

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

A CORRELATIONAL STUDY: SECOND-CHAIR LEADERS'
LEVEL 5 LEADERSHIP SCORE AND CHURCH GROWTH
AMONG SOUTHERN BAPTIST MEGACHURCHES

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Martin Benjamin Lovvorn

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

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ABSTRACT

As the church strives to overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges and navigate tumultuous times to fulfill its Great Commission, church leaders must strive to understand the type of leadership required to best accomplish their kingdom work. In researching the type of pastoral leadership that will most effectively build the church of Jesus Christ and advance his kingdom, much work has been dedicated to examining the leadership styles and influence of senior or lead pastors. However, few studies have explored the influence of second-chair pastoral leaders (SCPLs). This study is the first to quantitatively examine whether SCPLs who demonstrate the personal humility and professional will characteristic of Level 5 Leadership, as conceptualized by Collins (2001), contribute to the growth of the churches they serve. The purpose of this quantitative correlational study will be to determine if a statistically significant relationship exists between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs considered to be Level 5 Leaders as conceptualized by Level 5 Leadership Theory (L5LT) and measured by the Level 5 Leadership Scale (L5LS) and church growth as reflected by annual average weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions for Southern Baptist megachurches averaging at least 2,000 in weekly worship attendance in comparison to the growth realized by Southern Baptist megachurches led by SCPLs not considered to be Level 5 Leaders (cf., Collins, 2001; 2005; DeNeal, 2019; Reid, 2014).

Keywords: Christian leadership, second chair leadership, pastoral leadership, church leadership, church growth, Level 5 Leadership, Level 5 Leadership Scale, executive pastors, megachurches.

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Dedication

This research and dissertation are dedicated to my beloved family, who graciously sacrifice and faithfully support me as I pursue God's calling. I always thank God for you, Parris, my wife of noble character, and the arrows in my quiver – Levi, Jack, Colt, Hawk, and Landry. God blessed me beyond measure by giving me you. I pray I can say to you, "Follow me, as I follow Christ."

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I thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for redeeming me, calling me, and commissioning me for His service. I am constantly reminded of Christ's words, "The one who remains in Me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me."

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List of Abbreviations

Annual Church Profile (ACP)

Christian Standard Bible (CSB)

Church Growth Theory (CGT)

Level 5 Participant (L5P)

Non-Level 5 Participant (NL5P)

Level 5 Leadership Scale (L5LS)

Level 5 Leadership Theory (L5LT)

Pastoral Leadership Theory (PLT)

Second-Chair Leadership Theory (SCLT)

Second-Chair Pastoral Leadership (SCPL)

Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)

CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN

Introduction

W.A. Criswell, the longtime pastor of the historic First Baptist Church of Dallas, contended, “There is nothing wrong with a small church, but there is something wrong with a church that is not growing” (Falwell & Towns, 1973, p. 48). Indeed, “building his church constitutes Christ’s principal work in the world today” (Ryrie, 1999, p. 455). Jesus Christ has called pastors and leaders to advance this work (Christian Standard Bible, 2017/2020, Romans 12:8; Ephesians 4:11-13).¹ However, Christ does not intend his under-shepherds to undertake their great kingdom work alone. God often appoints a special cohort – the second-chair pastoral leader (SCPL) – to support the lead pastor, help shepherd the flock of God, and contribute to the growth of the church. The collaborative ministry of a well-matched first and second chair can significantly benefit the church (Bosch, 2020; Griffin, 2009). Accordingly, Hawco (2005) concluded, “the [first and second-chair pastoral leadership] team paradigm is vital to the effectiveness of the church of Christ in fulfilling her mission” (p. 7).

A second-chair leader is “a person in a subordinate role whose influence with others adds value throughout the organization” (Bonem & Patterson, 2005, p. 2). Though rooted in Scripture and increasingly recognized as invaluable, the critical role of SCPL has been described as “the most misunderstood clergy position of all time” (McCullar, 2009, p. 12). This study sought to objectively and quantitatively examine the contribution of SCPLs to the churches they serve. Specifically, applying Second-Chair Leadership Theory (SCLT) and Level 5 Leadership Theory

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the Bible are from the Christian Standard Bible (2017/2020).

(L5LT), this study examined whether there is a correlation between the Level 5 Leadership capabilities of SCPLs and church growth.

Since its birth, the church has grown as it fulfilled its Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:47). Over the last century, much work has been undertaken to discern how pastors can best contribute to church growth through effective leadership. Generally, there is consensus that pastoral leadership is critical to church growth (DeNeal, 2019, p. 59). However, few scholarly studies have empirically verified this premise (DeNeal, 2019, p. 41). Fewer still are studies that have even considered the importance of second-chair pastoral leadership to church growth.

This study is one of the first to quantitatively examine whether a relationship exists between SCPLs' effectiveness and the growth of the churches they serve. It is the first to quantitatively examine whether SCPLs who demonstrate the personal humility and professional will characteristic of Level 5 Leadership, as conceptualized by Collins (2001), contribute to church growth. In Chapter One, the researcher provides additional background to the research problem giving rise to the research concern. The researcher then offers a statement of the research problem that is the crux of this study, followed by a statement of purpose for the study. Next, the researcher outlines the research questions to be answered, describes any underlying assumptions and delimitations, and provides a list of defined terms. In conclusion to Chapter One, the researcher further explains the significance of this study and outlines the research methodology employed. In later chapters, the researcher provides an in-depth review of the relevant literature, research methodology, analysis of findings, and conclusions and recommendations for future studies.

Background to the Problem

This study explored whether SCPLs who demonstrate Level 5 Leadership influence the growth of the churches they serve. The task of the SCPL is among the most challenging and misunderstood callings in Christendom. Scripture reveals that Jesus Christ is building and growing his church, and he has commissioned his followers to participate in his work (Matthew 16:18; 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). As the Chief Shepherd, Christ has specially called and appointed some to serve as under-shepherds of his church (1 Peter 5:1-4). In a sense, SCPLs are the “under-under-shepherds.” They face unique challenges not experienced by others serving in ministry or analogous roles in other sectors (Bonem, 2016, p. 71). Yet, like the lead pastors they serve, they are called by God to contribute uniquely to the leadership and growth of Jesus Christ’s church. As the church strives to fulfill its charge in tumultuous times, churches and their leaders require a theological and theoretical framework to guide their ministry and help them understand the leadership structures, strategies, and styles that best advance the church’s mission.

In researching the type of pastoral leadership that will most effectively achieve this aim, relatively little scholarly work has explored the contribution of SCPLs. However, the church should not neglect to undertake such an examination as effective SCPLs may prove invaluable in helping churches and lead pastors to overcome the societal trends threatening the continued growth of the church in the United States today.

A cursory review of recent studies and news accounts regarding the state of the church in the United States might suggest that its mission and ministry are in great peril. The Pew Research Center observed, “The trends are clear – the U.S. is steadily becoming less Christian and less religiously observant” (Pew Research, 2019, para. 12). The number of Americans who identify as Christian has declined significantly over the last fifty years (Burdick, 2018, pp. 205-

206). During that time, the percentage of Americans identifying as Protestant Christians fell by almost 30%, while the percentage of those who claim no religious affiliation increased by nearly 20% (Burdick, 2018, p. 206). In the last twenty years, church membership in America has decreased by 20%, with only 50% of Americans reporting they belong to a church or other religious organization (Jones, 2019). Pew Research (2019) confirmed the steady continuation of these ominous trends over the last decade (para. 1, 8).

In a recent study, Pew Research (2022) estimated that in 2020, only about 64% of Americans claimed to be Christians, representing a steady and significant decline over the last three decades. If these trends continue at the same rate, Pew Research (2022) projects that by 2070, Christians could make up as little as 35% of the American population, while the religiously unaffiliated could comprise as much as 54% of the population.

Even Southern Baptist churches, who long withstood the decline experienced in other denominations, have not escaped the detrimental effects of this changing landscape. The Southern Baptist Convention, comprised of approximately 50,000 independent, cooperating churches, represents the largest Protestant denomination in the United States. Historically, Southern Baptists have been heavily influenced by the Church Growth Movement and have prioritized an evangelistic Sunday School ministry as a means of building the church and fulfilling the Great Commission (McLain, 1998). However, as *Christianity Today* recognized in 2019, “the nation’s biggest Protestant denomination isn’t as big as it used to be,” noting that Southern Baptist church membership had reached its lowest point in thirty years (Shellnut, 2019). If the church should be growing, the outlook may seem bleak.

Moreover, in 2020, the church was confronted with a new challenge – the global COVID-19 pandemic, which threatened the physical and emotional health of its members, unsettled

previously unalterable practices, and reshaped behavioral norms. Many churches were forced to suspend the practice of corporate worship, a liturgy foundational to the Christian faith. As a result, some predicted that 20% of churches would not survive the pandemic (Bunting, 2020, para. 1).

However, it would be a mistake to underestimate the church of Jesus Christ. In the midst of this hostile environment, faithful church leaders are working tirelessly to build and grow his church. Among them are those called and assigned by Christ to serve as second-chair pastoral leaders. Theirs is both a challenging and rewarding task. Serving Jesus Christ by leading his church is a great honor and significant responsibility. God promises pastoral leaders who lead well an “unfading crown of glory” (1 Peter 5:4b). He also admonishes them, “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

As under-shepherds of the church of Jesus Christ, pastoral leaders will be accountable to the Chief Shepherd for how they led his beloved church (1 Peter 5:4a). Thus, they must prayerfully consider how to rightly discharge their leadership duties in a manner “worthy of the calling [they] have received” (Ephesians 4:1). While questions about whom God has called one to be and what God has charged one to do may seem rudimentary, the concept of effective leadership has proven difficult for even learned scholars and experienced practitioners to apprehend (Deal, 2015, p. 3-4). Further, as the “most misunderstood clergy position of all time,” the role of the SCPL is among the most challenging in Christendom (McCullar, 2009, p. 12).

Foundational questions about role and responsibility can be confounding for SCPLs striving to fulfill their calling. As such, they critically require a leadership paradigm specially fitted to their unique ministry. Armed with such a model, SCPLs can more than merely survive

the challenges they face. They can thrive as they tenaciously carry out the Great Commission of Jesus Christ through his church (even though others may not realize or recognize their impact). The objective of this study is to provide these “good soldier[s] of Christ Jesus” with a framework that will help them “please [their] commanding officer” and accomplish their mission (2 Timothy 2:3-4). An integrated framework, including a biblical understanding of the mission and growth of the church, Christian leadership, pastoral leadership, and subordinate leadership, alongside social science theories of Second-Chair and Level 5 Leadership, may provide the optimal model for these God-ordained leaders.

To this end, this study quantitatively examined whether SCPLs who demonstrate Level 5 Leadership qualities contribute to church growth. Because this study evidences a relationship between second-chair pastoral leadership and the continued growth of the church, its findings will benefit SCPLs working to grow their churches by providing them with a theological and theoretical paradigm that will support their ministry, and it will assist churches and lead pastors who are seeking such leaders to help them overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles as they work to fulfill Christ’s Great Commission.

A review of the literature revealed a significant gap that should be explored in support of SCPLs and their kingdom work. SCLT is emerging as a highly effective framework for building and leading organizations in various areas, including the church. By its very nature, it is thoroughly paradoxical in that second-chair leaders must simultaneously lead and follow. This, however, is the way of the Christian leader – particularly the pastoral leader. Despite this synergy and its roots in the ecclesial arena, little scholarly research has examined the effect of second-chair pastoral leadership on church growth. Likewise, despite its overwhelming popularity, little scholarly work has been done to objectively measure and apply L5LT and its

two constructs of personal humility and professional will. This study is the first to quantitatively measure the Level 5 Leadership qualities of SCPLs and explore whether those who demonstrate personal humility and professional will – the two constructs of Level 5 Leadership – contribute to church growth as reflected by key performance indicators. Its findings will further equip and inform SCPLs seeking to fulfill their callings in service to Jesus Christ.

Statement of the Problem

This study examines and applies the emerging theory of Second-Chair Leadership and the popular theory of Level 5 Leadership, neither of which have been comprehensively considered in scholarly research, to determine whether a relationship exists between the leadership styles of SCPLs and church growth as reflected by three key performance indicators – specifically, weekly worship attendance, annual financial contributions, and annual baptisms.

The subject of leadership is one of the most researched and least understood among all social sciences (Deal, 2015, pp. 3-4). Numerous theories have been introduced through the years as attempts to provide clarity to the concept of leadership, and the church has often sought to understand these theories through a biblical worldview in furtherance of its kingdom work (Deal, 2015, pp. 9-15). Those efforts have yielded mixed results and little empirical evidence to support any church growth strategy. In this crowded field of study, the emerging theories of SCLT and L5LT are being introduced and developed. These two theories have been considered even more amorphous than their predecessors. They seemingly stand as antithetical to traditional concepts of leadership. Despite their complexity and ambiguity, however, the church may find the combined application of these theories valuable in fulfilling its Great Commission.

DeNeal (2019) examined whether a relationship existed between the leadership effectiveness of lead pastors as conceptualized by L5LT and church growth. Surprisingly, despite

the obvious importance of effective senior pastor leadership, DeNeal found no correlation. In applying secular leadership theories, however, one must recognize that the church is unlike any other organization on earth. Likewise, its leadership roles and structure do not necessarily mirror those of secular organizations. The lead pastor uniquely serves as Christ's spiritual under-shepherd, is called to publicly proclaim the gospel message, and is often aided in his organizational work by other elders and deacons.

As such, the researcher hypothesized that L5LT is more applicable to second-chair pastoral leadership than to the unique role of lead pastor, and that SCPLs who demonstrate personal humility and professional will in support of their lead pastor and church can significantly influence church growth. If this study supports the researcher's hypothesis, its findings will be valuable to churches and lead pastors seeking a second-chair leader to assist the lead pastor in building the church and accomplishing its mission and to SCPLs desirous of personal and professional growth that will strengthen their ability to significantly impact the world for Jesus Christ through their service in his church. This study is the first study to consider second-chair pastoral leadership within this conceptual framework by quantitatively examining whether a relationship exists between the Level 5 Leadership of SCPLs and the growth of the churches they serve as reflected by measurable key performance indicators.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study is to determine if a statistically significant relationship exists between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs considered to be Level 5 Leaders as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and church growth as reflected by annual average weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions for Southern Baptist megachurches averaging at least 2,000 in weekly

worship attendance in comparison to the growth realized by Southern Baptist megachurches led by SCPLs not considered to be Level 5 Leaders.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. What percentage of SCPLs of Southern Baptist megachurches is perceived to be Level 5 Leaders as measured by the L5LS (reflecting both personal humility and professional will)?

RQ2. What relationship, if any, exists between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and annual average weekly worship attendance?

RQ3. What relationship, if any, exists between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and annual total baptisms?

RQ4. What relationship, if any, exists between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and annual total financial contributions?

RQ5. What relationship, if any, exists between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and average weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions?

Assumptions and Delimitations

The researcher recognized certain assumptions underlying the study and delimitations establishing the boundaries of the study.

Research Assumptions

Although the researcher discusses CGT, for purposes of this study, the researcher assumed the participating churches and their leaders agree with the premise that churches should strive for growth and desire to increase their average worship attendance, annual financial contributions, and annual baptisms. Generally, though church leaders may debate the most appropriate means of church growth, they agree that healthy churches should be growing in these areas. Additionally, these three measures of church growth are regularly reported by Southern Baptist churches in a relatively consistent manner, whereas other measures may vary widely due

to differing ministry strategies and methods. Moreover, as a comparison, DeNeal (2019) utilized these three measures to consider whether a relationship exists between the leadership effectiveness of lead pastors identified as Level 5 Leaders and church growth. However, the researcher recognizes that not all churches intentionally pursue quantifiable growth for various theological or philosophical reasons. For example, MacArthur (1994) recognized that numerical growth is desirable but contends it is not a legitimate goal and condemns pragmatic methods often associated with CGT.

The researcher also recognizes that SCPLs often have very different roles and responsibilities from their counterparts in other churches. For purposes of this study, however, the researcher assumed the SCPLs in participating churches serve in a capacity consistent with the definition provided herein and with SCLT. Specifically, because the participating SCPLs must report directly to the lead pastor, the researcher assumed the SCPLs are serving in subordinate roles but are expected to influence others and add value to the organization.

