal setting was the urgency and passion each interviewee displayed. Participants defined their reasoning for goals as a major factor. Some said, "Goals bring unity. Goals help build love and trust," while others stated that "goals are huge for healthy church relationships." The different goals mentioned showed diversity in the thought of what a healthy and effective staff may look like, but the setting of the goals at the start of an LDP was not debated. Each participant thought all effective leadership development programs must identify proper goals and be intentional in reaching them.

Participants recognized that there may be several goals for an LDP; but the goals can be categorized by the fifteen categories below. The top four goals were as follows:

1. Create more leaders (mentioned by 5 participants).

2. Create a strong family or team (mentioned by 4 participants).

3. Personal growth (mentioned by 3 participants).

4. Alignment of mission and vision (mentioned by 3 participants).

Figure 1 shows all areas mentioned and the number of times.

Goals of a Leadership Development Program

Figure 1. Participants' Expressed Goals of an LDP.

It should be noted that of the fifteen categories of goals mentioned, each goal falls into one of three themes: relationships, personal achievements, and personal success.

Goals Related to Relationships

The goals of fun, family, more leaders, passion, consistency, trust, unity, church health, and safety/healing were the goals that relate to relationships. The types of relationships the

participants were referring to varied but fell into one of three categories: peer to peer, peer to supervisor, or a personal relationship with Jesus.

Student Pastor Creed, from Tennessee, lost his mother at a very young age. His support came from pastors in his life at the time. His experience taught him to value relationships. As a leader of staff, he places a high value on being relational and building trust within the team. He submits, "I think there needs to be enough of a relationship to where your people, your team, feel like they really know the leadership. They have a good relationship to where if their marriage is falling apart, they can walk into that office and trust you."

Pastor Bob uses his role as Children's Pastor to cultivate relationships with families in the community. He stresses the importance of communal connection but understands that connection with the church leadership will flow into the community. He says, "I'd say connection with the leader is probably what's going to accomplish the most success."

Stanley serves at a mega-church in Louisiana. He has sat in a variety of roles in his twenty-plus years of service. He has served under the same senior pastor for the entirety of his employment. His pastor has often placed a focus on relationships. Stanley states, "I think the door should always be open to help your staff. If you are a leader and your door is not always open, I don't think you should be in the church business."

Goals Related to Mission or Vision

Mission/vision, longevity, and quality of work are the goals that relate to personal achievement. Pastor Kevin comes from a Southern Baptist upbringing. He believes that the mission and vision of the church should be a driving force in the staff growth and development.

He stated, "Growth and confidence within the church staff can increase when there is a better understanding of the mission and vision."

Pastor Packer believes longevity on a church staff supports an effective and healthy staff culture. He said, "Staff members who stick around are likely achieving personal growth, which leads to the health and effectiveness of the whole organization."

Goals Related to Personal Success

Personal growth and personal holiness are the goals mentioned that are associated with personal success. Pastor Creed believes, "When a person not only grows in talent, but also in holiness, the health of the team grows exponentially." Talent is important but focusing on growth in the area of holiness brings great qualities into the team dynamic.

Pam grew up in church and has worked in multiple churches. She believes personal growth should be a major goal for any LDP. She states, "I want to see them be the best person they can be because they are falling more in love with Jesus." Focusing on personal spiritual growth can lead to the entire team becoming more effective.

Delineating the Team to be Trained

All participants were asked, "who should be involved in an LDP?" The answers varied, but there were some commonalities. Seven out of the fifteen participants agreed that everyone currently serving on the church staff should be involved at some level of leadership development. One said, "every person in church and ministerial role at your church should be involved to some degree." Another participant, Larry, said, "Everybody should be part of growing because the Great Commission is so important." One pastor of a church plant in

northwest Arkansas said, "I very strongly believe that every person on staff should be involved in it at some level." Another pastor said, "All people need growth; therefore, all should be involved at some level."

However, the seven who agreed that everyone on staff should be involved also felt as if the actual programs should differ for the various levels of staff. There should not be a one-size-fits-all program. The church can structure this in a tiered manor. Pastor Oscar from Nashville, Tennessee is a recently installed Senior Pastor. His previous church, where he served as the Family Pastor, was a traditional Southern Baptist Church. The church had over forty-five staff members. Due to the size of the team, Pastor Oscar is a proponent of different plans for different people. He said,

> I don't think the same plan would be for everybody. There should be a specific leadership development strategy for your ministerial leaders. There should be support and an LDP for your admins or support teams, ensuring that they have some form of buy-in to understand they're part of the team and the vision in the culture as well. I think incorporating leadership development with them, would be really helpful.

A smaller group of five participants maintained that the pastoral staff of the church should be the primary focus of a leadership development program. Jim, who serves as a Student Pastor, says, "I really see an LDP being a key for your full-time pastoral staff." Jim views the LDP as a trickle-down type of program: once the pastors are "poured into," they can transfer that same investment into their employees and teams.

Pastor Troy, from a small church in Northern Florida, believes development is necessary for anyone leading a ministry effort. He states, "I would say the goal of it is to ignite passion and to provide consistency for the pastors. Typically, those in leadership over a ministry don't have anybody managing them, or anybody helping them through, and they are really the ones that

need it most." These participants agreed that if someone or a team of people is investing in the pastors, the church has the best chance to remain effective and healthy.

The differing views brought about constructive conversation, but one observation was the lack of emphasis behind who should be involved. Each church leader answered the question but seemed to focus more on what happens within the plan versus who is involved. Having participants is obviously necessary, but in the opinions of these church leaders show that an effective LDP has a primary focus on the "meat" of the program versus delineating who is involved.

There were two LDP membership configurations that received just one mention each: one participant believed the LDP should include the staff members' spouses and the other believed the LDP should be strictly for full-time staff members only. The research participant who mentioned inclusion of a spouse was a female who is deeply passionate about making sure the family was cared for as well as the staff member. Pam said, "There's not a lot of support and love for the pastor's spouse. I really believe that a lot of the spiritual battles we face are at home, and a lot of them are on the shoulders of the husband/wife and the kids."

The participant who believed and LDP should be geared toward "full-time staff only" had an interesting take. He currently serves in a mega-church in the southern United States, where leadership development is emphasized. He believes the full-time pastoral staff should get invested in and then take that into their teams. The initial LDP would have a focus on the full-timers with the intent of each person replicating it to their own team in whichever manner they believed fit best. He says, "I really see it being a key for your full-time pastoral staff." Although this was his current model, he also expressed the primary focus should be more on the plan and process than on who was involved.

Figure 2 displays the breakdown of responses regarding who should be involved in an LDP:

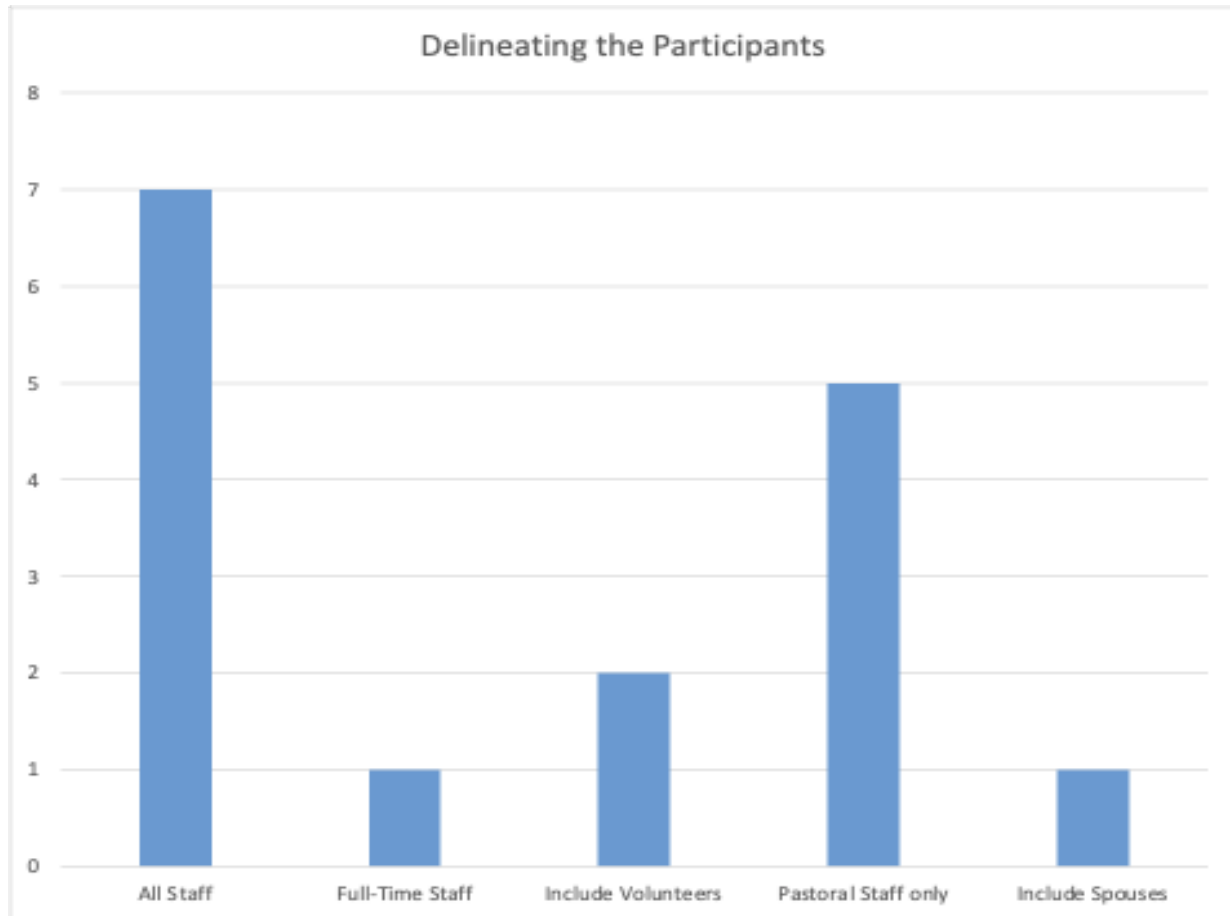Figure 2. How to Delineate Participants of an LDP.

Outlining the Actions

The subject of what actions should be involved in a useful LDP provided the most diverse answers and data from the participants. Everyone interviewed added something new to the conversation about what should take place. There were also several commonalities amongst the participants, which are categorized into several key components below.

How Leadership Development Should Be Structured

Participants had different visions about whether leadership development happens in a time-bounded, highly organized structure, or instead through informal mentoring relationships over an unspecified period.

One-On-One

Pastor Larry, from the Knoxville, Tennessee area is a proponent of one-on-one meetings. He states, "I meet with everybody I'm developing every two weeks for what we call 'coaching coffee.' Coaching coffee is a 30-minute time of developing my team."

Large Group

Associate Pastor Packer says this about large group gatherings: "I'd say a regular large-group meeting of teaching and equipping would be the best route."

Student pastor Jim discussed an ideal plan for large group leader development meetings. He stated, "On the first Monday of the month, we're doing an all-staff meeting where we are discussing specific topics. The second Monday of the month, we're going to get in our staff one on one conversations and are going to really dig deep into some struggles or helps that may be needed. The third Monday of the month, we're going to bring someone in from the outside. It could be a business leader that comes in to talk about leadership or something of that nature. On the fourth Monday of the month, we're going do something fun and just get to know each other and spend time together and build the team."

Organic Meetings

Other participants were proponents of an organic model, rather than formal meetings like Larry and Packer described. The premise for organic leadership is that people will develop better through real-life experiences. When teams have a cookout or hangout together at the bowling alley relationships are formed and trust is built. This type of intentional but organic leadership is coveted by many. For example, Pastor Dwight said, "I just think that there's something about being on a boat on Memorial Day, you know, I think that there's something to say about the natural conversations that are going to have with the group." And Pastor Stanley, who serves at a mega-church in Louisiana, touted the value of organic modelling: "I don't think you can do development without modeling." When leaders are in normal life situations, people can see them react, respond, and in turn model effective behaviors. If everything stays at the formal level, professional success may be reached, but personal will be left behind.

Figure 3 categorizes four main ways that participants envisioned the development would take place.
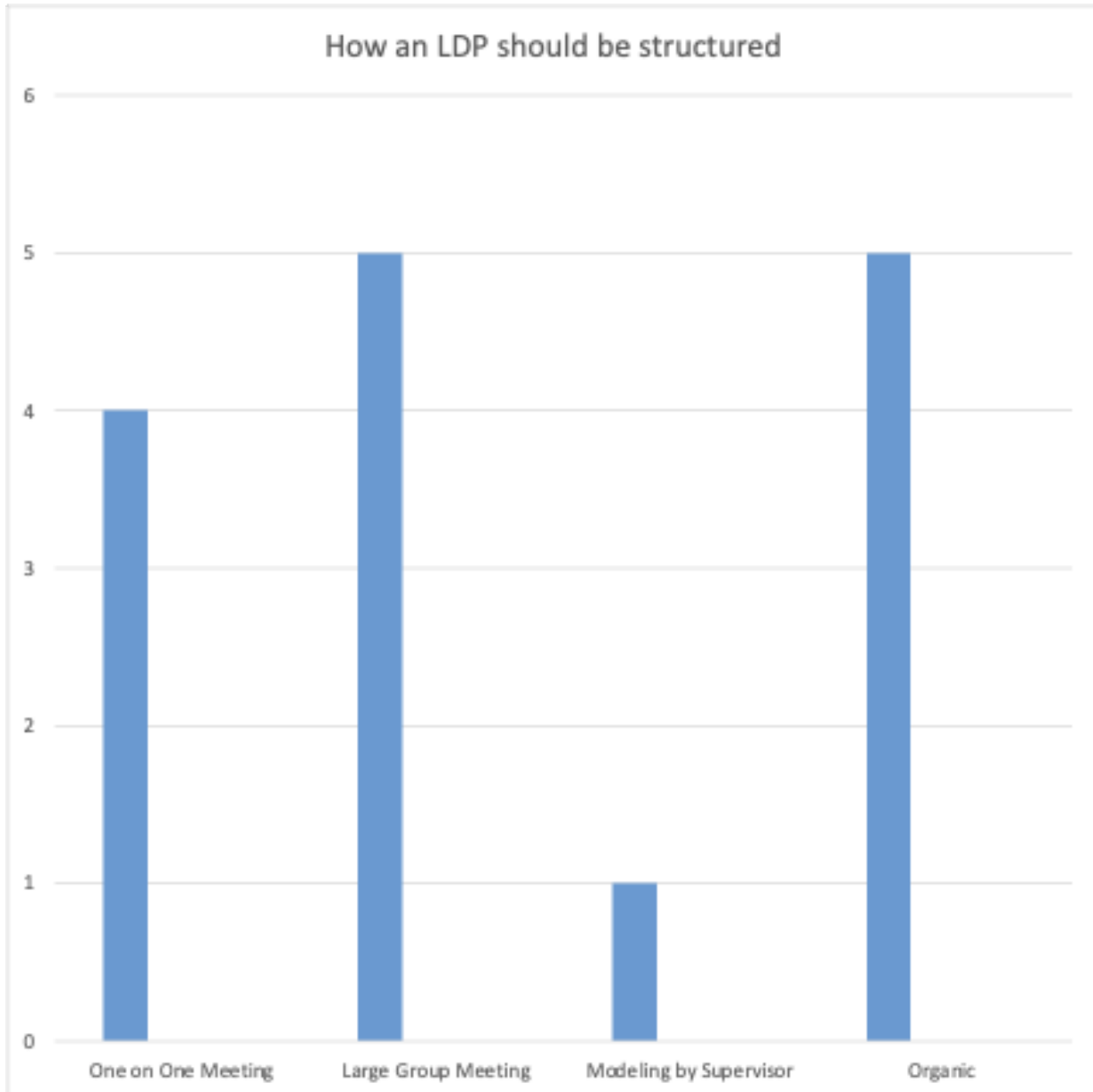
Figure 3. How Participants Believe an LDP Should Be Structured.

What Should Happen During LD Meetings

Figure 4 shows the data on what the participants believe should happen inside the

structured (or non-structured) time of development.
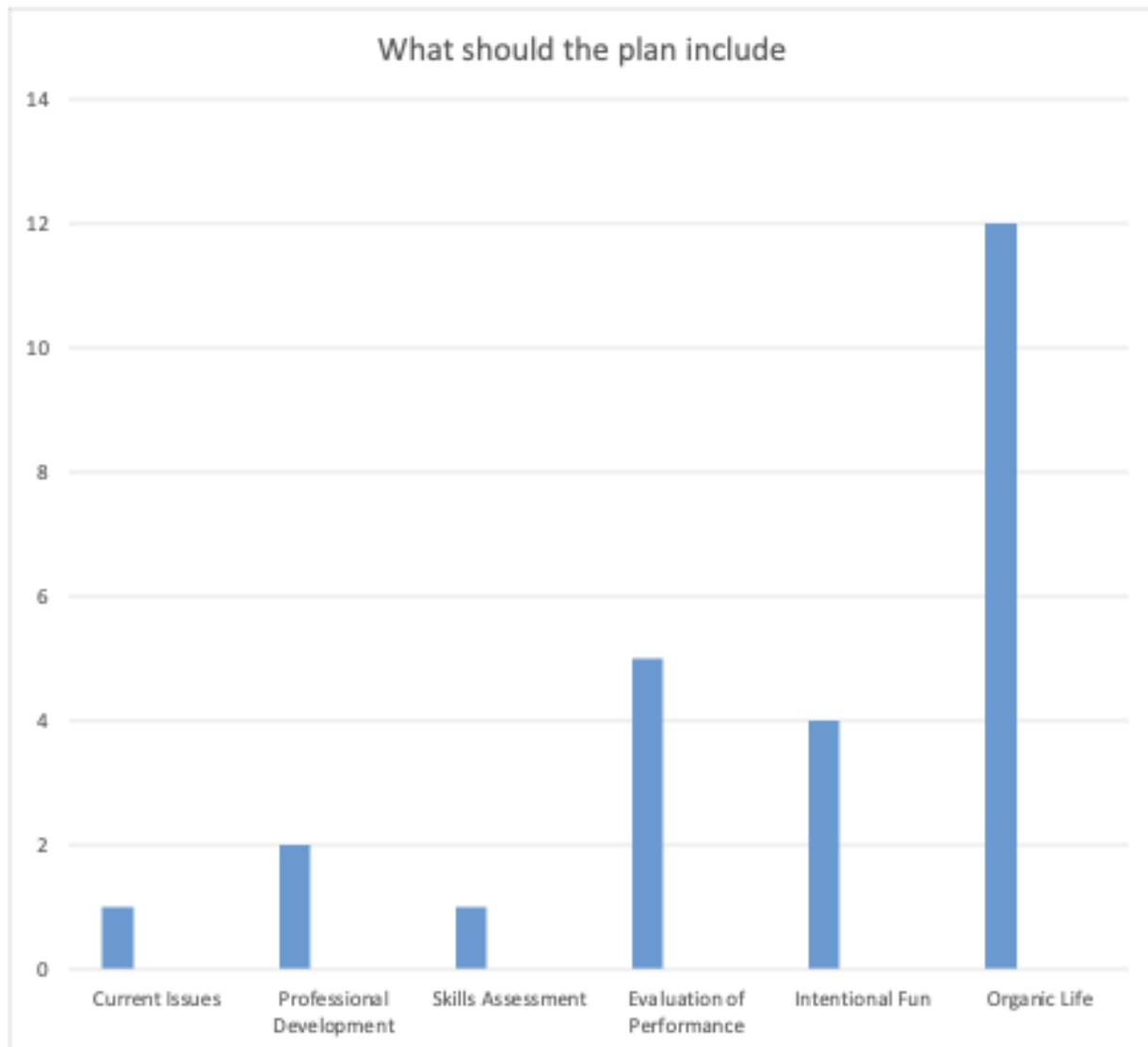
Figure 4. What Participants Believe an LDP Should Include.

Address Current Issues

Churches that create a mission and vision for their team to fulfill have consistent markers they are trying to hit. Along with those markers different issues may arise from week to week. According to one of the participants, using those current issues as leader development opportunities should be a part of an effective LDP. Pastor Dwight served in a large church in Arkansas for over fifteen years. The current issues that arose were handled specifically by the

executive team. The issues were handled, but no leaders were developed along the way. No one on the lower tiers of the organizational chart got to experience that type of problem solving. Pastor Dwight believed that this lack of involvement did not serve to prepare him for his later role as a Lead Pastor. He said, "Not being involved created a bit of anger and resentment toward those who were. It also didn't prepare me for what was to come."

Professional Development

Participants believed that a portion of the LDP should be spent on helping individuals become more effective in their role. If each person on the team is raising the bar in their own development the entire team gets better. Pastor Jim said, "There's a huge professional development piece. Things like the day-to-day role, how you're managing your time, how you're overseeing volunteers or paid staff, or even how you're pulling off your current responsibilities should be areas we dig into." Helping staff members develop in their role at the church will enhance the effectiveness of the church. Pastor Larry places a high focus on professional development. As a leader he is intentional with meeting his team and discussing their professional growth. He says, "I meet with everybody…to discuss their professional development."

Skills Assessment

Participants indicated that an LDP involves assessing the skills of their employees and aiding them in growth. Dr. Packer, who is a Lead Pastor in the Dallas, Texas area, talked about questions an LDP should have. He asked, "What are the qualities or the skills necessary for this person to be effective at their job? There has got to be some kind of skill assessment when

dealing with people. For example, if a person lacks in his or her administrative skills, the leaders'

job is to help them get the training needed."