The researcher approaches this study from an orthodox theological worldview traditionally espoused by Southern Baptist churches. Such a perspective frames the researcher's doctrinal beliefs and views on relevant issues, including church polity and mission.

Delimitations of the Research Design

This study included several delimitations that define its boundaries. Generally, these delimitations are intended to limit the influence of other confounding variables, including, but not limited to, theological and denominational differences, church autonomy, church size, emphasis on pertinent indicators of church growth, and major differences in the roles of participating SCPLs.

This study focused only on SCPLs of Southern Baptist megachurches. This delimitation

assumes these SCPLs share relatively similar responsibilities in similar environments in comparison to the entire population of second-chair church leaders.

To participate in this study, SCPLs must have served in their current position as a paid church staff member having formal authority over other staff members and responsibility for leading, managing, and/or administrating a significant portion of the church's ministry for at least five years. This delimitation was intended to focus the study on a period of time during which the influence of a single SCPL might be correlated with church growth.

While five years may appear to be a relatively short time period to evaluate whether such a correlation exists, the average tenure of pastoral leaders necessitates this narrow concentration. Generally, pastors remain at a church for approximately four years, but those serving in larger churches may tend toward a longer tenure of approximately nine years (Rainer, 2014; Fretwell, 2021; cf., Baptist Press, 2005). A study of executive pastors, however, found that these SCPLs have an average tenure of 5.5 years (Pepper, 2009, p. 7).

This study also focused only on second-chair leaders who report directly to the senior leader of the organization. Again, this delimitation was intended to emphasize those challenges unique to second-chair leadership positions and limit the influence of other variables.

Further, while leadership effectiveness and influence may be considered and evaluated in numerous ways, this study focused on leadership effectiveness as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS, which reflects the level of personal humility and professional will evidenced by the SCPL as reported by those completing the survey. The L5LS does not attempt to measure all specific qualities associated with L5LT, nor does it consider related theoretical constructs (cf., Reid, 2012, pp. 6, 18, 54-55).

Despite the established reliability of the instrument, the survey results may have reflected some personal bias. For example, SCPLs may consider themselves to be Level 5 Leaders but may not actually demonstrate the characteristics of Level 5 Leadership. This bias was offset by considering the responses of their colleagues in addition to their self-assessment. The other responders may also have been inclined to rate their SCPL more highly out of respect or concern. The confidentiality of their responses should permit them to answer objectively. The researcher took the utmost care in protecting the confidentiality of the responses, and no participating SCPLs were informed of their personal Level 5 Leadership Score. Participants were only given the opportunity to receive the findings of this study, which do not include any personally identifying information. Moreover, the heightened standard to qualify as a Level 5 Leader utilized in this study offset the personal bias potentially reflected in the responses.

Likewise, church growth and church health may be considered and evaluated in various ways, but this study focused on three metrics commonly measured and reported by Southern Baptist churches – worship attendance, baptisms, and financial contributions – as reflected in the Annual Church Profiles submitted to the Southern Baptist Convention. In some instances, it is possible that the reports submitted by churches could have been incomplete or inaccurate.

Finally, in light of the unprecedented challenges of 2020 resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused most churches in the United States to close for some time and could negatively influence all relevant measures of church growth, this study evaluated such measures for the period 2015-2019. This study, however, did not account for other crises or disasters in the relevant time period, which did not have such direct nationwide implications.

As a correlational study, any finding of a statistically significant relationship between the leadership of SCPLs and church growth are not necessarily causal or predictive – that is,

they do not reveal a “cause-and-effect relationship” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018, p. 148). Instead, a correlational study supports reasonable predictions regarding variable behavior and may reflect “plausible causal inference” (Curtis et al., 2016, p. 24).

Definition of Terms

The following defined terms are used in this study:

1. *Church Growth Theory*: Church Growth Theory (CGT) is a multifaceted and multidiscipline system designed for evaluating and measuring church growth. This system uses metrics such as numeric growth, baptismal gains, and financial contributions to determine church growth and health (DeNeal, 2019).
2. *Level 5 Leadership Scale*: The Level 5 Leadership Scale (L5LS) is a validated instrument for measuring Level 5 Leadership (DeNeal, 2019; Reid, 2012). The L5LS is used to quantitatively examine the two constructs of L5LT – personal humility and professional will (DeNeal, 2019).
3. *Level 5 Leadership Theory*: Level 5 Leadership Theory (L5LT) is a leadership typology and system that emerged from Collins’(2001) research and was popularized in his book *Good to Great* (DeNeal, 2019). This theory comprises two constructs of personal humility and professional will (DeNeal, 2019).
4. *Megachurch*: A megachurch is any Protestant Christian congregation with 2,000 or more average weekly attendees (both adults and children) at all services and physical locations (Thumma & Bird, 2015).
5. *Pastoral Leadership Theory*: Pastoral Leadership Theory (PLT) is an ecclesiological leadership frame and ideology influenced by biblical leadership characteristics and behaviors, as well as contemporary leadership concepts (DeNeal, 2019).

6. *Second-Chair Leader*: A Second-Chair Leader is a person in a subordinate role whose influence on others adds value throughout the organization (Bonem & Patterson, 2005).
7. *Second-Chair Leadership Theory*: Second-Chair Leadership Theory (SCLT) is an emerging leadership frame and ideology that considers the unique and complex challenges of leading from a subordinate position and the value provided by such subordinate leaders to the organizations and senior leaders they serve. SCLT has been heavily influenced by biblical concepts of leadership (Bonem & Patterson, 2005).
8. *Second-Chair Pastoral Leader*: An SCPL is a paid church staff member who reports directly to the lead pastor, has formal authority over other staff members, and has responsibility for leading, managing, and/or administrating a significant portion of the church's ministry.²

Significance of the Study

The researcher hypothesized that SCPLs who demonstrate Level 5 Leadership – both personal humility and professional will – can significantly contribute to church growth. To the extent this study supports the researcher's hypothesis, its findings could greatly benefit SCPLs desirous of personal and professional growth that will strengthen their ability to impact the world for Jesus Christ through their service in his church (cf., Johnson, 1995, pp. 182-183; McCullar, 2009, p. 12). It will also be particularly valuable to churches and lead pastors seeking a second-chair leader to assist in building the church and accomplishing its mission (cf., Reiland, 2014). As such, in exploring whether SCPLs who demonstrate Level 5 Leadership objectively and

² The definition for *Second-Chair Pastoral Leader* is based upon a survey of the literature regarding second-chair pastoral leadership in the church, including Bonem and Patterson (2005), Bonem (2016a; 2016b; 2017), Hawkins (2005), Taylor (2015), and Bosch (2020).

measurably contribute to church growth, this study meaningfully contributes to the fields of ecclesiology, organizational leadership, church leadership, and church growth by advancing the theoretical development and understanding of these fields of study. Additionally, it contributes to the epistemological understanding of L5LT by building upon the work of Reid (2012) and DeNeal (2019) in the use of the L5LS.

Summary of the Design

This study utilized a non-experimental, quantitative correlational research design in which a researcher will “use the correlational statistic to describe and measure the degree or association (or relationship) between two or more variables” (Creswell, 2014, p. 12). While correlational research does not reveal a cause-and-effect relationship, the discovery of a correlative relationship supports reasonable predictions regarding variable behavior (Curtis et al., 2016, p. 24; Seeram, 2019, p. 176).

The research population was SCPLs in Southern Baptist megachurches that are members of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), submitted an Annual Church Profile for the relevant time period (2015-2019), and maintained an average weekly worship attendance of at least 2,000 people in reporting year 2019. The SCPLs must have reported directly to the senior or lead pastor of their churches and served in their role for at least five years, including January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2019.

The researcher utilized a non-probability purposive total population sampling technique because the total number of Southern Baptist megachurches is relatively small and the population of SCPLs serving those churches shares a set of unique characteristics (Laerd Dissertation, n.d.). Of the estimated 5 million Christian congregations worldwide, based on the literature, the researcher estimated there would be approximately 200 Southern Baptist

megachurches in the United States. In surveying a total population, the response rate influences the level of confidence in the findings (Draugalis & Plaza, 2009). Generally, “a response rate of 50% - 60% or greater is optimal,” though the size of the population may require a higher response rate to support the reliability and generalizability of the findings (Draugalis & Plaza, 2009, pp. 1-2). An appropriate and representative response rate for a population of 200 is 66%, representing 132 responses as the sample (Draugalis & Plaza, 2009, p. 2).

The researcher discovered that only 167 megachurches qualified to participate in the study. From among those churches, only 93 SCPLs met the study criteria, resulting in an even smaller total population than originally anticipated. While 45% of the population responded to the survey, 17 had to be excluded, leaving a representative response of 26.88% of the total population (a sample of 25 qualified SCPLs). While such a response would not typically satisfy traditionally accepted standards of statistical significance, since this study involved a census of the total population and those participating represent a material percentage of the total population, its findings should be considered *practically significant* and “meaningful in a real-world sense of importance” (Mertler et al., 2022, p. 14).

Once the researcher identified the churches that met the criteria to be included in the study, the researcher reviewed available data, including church websites and other reports, or contacted the churches to determine if they had an individual serving the role of SCPL who might have qualified to participate in the study. The researcher then compiled a list of those serving as SCPLs in these churches and contacted these leaders via email to inform them, individually, of the study and request their participation. Utilizing electronic survey software, the researcher collected data from participants and responders, including an evaluation of the SCPL’s Level 5 Leadership as measured by the L5LS. Participating SCPLs were asked to

identify five colleagues who were also invited to assess the SCPL's leadership. Thus, those providing data pertaining to each participating SCPL included the SCPL and three to five of his or her colleagues.

The researcher analyzed the data using the electronic survey software, Microsoft Excel, and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The researcher used statistical procedures to determine whether there was a correlation between the variables. Specifically, the researcher used a Pearson product-moment correlation statistic to explore whether there is a correlation between the independent variable and each dependent variable individually, and a factorial multivariate multiple regression statistical test to relate the independent variables to the dependent variables collectively (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018, pp. 324-325, 334; DeNeal, 2019, pp. 82). The researcher then developed analytical generalizations to apply his findings to the population.

In Chapter Two, the researcher provides a more in-depth review of the precedent literature undergirding and leading to this study. The researcher outlines the research methodology in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Scripture teaches that those who aspire to be leaders in the church of Jesus Christ desire a noble task (1 Timothy 3:1). While tomes have been written about leaders and leadership, scholars and practitioners still debate what makes someone a good leader. Moreover, though God's Word has much to say about Christian leadership, its paradoxical nature has often proven difficult to rightly practice for even the most seasoned leaders. These issues can be especially confounding for second-chair pastoral leaders (SCPLs) striving to help grow the churches they serve. Indeed, relative to the broader fields of general leadership, Christian leadership, and, even more specifically, pastoral leadership, few scholarly studies have considered the nature or task of the SCPL. Thus, a review of the literature reveals a significant gap that should be explored.

Any sound approach to Christian ministry and leadership must rest upon the foundation of Scripture and properly integrate theology and theory. SCPLs working toward church growth must first consider what the Bible says about their role and responsibilities. They may then develop a biblical theology and theory of their task. In exploring the SCPL's contribution to church growth, this study examines a theology of (1) church growth, (2) Christian leadership, generally, and (3) pastoral leadership, specifically. This study also considers the application of Second-Chair Leadership Theory (SCLT) and Level 5 Leadership Theory (L5LT). Based upon a review of the literature, this researcher posits that a paradigmatic integration and practical application of these theological and theoretical considerations will serve the SCPL well as he works to build and grow the church under the headship of Jesus Christ and the leadership of a senior pastor.

Specifically, based upon a review of theological, theoretical, and related literature, the researcher hypothesized that SCPLs who exercise Level 5 Leadership positively influence church growth, and that this correlative relationship would be reflected in annual average weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions. This chapter provides an overview of the literature and data that support the researcher's postulate and evinces the need for this study. A theological and theoretical framework is constructed, and related literature is reviewed to provide a more complete context for the study. The chapter also reviews the rationale for the study, the gap in the literature to be explored, and a profile of the study.

Theological Framework

Christian leadership must be founded upon “an unequivocal belief in the objective truth of God’s Word and its authority over both belief and practice” (Bredfeldt, 2006, p. 69). As such, this study in second-chair pastoral leadership is first and foremost founded upon the “sturdy ground” of Scripture (Pinnock, 1967, pp. 150, 161). With the Bible as its basis, the theological framework for this study is constructed around three ecclesial pillars of (a) church growth, (b) Christian leadership, generally, and (c) pastoral leadership in the local church, specifically. A biblical theology regarding these matters holds that second-chair pastoral leaders (SCPLs) are called by God to contribute to church growth by helping lead pastors to equip the saints for the work of the ministry for building up the body of Christ to his glory.

Biblical Foundations of Second-Chair Pastoral Leadership

Scripture teaches that all Christian leadership is paradoxical because the Christian leader must simultaneously lead and follow (Matthew 20:25-28). This is especially true of SCPLs, who must submit themselves to Christ and to senior leaders placed in authority over them as they lead those entrusted to their care. While such paradoxical teachings can be difficult to practice, the

Bible offers models for the SCPL and provides the biblical foundations of Christian leadership and, more specifically, second-chair pastoral leadership.

Biblical Foundations of Christian Leadership

Bredfeldt (2006) notes, “[A] foundational commitment to the authority of Scripture . . . [is] the distinguishing characteristic of the [Christian] leader” (p. 70). It represents “an unequivocal belief in the objective truth of God’s Word and its authority over both belief and practice,” including matters of leadership (Bredfeldt, 2006, p. 69; Grudem, 1994, pp. 94-95). It is especially important for Christian leaders to establish this foundational commitment because of *what* Scripture teaches about leadership, which goes “against the grain of everything people have been taught by Western culture” (Hutchison, 2009, p. 69). That is, “Christian leaders are to lead like Christ” (Forrest, 2019, p. 23). Jesus Christ is the biblical model of leadership.

Jesus is the Model Servant. As a servant, Jesus did not seek to please himself but subordinated his will to the Father’s (Laniak, 2006, p. 99; Romans 15:3; Luke 22:42). “In pleasing his master, Christ is also the model [servant] for imitation” (Laniak, 2006, p. 99). As Howell (2003) explains, “Greatness in God’s kingdom consists in imitating the Son of man who came not to serve but to be served” (p. 189; Matthew 20:25-28). Indeed, servanthood is very the foundation of Christian leadership (Wagner, 2012, pp. 45, 47; Sanders, 2007, p. 22).

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. Like a shepherd, Jesus cares for his flock – his followers, he knows them intimately, he leads them toward a future hope, and he is willing to lay down his life for them (Harris, 2001, pp. 211, 214-216). He is the good Shepherd (John 10:11, 14). He is also the model Shepherd, whom his followers are to emulate (Harris, 2001, p. 211). As his under-shepherds, Christian leaders are called to care for the flock on behalf of the Chief Shepherd, just as he would – that is, in accordance with his image (Harris, 2001, pp. 211, 213,

249; 1 Peter 5:4; John 21:17). As such, “a Christian leader is someone who knows where the Lord is going and can get others to follow him as he follows the Lord” (Lawrence, 1987, p. 318).

Jesus is the Great Teacher. Bredfeldt (2006) observes that “Jesus came teaching” (p. 55). “The most common designation for Jesus was *rabbi* – teacher. Clearly, Jesus did not come as the leader of an enterprise but as the teacher of the words that bring life. It was his teaching and his sacrifice that marked his leadership” (Bredfeldt, 2006, p. 55). Likewise, Christian leaders are most effective when they serve as teacher-leaders, shepherding God’s flock and feeding his sheep by skillfully teaching their followers to understand and apply the Word of God (Bredfeldt, 2006, pp. 52, 56-58, 116; 1 Peter 5:2). Jesus Christ, the Great Teacher, demonstrates that “biblical leadership is a teaching task” (Bredfeldt, 2006, p. 27).

Jesus is the Ultimate Transformer. Jesus does more than model and teach leadership; he wholly transforms his followers. Christians are to live according to the image of Jesus Christ, but their sin nature interferes with their ability to do so (Forrest, 2019, p. 23; Grudem, 1994, p. 445; Kilner, 2015, p. 149). In Christ, however, “people are liberated to fulfill all that God intends them to be as human beings created in the image of God” (Kilner, 2015, p. 234). To lead as Christ is beyond the reach of man in his own strength, but Christian leaders are equipped for the task as Jesus *transforms* his followers and *conforms* them to his image (Kilner, 2015, p. 234; Romans 8:29; 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 12:9; Colossians 3:10).

Biblical Foundations of Second-Chair Leadership

Scripture reveals that the Lord often uses surrendered subordinate leaders to advance his kingdom. Indeed, the Bible provides illustrative and instructive examples of second-chair leadership. Some of God’s choicest servants served him from the second chair. For instance, Daniel served in a subordinate role to pagan King Nebuchadnezzar but was entrusted with oversight of Babylon (Daniel 2:48). Elisha served as Elijah’s assistant but was blessed with a

spiritual birthright as he assumed the mantle of leadership (1 Kings 2:9-12). The twelve apostles might be considered a cadre of second-chair leaders serving directly under the headship of Jesus Christ (Luke 6:12-16). Paul worked alongside several subordinates during his ministry and missionary journeys, including Silas, John Mark, Luke, Timothy, and Titus (Hawkins, 2000, pp. 24-28; Patterson, 2010, pp. 78-81). Modern SCPLs can glean lessons from these examples, and each account demonstrates that God calls and uses subordinate leaders. However, three figures are prime biblical models of second-chair leadership – Joseph, Joshua, and Timothy.

Joseph: The World’s Greatest Second-Chair Leader. Bonem and Patterson (2005) describe Joseph as “the world’s greatest second-chair leader” (p. 9). While living as a slave and a prisoner, Bonem and Patterson (2006) contend, “There must have been a season when [Joseph] discovered the meaning of second chair leadership” (p. 9). “He was no longer the favored son. He had no position of authority. . . . He apparently learned quickly and retained these lessons [of second-chair leadership] for the rest of his life” (p. 9). As Joseph humbled himself before the Lord, God exalted him (cf., 1 Peter 5:6). God would use Joseph to deliver his chosen people as part of his grand kingdom plan (Genesis 46; 50). Joseph was not ready to assume this influential leadership role until he wholly submitted to the Lord and developed the spiritual maturity required of second-chair leaders. The Bible evidences that SCPLs are appointed by God and prepared for his service and that God can greatly use them in their subordinate roles.

Joshua: The Second-Chair Leader God Prepared for Command. Likewise, after the nation of Israel was delivered from slavery in Egypt, God prepared Joshua to lead his people in the conquest of Canaan by positioning him as Moses’s second-chair for approximately forty years (i.e., Exodus 24:13; 33:11; Numbers 11:28; Joshua 1:1-5; Howell, 2003, p. 39). Blackaby

and Blackaby (2004) assert, “One of the main reasons Joshua became such a successful leader was because he first was a faithful and conscientious assistant” (p. 39).

The Battle of Rephidim: A First and Second-Chair Leadership Team in Action. Moses and Joshua are first seen working together as first and second-chair leaders in the face of hostility and crisis when they are attacked by the Amalekites at Rephidim (Exodus 17:8). Moses appointed Joshua as commander and charged him with recruiting an army and leading them into battle (Exodus 17:9a). Having delegated this important role and responsibility to Joshua, however, Moses did not abdicate his leadership. On the contrary, Moses informed Joshua, “I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand” (Exodus 17:9b). “Joshua appears in what will become a characteristic role as general of the armies with an authority approved by Moses” (Hess, 1996, pp. 21). Meanwhile, Moses maintains his preeminent role as God’s under-shepherd, taking his position before the people and appealing to God for aid and empowerment (Exodus 17:11-12). When the battle is won, it is God who is honored, glorified, and ascribed the victory (Exodus 17:15). In the same way, an effective pastoral leadership team will leverage their unique roles and responsibilities to lead God’s people to glorify him.

Called to Serve: A Critical Quality of Second-Chair Leadership. Joshua demonstrates a critical aspect of second-chair pastoral leadership – subordinate leaders must be called by God to ministry. The SCPL also “has a mandate from the Lord to fulfill” (Sheets & Jackson, 2005, p. 44). Blackaby and Blackaby recognize, “The job of assistant requires a clear sense of calling” (p. 45). Joshua was effective as a subordinate leader because he was confident that God called and commissioned him (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2006, pp. 43-45). Scripture reflects an important principle of biblical leadership – “The key to one’s leadership position rests with God. God assigns some people to work as assistants to other leaders. God calls others into roles as senior

leaders. . . . The key is God’s assignment” (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2006, p. 43). In other words, the second-chair spiritual leader must rest confidently in his divine calling.

Paul and Timothy: A Pastoral Ministry Team. In the New Testament, Scripture describes the ministry of several dyadic ministry teams, but the relationship of Paul and Timothy is perhaps one of the most beautiful pictures of an effective and high-performing pastoral ministry team in action. Though Paul and Timothy were fulfilling their apostolic mission, their relationship is akin to that of first and second-chair pastoral leaders in that they led, built, and strengthened the church of Jesus Christ together (Patterson, 2010, pp. 78-81). As a result of their combined efforts in service to the Lord, “the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers” (Acts 16:5). Timothy expanded and extended Paul’s ministerial influence as Paul’s “agent to encourage and strengthen [local] churches” (Patterson, 2010, p. 30). In the same way, an effective SCPL should expand and extend the ministry of the senior leader in fulfilling the Great Commission and building up the body of Christ.

These three examples reflect that God chooses to work in and through second-chair leaders in special ways. Bonem and Patterson (2006) posit that second-chair leadership is not second-tier leadership (pp. 72-73). Indeed, Christ expressly teaches that godly leadership entails subordinate service to God and others. These principles of second-chair pastoral leadership have been recognized and practiced by the church of Jesus Christ since its beginning.

Theological Foundations of Second-Chair Pastoral Leadership

The early church emphasized and recognized the importance of second-chair pastoral leadership. Grudem (1994) observed, “There is quite a consistent pattern of plural elders as the main governing group in New Testament churches” (p. 912). In the first century, it appears the earliest church fathers continued the practice of installing associate pastors or elders to help lead local churches. For example, relying on Scripture and the teachings of the apostles, Clement

notes that elders or pastors were to be appointed as leaders of the local church, describing the practice as “no new method” (Horrell, 1997, p. 332; Johnston, 2006, p. 12). According to Dever (2001), the patristics also recognized that one lead pastor should be vested with authority over the others as “first among equals” (p. 532; Harvey, 2021, para. 8). In the second century, Justin referred to the lead pastor as the president-elder to distinguish him from his subordinate pastors (Dever, 2001, p. 532; Harvey, 2001, para. 8). Shortly thereafter, however, church polity began to morph into various iterations of the model outlined in Scripture. Ignatius appears to be one of the first to contend for a new monepiscopacy, vesting even greater power in a single elder (p. 333). Johnston (2006) notes that one might infer from Ignatius’ writings that this model was a “relatively new innovation” (p. 12). By the mid-second century, few churches are described in patristic writings as having more than one elder (Johnson, 2022, para. 13). For example, Polycarp is described as being appointed as *the* elder of the church in Smyrna (Johnson, 2022, para. 13). While this change was not necessarily unbiblical, it may have led to future distortions of the ecclesial leadership structure. It likely also contributed to the identity crisis SCPLs are facing today as they wrestle with questions regarding their role and responsibilities. However, having established that second-chair pastoral leadership is firmly rooted in Scripture and was recognized by the early church, contemporary SCPLs may again develop a biblical theology and theory of their God-ordained calling.

Church Growth

Church leaders must develop a biblical theology of church growth. McGavran (1961) contended, “God wills church growth” (p. 430; 1 Corinthians 3:7). McGavran (1968) explained, “Church growth is not the only end of mission, but it is generally held to be a chief and irreplaceable end” (p. 336). A biblical theology of church growth recognizes its aim as the

“underlying purpose of the Bible” (McGavran, 1968, p. 58). Its overarching goal is “to proclaim Jesus Christ as God and Savior and encourage men and women to become his disciples and responsible members of his church” (McGavran, 1968, p. 57). Such a theology supports the view that Christ has called his followers to *numerically* grow both the universal church and individual local churches (i.e., McGavran, 1955, p. 394; Towns, 1986, pp. 67-68).

There is little debate among reputable Christian leaders that Christ desires his church to grow through the addition of people who have responded to his gospel and have been saved by grace through faith in him, but there is much debate about *how* such growth occurs and the Christian leader’s role in the process. Historically, church growth principles have been widely embraced by evangelical churches – particularly Southern Baptist churches stressing missions and evangelism (cf., McSwain, 1980, pp. 534-535). In support of this view, church growth proponents like Donald McGavran, Peter Wagner, and Elmer Towns held to a theology that promulgated a consecrated pragmatism for the advancement of the gospel. Since its inception, however, prominent voices like John MacArthur and Os Guinness warned against such a theology of church growth as unbiblical (e.g., Guinness, 1992; 1993; p. 50; Litfin, 1998, pp. 66-68; MacArthur, 1994; 2010). Consequently, the theological implications of church growth strategies were thoroughly considered and discussed at the height of the Church Growth Movement – now almost thirty years ago.

Towns (1986) described church growth as “that science that investigates the planting, multiplication, growth, function, health, and death of churches. It strives to apply the Biblical and social principles in its gathering, analysis, displaying and defending of the facts involved in implementing the great commission” (p. 64). Therefore, Towns (1986) contended, “The area of church growth is connected to theology in both content and methodology” (p. 67).

McGavran argued, “Church growth is basically a theological stance. God requires it. . . . Church growth rises in unshakeable theological conviction” (McGavran & Wagner, 1990, p. 8). McGavran taught that Christian leaders are spiritually obligated to employ pragmatism bounded by morality in the pursuit of church growth to accomplish the Christian mission. McGavran, however, understood that his emphasis on pragmatism could be misconstrued. As such, he noted that a biblical approach to church growth “should never be seen as self-aggrandizement, but always as faithfulness to God” (McGavran, 1968, p. 335; McGavran & Wagner, 1990, p. 283).

Wagner (1972) further advanced the theological concept of consecrated pragmatism as a moral means to a godly end. Wagner argued, “faithful obedience to Jesus Christ as Lord implies bending all efforts, energies, and resources toward bringing men and women to follow Christ in true discipleship, and to join themselves together in the fellowship of local churches” (para. 5). He advocated for a “fierce pragmatism” in this regard (Wagner, 1972, para. 7). In defending this view of pragmatism, Wagner (2010) explained, “When I assert that the end justifies the means in strategy planning, I am referring to value-neutral means only, not to immoral means . . . God’s work must be done in God’s way” (p. 29).

As they seek to build and grow the church in service to Jesus Christ, church leaders must develop a biblical theology of church growth lest they wreck their own ministry or lead others astray (1 Peter 5:2-4; Acts 20:28; cf., 1 Corinthians 9:27; Luke 17:2). Such a theology allows for consecrated pragmatism bounded by ethics and morality derived in furtherance of the Great Commission and motivated by an ambition to exalt and honor the Lord (cf., Wagner, 2010, pp. 28-29). On the other hand, Christian leaders that treat God’s work as a human endeavor, unconcerned with scriptural standards of righteousness, sacrifice their testimony for Christ and their moral authority in society (MacArthur, 2010; Dreyer, 2016, pp. 5-6).

The church needs leaders “who will take up the challenge to build a church that will reach their generation” (Towns, 2003, p. 19). While these leaders must guard against dangerous pitfalls associated with pragmatism, including the temptation to pursue immoral means and selfish ends, they should aggressively pursue their aim of “[proclaiming] Jesus Christ as God and Savior and [encouraging] men and women to become his disciples and responsible members of his church” (McGavran, 1968, p. 57; cf., Guinness, 1993).

Christian Leadership

Generally, there is a consensus that effective leadership supports church growth (DeNeal, 2019, p. 59). As such, a biblical understanding of Christian leadership is foundational to any strategy of church growth. Such a theology must begin with a commitment to the authority of Scripture and properly integrate theology and theory (Bredfeldt, 2006, p. 69; Estep et al., 2008, pp. 34-37). A biblical theology of Christian leadership holds that (1) the Bible is the authority on Christian leadership, and (2) Jesus Christ is the standard and enabler of Christian leadership (Bredfeldt, 2006, p. 69; Kilner, 2015, pp. 233, 275).

The Bible is the Authority on Christian Leadership

Bredfeldt (2006) notes, “Biblical leadership begins with a commitment to biblical authority” (p. 67; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). Indeed, the authority of Scripture is the foundational principle on which all Christian theology rests (Pinnock, 1967, pp. 150-151). God has the ultimate authority on all matters, and the Bible is “the very verbal expression of God, like a decree or a proclamation of a monarch which conveys directly the authority of the sovereign” (Witmer, 1961, pp. 264, 265). Therefore, as “the transcript of the voice of the Living God,” the Bible can be trusted as wholly true on every subject to which it speaks, including Christian leadership (Pinnock, 1967, pp. 150, 154).

Importantly, though some attempt to narrow the scope of Scripture's authority, the Bible is God-breathed, authoritative, inspired, and inerrant regarding everything written in it (Grudem, 1994, pp. 94-95). A commitment to the authority of Scripture sometimes requires that Christians embrace paradoxical teachings meant to deepen their faith and understanding of God's kingdom (Waters, 2010, pp. 423-424). The Bible presents this type of paradoxical teaching on Christian leadership (Santos, 1997, pp. 452-453). Christ's approach to leadership directly contradicts human nature and cultural norms (Hutchison, 2009, p. 65). Jesus, however, has undeniably established a radical and paradoxical paradigm for Christian leadership (Hutchison, 2009, p. 54). To lead in God's kingdom, one must first follow. To govern, one must submit in service. To be great, one must humble himself as the least among men.

Jesus Christ is the Standard and Enabler of Christian Leadership

Jesus did not lead according to social norms (Forrest, 2019, p. 23). He did not first appear as a high-profile visionary leader with a great, charismatic personality. Instead, he led as a servant, a shepherd, and a teacher. Still, Jesus Christ was the ultimate transformational leader, modeling Christian leadership and enabling his followers to follow his example through the power of his Holy Spirit. Thus, Jesus is "both the standard and enabler" of Christian leadership, making it possible for believers to lead in his image (Kilner, 2015, p. 233; Romans 6:1-5).

Christlike leadership necessitates subordination. Lawrence (1987) noted, "No Christian leader can assume the position of being 'number one,' that is, the leader" (p. 317). "The chief characteristic of a Christian leader must be submission to Christ, and only those who have learned that submission is the key to power can be effective Christian leaders" (Lawrence, 1987, p. 318). Thus, every Christian leader is first and foremost a follower, a subordinate, of Christ

Jesus (Lawrence, 1987, p. 318). An effective Christian leader is entirely and exclusively focused on advancing the work of Christ (2 Timothy 2:4).

In his teachings about leadership, Christ expressly instructed his followers to follow his example (Matthew 20:25-28). Jesus explained that “leadership in God’s kingdom is completely different than the kind of leadership practiced in secular society. The latter is authoritarian and hierarchal. . . . In the kingdom of God, however, one climbs only by first descending” (Howell, 2003, p. 197). This principle undergirded Jesus’s teaching about Christian leadership and any biblical theology regarding the subject. Specifically, Jesus said:

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25b-28).

Notably, Jesus’s radical teachings on Christian leadership would have been as difficult for Christ’s disciples to accept when he first presented them as they are today (Hutchison, 2009, pp. 54-55). In giving this instruction, however, Jesus taught three important principles that inform a biblical theology of Christian leadership (Hutchison, 2009, pp. 62-64). Christ taught that spiritual authority and leadership (1) come only through suffering and sacrifice, (2) can only be sovereignly granted by God, and (3) are demonstrated through selfless service to others (Hutchison, 2009, pp. 63-63; Sanders, 2007, pp. 22-23).

Sanders (2007) describes this teaching as “The Master’s Master Principle” (pp. 21-27). He writes, “Jesus knew that the idea of leader as ‘loving servant of all’ would not appeal to most people. . . . But ‘servant’ is his requirement for those who want to lead in his kingdom” (Sanders, 2007, p. 22). The Great Teacher’s instructions regarding leadership directly contradict human nature and cultural norms (Hutchison, 2009, p. 65). Jesus, however, is “both the standard and enabler” of Christian leadership (Kilner, 2015, pp. 233; Colossians 1:15; Romans 6:1-5).