Performance Evaluation

Performance evaluation was mentioned as a key component of what should take place

within a program. Allowing leadership a set apart time to give constructive criticism and speak

truth into the life of their mentee would enhance a person's development. One participant

illustrates this point by saying,

> There's a huge evaluation piece. It could be more operational for day-to-day happenings. Discussing issues such as how you're managing your time, how you're overseeing volunteers or paid staff, how you're pulling off your current responsibilities. You could also maybe have a person grade themselves and kind of be honest about where they are in their performance.

Pastor Toby believes it to be necessary to have formal evaluations at pivotal times. He

suggests, "There should be some evaluating on a 90-day, 180-day, and then a 365-day format."

Intentional Fun

Leadership is hard work. Church leadership can often be overwhelming and stress-

inducing. Participants emphasized the importance of creating fun environments for the team to

release stress and lower anxiety. Jim, the Student Pastor from Florida, said,

> The most fun we had was when we sat around and watched Monday Night Football. We hung out and we talked and we ate together and that was really good for me to see the team in a different light. I never get to hang out with them like that, so it really helped me and encouraged me personally to spend time and just to learn from them, and to be around them.

Organic Life (Unforced Growth Moments)

The overwhelming and surprising response to the question of what should be included was that LDP members should just "do life" together. Nearly 80% of all participants said that spending time in organic, normal life situations would benefit the development of leaders. One explained the importance of the organic process as, "we're just going to get to know each other, start building a friendship, because when we start doing that sort of thing those walls come down. We start building trust. We're building because we're just getting reps with one another."

The primary thought behind the notion of organic meetings is that seeing each other in non-threatening and everyday life circumstances helps create trust and builds relationships. Once that bond is formed people are more likely to listen and heed the wisdom being poured into their life. Planning intentional "fun days" were also mentioned several times as what should happen within an LDP. Lead Pastor Dwight stated, "I just think that there's something about going out on a boat on Memorial Day. I think that there's something to say about the natural conversations that are going to take place."

How Often and What's the Duration?

The final two questions within the "actions" domain of an effective LDP were how often should the actions take place and how long should the overall program last.

The strong majority of those interviewed believed that a weekly connection of some form should take place. They said, "There must be a once-a-week check-in," and "I think you give an hour to this at the start of every week." or "60 to 90 minutes per week, with 1 break." The common underlying reason for the weekly gathering was consistency. Troy, a young Pastor with two years of full-time church ministry experience spoke to the importance of consistency. He

believes, "if it is consistent as week in week out, you'll see that there's going be fruit in every aspect of life mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and even physically." Pastor Kobe has served in multiple churches during his twenty years of ministry. He had a simple opinion when talking about the duration and frequency of meetings. He said, "if it's going to be effective, it must be consistent." These church leaders felt strongly that if a commitment was made to the development of people, then the process must be consistently in front of everyone involved.

Putting a plan in place and being intentional with it is key. Participants agreed that differing structures had their strengths and could be used to be shown effective. The primary response to the structure question was consistency. Pastor Troy said, "I think it shouldn't just happen once or twice a year. I think it's got to be more consistent." Pastor Bob said, "the plan has got to be regular and consistent." Each church should choose which structure fits best for their team and then remain faithful to executing that structure.

One outlier was the participant who claimed that gathering once every six months would be an effective amount of time to truly develop leaders. This participant holds a strong view that experience is the best teacher or developer an individual can have. He expressed his displeasure with a leader who is a micro-manager and how that typically pushes people away instead of developing them to be more effective. His stance included the caveat that staff would have unlimited access to their mentor throughout the 6 months, but the "meetings" and programmed portions would happen very infrequently. Figure 5 summarizes participants' perceptions of the frequency of meetings for a useful LDP:
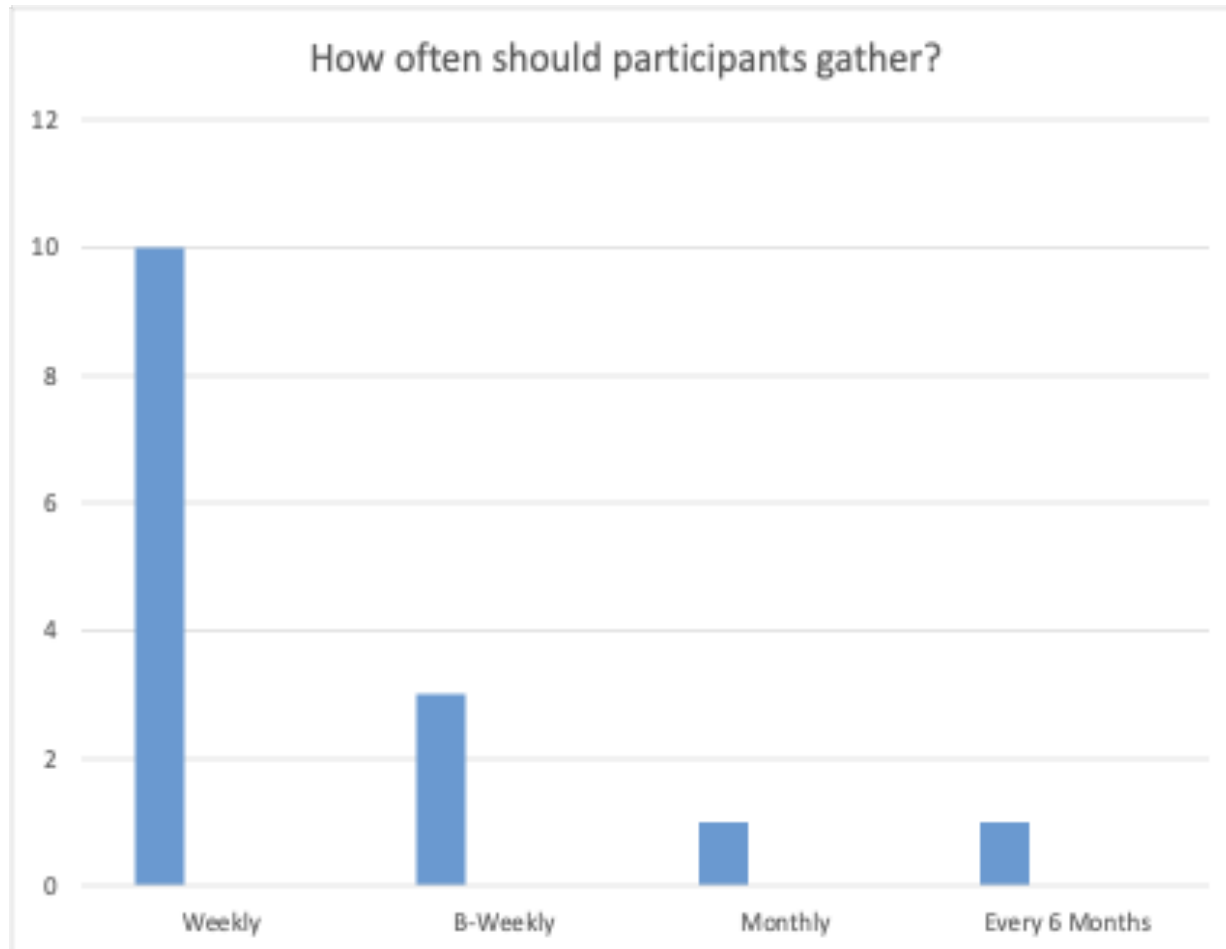
Figure 5. How Often Participants of an LDP Should Gather.

The Duration

Participants had varying perceptions about the ideal duration for the entire course of a useful LDP. Six out of the fifteen participants claimed twelve months was the best length of time to develop leaders. Senior Pastor Packer believes that a full year would give the best scope of a person. He said, "I want to see all four seasons. I want to see a calendar year of a person." This gives the leadership an opportunity to see people in the ups and downs of ministry.

Another pastor who said 1 year was a good amount of time came from a different perspective. He said, "I don't think that six-week leadership pipelines are super effective. You spend six-weeks and you give them these four quadrants of leadership and then you're like, all right, you're a leader now." He went on to say, "You have it set up where you spend a year with a group of people doing this and leading them. After that, you tell them, you've been with me for a year, you've seen this and now it's your turn to go and find other people, and you start doing this with them."

How long should the LDP last?
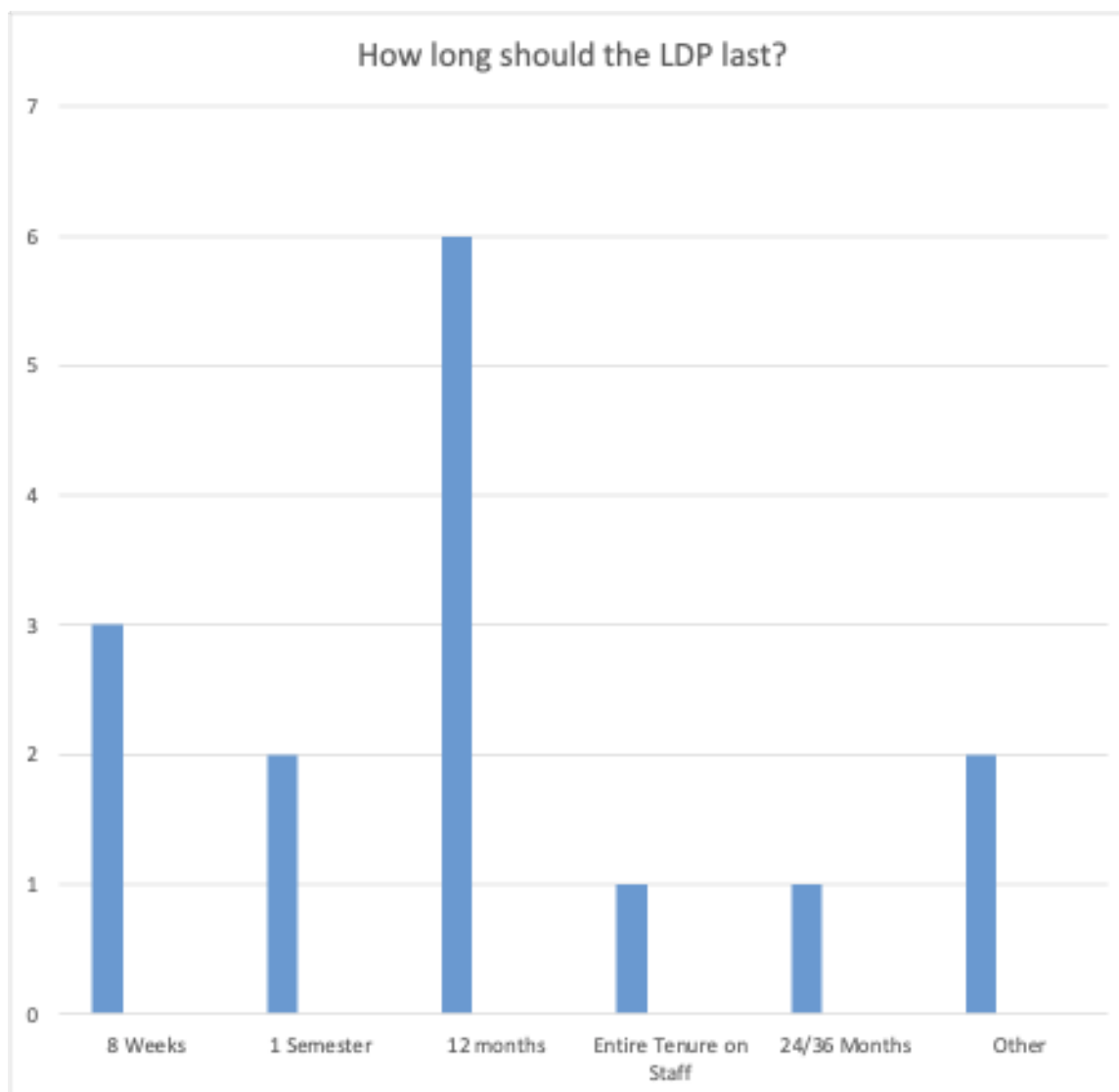
Figure 6. How Long Participants Believe an LDP Should Last.