Pastoral Leadership

It is especially important for those called to lead local churches to embrace a biblical theology of Christian leadership – specifically, pastoral leadership. “Pastoral Theology is that science which treats of the duties of a pastor and a church to one another and to the world” (Carroll, 2016, p. 183). A comprehensive theology of pastoral leadership frames the manner in which Christ’s under-shepherds conduct their lives and ministries and relate to the church and the world (Carroll, 2016; 2016a). Indeed, Akin and Pace (2017) contend that “ministries are destined to collapse” apart from a sound theological framework (p. 3).

Many pastoral leaders, however, are facing an identity crisis that stems from a paucity of pastoral theology (Johnson, 1995, pp. 182-183). Accordingly, pastoral leaders must develop a biblical theology of the pastoral role to effectively serve the Lord and lead in his church. According to Akin and Pace (2017), “Pastoral theology establishes a theological framework for ministry that is biblically derived, historically informed, doctrinally sound, missionally engaged, philosophically deliberate, and contextually relevant” (p. 10).

The Office of the Pastor

Carroll (2016b) contended, “No office by men can equal the office of the Christian pastor” (p. 191). It is not because the pastor serves as priest or mediator between God and man, nor because he lords over the laity, but because the office of pastor has been divinely instituted by God and the pastor has been divinely called by God (Carroll, 2016b, pp. 191-192). Scripture recognizes two official offices in the church – pastors and deacons (Dever, 2005, p. 10). In describing the pastoral office, God’s Word uses three terms shepherd (or pastor), elder, and overseer (or bishop) (Bixby, 2007, pp. 5-8; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 5:2; Titus 1:5-9). In the New Testament, these terms are interchangeable and refer to the same office (Dever, 2005, p. 9).

In Southern Baptist churches, which adhere to congregational form of church governance that emphasizes the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, the office of lead pastor is said to be the “first-among-equals” (Shurden, 1989, p. 38; cf., 1 Peter 2:9). Still, the office of pastor is one of critical spiritual leadership. As influential pastor-theologian W.A. Criswell explained, “strong churches do not exist with weak, ineffectual pastors” (Shurden, 1989, p. 38).

Pastoral leadership may only be understood in relation to the church (Akin & Pace, 2017, pp. 12-13). According to Akin and Pace (2017), “A theology of pastoral ministry is inextricably linked to ecclesiology, or the doctrine of the church” (p. 137). The church is the community of Christ (Akin & Pace, 2017, pp. 142-143; Estep et al., 2008, pp. 235-236). It is his “chosen instrument to carry out his plan” (Akin & Pace, 2017, p. 142). As Chester and Timmis (2008) note, the church “is formed *by* mission and *for* mission” (p. 103). It has been commissioned by Jesus Christ to pursue a ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18). The church’s mission is to advance the kingdom of God through the proclamation of the gospel and the sanctification of the saints (Chester & Timmis, 2008, pp. 86-87; Stetzer & Rainer, 2010, p. 207). This kingdom work is accomplished by “mobilizing and equipping God’s people to engage together for the mission of God” (Lingenfelter, 2008, p. 42). This is the task of the pastoral leader.

According to Carroll (2016c), “What the general is to the army the pastor is to the church. As the oriental shepherd goes before his sheep and leads them into green pastures, so the pastor goes before the people to lead them into green pastures of spiritual development” (p. 216; Hebrews 13:7). As such, pastors are accountable to the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, for how they shepherd, lead, and care for his flock (Akin & Pace, 2017, p. 157).

The Polity of the Pastorate

There is much debate among Christians regarding the polity of the church and the pastorate. For purposes of this study, a biblical theology of pastoral leadership may assume the lead pastor should be deemed the “first-among-equals” in relation to both the congregation and to other pastors with whom he serves (Shurden, 1989, pp. 37-40). In developing a biblical theology of pastoral leadership pertaining to SCPLs, however, one must examine whether the role and responsibilities of pastor extend to those serving under the leadership of the lead pastor.

Those ministering in the church under the leadership of a first-chair pastor often contend with whether they are merely second-chair leaders holding a managerial position or second-chair *pastoral* leaders holding an ordained spiritual position (Taylor, 2015, p. 41). Those called by God as pastors are specially gifted and commissioned for that purpose, and their role carries with it great responsibility (Ephesians 4:11). Thus, SCPLs must seriously consider whether a biblical theology of pastoral leadership and ministry extends the God-ordained role and responsibility of the pastor to subordinate leaders of the church.

The lead pastor (commonly referred to as “the pastor”) is the person to whom the congregation has entrusted primary authority and responsibility for its leadership (Dever, 2005, pp. 32-33). Generally, the lead pastor is chiefly responsible for shepherding the flock of God – specifically, through the preaching and teaching of God’s Word (Dever, 2005, pp. 32-33). But Scripture also provides that there may be plural pastors (as distinct from a *plurality* of pastors) in a single local church (Akin & Pace, 2017, pp. 155; Bixby, 2007, pp. 5-7; Dever, 2005, pp. 18, 32-33; Acts 14:23; 20:17; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:14). In the New Testament, it appears the “multiplication of assistant pastors” typically stemmed from the growing size of a local church congregation (Dever, 2005, p. 21).

In fact, it appears it was common – if not expected – for New Testament churches to have more than one pastor (Dever, 2007, p. 13). Accordingly, a biblical theology of pastoral leadership provides for the role of the second-chair *pastoral* leader. As Dever (2007) explained:

“A pastor is set apart by God, biblically qualified, trained, and prepared; then called by a congregation to lead, govern, oversee, protect, and spiritually feed the congregation of God’s people. This definition of a pastor would seem to apply to all pastors, regardless of their ministry specialty, giftedness, time on the staff, or salary arrangements. When operating from the assumption of the terms elder (πρεσβύτερος), bishop (ἐπίσκοπος), and pastor (ποιμήν) are used in the [New Testament] of the same church office, the word pastor can logically refer to any qualified pastor, regardless of position on staff” (p. 7).

Therefore, in examining the role, responsibility, and influence of SCPLs, one should recognize these subordinate leaders as biblical pastors, and should not necessarily characterize their position as merely secular or administrative (cf., Bosch, 2020, pp. 35-45). Notably, however, as Bixby (2007) observed, “Any man who accepts the title elder, bishop, or pastor must be qualified and recognized as a pastor. All of the pastors who serve a church must share the same qualifications [of the lead pastor]” (p. 11; cf., Akin & Pace, 2017, p. 156). Thus, the role of SCPL is both a noble task and weighty responsibility.

To rightly examine any natural or social phenomena, Christian scholars and practitioners must view the world through a biblical worldview, which begins with a commitment to the authority of Scripture and a biblical theology of what the Bible says regarding relevant matters. This theological framework includes such a consideration of church growth, Christian leadership, and pastoral leadership. The next section of this literature review includes theoretical considerations relevant to this study.

Theoretical Framework

Building upon the foundation of Scripture, and employing a paradigmatic approach to integration, church leaders may appropriately integrate Scripture, theology, and social science

theories of church growth and leadership in furtherance of their calling to shepherd God's people and build the church of Jesus Christ (Estep et al., 2008, pp. 34-37).

The subject of leadership is one of the most researched and least understood among all social sciences (Deal, 2015, pp. 3-4). Today, emerging theories of leadership are being introduced and developed that seemingly stand as antithetical to traditional concepts of leadership. Such theories include Second-Chair Leadership and Level 5 Leadership.

The primary theories comprising the theoretical framework for this study are (a) church growth theory (CGT), (b) pastoral leadership theory (PLT), (c) second-chair leadership theory (SCLT), and (d) Level 5 Leadership theory (L5LT). The study will explore whether SCPLs who demonstrate the "paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will" characteristic of L5LT contribute to the growth of the churches they serve.

Church Growth Theory

Pastoral leaders are responsible for ensuring both the spiritual and organizational growth of the local body that has been entrusted to their care. To this end, CGT developed as a significant focus of ecclesial ministry over the last century and has been recognized as both a movement and a discipline (Towns, 1986, pp. 66-67).

Though scholars have proposed various definitions, Peter C. Wagner, one of McGavran's most well-known protégés who succeeded McGavran as the leading voice of the Church Growth Movement, defined CGT as follows:

“[CGT] is that science which investigates the planting, multiplication, function and health of Christian churches as they relate specifically to the effective implementation of God's commission to ‘make disciples of all nations’ (Matt. 18:19-20). [CGT] strives to combine the eternal theological principles of God's Word concerning the expansion of the church with the best insights of contemporary social and behavioral sciences, employing as its initial frame of reference, the foundational work done by Donald McGavran” (Towns, 1986, p. 64).

Towns (1986) later expounded on Wagner's definition, explaining, "[CGT is] that science that investigates the planting, multiplication, growth, function, health, and death of churches. [CGT] strives to apply the Biblical and social principles in its gathering, analysis, displaying, and defending of the facts involved in implementing the great commission" (p. 64).

In the years following its inception, CGT was widely embraced, aggressively criticized, and hotly debated. As an effective missional strategy, CGT evolved into a discipline, and thereafter grew into a movement among evangelical churches in America. Its principles and practices are still employed by churches across America today.

McGavran (1965) recognized serious deficiencies in the prevailing theories of Christian mission, and called for change and action, which resulted in the development of CGT (pp. 451-453). Specifically, McGavran (1955) argued that many wrongly believed they were effectively fulfilling the Christian mission by being faithfully present in whatever circumstances God ordained (p. 396; 1961, p. 431; 1965, pp. 451-452). McGavran (1965), however, argued that this view of mission was "at best partial, at worst thoroughly wrong – a well-intentioned but misleading policy, a basic error" (p. 452). He contended it fell short because it expected defeat, accepted small growth as the normal pattern, and it did not "throb with Christ's passion for men's eternal redemption" (McGavran, 1965, pp. 454-455; 1968, 335; cf., McGavran, 1955, p. 395; 1968, pp. 335-336). In other words, the church was not delivering results in service to the Lord (McGavran, 1968, 336; cf., Matt. 25:24-30). CGT requires the "baptism of bodies, the salvation of souls, and the building of new visible churches" (McGavran, 1968, p. 336).

Thus, McGavran (1965) introduced CGT as "a more up-to-date, effective and biblical course of action" (p. 453). As the foundational principle, McGavran (1965) argued that the Christian mission is more than service, community, or even proclamation, but "is intentionally,

and constitutionally, by word and deed, proclaiming Christ as Lord and Savior and persuading sinful men to become disciples” (p. 455). According to McGavran (1965), the fulfillment of mission is reflected in the “objective, measurable growth of the church” (p. 457).

Though CGT has been criticized for its focus on growth as a measure of effective ministry, even those who prefer to emphasize church health recognize that healthy churches grow (Mills, 2016, pp. 72, 75; cf. Towns, 1986, p. 65; Hunter, 1992, p. 160; Litfin, 1998, pp. 66-76). Moreover, research studies reflect that effective pastoral leadership has been considered an essential aspect of CGT (DeNeal, 2019, p. 7, 59-60). Accordingly, it is important for pastoral leaders to understand CGT, including its tenets and usefulness in ministry.

Tenets of Church Growth Theory

Since its inception, CGT has rested upon three foundational convictions – (1) “God wants his lost children found and enfolded . . . [and so the] Eternal God commands church growth,” (2) discovering the theological and scientific factors that contribute to church growth is essential to the Christian mission, and (3) all missional methods and ministry activities should be planned in light of what is being achieved – that is, the church should pursue what is most effectively yielding spiritual fruit for the kingdom of Jesus Christ (McGavran, 1986, pp. 57-58). These convictions led to the development of six primary tenets of CGT.

First, CGT is both biblical and scientific (McGavran, 1965, p. 459). CGT holds that God’s Word commands the pursuit of church growth through evangelism and discipleship (McGavran, 1968, p. 337; i.e., Matthew 28:19; Romans 1:5). CGT also recognizes and integrates anthropological and sociological factors in church growth (McGavran, 1965, p. 458).

Second, CGT necessitates serious strategy. CGT demands that Christians “take church growth with life-and-death seriousness” (McGavran, 1965, p. 458). CGT recognizes that church

growth does not just happen, but requires strategy, intentionality, and focus (McGavran, 1961, p. 430; 1965, p. 458). Christians must purposefully work to accomplish the Great Commission.

Similarly, CGT requires hard, bold plans to accomplish the Great Commission (McGavran, 1965, p. 459). McGavran (1965) argued, “Nothing inhibits the reconciliation of men to God today more than to imagine that [the] Christian mission can be carried out without conscious planning for church growth” (p. 459). Churches should employ the methods that most effectively yield results as reflected in the fourth tenet of CGT (McGavran, 1961, p. 434).

CGT emphasizes a spiritual return on investment (McGavran, 1965, p. 459). According to CGT, the church often lacks a sound strategy and therefore bypasses those most desperate to hear the gospel (McGavran, 1955, p. 402; 1968, p. 342). CGT argues that the church should strive to “win the winnable while they are winnable” (Hunter, 1992, p. 162). It holds that Christians should seek to save as many as possible by first reaching those who are most receptive and responsive to the gospel of Jesus Christ, thereby yielding the greatest spiritual return.

Fifth, in praxis, CGT should be adapted to reach distinct communities. McGavran (1965) argued that people are most naturally attracted to others like them, so churches often grow by adapting methods to reach those in the surrounding community who are most naturally drawn to the existing congregation (McGavran, 1965, p. 458). He also recognized that most converts are introduced to Jesus Christ by someone with whom they already have a personal relationship (p. 458; Hunter, 1992, p. 160). As Zunkel (1981) observed, CGT does not argue that “it must be this way; it simply often is this way” (p. 998). Importantly, McGavran (1965) emphasized that maturing Christians come together under the shared banner of Jesus Christ, and thus a growing church should become increasingly diverse over time (p. 458).

Sixth, CGT never compromises the message but always entails evolving methodologies. McGavran (1965) explained, “[CGT] recognizes that church growth is an exceedingly complex process and cannot be commanded” (p. 460). Like any theory, CGT is fallible and incomplete. It is not a proven “mechanical sequence” one can simply apply (McGavran, 1965, p. 460). Indeed, by its nature, CGT is ever-evolving. As Towns (1986) observed, “Programs are not absolutes; [but] biblical principles are” (p. 69). Ultimately, however, CGT recognizes church growth is a spiritual matter enacted by the Holy Spirit (McGavran, 1965, p. 460; 1 Cor. 3:5-9).

Pastoral Leadership Theory

In addition to a biblical theology, as discussed above, Litfin (1982) noted that pastors need a comprehensive theory framing their leadership role to help them make sense of their numerous responsibilities and evaluate their effectiveness (p. 58). Litfin (1982) observed, “There are few vocations that splinter a man like the pastoral ministry” (p. 57). Indeed, a pastor is expected “to be at once an effective scholar, administrator, communicator, counselor, motivator, educator, and host of other things as well” (Litfin, 1982, p. 57). In Scripture, the pastor is often understood in terms of its historical model as servant and shepherd (Litfin, 1982, pp. 58; DeNeal, 2019, p. 35; Acts 20:28-29; 1 Pet. 5:1-4; Phil. 1:7; 1 Tim. 3:1; 5:17; Titus 1:5, 7). As a theoretical paradigm, PLT relates to the roles and responsibilities of the church pastor and has been well-considered in both scholarly and popular literature using various constructs.

Conceptualizations of Pastoral Leadership

In scholarly literature, PLT has been primarily conceptualized by three leadership theories: (a) transformational leadership, (b) servant leadership, and (c) authentic leadership (DeNeal, 2019, p. 35; cf., Drummond, 2020, pp. 29-47). DeNeal (2019) reported that the body of scholarly research regarding PLT includes a “significant number of studies employing

transformational leadership theory . . . as a frame for conceptualizing and evaluating pastoral leadership” (p. 39; i.e., Drummond, 2020). Several studies considered whether a relationship exists between pastors’ transformational leadership styles and church growth, but these studies yielded widely disparate results (DeNeal, 2019, p. 41; i.e., Onnen, 1987; Bridges, 1995; King, 2007; Burton, 2010; Ham, 2012; Luckel, 2013). DeNeal (2019) also reported that numerous studies applied theories of servant leadership and authentic leadership to pastoral leadership (pp. 42-46). These studies, too, delivered mixed results in examining the relationship between pastoral leadership and church growth (DeNeal, 2019, p. 46; i.e., Ming, 2005; Danley, 2015).

In summary, PLT reflects the complex role and weighty responsibilities of the pastoral leader. While scholars seek to develop a useful theoretical framework to aid pastors in their work, practitioners strive to build and grow the church of Jesus Christ in accordance with Scripture. In light of these grand challenges, many churches have recognized the importance of adding SCPLs to help senior or lead pastors carry out the work the Lord has established for their churches, resulting in the development of SCLT in the ecclesial arena.

Second-Chair Leadership Theory

The name itself – second-chair leadership or subordinate leadership – reflects its paradoxical nature. However, despite its complexity and ambiguity, church leaders may find SCLT to be quite effective, integral to church growth, and more aligned with a biblical worldview than other established theories of leadership. In the area of leadership, Jesus Christ taught that those who seek to lead in his kingdom must first subordinate themselves in service to the Lord and to his people (Matt. 20:25-28, Christian Standard Bible). While SCLT stands to be further developed and understood in light of God’s Word, church leaders striving to lead in

accordance with Scripture, shepherd God's people, and build the church of Jesus Christ will do well to examine and employ the basic principles of this relatively novel approach.

Second-Chair Leadership Theory is an emerging theory of leadership that has been most heavily considered within the ecclesial context but is increasingly recognized as critically important to organizational leadership in various sectors. Bonem and Patterson (2005) described a second-chair leader as “a person in a subordinate role whose influence with others adds value throughout the organization” (p. 2). In their seminal work on SCLT, they contend that second-chair leaders able to manage the tensions unique to their subordinate role can make valuable contributions to their organizations (Bonem & Patterson, 2005, p. 4; Wiley, 2009, pp. 12-13).

The Evolution of Second-Chair Leadership

Though second-chair leadership may be an emerging theory of leadership, questions and challenges relating to the concept are not necessarily new. Fisher and Sharp (1999), Bellman (2001), and Scroggins (2017) sought to answer one of the primary questions on the minds of many subordinate leaders, “How do I lead if I am not in charge?” Fisher and Sharp (1999) explained that effective leaders must learn to wield influence within an organization without the formal or positional authority of the senior leader (pp. 14-34). Likewise, Bellman (2001) observed that many potential leaders serving in subordinate roles mistakenly “attribute power to a position [they] have yet to hold, or that others hold, and [tend] to diminish the power [they] currently have” (p. 2). The most effective and influential leaders, however, choose to lead, serve others, and add value to their organizations whether or not they have been granted the formal position or authority of the person “in charge” (Bellman, 2001, p. 1-2). Scroggins (2017) described this type of informal influence as the true “currency of leadership (pp. 26-27). In other

words, while subordinate leaders must recognize they are not in charge, they must also learn to serve their organizations and those in authority over them by leading as faithful followers.

The art of second-chair leadership has been effectively practiced in many fields for many years. In their work, *Co-Leaders*, Heenan and Bennis (2000) provide a wide variety of examples of subordinate leaders, including General George C. Marshall, Bob Lutz of Daimler-Chrysler, Win Smith of Merrill-Lynch, and Anne Sullivan Macy, Helen Keller's teacher. The outsized influence quietly wielded by second-chair leaders and their ability to create value has even been demonstrated in the upper echelons of government and at the highest levels of world leadership, as reflected in "*The Man Who Ran Washington*" and "*The Second Most Powerful Man in the World*," two recent biographies of second-chair leaders James Baker III and Admiral William Leahy, respectively (Baker & Glasser, 2020; O'Brien, 2019).

In his biography of Admiral Leahy, O'Brien (2019) recognized a unique dynamic of second-chair leadership, noting, "We often confuse celebrity with authority," but second-chair leadership entails "the substance of power, not the style" (p. 3). In other words, effective second-chair leaders focus on service and achievement rather than position or formal authority. They embrace the axiom famously displayed in the Oval Office by President Ronald Reagan, "There is no limit to what a man can do or where he can go if he does not mind who gets the credit." While this approach may rightly be acknowledged as noble, it is also important to recognize second-chair leadership as a proven and effective organizational strategy.

Heenan and Bennis (2000) emphasize that second-chair leadership (or co-leadership) "is not a fuzzy-minded buzzword designed to make non-CEOs feel better about themselves and their workplaces. Rather it is a tough-minded strategy that will unleash the hidden talent in any enterprise" (p. 5). In recent years, this strategy has been increasingly recognized as critical to

organizational success. According to Wickman and Winters (2016), the magical combination of first and second-chair leaders has proven to be the most effective strategy for building and leading organizations, as demonstrated by thousands of successful companies, including Disney, Ford, and McDonald's (pp. xii-xiii, 49-50).

Although second-chair leadership is not an entirely new concept, Heenan and Bennis (2000) recognize it as increasingly vital in a modern, fast-paced, changing environment, noting:

“[W]hat is new are the changed realities of the twenty-first century. In a world of increasing interdependence and ceaseless technological change, even the greatest of Great Men or Women simply can't get the job done alone. As a result, we need to rethink our most basic concepts of leadership” (p. 5; cf. Branaugh, 2017, para. 2-3; Fletcher, 2013, para. 1-8).

In rethinking leadership, organizations must “challenge the time-honored notion that all great institutions are the lengthened shadows of a Great Man or Woman” (Heenan & Bennis, 2000, p. 4). Instead, they should recognize that “every successful organization has, at its heart, a cadre of [second-chair leaders] – key players who do the work, even if they receive little of the glory” (Heenan & Bennis, 2000, p. 3).

This evolving perspective gave rise to the further development of SCLT, but the roots of subordinate leadership date back to the pages of Scripture and the teachings of Jesus.

A Biblical Worldview of Second-Chair Leadership Theory

The goal of every Christian leader should be to lead according to the image of Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches that Christians are being renewed in Christ and thus becoming more like Christ, the very image of God (Colossians 3:10). To be conformed to the image of God in Christ should be the aim and ordinary course of the Christian life (Kilner, 2015, p. 2351 Grudem, 1994, p. 445; Romans 8:29). Christian leaders have thus been called to “pattern [themselves] after Jesus, the complete revelation of the image of God” (Erickson, 2015, p. 192). Accordingly, to lead in accordance with a Christian worldview, one should strive to lead like Christ. Christ-

like leadership runs contrary to all of mankind's notions of power and influence. Though Jesus was the King of kings and Lord of lords, he led as a servant – a subordinate leader (Kilner, 2015, p. 293; Matthew 20:26-28; 1 Peter 5:4).

Just as Christ's teachings directly contradict human nature and cultural norms, SCLT reexamines traditional tenets of leadership (Hutchison, 2009, p. 65). Indeed, because Christian leadership requires submission to Christ, every Christian leader is first and foremost a follower, a subordinate (Lawrence, 1987, p. 318). In other words, in a spiritual sense, to lead in accordance with a Christian worldview, one must always serve as a second-chair leader.

In keeping with Scripture, SCLT emphasizes that Christian leaders must first and foremost serve in a subordinate role. Often, this is true within an organizational context. More importantly, however, Christians must always assume the role of subordinate to Christ before assuming the mantle of leadership. For the Christian and the second-chair leader, "a significant element in leadership is the ability to show others which way the [principal] leader is going" (Lawrence, 1987, p. 318). Accordingly, SCLT is generally consistent with a Christian worldview that always recognizes Jesus Christ as the head of the Church, Chief Shepherd, and primary leader (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18; 1 Peter 5:4).

Although SCLT largely aligns with a Christian worldview, the literature does reveal some weaknesses in the theory that are seemingly inconsistent with the biblical concept of subordinate leadership. In some cases, SCLT tends to depart from spiritual precepts by relying too heavily on secular theories and philosophies. In drawing analogies to the corporate sector to explain second-chair leadership in a spiritual context, one neglects (1) the unique character of the church as both an organization and a spiritual organism, and (2) the special calling of the senior pastor as a preacher and teacher of God's Word (cf., Acts 6:1-7). As such, CEO/COO,

leader/manager, and visionary/implementer models are lacking. This distinction is at the crux of Jesus's teaching – kingdom leadership is radically different.

Moreover, in applying secular models, the literature sometimes reserves true leadership functions exclusively for the first chair leader, which may inadvertently reinforce a type of great man leadership theory within a spiritual context. In the kingdom, however, regardless of position or assignment, every Christian should strive daily to be “renewed in knowledge according to the image of [their] Creator” so they might effectively serve and glorify the Lord (Colossians 3:10). Thus, while a second-chair leader should serve in accordance with their unique spiritual gifting, they should also be growing in spiritual wisdom and ability. As such, the maturing second-chair leader should not be relegated to a predefined managerial role but should be nurtured and developed to lead in support of their first-chair leader and organization.

Finally, though SCLT emphasizes service to the first chair leader, Christians must always remember that their service to the first chair is done in worship of the true head, Jesus Christ. The Christian first-chair leader should remember this truth as well. As Christ's under-shepherd, the first-chair leader says to the second-chair, “Follow me as I follow Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). In turn, the second-chair leader willingly follows the first-chair and humbly leads others in devoted service to the Chief Shepherd.

Second-chair leadership theory is emerging as a highly effective framework for building and leading organizations in various areas. By its very nature, it is thoroughly paradoxical in that second-chair leaders must simultaneously lead and follow. This, however, is the way of the Christian leader. Thus second-chair leadership theory is fundamentally consistent with a Christian perspective of leadership.

Distinctives of Second-Chair Leadership

Due to its ambiguous and paradoxical nature, the second-chair leader's role and responsibility remain difficult to grasp for even the most seasoned practitioners, often resulting in feelings of being lost, frustrated, and alone (Bonem, 2016a, p. 71; cf. Powell, 2009, p. 244). Deal (2015) examined whether SCLT is a new leadership theory and concluded that SCLT largely borrowed from established theories, particularly transformational and servant leadership (p. 59). The literature, however, reveals a far more complex theory with unique challenges innate in the subordinate-leader role that are difficult for even the most seasoned second-chair leaders to grasp (Bonem, 2016a, p. 71, 2016b, p. 41, 2017, para. 8, 16; Griffin, 2009, pp. 18-23; Mauriello, 2001, pp. 103-107; McCullar, 2009, p. 12; Powell, 2009, p. 244).

McCullar (2009) notes, "The second chair leader is the most misunderstood clergy position of all time" (p. 12; cf., Bird, 2012, para. 1; Bonem, 2016b, p. 41). This complex role is often "pinched in the middle" of several contingencies of stakeholders and faced with "navigating relational triangles, negotiating political power, stewarding agency, enacting followership, and understanding [best] management [practices]" (Mauriello, 2001, pp. iii, 17, 103, 104-107). Consequently, as Bonem (2017) writes, the second-chair leader must be highly flexible and broadly competent to lead and manage in various contexts under significant pressure (para. 1, 8, 16). Despite the unique challenges of their role, when second-chair leaders operate effectively, their performance often leads to the growth and success of the organizations they serve (i.e., Bosch, 2020, pp. 125-126).

The task of the second-chair leader is likewise difficult to define. While there is a tendency to always position the first chair as the visionary leader and the second chair as the implementing manager, the literature reveals that effective second-chair leaders must be able to

both lead and manage at the highest levels of competence (Hawkins, 2005; Griffin, 2009, pp. 18-23; Taylor, 2015; cf. Wickman & Winters, 2016). The second-chair leader may function as the chief operating officer, organizational strategist, or second-in-command (Fletcher, 2013, para. 11-28; cf. Powell, 2009, p. 229). They may be called upon to serve as an administrator, catalyst, mentor, or overseer (Fletcher, 2012; 2012a). The role requires unique discernment to determine how and when to exercise the appropriate degree of influence to affect the desired outcome while demonstrating proper respect and deference to the principal leader (Jones, 2013, para. 5-8).

Indeed, second-chair leadership is paradoxical and challenging by its nature. Heenan and Bennis (2000) note that second-chair leadership theory upends traditional notions of leadership (p. 5). Recognizing its value in the secular context, they explain, “The old corporate monotheism is finally giving way to a more realistic view that acknowledges [principal] leaders not as organizational gods but as the first among many contributors” (Heenan & Bennis, 2000, p. 4). Despite its challenges, Bosch (2020) theorized that effective second-chair leaders significantly contribute to the growth and success of the organizations they serve (pp. 125-126).

Level 5 Leadership Theory

Likewise, in the last twenty years, the popular theory of Level 5 Leadership Theory has been considered an unorthodox approach to effective organizational leadership and has been widely discussed, though relatively few scholarly studies have objectively evaluated its effectiveness. Collins (2001) distinguished Level 5 leadership as “the highest level in a hierarchy of executive leadership” (p. 20). He explained his view of Level 5 Leadership by outlining the various levels of organizational leadership as follows:

1. Level 1: Highly capable individuals make productive contributions through talent, knowledge, skills, and good work habits;

2. Level 2: Contributing team members contribute individual capabilities to the achievement of group objectives and work effectively with others in a group setting;
3. Level 3: Competent managers organize people and resources toward the effective and efficient pursuit of pre-determined objectives;
4. Level 4: Effective leaders catalyze commitment to and vigorous pursuit of a clear and compelling vision, stimulating higher performance standards; and
5. Level 5: Executives build enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will.

(pp. 20-21).

In differentiating Level 5 leadership from other comparison leaders, Collins (2001) contended that Level 5 leaders possessed a unique “paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will” (p. 20). These aspects of L5LT represent the two primary constructs of L5LT – that is, (1) personal humility and (2) professional will (Collins, 2001, p. 22; Reid, 2012, pp. 8-12; DeNeal, 2019, pp. 18-35). Thus, Level 5 leaders are “a study in duality – modest and willful, humble and fearless (Collins, 2001, p. 22).

Distinctives of Level 5 Leadership

Notably, Reid (2012) and DeNeal (2019) both distinguished L5LT from other leadership theories, including Greenleaf’s servant leadership. L5LT is commonly likened to such theories based on their shared emphasis on humility as critical to effective leadership (Reid, 2012, pp. 12-15; DeNeal, 2019, pp. 20-25). While these theories do prescribe a version of the personal humility reflected by L5LT, they do not include the dogged professional will that is equally essential to L5LT. For example, according to Greenleaf’s servant leadership theory, servant leaders should prioritize the needs of their followers over the success of the organization

(Greenleaf, 2007, p. 83; Northouse, 2018, pp. 227, 238; Reid, 2012, p. 13; DeNeal, 2019, pp. 20-21). According to L5LT, however, Level 5 leaders prioritize the successful completion of the organization’s mission – even before the personal needs of individual followers (Collins, 2005, p. 11; Reid, 2012, p. 15; DeNeal, 2019, pp. 21, 27). Therefore, while some other leadership theories do reflect the personal humility construct of L5LT, they do not account for the paradoxical combination of both personal humility and professional will that is unique to L5LT.

Summary of Theoretical Framework

Taken together, CGT, PLT, SCLT, and L5LT comprise a robust theoretical framework undergirding this study. This section provides an overview of these theories and advances the need for churches, pastoral leaders, and scholars to consider further how SCPLs might contribute to church growth. The next section of this literature review examines related literature that sheds further light on the need for this study, including seminal works and precedent studies regarding Second-Chair Leadership Theory and Level 5 Leadership Theory.

Related Literature

Building on the theological and theoretical frameworks outlined above, this section of the literature review will advance a more holistic view of the research question at issue and the gap in the existing literature by examining (a) the seminal works on Second-Chair Leadership Theory and Level 5 Leadership Theory, and (b) key precedent studies pertaining to the research question. Together, the biblical theology, social theory, and related literature reveal a gap in the literature ripe for review regarding the contribution of SCPLs to church growth.

Second-Chair Leadership Theory

The seminal work on Second-Chair Leadership Theory is Bonem and Patterson’s *“Leading from the Second Chair: Serving Your Church, Fulfilling Your Role, and Realizing Your*

Dreams” (Bonem & Patterson, 2005). They observed that the second-chair leader must learn to lead and manage through a set of paradoxes and established three paradoxical pillars of second-chair leadership (Bonem & Patterson, 2005). Specifically, the second-chair leader must manage the tensions of (1) the subordinate-leader paradox, (2) the deep-wide paradox, and (3) the contentment-dreaming paradox (Bonem & Patterson, 2005, p. 4; Wiley, 2009, pp. 12-13).