Guiding the Process

Every church has a different make up of staff, polity, and structure. The question

of who should lead the LDP process brought to light several variegated perceptions. The defining

thread found throughout every answer was that the size of the church matters. A church with

three to five staff members will be guided in a different way than a church with fifty staff

members. The context and size play a huge role in who much a positional leader can do. Oscar, a

pastor at a church of over two thousand weekly attendees said, "it depends on the context and the size of the organization. If you're looking at it from our context and our church, we're a large church with a large staff. Our senior pastor is a great leader, but leadership training and development is not his skill set so he's brought on an executive pastor." Figure 7 identifies the leaders presented as potential leaders and the LDP.
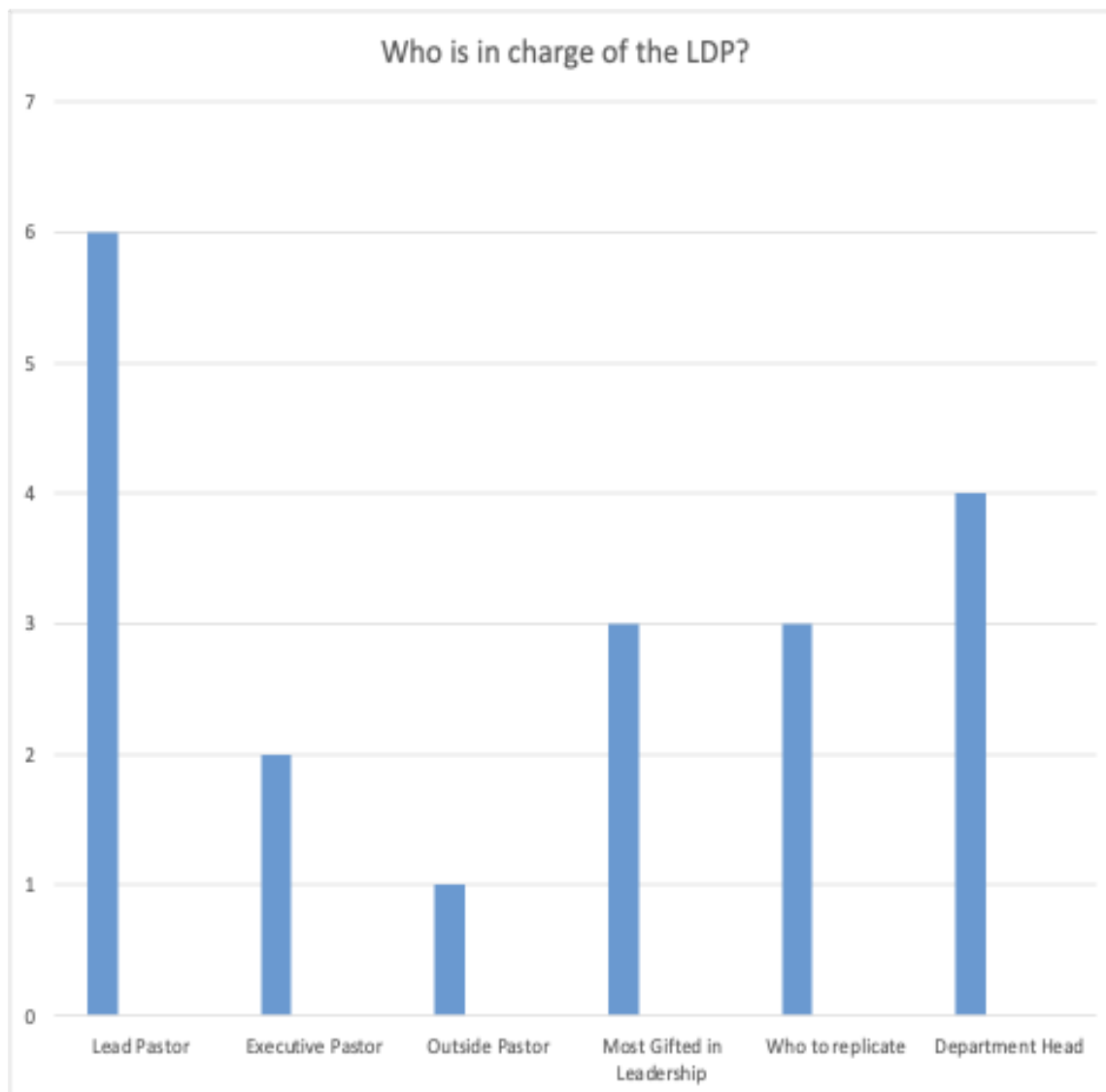
Figure 7. Who Participants Believe is in Charge of an LDP.

The lead pastor was the most common person identified as the ideal person to guide the process of an LDP. One children's pastor from a large SBC Church said, "It's the lead pastor, because he's assuming a lot more responsibility for the executive leadership type functions. I think he's got to bless it and support it. I certainly don't think he has to do it." Pastor Kobe, who is a Next Generation Pastor, says, "The Senior Pastor on occasion has to be able to give some time and face to that. It communicates that value and authority are in there." The lead pastor's

level of involvement was highly dependent upon the number of staff members he is leading. A leader of just a few staff members should have the capacity to invest time and energy in developing those few. A lead pastor over many staff may have to delegate certain responsibilities but maintain a balance of personal involvement in the process.

The role of executive pastor was mentioned as a possible leader of the LDP due to his typical close rapport with the senior leader. One participant from a large church in Louisiana said, "Somebody who has the authority from the pastor should lead." Twelve of the fifteen participants agreed that position on staff does matter when identifying a leader. Of those twelve, three answered that the person on staff who is the most gifted in leadership should lead the program despite their position on the organizational chart. One of those participants stated, "Everybody has to see themselves as being a leader who is being developed and everybody has to see themselves as a leader who's developing others." Another added, "It's about gifting and who is geared and burdened for this." The third said, "I really think that it's not about the level that the person is at or the table that they sit at, or the chair that they sit in. I think it's more of what we are trying to multiply?" If they have a passion and have shown excellent leadership gifting and ability, then they should be the person to deposit that into the rest of the staff.

Two additional observations were noted. First, three participants mentioned that the leader is the person on staff who should be imitated. He or she has set the example in leadership, and they are the type of people everyone on staff could learn from. The second surprising observation came from a young student pastor. He has two years of experience in a medium-sized church. An outside pastor, not on the church staff, was his choice for the person leading the charge. Pastor Troy said,

I think it would be helpful to have somebody who's not in the day-to-day grind of our ministry. Someone who is an elder, who has been involved in ministry in the past, or is even still involved in ministry, but has many years of experience and wisdom to bring to the table. And, like I said, someone that's not going to battle with you every day, so they can have an outside perspective.

The primary reasoning behind this idea was that the outsider could bring a distinct experience and perspective.

The foundation for whoever is guiding the LDP is trust and relationships, no matter who the individual is. Participants said things like, "The people have to feel that you believe in them and care that they are there, and you are authentic," or, "The first thing that comes to mind is relationships," and, "There has to be definitely a huge element of trust. You have to trust your leader."

Addressing Holistic Needs

When developing an LDP, the designer must take into consideration what areas of their staff's lives they should focus. The desire of this question is to discover how deeply people really want their leaders involved in their life. Participants were asked to describe their ideal plan and any areas that they would prefer not to be touched. Figure 8 shows the areas in which the participants believed should be a part of an LDP.
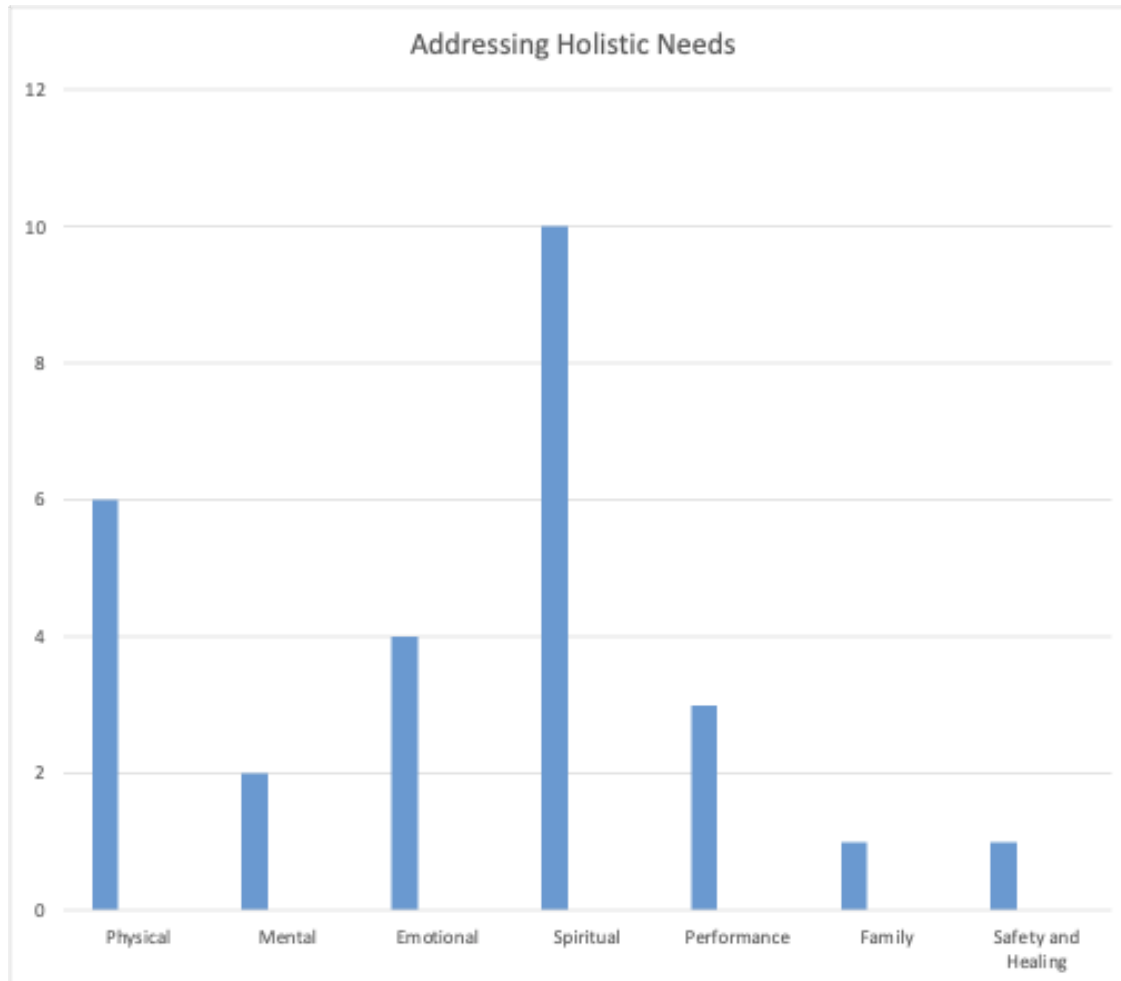
Figure 8. Addressing Holistic Needs in an LDP.

Participants were given the opportunity to bring up any areas which they believed needed to be covered in an LDP. Worship Pastor Michael, from Tennessee, summed up what most participants agreed to: "I truly believe the right answer is all of this should be there."

The interviewer asked about the three specific areas of physical, mental, and emotional health. The initial responses to this question brought about a variety of answers. The vast majority believed that the spiritual growth of the people in the LDP should be of utmost importance. Oscar, who recently became a Lead Pastor at a rural church in Tennessee said,

"Every church leader leads out of the spiritual component." Another interviewee said, "An LDP has to be about spiritual formation." Church leaders believe everyone must continue to grow in their walk with Jesus to remain effective in reaching others.

The second highest response area was the physical aspect of the person. Six out of fifteen participants claimed this to be a primary area of focus due to the commands from God to rest. Participants spoke about how pastors and church leaders are notorious for burning out due to the lack of following this command. One former church leader said, "The physical aspect of the staff member is super important because Jesus talks about taking care of your body." Another participant, who felt strong about involving the physical side of a person, said, "In the way that I'm thinking about physical, rest has to be led. And I think you have to lead people to rest." There were three participants who shared a little bit of hesitation when talking about the physical aspect of the LDP. They said, "I think it needs to be taught in a non-threatening and non-guilty way," and "You got to be careful if you drift over into, you know, weight loss. You should figure out some other physical encouragement that can happen in that LDP."

The emotional aspect of a person was the third highest area garnering attention. The church leaders interviewed are noticing an uptick in the amount of church leaders who are claiming emotional or mental health issues. One participant, who has over ten years of church staff experience, discussed the pressure of perfection that many pastors face. Pastor Creed said, "You feel like you have to make sure nobody knows your weaknesses. And you're covering that up versus the ability to be in good community where you have those accountability outlets." This pressure affects the emotional and mental side of every leader. Another participant, who is deeply passionate about developing a staff member's emotional side of life, said, "We want to

provide an organization where people feel safe and secure to share the real parts of them with you. And then you as their leader feel safe and secure to share the real parts."

There were two outliers that were mentioned as areas an LDP should emphasize. A former staff member of a mega-church in Tennessee discussed the importance of spending time with the family of the staff member to gauge the health of the person. She said, "Ministry takes a toll on the individual but also the family of the staff member. Investing in the whole family unit will help the staff person be more effective and healthier." The second area, which was only mentioned by one participant, was safety and healing. This individual comes from a background in which one on one counseling has been a huge asset. They believe every church should care for the soul of its staff. Pastor Dwight said, "Using the LDP as a place to provide safety and healing would create a trusting environment." He also talked about how allowing pastors to be real and honest gives way to the mounting pressure to appear as perfect and put-together. Although others mentioned the stress and pressure that many church leaders feel, this participant was the sole interview that claimed safety and healing should be a primary focus of any LDP.

Measuring Success

Regardless of whether someone is running a business, sport team, or church, there must be goals set in place and ways to understand whether those goals are being met. Participants were asked to explain how they would measure the success or failure of their plan. Many of the areas discussed could be applied to any person or position that is walking through an LDP, but some areas are specific to the leader and the church context. Figure 9 displays the areas in which the participants shared how to measure success.
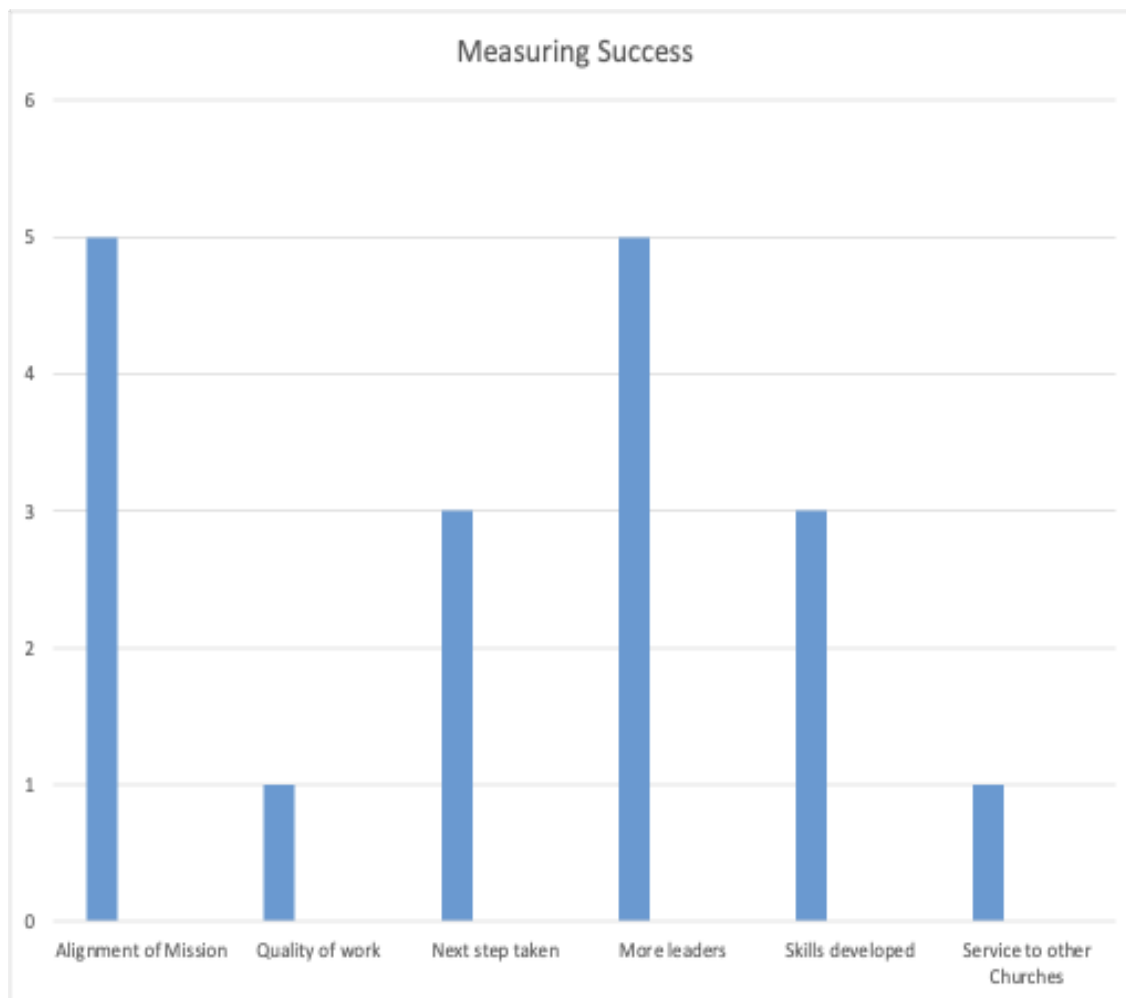
Figure 9. Measuring Success of an LDP.

Alignment of Mission

Alignment of mission and vision and adding more leaders were the top two areas in which the participants viewed as the primary ways to measure success. Participants said things like, "Church staff members involved in an LDP should be more in line with the primary mission and vision of the church at the conclusion of the program," and "Alignment with the mission and vision of the church will help the church reach their goals and purpose for existing." Another said, "You want them to catch your culture and the DNA of your church and to embody the philosophy of ministry."

Quality of Work

Surprisingly, the quality of work measuring stick was only mentioned by one participant. Kevin, who interned at a large church in North Carolina, said, "The quality of work is vital. It shows that this role isn't just getting the job done but being intentional about growing."

Next Steps Taken

Personal next steps were mentioned by three participants. Pastor Larry serves as the communications director at a thriving church in the southern United States. The act of developing leaders is emphasized to all staff and volunteers. Larry says, "The goal is to move somebody from where they're at on the pipeline, to the next step." An Associate Pastor from a traditional Southern Baptist Church said, "You want them to catch your culture and the DNA of your church and to take steps to embody the philosophy of ministry."

More Leaders

Participants talked about how developing more leaders helps the church increase its capacity to reach people. Five out of the fifteen church leaders say that if a church is developing more leaders, then the LDP is a success. Long-tenured Pastor Toby said, "We want to create a culture that's reproducing other leaders." Other participants agreed and stated, "I want to see trustworthy individual leaders who then can create leaders," and, "It's all about making disciples who make disciples."

Skills Developed

The development of the skills needed to be an effective minister was mentioned as an essential part of an LDP. Darrell is a young Associate Pastor at a newly planted church. He explained, "Effective leaders inspire, persuade, encourage, and prepare others skills to help drive their vision into reality."

Service to Church

Another outlier regarding measurement of success was the emphasis one pastor put on service to other churches. Pastor Toby described the success of an LDP as, "a person's ability to help other churches grow and develop people." He emphasized each person's ability to help expand the Kingdom of God and not solely focus on their own local church.

Chapter 5

Discussion And Conclusion

The purpose of this DMIN thesis was to understand church leaders' perceptions of a

useful LDP. Pastors and church leaders spend most of their lives pouring into the lives of others.

This is a high calling from God that often brings high levels of spiritual, emotional, and even

physical weariness. A church should invest time, energy, and resources to make certain its

leaders are healthy and effective. The research conducted gained a viewpoint from the eyes of

current and former church staff members. Many of the participants agreed that a focus on

leadership development would be beneficial for the entire staff. All participants have had

experience with leadership development, but none expressed that their churches had an

intentional and fully developed plan. This chapter will show the alignment between church

leadership literature and participant data on the major themes that emerged from the interviews:

1) goal setting, 2) delineating the team, 3) outlining the actions of an LDP, 4) guiding of the

process, 5) addressing holistic needs, and 6) measuring success of an LDP. The participants

disagree that one plan would work for every church and every staff member; yet any ministry

can accomplish great things for the Kingdom of God if staff members are receiving healthy and

proper care from their leaders.