The Subordinate-Leader Paradox

The first paradox the second-chair leader must learn to embrace is the subordinate-leader paradox. Bonem and Patterson (2005) explain that the traditional “mental model of leadership involves having complete freedom to set direction and determine actions for ourselves and the organizations without any ‘interference’ from a supervisor” (p. 4). As such, one who is subordinate seems less “leaderlike” (Bonem & Patterson, 2005, p. 4). However, effective second-chair leaders realize they need not be at the “top of the pyramid” to lead or add value to their organizations (Bonem & Patterson, 2005, p. 4). They recognize and accept that they are not the “lead leader,” and they serve with a genuine attitude of humility and gladness (Bonem & Patterson, 2005, p. 30-31). They also recognize that their ability to serve and lead well depends largely on a mutually beneficial and edifying relationship with their first chair leader (Bonem & Patterson, 2005, p. 4; Bonem, 2016a, p. 72). Nelson (2021) notes that second-chair leaders must be able to discern “when they need to increase and when they need to decrease” – when to exercise authority and when to submit to the first-chair leader (p. 87). Bonem and Patterson (2005) liken the relationship between first and second-chair leaders to a marriage (p. 27). It takes effort to make the relationship work, but “when first and second chair leaders work together in a close, harmonious relationship fueled by a unified vision of God’s purpose for their ministry,” great things can be accomplished (Bonem & Patterson, 2005, pp. 27-28; Bonem, 2016b, pp. 5-6).

The Deep-Wide Paradox

Secondly, the second-chair leader must operate within the deep-wide paradox. Subordinates often have a deeper understanding of their narrow area of responsibility than do senior leaders. On the other hand, first-chair leaders often have a much wider perspective than their subordinates and are capable of seeing the big picture as they guide the organization forward. To function effectively, second-chair leaders must have both a deep and wide perspective (Bonem & Patterson, 2005, pp. 4-5). They must have a clear understanding of the vision, mission, and strategy of the organization and a thorough knowledge of its inner workings (Bonem & Patterson, 2005, p. 67; Bonem, 2016b, pp. 53-63). The deep-wide paradox presents unique challenges and opportunities to second-chair leaders (Bonem & Patterson, 2005, p. 69).

The Contentment-Dreaming Paradox

Finally, the second-chair leader must rest within the contentment-dreaming paradox. Second-chair leaders are leaders, not merely subordinates. Accordingly, second-chair leaders should have grand dreams for the future of their organization (Bonem & Patterson, 2005, p. 5). However, second-chair leaders must always be willing to subordinate their own dreams to the vision of the first-chair leader or the plans of the organization (Bonem & Patterson, 2005, p. 5). They must learn to be content with the present, or even accepting of an entirely different envisioned future, to remain effective in their second-chair role (Bonem & Patterson, 2005, p. 5). The contentment-dreaming paradox is often difficult for second-chair leaders to navigate, and some attempt to escape its tension by unhealthily moving toward one extreme of the spectrum, but successful second-chair leaders learn to manage the tension and rest comfortably within the paradox, contently serving while dreaming about the future (Bonem & Patterson, 2005, p. 117).

Level 5 Leadership Theory

L5LT was first developed by Collins (2001) in his bestselling book, *Good to Great*. In examining those factors that distinguished great companies from comparison companies, Collins (2001) found a particular leadership typology that contributed to their success (p. 20). Collins (2001) conceptualized this leadership as L5LT. In subsequent works, Collins maintained that Level 5 leadership was foundational to organizational success and that L5LT was consistently confirmed (cf. Collins, 2005, 2009; Collins & Hansen, 2011; Collins & Porras, 2010). Collins (2005) also argued that L5LT was transferable to organizations in the social sectors, including churches (p. 11; cf. Christianity Today, 2006; Bonem, 2010, p. 64).

Collins (2001) further described Level 5 leaders as “self-effacing individuals who displayed the fierce resolve to do whatever needed to be done to make the company great” (p. 21). He explained:

“Level 5 leaders channel their ego needs away from themselves and into the larger goal of building a great company. It’s not that Level 5 leaders have no ego or self-interest. Indeed, they are incredibly ambitious – but their ambition is first and foremost for the institution, not themselves” (Collins, 2001, p. 21).

These two constructs are discussed in more detail below and undergird the L5LS, which serves as the primary instrument for this study and precedent studies (cf., Reid, 2012; DeNeal, 2019).

Personal Humility

First, Collins (2001) observed that Level 5 leaders possessed a personal humility that distinguished them from other comparison leaders (pp. 27-30). They were often described as “quiet, humble, modest, reserved, shy, gracious, mild-mannered, self-effacing, [and] understated” (Collins, 2001, p. 27). Notably, when interviewed, Level 5 leaders generally avoided any discussions about their own contributions and commonly credited others with their organizations’ success (Collins, 2001, p. 27). They “looked out the window” to credit other

people and external factors when the organization realized success (Collins 2001, pp. 33, 36). Collins (2001) observed that these Level 5 leaders “never wanted to become larger-than-life heroes. . . . They were seemingly ordinary people quietly producing extraordinary results” (p. 28).

Professional Will

Second, Level 5 leaders demonstrate an extreme professional will (Collins, 2001, pp. 30-33). Collins (2001) explains that Level 5 leaders have a “ferocious resolve, an almost stoic determination to do whatever needs to be done to make the company great” (p. 30). They are “fanatically driven, infected with an incurable need to produce results” (Collins, 2001, p. 30). When things did not go well, they “looked in the mirror” to take responsibility for poor results (Collins, 2001, pp. 33-35). As an aside, Collins (2001) notes that many of these leaders did not come from outside the company but were insiders who were passionate about the organization and its mission (pp. 30-31). These Level 5 leaders were characterized by their “dogged nature . . . [and] personal style of sheer workmanlike diligence” (Collins, 2001, p. 33). They see and conduct themselves as a “plow horse” rather than a “show horse” (Collins, 2001, p. 33).

Collins (2001) provided the summary reflected in Table 1, outlining key aspects of the two constructs of L5LT – personal humility and professional will:

Table 1*The Two Sides of Level 5 Leadership*

Personal Humility	Professional Will
Demonstrates a compelling modesty, shunning public adulation, never boastful.	Creates superb results, a clear catalyst in the transition from good to great.
Acts with quiet, calm determination; relies principally on inspired standards, not inspiring charisma, to motivate.	Demonstrates an unwavering resolve to do whatever must be done to produce the best long-term results, no matter how difficult.
Channels ambition into the company, not the self; sets up successors for even greater success in the next generation.	Sets the standard of building an enduring great company; will settle for nothing less.
Looks out the window, not in the mirror, to apportion credit for the success of the company – to other people’s external factors, and good luck.	Looks in the mirror, not out the window to apportion responsibility for poor results, never blaming other people, external factors, or bad luck.

(Collins, 2001, p. 36)

Level 5 Leadership in the Social Sectors

Of particular relevance to this study is Collins’s (2005) application of Level 5 leadership in the social sectors, which includes religious organizations and churches. Collins (2005) observes that Level 5 leadership in this arena requires both executive and legislative leadership (pp. 11-12). As executive leaders, Level 5 leaders wield enough power to effectively make the right decisions on behalf of the organization (Collins, 2005, p. 11; Bonem, 2010, p. 64). As legislative leaders, Level 5 leaders are adept at involving others and “[creating] the conditions for the right decisions” to be made by the leaders of the organization (Collins, 2005, p. 11; Bonem, 2010, p. 64). Collins (2005) maintains that Level 5 leaders in the social sectors are “ambitious first and foremost for the cause, the movement, the mission, the work – not

themselves – and they have the will to do whatever it takes . . . to make good on that ambition”

(p. 11). As such, Collins (2005) explains:

“Level 5 leadership is not about being ‘soft’ or ‘nice’ or purely ‘inclusive’ or ‘consensus-building.’ The whole point of Level 5 is to make sure the right decisions happen – no matter how difficult or painful – for the long-term greatness of the institution and the achievement of its mission, independent of consensus or popularity” (p. 11).

However, Bonem (2010) contends that Level 5 leadership in the church must transcend executive and legislative leadership abilities – instead, it must be “spiritual and situational” (p. 64). He argues that pastoral leaders must integrate Scripture, guidance from the Holy Spirit, and best practices of organizational leadership to effectively lead the church to accomplish its mission (Bonem, 2010, pp. 64, 66). It is at this juncture that the theories underlying this study intersect.

Precedent Studies

Prior studies considering SCLT and L5LT help provide a more complete picture of the research problem and highlight a gap in the literature. Specifically, this study will draw from works related to the (a) conceptualization of pastoral leadership in relation to L5LT, (b) objective measurement of L5LT, (c) application of L5LT to pastoral leadership and church growth, and (d) influence of SCPLs on church growth. These studies highlight the importance of the research problem, the lack of empirical research regarding either SCLT or L5LT, and a significant gap in the literature yet to be considered.

Acts 6/7 Pastoral Leadership

Rainer (2005) developed a concept of pastoral leadership based on L5LT, which he describes as “Acts 6/7 Leadership” (pp. 35-51). Like Collins, Rainer (2005) identified two primary constructs of Acts 6/7 Leadership, which largely mirror the personal humility and professional will characteristic of Level 5 Leadership. Rainer (2005) described these qualities as “confident humility” and “unwavering persistence” (pp. 37-40).

Confident Humility. Additionally, Rainer (2005) contended that Acts 6/7 pastoral leaders demonstrate a “compelling modesty” (p. 39). They were often described as “modest, humble, quiet, others-centered, [deflecting of] accolades, and open to criticism” (Rainer, 2005, p. 40). “They are quick to praise others and equally quick to accept responsibility for anything that may go wrong” (Rainer, 2005, pp. 44, 59-62). This tendency was indicative of their “confident humility” – a confidence that “centered more on what God was doing in their lives and less on their own inherent abilities” (Rainer, 2005, p. 59).

Unwavering Persistence. Rainer (2005) observed that these pastoral leaders demonstrate unwavering persistence and faithful perseverance (pp. 37, 63-64). “They stay with a church during the difficult times even though there may be numerous temptations to move to a greener pasture” (pp. 37, 56-58). This persistence is reflected in their dogged pursuit of missional objectives. As Rainer (2005) explains, “These leaders see a clear goal, and though it may take years to reach the goal, they do not see giving up as an option” (p. 37). Acts 6/7 leaders also maintain a commitment to the authority of Scripture and put their belief into action by carrying out the Great Commission in their churches (Rainer, 2005, pp. 54-56).

Acts 6/7 Leadership Practices. According to Rainer (2005), Acts 6/7 leaders also exhibit several defining practices reflective of the two primary characteristics of unwavering persistence and confident humility. For example, in demonstrating humility, they love the members of their church and strive to communicate their love to them (Rainer, 2005, pp. 47, 62). Additionally, they are often “reluctant leaders” who do not seek the limelight but are thrust into leadership (Rainer, 2005, pp. 48-49). Their ambition is to accomplish the mission of the church (Rainer, 2005, p. 49-51). They “consistently [have] a vision that [is] outwardly focused. . . . They [are] passionate about reaching the lost and unchurched, and the visions they communicated

inevitably reflected this priority” (Rainer, 2005, p. 64). Finally, Acts 6/7 leaders desire to leave a legacy, and hope their churches will continue ministering effectively long after their service as a pastoral leader (Rainer, 2005, pp. 64-65). In developing his Acts 6/7 leadership framework Rainer (2005) essentially applied L5LT to pastoral leadership of the church.

Objective Measurement of Level 5 Leadership

While many practitioners were intrigued by L5LT, Reid (2012) recognized the need to quantify and measure it. Though L5LT has been widely embraced as groundbreaking and profound, it has also been criticized as being vague and ambiguous and, therefore, useless in practice (Reid, 2012, pp. 2-3). May (2006) noted the ambiguity in L5LT, writing:

“Level 5 leadership is vague. The only trait people seem to agree on is that level 5 leaders have humility. Humble leaders can be a good thing, but if Jim Collins can’t even tell whether or not Jack Welch was a level 5, what chance do the rest of us have? Isn’t Collins supposed to be the expert on Level 5 leadership? Hasn’t more been written about Jack Welch than about most other CEOs? And Collins can’t tell? He’s either being diplomatic and refusing to say ‘no, Welch wasn’t,’ or Level 5 leadership is business jibber jabber” (para. 8).

As such, Reid (2012) sought to develop the first statistically valid instrument to quantitatively measure Level 5 Leadership. In his study, Reid (2012) introduced the Level 5 Leadership Scale (L5LS) designed to measure the two constructs of Level 5 Leadership – personal humility and professional will (pp. 3-4, 57-58). Based on a review of the literature regarding L5LT, Reid (2012) identified a total of 99 characteristics underlying and describing the two primary constructs of Level 5 leadership – 55 pertaining to personal humility, and 44 pertaining to professional will (p. 18). Reid (2012) then engaged a panel of experts to help determine which characteristics of Level 5 leadership should be measured by the L5LS (p. 23). Ultimately, Reid (2012) identified and measured ten characteristics of Level 5 leadership – five attributes of personal humility and five attributes of professional will (p. 55). Table 2 reflects those attributes measured by the L5LS:

Table 2*Final Level 5 Leadership Scale Attributes*

Personal Humility	Professional Will
Genuine	Intense Resolve
Humble	Dedication to the Organization
A Team Player	A Clear Catalyst in Achieving Results
Servant Attitude	Strong Work Ethic
Does Not Seek Spotlight	Self-Motivated

(Reid, 2012, p. 55)

Though it measures various attributes of both constructs, the L5LS is designed to yield a dichotomous result – meaning, the leader is designated as either being a Level 5 leader or as not being a Level 5 leader (Reid, 2012, p. 30). Reid (2012) thoroughly tested and established the reliability and validity of the L5LS, which can now be used to empirically identify Level 5 leaders (pp. 22-56, 58, 60). Interestingly, Reid (2012) noted that a limitation of his study may have been that his sample was comprised of middle-aged, evangelical Christian men (which will likely be similar to the current research) (p. 59). In conclusion, Reid (2012) contended that the L5LS would be useful in identifying executive leaders capable of leading organizations from good to great and evaluating leadership potential within an organization (pp. 58-59).

Application of Level 5 Leadership Theory to Church Growth

Building on Reid’s research, DeNeal (2019) utilized the L5LS to apply L5LT to pastoral leadership and church growth (p. 3). Specifically, DeNeal (2019) quantitatively examined whether a lead pastor’s leadership style influences church growth. DeNeal (2019) theorized there would be a statistically significant correlation between the leadership styles of lead pastors

identified as Level 5 Leaders by the L5LS and key church growth indicators, including (a) average weekly church attendance, (b) annual total baptisms, and (c) annual total financial contributions (pp. 11-12). DeNeal observed:

“Another important factor related to CGT is leadership. Generally, most sources identified pastoral leadership as a vital influencer in determining church growth. Furthermore, a comparison of L5LS constructs and corresponding elements with CGT leadership characteristics revealed substantive compatibility. This finding suggests the study of L5LT and pastoral effectiveness should experience significant conceptual alignment” (p. 63).

DeNeal (2019) was the first to apply L5LT and the L5LS as a conceptual framework for pastoral leadership effectiveness (p. 8). Although the literature seemed to support his hypothesis, DeNeal (2019) was surprised that his research did not reveal a statistically significant relationship between the Level 5 Leadership of participating lead pastors and church growth (pp. 89, 103).

DeNeal (2019) considered several possible explanations for this result, including that Scripture and the relevant literature indicate a special divine aspect of CGT and PLT (pp. 89-96; cf. 1 Cor. 3:4-9). DeNeal (2019) noted that both theology and theory emphasize this supernatural factor (p. 96). This researcher agrees that all aspects of CGT and PLT must be divinely empowered by the Holy Spirit but also theorizes that L5LT might more appropriately be applied to SCPLs with different roles and responsibilities than their lead pastors. Indeed, in developing L5LT, Collins (2001) certainly did not have in mind the unique role of the lead pastor tasked with the proclamation of the gospel. Neither can the spiritual office of the lead pastor be properly analogized to a chief executive. The less visible role of the SCPL, however, may be more consistent with L5LT. As such, this researcher hypothesizes that the convergence of SCLT, PLT, and L5LT may lead to church growth.

Second-Chair Leaders and Church Growth

In a mixed-methods study, Bosch (2020) theorized that effective executive pastors serving in second-chair leadership roles help churches attain desired growth (pp. 16-17). Bosch (2020) sought to examine “how highly performing churches utilize executive pastors, and whether a church’s investment of salary and labor effort in an executive management model, including the hiring of an [executive pastor], can be correlated with overall performance” (p. 26). In presenting his research problem, Bosch (2020) noted that little quantitative analysis had been performed to evaluate the contribution of executive pastors to their churches (p. 18).