Discussion of Goal Setting

All participants discussed the reasons for having goals and the ramifications if there is no

goal to attain. Although there are differing opinions on what the goals should be, the lack of a

goal is seen as an impediment to ministry. These church leaders believe that goal setting gives

each team member an opportunity to see areas of growth and decline in the church's ministry

efforts. When establishing an objective, people have a clearer understanding of expectations. The goals set forth at the beginning allow leaders something to lean on when discussing quality of work, sufficiency, and effectiveness in their role. The findings of this project (in chapter 4), as reported by the participants, revealed that creating more leaders, creating a family culture amongst the team, and personal growth of the minister are the top goals. Literature on goals and goal setting are discussed below.

Literature on Goal Setting

Goal setting should be done with each team member that is being developed. There should be goals in common for the entire team, but individual goals should exist as well. Church leadership author and speaker Bill Hull speaks to the development of the church leaders' professional skills. He claims, "Depending on the level of expected leadership, these skills include the ability to communicate Scripture, to articulate the church's vision, mission, and philosophy of ministry; to manage, coach, motivate, and correct others."[133] Hull's opinions on goal setting align with the participants involved in this study. Hull believes the emphasis of goal setting will directly impact the development of the leader. The training of a leader should be based on the objectives set before him. The mission and vision of the local church should be seen as the objectives and the training of the minister should flow from those areas. The majority of those interviewed agreed with this emphasis.

Much of the literature surveyed in chapter 2 on the topic of leadership suggests that creating more leaders should be a goal of any LDP. Author and educator Noel M. Tichy writes

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[133] Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Pastor: Leading Others on a Journey of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 300.

on the importance of setting goals to produce leaders. He says, "Organizations succeed long term because they continually regenerate leadership at all levels."[134] The church will always need more and better leaders. The amount of need within the church body can feel enormous. There are spiritual and emotional needs everywhere. It seems there is always more to be done. For pastors, this can feel overwhelming. It often raises tough questions. A primary question that is often raised is, *Where are all the people going to come from to lead these different ministries*? Creating more leaders will serve to help the church in its mission to reach people.

Culture within any workplace is a major influence on the effectiveness and impact the organization will have. This research shows that church leaders value and want to lean on a healthy family-like culture. They are looking for a place to be able to be real and authentic.

Pastor Stephen Blandino acknowledges the need for a healthy church culture. He stresses the importance of organizational culture to reach the mission of the church. When leaders are trying to cultivate health in the church it requires an understanding of the vision, systems, staffing, relationships, and leadership.[135] Healthy cultures create consistent advancement of the mission. Unhealthy cultures are toxic and create dysfunction within the team. Unhealthy cultures derail the church's mission. Blandino's emphasis on the healthy culture relates to the participants who focused on relationships. Those participants believe that belonging to a healthy "family" (staff) will help all involved with being effective and successful. A healthy culture allows for mistakes, growth, and conversation, all of which are needed for healthy relationships.

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[134] Noel M. Tichy, *The Cycle of Leadership: How Great Leaders Teach Their Companies to Win* (City of publication: Harper Collins, 2009), 53.

[135] Stephen Blandino, *Creating Your Church's Culture: How to Uproot Mediocrity and Create a Healthy Organizational Culture* (Fort Worth, TX: Blandino, 2013), 26.

Personal growth of the minister is another primary goal the participants felt should be a goal. When people stop growing, whatever they are involved in is affected. Leadership authors, Richard Wellins, William Byham and Jeanne Wilson are adamant that real church growth starts with individuals. Equipping teams for personal growth should be at the top of the leader's to-do list. They give tools to guide in that growth process:

1. Aligning with God's purpose for life.

2. Learning new ways to measure growth.

3. Targeting strategies to preserve growth into the future.[136]

These tools are practical and even helpful, but only the first tool aligns with those surveyed in this project. Discovering God's purpose in life and then striving for personal growth in those areas is looked upon favorably by the participants. Learning new ways to measure growth and strategies to preserve growth in the future was not mentioned or discussed.

<div align="center">Practical Implications of Goal Setting</div>

The motivations of the participants were highly Gospel-centered. None of them expressed that the purpose of goals was for personal gain; rather, their desire was that God's church could become more effective in reaching people. The findings agree with other literature that suggests pastors leverage their own development and personal growth for the betterment of other leaders. If creating more leaders and creating a culture of family is essential to ministry, churches should help build an LDP that produces those values. Such a process would keep

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[136] Richard S. Wellins, William C. Byham, and Jeanne M. Wilson, *Empowered Teams: Creating Self-Directed Work Groups that Improve Quality, Productivity, and Participation* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 214-215.

leaders engaged and working toward meeting these objectives. An effective LDP should incorporate Blandino's culture work[137] and Wellins, Byham, and Wilson's model for personal growth.

Further Research on Goal Setting in LDPs

The participants in this project clearly suggest that an LDP should start with a period of setting goals. The interaction that this author has had increased understanding and priority that should be placed on creating a goal-setting process. A qualitative study that describes how leadership teams establish goals would prove valuable. Additionally, a quantitative study could compare the success of goals that were predetermined by leaders to the success of goals set organically by the group. Another recommendation would be a case study on teams who function with goals in mind and teams who do not. Gaining insight on the differing cultures and team morale would be an asset to church leaders.

Discussion on Delineating the Team of Leaders to be Trained

This research shows a lack of consistency in determining who should be trained. Those who agreed (seven out of fifteen) that everyone on a church staff should be involved align more closely with the literature on church leadership. The participants identified that there would be an impact within the organization regardless of what level of staff member was involved. If overall effectiveness of the team is the goal, then the LDP should train the entire team. The interviews

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[137] Blandino, *Creating Your Church's Culture*, 27.

cemented the fact that someone's place on the organizational chart does not limit his or her ability to be effective and healthy.

Literature on Delineating the Team of Leaders to be Trained

The model for Christian leadership development is Jesus' model of discipleship: one person investing in, modeling, and teaching another person the ways of the Lord. In their article entitled, "Jesus' Use of Experiential Learning in the Sending of the Seventy: Implications for Ministry Practicums," K. Nehrbass and Jane Rhoades give evidence to Jesus' model of discipleship (teaching). They write,

> The sending of the seventy(two) may initially seem like the disciples were tossed into the deep end without a significant amount of prior training. Their learning task, after all, was quite ambiguous. What did Jesus expect them to do? But those who had spent a year or two with Jesus had experienced first-hand Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God and had observed the Lord in action in a variety of settings. In fact, their "internship" in Samaria built on what they had already learned through their experience with Him.[138]

Discipleship literature is addressed to all who are striving to follow Christ. Being a disciple of Jesus is not limited to any role or job title.

The development process within a local church is steeped in the same discipleship foundations. Choosing the people who are a part of the process looks different to different leaders. As noted in chapter 2 of this study, Gibbs believes that the selection process should look for those who are showing the most potential. He stresses this point due to the ever-changing culture around and within the church. Gibbs cites the new global realities as reason to see change in Christian leadership. He says, "Styles of leadership are changing, from hierarchies to networks

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[138] K. Nehrbass and J. Rhoades, "Jesus' use of experiential learning in the sending of the seventy: Implications for ministry practicums," *Christian Education Journal* 18, no. 1 (2021):

and from compartmentalization to connectivity."[139] The topic of potential was not specifically mentioned or discussed by any of the participants in this study. Contributors spoke of the importance of gifting and talent, but never mentioned the staff members prospective growth.

Literature also suggests that leadership development should not stop with staff members but should flow into the volunteer base of the church body. As seen in chapter 2, Fletcher is a major proponent of this practice. He believes if churches are going to reach full effectiveness in their communities, the people who make up the church must be trained and sent out. The staff cannot do it alone.[140] While the participants in this study would likely agree with Fletcher's approach, the focus and conversation remained on developing the staff members.

The overall findings for which members of the church staff need to be trained were not exclusive to one group or level of staff. The participants varied in their opinions of who, but each of them stated the importance of the type of training that would take place.

The staff members interviewed agree that building a strong team is important to the function of the church. When the staff is functioning at a high level the church is more effective.

Practical Implications of Delineating the Team of Leaders to be Trained

When conducting an LDP the leadership should have a pulse on the team and the areas of strength and weakness. If churches choose to enroll the entire staff into an LDP there are great benefits, just as if only those in lead roles are added would bring. Literature and research agree that developing leaders at any level will aid the organization in reaching their goals.

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[139] Gibbs, *Leadership Next*, 125.

[140] Fletcher, *Empowering Leadership*, 112.

The participants and literature point to the fact that pastors who make the decision to give intentional attention to developing people should focus more on the process than who is in the program. Churches should develop people with the ideal that those being trained will model it to others.

Further Research on Delineating the Team of Leaders to be Trained

Much has been done to understand the implications of developing and training leaders, but less is known about which roles bring about the most effectiveness. Although this research project reveals the need for leaders to be trained, pastors would be interested to know what levels bring about the most change to their staff. Is potential related to personality traits of the staff member? Is it instead connected to the role the staff member has in the church? What are various trainers' perceptions of "potential" and how do they measure it?

Discussion on the Core Actions of an LDP

The conversation around the actions of an LDP yielded the most diverse answers. These actions play a pivotal part in the development of people. Churches would help themselves greatly by identifying the proper core actions to include in their plan. The research circled several important questions. How should the LDP be structured? What content should be discussed? How often should it take place? What's the duration of the program? Although participants had differing thoughts on the core actions, no one debated the success of any type of plan. They each understood the significance that an LDP would play in their staff. Below, each area will be discussed.

How Should the LDP Be Structured?

The structure of the meetings fell primarily into three lanes. A formal gathering, and an organically formed context, were two structures mentioned by participants. A one-on-one structure was mentioned as well. A group gathering is simply getting numerous people together to be developed and invested in. This model offers the ability to train more people at once. It also allows the participants to have their peers to lean on and walk with them. Literature refers to this as educational leadership. Professor Sung Joong Kim explains the benefits of the educational structure in his article entitled, "Development of pastoral administrative leadership scale based on the theories of educational leadership." He submits, "Educational leadership is a process wherein educational leaders promote the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and an instructional program conducive to student learning and staff's professional growth."[141]

The organic model was brought to the table by five of the participants. This structure relies on less formal training and more life-on-life modeling. Church literature is rather mute about organic leadership development. Few have written about or studied the uses and effectiveness. Business leader and founder of the self-renewal group, Mitch McCrimmon, writes about organic leadership. He claims, "With organic leadership, direction evolves or emerges through trial-and-error learning. Direction is discovered rather than decided in an organic organization."[142] Leaders can use the daily happenings within the church to help teach and guide those under their care.

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[141] Sung Joong Kim, "Development of pastoral administrative leadership scale based on the theories of educational leadership," *Cogent Business & Management* 6, no. 1 (2019): 5.

[142] Mitch McCrimmon, "Organic Leadership," accessed September 13, 2022, https://leadersdirect.com/organic-leadership.