In his study, Bosch (2020) contributed to both the sparse body of literature regarding the role of the second-chair leaders (specifically, executive pastors) and to the theological and theoretical frameworks of this study. Indeed, Bosch (2020) makes a compelling case for the significance of his study. He notes that pastors and churches may not fully understand the “demands and opportunities” of an executive pastor (p. 72). He further explains that his study will help churches decide whether they should hire an executive pastor (Bosch, 2020, p. 73). Bosch (2020) notes that he “wanted to know whether an executive pastor could be crucial to the performance of large or fast-growing churches,” which is undoubtedly an important question for church leaders to address (p. 73). He further notes that no previous studies sought to quantitatively measure the contribution of executive pastors to church growth (pp. 73-74).

In constructing his theological framework, however, Bosch (2020) focuses primarily on the necessity and appropriateness of an administrative function within the church (pp. 35-40). As such, he attempts to outline a “theology of executive management in the church” by drawing upon examples of administrative work in the New Testament, Old Testament, and the modern era (Bosch, 2020, p. 46). Though Bosch (2020) contends that an executive pastor’s

responsibilities should be considered as falling within the spiritual realm as one function of the body of Christ, he distinguishes between pastoral and administrative work or ministerial and non-ministerial work (i.e., pp. 44, 45). Thus, Bosch (2020) draws from the literature that emphasizes that distinction but includes strong support for his argument that administrators are often called upon by God to help accomplish his work and support his church (i.e., p. 35, 37-39, 41-44; Gen. 47:7-10; Dan. 2:36-38; Acts 6:1-2; 1 Cor. 12:27-29, New American Standard Bible).

Similarly, in developing the theoretical framework for his study, Bosch (2020) focused primarily on (1) the church as an organization, (2) management as distinct from leadership, (3) administration as distinct from pastoral duties, and (4) church growth as an appropriate measure of church performance (pp. 46-60). Bosch (2020) provides an effective overview of CGT and its use as a measure of church performance but again frames the nature of the executive pastor's role as almost wholly administrative in support of his argument that executive management is a valid and valuable function in an ecclesial context (pp. 51-60).

Though this study seeks to explore a similar question and gap in the literature – specifically, by quantitatively measuring the contribution of SCPLs to church growth – the underlying theological and theoretical frameworks differ significantly. While Bosch (2020) views the role of executive pastors as primarily secular, non-ministerial, and administrative, this study frames the role of SCPLs as chiefly spiritual.

Sansom (2022) also recognized the spiritual significance of the second-chair, particularly those serving as executive pastors, noting that these SCPLs share “responsibility for the spiritual oversight of the church” (pp. 2, 14). He argued that an executive pastor should assume much responsibility for the oversight and shepherding of the church, freeing the senior pastor to focus

on preaching and teaching (Samson, 2022, pp. 24-25). Thereby, the SCPL extends both the administrative *and* pastoral function of the senior pastor (Sansom, 2022, p. 92).

Likewise, Krenz-Muller (2022) emphasized the “unique *pastoral* role of a called and God-appointed [SCPL]” (p. 4). She noted that SCPLs fill a shepherding role, share responsibility for the leadership and stewardship of the church, and are often entrusted with “breadth of oversight or ownership of the whole pastoral ministry, with full *pastoral* and *executive* influence, function, and authority” (Krenz-Muller, 2022, pp. 7, 51-53). Accordingly, SCPLs must approach their work as a spiritual one (Krenz-Muller, 2022, p. 56).

Still, Bosch’s (2020) findings and conclusions are instructive and advance the body of knowledge and literature surrounding this study. In the face of significant challenges, including the potential effects of a global pandemic, Bosch (2020) was unable to collect enough quantitative data to support more than “rudimentary” statistical findings, but his mixed-methods approach yielded some insightful conclusions (pp. 105-109). Specifically, Bosch (2020) concluded, “The presence of an [executive pastor] may not be a determining factor but does appear to be a contributing factor to church performance” (p. 114). He observed, “If the vision of the senior pastor includes growth . . . there is little question that the [executive pastor] would be a vital instrument of supporting and sustaining that success” (Bosch, 2020, p. 115). In conclusion, Bosch (2020) asserted, “It is reasonably established here that the [executive pastor] is indeed associated with church performance generally, and church growth specifically” (p. 125). Bosch (2020) was one of the first to consider this important question and thereby advanced the opportunity for further study regarding the correlation between second-chair pastoral leadership and church growth.

Summary

This section of the literature review summarized related literature relevant to the study, including three pivotal precedent studies and literature regarding the megachurch as the most likely arena for the application of this study. Together, the theological framework, theoretical framework, and related literature provide an overview of those concepts forming the basis of this study and narrow the issue to the matter at hand – whether SCPLs who demonstrate Level 5 leadership attributes contribute to church growth. But this question is more than academic – as reflected in the following rationale for the study, it is critical that churches and their leaders identify and understand the type of leadership that will support the growth of the church and the fulfillment of its Great Commission.

Rationale for the Study and Gap in the Literature

This study explored whether the leadership style and effectiveness of SCPLs influences the growth of the churches they serve. The Pew Research Center observed, “The trends are clear – the U.S. is steadily becoming less Christian and less religiously observant” (Pew Research, 2019, para. 12). Despite this apparent trend, faithful church leaders are working tirelessly to build and grow the church of Jesus Christ. This study applied Level 5 Leadership Theory, first conceptualized by Jim Collins, to second-chair pastoral leadership, and quantitatively examined whether SCPLs who demonstrate Level 5 Leadership competencies might significantly influence church growth. More specifically, it examined the emerging theory of Second-Chair Leadership and the popular theory of Level 5 Leadership, neither of which have been thoroughly considered in scholarly research, to determine whether a relationship exists between the leadership styles of SCPLs and church growth as reflected by key performance indicators – specifically, weekly worship attendance, annual financial contributions, and annual baptisms.

DeNeal (2019) examined whether a relationship existed between the leadership effectiveness of lead pastors as conceptualized by L5LT and church growth. Surprisingly, despite the obvious importance of effective senior pastor leadership, DeNeal found no correlation. In applying secular leadership theories, however, one must recognize the church is unlike any other organization on earth. It is both a spiritual organism and an organization, and it is the only entity created and commissioned by the Lord to advance his kingdom. Likewise, its leadership roles and structure do not necessarily mirror those of secular organizations. Indeed, the lead pastor uniquely serves as Christ's primary spiritual under-shepherd, is called to publicly proclaim the gospel message, and is typically aided in his organizational work by other elders and deacons. As such, while DeNeal found no statistical relationship between the Level 5 Leadership of lead pastors and church growth, this study examined whether a correlation exists between Level 5 Leadership of SCPLs and church growth.

Second-Chair Leadership Theory and Level 5 Leadership Theory, two emerging theories of leadership, reflect the paradoxical concepts of leadership found in Scripture, and the church may find their combined application invaluable in fulfilling its Great Commission. Furthermore, because this study evidences a relationship between second-chair pastoral leadership and the continued growth of the church, its findings will assist churches and lead pastors who are seeking second-chair leaders to help them overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles to fulfill Christ's Great Commission.

A review of the related literature revealed a significant gap that should be explored in the furtherance of Christ's Great Commission. SCLT is emerging as a highly effective framework for building and leading organizations in various areas, including the church. By its very nature, it is thoroughly paradoxical in that second-chair leaders must simultaneously lead and follow.

This, however, is the way of the Christian leader – particularly, the pastoral leader. Despite this synergy and its roots in the ecclesial arena, little scholarly research has examined the effect of second-chair pastoral leadership on church growth. Likewise, despite its overwhelming popularity, little scholarly work has been done to objectively measure and apply L5LT and its two constructs of personal humility and professional will. This study is the first to quantitatively measure the Level 5 Leadership qualities of SCPLs and explore whether those who demonstrate personal humility and professional will – the two constructs of Level 5 Leadership – contribute to church growth as reflected by key performance indicators.

Profile of the Current Study

This study examined the emerging theory of Second-Chair Leadership and the popular theory of Level 5 Leadership to determine whether a relationship exists between the leadership styles of SCPLs and church growth as reflected by three key performance indicators – weekly worship attendance, annual financial contributions, and annual baptisms.

The researcher hypothesized that SCPLs who demonstrate personal humility and professional will in service to the Lord, their church, and their lead pastor can significantly influence and contribute to church growth. This study supports the researcher’s hypothesis, in part. Its findings will be valuable to churches and lead pastors seeking a second-chair leader to assist the lead pastor in building the church and accomplishing its mission and to second-chair leaders desirous of personal and professional growth that will strengthen their ability to significantly impact the world for Jesus Christ through their service in his church.

This quantitative study utilized a correlational design in which the researcher sought to “use the correlational statistic to describe and measure the degree or association (or relationship) between two or more variables” (Creswell, 2014, p. 12). The research population was SCPLs in

Southern Baptist megachurches in the United States that are members of the SBC and average at least 2,000 in weekly worship attendance. The researcher utilized a non-probability purposive total population sampling technique to survey SCPLs who served in qualifying churches from 2015 to 2019, and whose churches submitted an ACP to the SBC for the relevant period and maintained an average attendance of at least 2,000 in reporting year 2019. Initially, the researcher estimated there were approximately 200 megachurches in the Southern Baptist Convention. However, the researcher discovered that only 167 megachurches qualified to participate in the study. From among those churches, only 93 SCPLs met the study criteria, resulting in an even smaller total population than originally anticipated. This study would have required a sample size of 75 participants (81% of the population) to support a confidence level of 95% with a margin of error of 5%. The actual sample represented 27% of the total population. As such, while the study's findings do not necessarily meet traditionally accepted standards of statistical significance, the researcher believes they should be considered practically significant.

The researcher used electronic surveys incorporating the L5LS to collect data from participants and responders. The researcher used statistical procedures to determine whether there was a correlation between the variables. The researcher then made analytical generalizations to apply his findings to the population. Chapter 3 provides a detailed explanation of the research methodology for this study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This quantitative correlational study explored whether a relationship exists between the Level 5 Leadership qualities of second-chair pastoral leaders (SCPLs) and church growth as reflected by annual average weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions. This chapter will provide a synopsis of the research design and discuss the population and representative sample studied, the sampling procedure, limitations on generalization, ethical considerations, the proposed instrumentation, research procedures, and data analysis and statistical procedures.

Research Design Synopsis

This study utilized a non-experimental, quantitative correlational research design. The purpose of correlational research was to investigate whether and to what extent one variable may influence another (Curtis et al., 2016, p. 21). While correlational research does not reveal a cause-and-effect relationship, the discovery of a correlative relationship enables the researcher to make reasonable predictions regarding variable behavior (Curtis et al., 2016, p. 24; Seeram, 2019, p. 176). This study explored whether such a relationship exists between the quantitatively measurable Level 5 Leadership scores of SCPLs (the independent variable) and church growth as reflected by average weekly worship attendance, annual baptisms, and annual giving (the dependent variables). This section will review the research problem underlying this study, the research purpose statement, the research questions and related hypotheses, and the research design and methodology.

The Research Problem

Jesus Christ said, “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it” (English Standard Version, 2001/2016, Matthew 16:18b). Those called by Christ to participate in

his kingdom work undoubtedly include SCPLs. Indeed, the literature reveals both theological and theoretical support for this vital ministry role and suggests that effective SCPLs significantly contribute to church growth in fulfillment of the Great Commission. Additionally, the literature indicates that the integration of Second-Chair Leadership Theory (SCLT) and Level 5 Leadership Theory (L5LT) might provide a practical framework for SCPLs helping to build and grow the churches they serve. However, though second-chair pastoral leadership is increasingly recognized as critical to mission success, relatively few scholarly studies have explored its nature or influence, and most of those studies have utilized qualitative research methods, leaving a significant gap in the literature (Bosch, 2020, p. 30). As such, the literature both reflects a gap that should be explored and provides a conceptual framework that indicates the variables considered in this study might be related (cf., Seeram, 2019, p. 21).

This study sought to answer five research questions in exploring whether such a relationship between variables exists. The researcher employed a quantitative correlational design to answer those research questions. The population is SCPLs in Southern Baptist megachurches that are members of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), submitted an Annual Church Profile for the relevant time period (2015-2019) and maintained an average of at least 2,000 in weekly worship attendance in reporting year 2019. The SCPLs must have served in their current role for at least five years, including January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2019. The sample was a representative response of qualifying SCPLs.

The researcher utilized the Level 5 Leadership Scale (L5LS), an existing instrument established as valid and reliable, and used electronic surveys to collect data from participants (cf., Reid, 2012). Once collected, the data was statistically analyzed to relate the Level 5 Leadership of SCPLs to three church growth indicators (annual average weekly worship

attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions) individually and collectively. The remainder of this Chapter Three further details the proposed research methodology for this study.

The Research Purpose

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to determine if a statistically significant relationship exists between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs considered to be Level 5 Leaders as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and church growth as reflected by annual average weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions for Southern Baptist megachurches averaging at least 2,000 in weekly worship attendance in comparison to the growth realized by Southern Baptist megachurches led by SCPLs not considered to be Level 5 Leaders.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Quantitative research studies rely on research questions and hypotheses “to shape and specifically focus the purpose of the study” (Creswell, 2014, p. 143). The research questions ask whether there might be a relationship among variables and the hypotheses predict the expected outcome of the research questions (Creswell, 2014, p. 143). This study included the research questions and related hypotheses enumerated in this section.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. What percentage of SCPLs of Southern Baptist megachurches averaging at least 2,000 in weekly worship attendance is perceived to be Level 5 Leaders as measured by the L5LS (reflecting both personal humility and professional will)?

RQ2. What relationship, if any, exists between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and annual average weekly worship attendance?

RQ3. What relationship, if any, exists between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and annual total baptisms?

RQ4. What relationship, if any, exists between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and annual total financial contributions?

RQ5. What relationship, if any, exists between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and average weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions?

Research Hypotheses

In quantitative studies, null hypotheses are traditionally used to statistically test and thereby answer the research questions (Creswell, 2014, p. 144). A null hypothesis “makes a prediction that, in the general population, no relationship or significant difference exists between groups on a variable” (Creswell, 2014, pp. 144, 245). Because inferential statistics were used to analyze the results of the research questions, it was necessary and appropriate to develop null hypotheses related to questions two through five, which relate the independent and dependent variables (Flanagan, 2021, p. 74). The following null hypotheses were established to examine whether a statistically significant relationship would be revealed in answering those questions:

H₀₁: None established.

H₀₂: There is no relationship between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and annual average weekly worship attendance.

H₀₃: There is no relationship between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and annual total baptisms.

H₀₄: There is no relationship between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and annual total financial contributions.

H₀₅: There is no relationship between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and average weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions.

Research Design and Methodology

A quantitative correlational design was appropriate for this study because its aim was to explore whether a relationship exists between the independent and dependent variables (Creswell, 2014, p. 12). Specifically, this study examined whether a relationship exists between the Level 5 Leadership of SCPLs (the independent variable) and measurable church growth as reflected by three key performance indicators – attendance, baptisms, and contributions (the dependent variables).

A quantitative approach enables researchers to objectively test theories by measuring and statistically analyzing data to determine whether a relationship exists among variables (Creswell, 2014, p. 247). Creswell (2014) describes a variable as “a characteristic or attribute of an individual or an organization that can be measured or observed and that varies among the people or organizations being studied” (p. 52). Independent variables are thought to influence outcomes, and dependent variables reflect the outcomes likely produced by the independent variables (Creswell, 2014, p. 52). A correlational design is a quantitative methodology that employs a correlational statistic to determine whether and to what degree two or more variables are related (Creswell, 2014, p. 12). Thus, in quantitative correlational studies, the independent and dependent variables are related to answer the research questions and test the research hypotheses presented by the researcher (Creswell, 2014, p. 53).

Leedy and Ormrod (2018) explain, “A correlation exists if, when one variable increases, another variable either increases or decreases in a somewhat predictable fashion” (p. 148). Accordingly, by determining the value of one variable, the researcher can predict the value of the other variable with some accuracy (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018, p. 148). Cohen et al. (2003) observe that correlational designs should be used to determine (1) whether there is a relationship between

the variables, (2) the direction of the relationship, and (3) the magnitude of the relationship (p. 193; Chaisson, 2021, pp. 67). A correlational study does not necessarily reveal a “cause-and-effect relationship” but can support reasonable predictions regarding variable behavior and may reflect a “plausible causal inference” (Curtis et al., 2016, p. 24; Leedy & Ormord, 2018, p. 149; Seeram, 2019, p. 176).