Four participants agreed that one-on-one sessions would bring the most effective results. The one-on-one model offers personalized care and development. It also leaves room for a deeper and more meaningful relationship. The Columbus Discipleship Network stresses the importance of this model. Citing Jesus as their source for utilizing this model they define it: "One on one discipleship is an intentional, spiritual, life-on-life relationship in which one person helps another grow—under grace and into Christian maturity—through regular, focused, intentional time together."[143]

What Content Should Be Discussed During an LDP?

Participants believed that an LDP should involve addressing current issues, professional development, skills assessments, evaluation of performance, intentional fun, and especially an aspect of "organic life." These topics remain a dynamic and progressive area of research.

Torrence Sparkman studied and recorded the leadership development experiences of church denomination executives. He reveals,

> The nature of leader development which emphasizes individual knowledge, skills, and abilities, and develops the intrapersonal abilities necessary for leadership has been clarified, and the subjects of leader development and leadership development research expanded. However, more needs to be learned about the individual knowledge, skills, abilities and intrapersonal requirements for executive leadership in church organizations.[144]

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[143] "The discipleship network for Columbus," accessed September 13, 2022, http://thecolumbusdiscipleship.net.

[144] Torrence Sparkman, "The Leadership Development Experiences of Church Denomination," accessed August 17, 2021, https://jacl.andrews.edu/the-leadership-development-experiences-of-church-denomination-executives/.

The research of the church denominational leaders provides insight into creating an effective LDP. A key takeaway is that there is no explicit pathway or formal development process to advance people into effective leadership.

Addressing Current Issues

The interview data on this aspect showed that staff members want to be included in the leadership decisions—the current issues facing the church. They were not asking for distributed leadership, but they wanted to be included in the leader's thought processes regarding the church's issues. Leadership author Peter Northouse referred to this as "team leadership."[145] A group of people who hold a common goal, must figure out how best to work together to reach said goals. Whatever current issue is being discussed can be attacked by the team instead of just one or two individuals.

Professional Development

Participants considered professional development as a core action inside of an LDP. Growing and becoming better at the tasks involved with pastoral ministry would raise the level of efficiency along with capacity to reach more people. Professional development is an often-neglected part of the church leader's tasks. In her book, *Becoming the Pastor You Hope to Be*, Barbara Blodgett urges ministers to resist praise and instead to ask for feedback, to seek the company of mentors who are better than the reader is at what he or she does, to be vulnerable

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[145] Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership. Theory and Practice* (Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publishing, 2022), 22.

before their peers in order to learn from them, and to define themselves as a leader who does not merely take activist stances but risks entering into deep, transformative relationships.[146]

Skills Assessment/Evaluation of Performance

Several stakeholders felt like a portion of the LDP should be centered around performance evaluation. Leaders giving feedback and constructive criticism would serve as a help to the individual and in turn the entire staff. Much has been communicated and written about correct ways to do performance evaluations. Leaders felt, when done the right way, performance evaluation could truly benefit the organization. Author Mark Maines explains formal evaluations provide the opportunity to enhance ministry, improve priorities, encourage better communication and active participation. The process allows the church to grow toward mature service and caring fellowship, discover opportunities to implement better strategies, and strengthen the unity of spirit between the pastor and elders.[147]

Organic Context

Eighty percent of the church leaders interviewed said the content should be less formal and more organic. According to the participants, getting people in real life situations would be more helpful and impactful than just scheduling a thirty-minute formal meeting every week. Instead of having a regular curriculum of sorts, experience through normal life situations would

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[146] Barbara J. Blodgett, *Becoming the Pastor You Hope to Be* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing, 2011), 9.

[147] Mark Maines, "Ministry Evaluation: A Gift You Can," accessed October 1, 2021, https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/ministry-evaluation-a-gift-you-cant-ignore.

serve as the teaching. This was obviously modeled by Jesus with his disciples. Jesus consistently used normal life situations to teach His followers.

In their book *Teams that Thrive*, authors Ryan Hartwig and Warren Bird surveyed more than 250 church teams. Among the list of top five disciplines of an effective team is reliance upon inspiration more than control. They submit, "Outstanding teams prioritize leadership through relationship-based inspiration rather than role-based giving of directives."[148]

Practical Implications of the Core Actions of an LDP

Every church staff has a culture. That culture is reflective of the leadership within the church. Pastors and church leaders who desire to create a healthy culture should create trust building avenues for their team. All people have a desire to be heard, wanted, and understood. If leaders would tap into those longings and help people understand their place in the organization, trust, commitment, and health would flow freely. Once there is a trust-culture, the actions for team building and shepherding are unlimited. This study and much of the leadership literature proves that people will follow leaders who they trust and respect. This type of culture does not just happen by accident. There must be intentional attitudes and mindsets of the leadership to build these virtues. Leaders should start by inviting their teams into their living rooms and kitchen tables. These types of everyday environments tear down walls that people have built up. People are more likely to be "real" around a cup of coffee than inside of a boardroom. The negative baggage and past experiences can make some team members hesitant to trust or even difficult to deal with. Leaders should view those individuals as opportunities to make a

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[148] Ryan T. Hartwig and Warren Bird, *Teams That Thrive* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 25.

difference and help change their lives. The actions of an LDP should always lead back to discipling people to a closer walk and resemblance of Jesus.

Implications Regarding Team Leadership

An effective LDP can operationalize Northouse's[149] team leadership model the following way:

1. Bi-monthly team meetings where the leader discusses a current issue, reminds the team of the common goal, and asks people how their role in the team means they have a specific task to help address that issue.

2. Create an avenue that staff members can regularly give input into the happenings of the church.

Implications Regarding Professional Development

An effective LDP should include Blodgett's[150] strategy as well as investing resources.

1. Monthly individual meetings that invite feedback and conversations on the team members' growth;

2. Intentional growth strategy discussed and implemented for each staff member; and,

3. Create a culture of learning through conferences, books, podcasts, etc.

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[149] Northouse, *Leadership*, 51.

[150] Blodgett, *Becoming the Pastor You Hope to Be*, 108.

Implications Regarding Performance Evaluation

An effective LDP will include a regular and on-going schedule of meetings that specifically address the performance of the employee. The evaluation process should be a time to reflect on the last year, make changes where needed, but just as important — to celebrate successes.

Implications Regarding the "Organic" Aspects of Development

An effective LDP will seek to build trust amongst the team. Utilizing stress-free relationship building activities will help team members get to know one another. Prioritizing relationships helps teams see their peers less as tools to accomplish a mission and more as a person made in the image of God.

Further Research on the Core Actions of an LDP

It would be enlightening to further explore the impact a healthy culture has on an individual. Did they stay on the team for a longer period of time? Once they caught the vision, did it begin to flow out of them onto the people they lead? How long did the trickle-down effect take? Spending time within a healthy church culture would be informative as to the tools and actions that were being utilized.

Furthermore, research investigating any correlations between a person's role in the church and their buy-in to the culture would be helpful. Do people who are higher on the organizational chart seem to conform to the culture quicker or slower than their counterparts? For instance, churches who have full- and part-time team members could have a better understanding of how much time and effort it's going to take to get the part-time people to fully

buy-in. This type of data would allow pastors and their teams to develop a better and clearer process for developing their teams.

Discussion on Guiding the Process

All participants agreed that the lead pastor should be involved in the LDP at some level. The size of the staff would be a determining factor in his role. Participants also said the executive pastor, the head of a department, or the pastor who has the most leadership gifting should lead the charge in guiding the process. Each role is discussed below.

Literature on Guiding the Process

Leadership yields some of the highest amounts of resources on any topic written about. The interview data on this topic shows that most of the participants believe the senior pastor should be involved at some level within an LDP. Team success is the responsibility of the leader and in churches, this responsibility falls to the lead pastor.

Author and researcher Soo Yeong Beh refers to the importance of the senior pastor's involvement in leadership. His research concludes, "Churches whose senior pastor initiated and implemented the strategy showed that they had more impetus and momentum in developing emerging leaders in their midst."[151] The senior pastor's direct leadership was cited as the most important factor that influenced the leadership development process.

The role of the senior pastor is important, but it should not be the only voice heard. Any LDP should involve other key leaders in the process. Participants agreed that a team of leaders

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[151] Soo Yeong Beh, "Leadership Development in the Local Church" (PhD. diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2012), 107.

who were directly or indirectly involved in some way together with the senior pastor can lead the

LDP. These senior leaders work together with the senior pastor in identifying, recruiting,

training, and empowering the emerging leaders.

This data alligned with the findings in the leadership literature. One acknowledged value

was that the major leadership of the church needed to take ownership of the development

process. Author of *The Equipping Church*, Sue Mallory, suggests the senior pastor, or the key

leader, needs to provide the vision, leadership validation, priority, and budget for the

development process to take root.[152] When designing an LDP, the key leaders of the church need

to be involved, either directly or indirectly.

Practical Implications for Guiding the Process

The primary implication in this study is that the senior pastor or senior leaders' role in the

LDP is necessary. This was often not the case in most literature discussing the role of senior

pastors. Because developing leaders is such a crucial part of every church, and because the lead

pastor's role was so instrumental in the LDP, churches must understand the investment needed to

be successful. Governing boards should ensure that their leaders are investing the time and

resources into this area of ministry.

Further Research on Guiding the Process

Identifying multiple churches who have an LDP and categorizing the senior pastor's

involvement would prove helpful. Access to the staff's perception of the leader's involvement

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[152] Sue Mallory, *The Equipping Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 101.

would greatly impact the forming of a new plan. A qualitative study on the perceptions of teams whose senior leader is greatly involved as well as teams whose senior leader is not involved at all would provide excellent data for those interested in starting an LDP.

Discussion on Addressing Holistic Needs

Participants were asked what areas of their lives they would invite an LDP to address. They believed that an LDP should address a person's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of life. Two outliers that were mentioned are family as well as safety and healing. These areas are discussed below.

Discussing Physical Health

Close to half of the participants believed that the subject of physical health should be addressed within an LDP. They were not looking for the team to have physical goals to meet, but for someone to care about how they are doing physically. There is extensive literature and research on a person's physical health which pastors and church leaders can heed. However, there is limited study on how the physical body affects one's ministry.

In her article entitled, "Addressing the Crisis in Clergy Health," Amy Frykholm proclaims, "Pastors tend to move too frequently to maintain relationships with doctors who might hold them accountable for their health. The profession discourages them from making close friends. All of this translates, studies show, into clergy having higher than normal rates of obesity, arthritis, depression, heart problems, high blood pressure, diabetes and stress."[153]

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[153] Amy Frykholm, "Fit for Ministry: Addressing the Crisis in Clergy Health," accessed September 12, 2021, https://www.christiancentury.org/article/2012-10/fit-ministry.

In addition, pastors typically don't take the time needed for self-care because they are focused on caring for others. In her study of clergy, Jen Proeschold-Bell asserts, "Clergy recognize the importance of caring for themselves, but doing so takes a back seat to fulfilling their vocational responsibilities, which are tantamount to caring for an entire community."[154] An LDP that includes the physical health of the person would be beneficial for all.

Discussing Mental Health

A small number of participants felt that mental health should be involved in the LDP. This side of a person's health has been relatively quiet until recent years. With a seemingly higher rate of suicide, burnout, and exhaustion within pastoral ranks, new literature is coming out consistently. Professional counselor, Jeff Smith, talks about the importance of the pastors' coping skills. The way a pastor regulates his emotions (i.e., how he or she copes) will directly have an impact on his or her ministry.[155]

Discussing Emotional Health

Emotional health garnered the third highest response. The participants who discussed emotional health felt a deep conviction that this area must be tackled. The literature and research on the emotional aspect of pastoring is plentiful. Church researcher and author George Barna

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[154] Duke University, "Creating Health Interventions for clergy proves complex," accessed September 13, 2022, https://globalhealth.duke.edu/news/creating-health-interventions-clergy-proves-complex.

[155] Jeff Smith, "2021 Pastoral Mental Health Report - Church and Mental Health," accessed October 12, 2021, https://churchandmentalhealth.com/2021-pastoral-mental-health-report

conducted a study of pastors, and the results are staggering. They represent a need for emotional health to matter:

1. Eighty percent of pastors surveyed believe pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families;

2. Eighty percent of pastors and eighty-four percent of their spouses feel unqualified and discouraged in their role as pastors;

3. Ninety percent of pastors said the ministry was completely different than what they thought it would be like before they entered the ministry;

4. Seventy percent do not have someone they consider a close friend; and,

5. Fifty percent feel so discouraged that they would leave the ministry if they could, but have no other way of making a living.

Over 1,700 pastors left the ministry every month last year.[156]

The emotional weight that is being carried by these men and women is not sustainable. There is a deep-seeded need for emotional care. The constant care and giving of oneself for the benefit of others can be emotionally taxing on the pastor. Most do not have adequate means to refuel and refresh. Churches should give sufficient time and resources to help their pastors remain emotionally healthy.

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[156] George Barna, "Pastors Share Top Reasons They," accessed April 2, 2022, https://www.barna.com/research/pastors-quitting-ministry/.

Discussing Spiritual Health

The spiritual health of the pastor was mentioned by most of the participants. Growth in the spiritual arena is a topic for all who follow Christ, but especially for those leading God's people. Pastor and professor Phillip Crouse explains to pastors, "If you want to remain effective in ministry for years to come, you cannot underestimate the importance of your spiritual health."[157] Hs model for preventative care and maintenance would serve all pastors well. Learning warning signs, seeking accountability, and intentionally investing in oneself are all parts of the spiritual growth process.

Discussing Family

One participant mentioned addressing the family of the pastor. They were not suggesting the family should be involved in every decision, but that care for them should be provided as part of the LDP. A pastor's family is such an integral part of the ministry; their spouse and children should be invested in. Pastor Daniel Stegeman expresses the importance of family care in his article entitled, "The Pastor and His Family." He explains, "The health and success of the churches and our families are linked. Family life is significantly important to the well-being of the church. If families are not healthy and vibrant, the church will not be healthy and vibrant."[158]

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[157] Phillip Crouse, "The Pastors Health," accessed July 15, 2022, https://www.pastorscenter.org/blog/the-pastors-health

[158] Daniel Stegeman, "The Pastor and His Family," accessed July 15, 2022, https://pastoral-theology.com/2020/04/28/the-pastor-and-his-family/2020.

Practical Implications for Addressing Holistic Needs

An effective LDP can practice caring for the "whole" person:

1. Bi-monthly meetings should incorporate conversation centered around the physical health of the individual, reminding them of the importance of their body. Goals should be implemented and discussed if both parties feel it to be necessary.

2. A Rest/Sabbath policy should be incorporated into the staff handbook, making certain pastors take the appropriate time to rest and refuel their physical bodies.

3. Mental, emotional, and spiritual needs should be addressed in the weekly meetings. This is a time to present current situations and develop plans for growth.

4. Twice per year, the church should give the leader permission and resources to care for their family. This could come in the form of days off, financial resources, getaways, or fun outings, allowing margin in the pastor's schedule to focus on the family.

Further Research on Addressing Holistic Needs

Gaining insight into the life of a pastor who has or currently is walking within an LDP that focuses on his holistic needs would prove extremely helpful. Understanding how the care for his own soul helped him in reaching others and striving for the mission of his church would be beneficial. A study on the family of a pastor who has good soul care versus those who have not would help measure the effectiveness of this intentional holistic process.

Discussion on Measuring Success of an LDP

The conversation around measuring success brought about many different viewpoints. Some leaders felt as if the success would be visible through missional alignment and

reproduction, while others saw success as helping the larger Church body. All discussion on this topic led to having a better situation than when one started. These staff members all agreed that having a goal and measuring its success or failure was a vital part of the process.

Literature on Measuring Success of an LDP

Most churches have some sort of mission or vision statement. This is the phrase that unites people to be working in the same direction. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of pieces of literature written on how churches should construct that mission or vision statement. For those churches who have walked through that process, it does not stop there. Having the vision is the first step, but seeing it play out must be a part of the process as well. Having strong leaders is the difference in success and failure of reaching the mission and vision of any church. Strategic planning expert Aubrey Malphurs says, "The key to success is competent strategic leadership. You may develop the finest strategic plan in the history of the church. It may be featured in the major journals on leadership. You might publish it in a book that sells thousands of copies. However, it will not be successful without competent, gifted leadership."[159] The responses from the participants affirm Malphurs's keys. Developing leaders is vital to seeing the mission and vision of the church come to life and be successful.

Developing more leaders was at the top of the response list when asking participants how to measure success. There is always room for more leaders in every church. If churches focused on building more leaders and growing better leaders there would be more ministry success. In their book entitled *Building Leaders*, Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini write, "The ultimate

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[159] Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning* (Grand Rapids, MI. Baker Books, 2013), 14.

test of a leader isn't the magnitude of his or her ministry. But whether that leader trains other leaders who can sustain the church organization when he or she is no longer present. The true test is the leadership legacy that the pastor leaves behind."[160]

Practical Implications for Measuring Success of an LDP

An effective LDP must have a way of measuring success. Once the team or person in charge gives clarity to the goals, everyone should be able to measure the success or lack thereof. The development of new leaders should be a primary goal of every church. According to the research of this project, and much of the modern-day literature, developing people has huge implications. More leaders provide more hands and feet to carry out the mission and vision of the church. More leaders afford churches a larger capacity to serve and carry out God's mission.

Further Research on Measuring Success of an LDP

The success of an LDP may be different for different churches but gaining insight into their process would help the overall understanding. Seeing churches make goals and then hearing why those goals were chosen could help clarify how and why they measure success the way they do. For those churches who do not have an LDP, it would be helpful to know if they still set goals and how they measure the success of those goals. Through further research some helpful questions could be asked: does having an LDP help churches reach their goals at a higher level than those who do not? Does having an LDP produce more leaders than churches who do it less strategically? What is the primary reason many churches do not have an LDP? The answers to

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[160] Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 12.

these questions could significantly help new (or older) churches who are trying to develop more leaders.

Conclusion

The value of knowing the recommendations from church leaders for an effective LDP will aid the process of development. This research helps eliminate guesses and assumptions about LDPs and allows for top-level leaders to create a process that will truly address staff concerns and goals. When the shepherds, who are called by God to minister to others, are cared for, heard, and loved, they will be more effective in reaching people. Table 5.1 summarizes the participants' perceptions of a useful LDP.

Table 5.1. Summarizing Participants' Perceptions of a Useful LDP.

The goals of an LDP	Alignment of the mission and vision of the church, replication of leaders, development of skills and performance.
The team involved in an LDP	All staff members and may include volunteers
The actions of an LDP	A combination of one-on-one, large groups, modeling and informal (organic) interactions between team and supervisor
How the LDP process is guided	The one whom the team identifies as most qualified and passionate about leadership development. (Could be the lead pastor, executive Pastor, or even an outsider)
Needs to be addressed by an LDP	Holistic approach: spiritual, emotional, physical, safety/healing
Measuring success of an LDP	Alignment of mission, replication of leaders, and development of skills

This project was born out of a desire to see more effective church leaders and to see churches care for their pastors better. Bringing God glory and seeing more people in the world turn to him is the goal.

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APPENDIX 1

Interview Guide

The "who" of a valuable leadership development program
- Who is involved in the program?
- Who oversees various aspects of the program?

The "what and how" of a valuable leadership development program
- Tell what activities would need to happen for the church to carry out a valuable leadership development program

The "when" of a valuable leadership development program
- How long would we want this program to last?
- What time commitment per week or per month is reasonable and valuable?

The "why" of a valuable leadership development program
- What would we want to accomplish as we carry out the program?

How would we measure success?

APPENDIX 2

Staff Member Confirmation Email

Dear _____,

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my Doctor of Ministry research project. Your ideas, experiences, and opinions are extremely important to me. There are approximately 25 individuals participating in this project and each one brings a great perspective. Your answers will be critical in developing themes and potential leadership development plans. Your responses will be reported as anonymous.

We will be meeting on a zoom call on _____ at _____. Please sign and return the informed consent form below.

Just Jesus,
Bobby Thompson
Informed Consent

The interview process in which you are about to participate is designed to investigate ways to evaluate and enhance the health of a church staff. This project is being done by Bobby Thompson in fulfillment of the action research project at Liberty University. In this group, you will be asked to discuss and help develop an intentional plan of shepherding. Please be certain that any information you provide will be held in stringent confidence. At no time will your name be reported along with your responses. Please understand that your participation in this research is voluntary and you are free to depart at any time. By partaking, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research project.

Name_____

Signed_____ Date_____

APPENDIX 3

Member Check Results

Below you will see a table of my findings of what church leaders' perceptions of a

successful leadership development program are. Please take a moment and answer the following

questions.

1. What would you change about any of these findings?
2. What area do you see that most captured your perceptions?
3. What area do you think is most vital to get right?

Church Leaders perceptions of a useful LDP

The goals of an LDP	Alignment of the mission and vision of the church, Replication of leaders, development of skills and performance.
The structure of an LDP	A combination of one-on-one, large groups, modeling and informal (organic) interactions between team and supervisor.
The members of an LDP	All staff members and may include volunteers
The guide of the LDP	The one whom the team identifies as most qualified and passionate about leadership development. (Could be the lead pastor, executive Pastor, or even an outsider)
The foci of an LDP	Holistic approach: spiritual, emotional, physical, safety/healing.
The evaluation of an LDP	Measure alignment of mission, replication of leaders, and development of skills

IRB Approval Letter

June 29, 2021

Bobby Thompson
Kenneth Nehrbass

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY20-21-1022 A Strategic Approach to Shepherding Church Staff

Dear Bobby Thompson and Kenneth Nehrbass,

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 project 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 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.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office