Although there is relatively little literature regarding correlational research design, scholars and practitioners have recognized the importance of correlational research (Seeram, 2019, p. 176; Chaisson, 2021, p. 67). Indeed, Curtis et al. (2016) recognize that understanding the relationships between two phenomena is critical to all social science disciplines and “an abiding impetus for scientific enquiry” (p. 20). Similarly, Cohen et al. (2003) observed:

One approach to a fuller understanding of human behavior is to begin by teasing out simple relationships between those factors and elements deemed to have some bearing on the phenomena in question. The value of correlational research is that it is able to achieve this end (p. 191).

This study seeks a fuller understanding of how SCPLs help grow the churches they serve in furtherance of Christ’s Great Commission. According to Ryrie (1999), “building his church constitutes Christ’s principal work in the world today” (p. 455). As such, it is imperative that the church considers how SCPLs might contribute to this work and consider any “plausible causal inferences” that could support its accomplishment.

Population

The research population was SCPLs in megachurches in the United States that are members of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), submitted an Annual Church Profile to the SBC (or cooperating state convention) for the relevant time period (2015-2019), and maintained an average weekly worship attendance of at least 2,000 in reporting year 2019. The SCPLs must have reported directly to the senior or lead pastor of their churches and have served in their role

for at least five years, including January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2019. The intended sample was a representative response of the full population of qualifying SCPLs.

The number of Southern Baptist megachurches is relatively small. Bird (2012a) estimated that there were only about 1,750 megachurches in the United States. According to Rainer (2017), of the estimated 500,000 Christian congregations in the United States, there are approximately 50,000 Southern Baptist churches, and only 181 qualify as megachurches (pp. 1-3, 20-21, 94-98). In a running list maintained since 1992, the Hartford Institute for Religion Research estimates there are approximately 240 Southern Baptist megachurches (Hartford Institute, n.d.). The population of SCPLs serving those churches is further limited, though Southern Baptist megachurches commonly employ an SCPL (Branough, 2017; Bosch, 2020). Additionally, the study population was limited to those who meet the screening criteria for the study. The researcher discovered that only 167 megachurches qualified to participate in the study. From among those churches, only 93 SCPLs met the study criteria, resulting in an even smaller total population than originally anticipated. Because of the relatively small size of the population, this study would have required a sample size of 75 participants (81% of the population) to support a confidence level of 95% with a margin of error of 5%. The actual sample represented 27% of the total population. As such, while the study's findings do not necessarily meet traditionally accepted standards of statistical significance, the researcher believes they should be considered practically significant and applicable in the real world.

The entire population of qualifying SCPLs, however, was accessible to the researcher through data attained from the Southern Baptist Convention (including related entities and cooperating state conventions), church websites, and the researcher's personal contacts. The researcher serves as an SCPL in a Southern Baptist megachurch.

Sampling Procedures

The researcher utilized a non-probability purposive total population sampling technique because the total number of Southern Baptist megachurches is relatively small and the population of SCPLs serving those churches shares a set of unique characteristics (Laerd Dissertation, n.d.). The population of SCPLs who have served in qualifying churches for at least five years, including from 2015 to 2019, and whose churches submitted an Annual Church Profile to the SBC (or cooperating state convention) for the relevant time period were invited to participate, and the responding SCPLs will comprised the sample. The final sample represented 27% of the total population.

According to Laerd Dissertation (n.d.), “Total population sampling is a type of purposive sampling technique that involves examining the entire population (i.e., the total population) that have a particular set of characteristics (e.g., specific attributes/traits, experience, knowledge, skills, exposure to an event, etc.).” Total population sampling is appropriate when (1) the population size is relatively small and (2) the population shares uncommon characteristics (Laerd Dissertation, n.d.). Typically, when using a total population sampling technique, the units comprising the sample are people (Laerd Dissertation, n.d.). These units will have some distinctive shared characteristic(s) (Laerd Dissertation, n.d.). For example, in a study exploring the knowledge gains of managers who have been on long-term international assignments in a Fortune 500 company, the total population may only be 40-50 managers who share the uncommon experience of having been on long-term international assignments (Laerd Dissertation, n.d.). Similarly, this study will examine the leadership qualities of SCPLs serving Southern Baptist megachurches. The total population will likely be less than 200 units that share this unique experience.

According to Laerd Dissertation (n.d.), researchers should follow a three-step process in creating a total population sampling. First, the researcher should define the population by explaining the specific, uncommon characteristic(s) of the population (Laerd Dissertation, n.d.). Second, the researcher should create a list of the population (Laerd Dissertation, n.d.). The list should include only those units that share the uncommon characteristic(s) identified in defining the population (Laerd Dissertation, n.d.). Finally, the researcher must contact all members of the population (Laerd Dissertation, n.d.). In this proposed study, the population includes SCPLs serving Southern Baptist megachurches in the United States. Of the estimated 5 million Christian congregations worldwide, there are less than 200 Southern Baptist megachurches in the United States (Bird, 2012a; Rainer, 2017). Thus, the SCPLs serving those churches (the population units) share a unique experience, making a total population sampling technique appropriate for this study.

To identify the population, the researcher requested access to Annual Church Profiles and other data maintained by the SBC, including Lifeway Research. Lifeway Research provided a complete list of all qualifying Southern Baptist megachurches that reported at least 2,000 in average worship attendance in the reporting year 2019. Next, the researcher examined available data, including church websites or reports, or contact qualifying megachurches to determine if they employed an SCPL who served in their role from 2015-2019. The researcher made a list of these SCPLs (the population units), which represented the total population. Then, the researcher contacted the SCPLs on the list and invited them to participate in the study via email. In connection with this invitation, the researcher provided them with additional information about the nature of the project, ethical parameters, potential risks and benefits, screening criteria, and informed consent. SCPLs who failed to respond received a reminder email every five business

days but did not receive more than three reminder emails. The researcher also attempted to contact unresponsive SCPLs by telephone to personally invite them to participate in the study.

Those willing to participate were asked to return an executed informed consent form and provide the names and email addresses of five colleagues (supervisors, peers, or subordinates) who could be invited to complete a survey regarding the SCPL's leadership style. The SCPL was then sent a link to an electronic survey that was facilitated by Qualtrics and included a self-assessment utilizing the L5LS.

Once the SCPLs had been invited to participate in the study and participating units provided contact information for colleagues, the researcher invited those colleagues identified by SCPLs as potential responders to participate in the study and provided them with the same type of information previously provided to the participating SCPL. The initial email to the responders included a link to an electronic survey that was facilitated by Qualtrics. The email also included an executable informed consent form as a prerequisite to completing the survey. The survey asked the responders to assess the SCPL utilizing the L5LS. Responders who failed to respond received a reminder email every five business days but did not receive more than three reminder emails. No further communication was made to facilitate the responders' participation.

In surveying a total population (also known as taking a census), the response rate significantly influences the level of confidence in the findings (Draugalis & Plaza, 2009). Generally, in survey research, "a response rate of 50% - 60% or greater is optimal because nonresponse bias is thought to be minimal with that high of a response rate" (Draugalis & Plaza, 2009, p. 1). When using a total population sampling technique, however, a higher response rate may be required to support the reliability and generalizability of the findings (Draugalis & Plaza, 2009, p. 2). The total population of SCPLs serving Southern Baptist megachurches in the United

States that met the study criteria included only 93 units. The total response rate of SCPLs represented 45% of the population. However, 10 of the responding SCPLs did not receive a minimum of three evaluations from their colleagues, and seven of the responding SCPLs only provided a self-evaluation. Therefore, those 17 SCPLs were excluded from the sample, leaving a sample size of 25 SCPLs representing 27% of the total population.

An acceptable sample size is typically dependent on the size of the population and based on “(a) the margin of error or confidence interval, (b) confidence level, and (c) sample response percentage” (DeNeal, 2019; Creswell, 2014, p. 159). Assuming a total population of 200, a sample size of 132 units would support a confidence level of 95% with a 5% margin of error (Creative Research System, n.d.). Generally, an acceptable margin of error for correlational studies using survey research is between 4% and 8% (Flanagan, 2021, pp. 77-78). Thus, in sampling a total population of 200, a response rate of 66% (132 responses) should bolster the reliability and generalizability of the researcher’s findings. This study would have required a sample size of 75 participants (81% of the population) to support a confidence level of 95% with a margin of error of 5%. The actual sample of 27%. Thus, due to the small population and representative sample, the findings would not necessarily be considered statistically significant. However, the researcher believes the findings should be considered practically significant.

A total population sampling technique provides “deep insights into the phenomenon” being studied and “a reduced risk of missing potential insights” (Laerd Dissertation, n.d.). As a purposive sampling technique, total population sampling does not yield *statistical* generalizations about the studied *sample* but may reveal *analytical* generalizations about the *population*, which may also verify theoretical postulates pertaining to the population (Laerd Dissertation, n.d.; Yin, 2015, pp. 104-106; Džinić, 2015, p. 17). The researcher intends for his

findings to be generalizable to Southern Baptist megachurches in the United States – specifically, the SCPLs working to grow these churches, and provide them with a theological and theoretical construct that will help advance their mission and ministry. The researcher is also hopeful his study will be helpful to a “superpopulation” of churches of various denominations and sizes worldwide, their lead pastors, and their SCPLs as they seek to accomplish the Great Commission (cf., Alexander, 2015).

Limitations on Generalization

This study included several delimitations that defined its boundaries. As a correlational study, any finding of a relationship between the leadership of SCPLs and church growth is not necessarily causal or predictive.

This study focused only on SCPLs of Southern Baptist megachurches in the United States averaging at least 2,000 in weekly worship attendance who served in their current position for at least five years, including at least the period 2015 – 2019. This delimitation assumed these SCPLs share relatively similar responsibilities in similar environments in comparison to the entire population of SCPLs. This delimitation was intended to limit the influence of other confounding or unknown mediating or moderating variables, including, but not limited to, theological and denominational differences, church autonomy, church size, emphasis on pertinent indicators of church growth, and major differences in the roles of participating SCPLs.

This study also focused only on SCPLs who reported directly to the organization’s senior leader. Again, this delimitation was intended to emphasize those challenges unique to second-chair leadership positions and limit the influence of other variables.

Further, while leadership effectiveness and influence may be considered and evaluated

in numerous ways, this study focused on leadership effectiveness as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS, which reflects the level of personal humility and professional will evidenced by the SCPL as reported by those completing the survey. The L5LS does not attempt to measure all specific qualities associated with L5LT, nor does it consider related theoretical constructs (cf., Reid, 2012, pp. 6, 18, 54-55). Additionally, despite the established reliability of the instrument, the survey results likely reflected some personal bias.

While church growth and church health may be considered and evaluated in various ways, this study focused on three metrics commonly measured and reported by Southern Baptist churches – worship attendance, baptisms, and financial contributions – as reflected in the Annual Church Profiles submitted to the Southern Baptist Convention. In some instances, it is possible the reports submitted by churches could have been incomplete or inaccurate.

In light of the unprecedented challenges of 2020 resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused most churches in the United States to close for some time and could negatively influence all relevant measures of church growth, this study evaluated such measures for the period 2015-2019. This study, however, did not account for other crises or disasters in the relevant time period, which did not have such direct nationwide implications.

Finally, a total population sampling technique is intended to yield analytical generalizations about the population rather than statistical generalizations extrapolated from a representative sample of the population (Laerd Dissertation, n.d.; Yin, 2015, pp. 104-106; Džinić, 2015, p. 17). Typically, researchers cannot access or survey an entire population, so they survey a representative sample and rely on statistical generalizations based on probabilistic estimates to infer findings about the broader population (Yin, 2015, pp. 104-105). But this standard approach to generalization is inapplicable when the total population represents the

sampling frame (Laerd Dissertation, n.d.). Instead, as a purposive technique, total population sampling reveals analytical generalizations about the population studied (Laerd Dissertation, n.d.; Džinić, 2015, pp. 10-17). Analytical generalizations verify theoretical postulates (Džinić, 2015, p. 17). That is, researchers make analytical generalizations to “show how their study’s findings are likely to inform a particular set of concepts, theoretical constructs, or hypothesized sequence of events” and demonstrate how the lessons learned from their study may be applied to other cases (Yin, 2015, p. 105). In support of their analytical generalizations, researchers should present “carefully constructed arguments . . . resistant to logical challenge” (Yin, 2015, pp. 105-106). If the study reveals empirical support for the researcher’s theory, the researcher should explain how such “theoretical advances can pertain (generalize) to situations other than those examined” (Yin, 2015, p. 106). In some cases, analytical generalizations about a total population may be extrapolated and applied to a broader “superpopulation” (Alexander, 2015).

In this study, the researcher theorized that SCPLs who demonstrate strong Level 5 Leadership positively influence church growth. Because the study reflects a correlation between SCPLs’ Level 5 Leadership and church growth, it provides empirical evidence for the researcher’s theory. Although the study does not necessarily support statistical generalizations, the researcher has made analytical generalizations about the population that may also inform and benefit SCPLs serving in other churches throughout Christendom.

Ethical Considerations

In preparation for this study, the researcher completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) basic course for social and behavioral research on March 11, 2021. The researcher’s certification remains effective until March 10, 2024. Before beginning the study, the researcher sought approval from Liberty University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), which

was granted on March 29, 2023. The researcher ensured the study complies with all ethical standards of research, related federal mandates, and university policies and procedures.

The researcher took the necessary steps to address any identifiable ethical concerns. Specifically, the researcher took steps to protect participants from harm, obtain participants' informed consent, protect the participants' right to privacy, and deal honestly and professionally with all participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018, pp. 111-115). The researcher has no known conflicts of interest and will seek no financial gain from this research effort. The purpose of the research was disclosed to participants and responders. No one was blind to the researcher's intent. No deception was planned or intended. No one was compelled or pressured to participate in the study or respond to the research questionnaire. All participation was voluntary, though each participant asked other responders to respond by evaluating the participant's leadership.

The researcher utilized personal email communications and an online survey software program (specifically, Qualtrics) to invite SCPLs to participate in the study, share information about the study, and attain survey responses from both the participants and other responders. While email informed participants and responders about the study and requested their participation, it was not used to collect research data. Instead, research data was collected and secured through an online survey and data analysis software program. Research data and any records, including personally identifiable information, was maintained in a secure, password-protected electronic file system on a separate hard drive. Any email correspondence was deleted from the researcher's email account. While there is some risk involved in collecting information and data using these tools, including the possibility of cybercrime, compromised security in software programs, vulnerabilities innate in email and online communications, or inadvertent

exposure of information, the researcher employed appropriate security measures to protect the participants' and responders' data.

The only personally identifiable information collected was that which was necessary to properly link the participants' and responders' survey responses. The researcher "protect[ed] the anonymity of the individuals . . . [by disassociating] names from responses during the coding and recording process" (Creswell, 2014, p. 99; DeNeal, 2019, p. 77). Additionally, to ensure the privacy of those responders evaluating the leadership of their colleague or supervisor, no participants were informed of their personal Level 5 Leadership Score.

Researchers must limit the potential effects of personal bias, which can "influence the data collected, the conclusions drawn, or both" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018, p. 184). The researcher's interest in this study stems from his service as an SCPL in a growing Southern Baptist megachurch. The researcher acknowledges his appreciation for SCPLs and their contributions to the churches they serve. As the literature reflects, the researcher also recognizes that many SCPLs could benefit from a theoretical framework that would support their ministries. The use of third-party tools and instruments, however, assisted in limiting or eliminating any researcher bias (Chaisson, 2021, p. 72). By *quantitatively* assessing the Level 5 Leadership of SCPLs using the L5LS – an existing tool shown to be valid and reliable – and correlatively relating the Level 5 Leadership scores of SCPLs to objective church growth metrics, the researcher limited the influence of any personal bias on this study and its findings.

Per the American Psychological Association's standards, completed survey responses will be maintained in the survey software program or another secure electronic database for five years after the completion of the study (Creswell, 2014, p. 101). Other electronic files will be maintained on a password-protected hard drive for the same period. Physical reports and

documents will be stored in a secure file cabinet, only accessible by the researcher, for five years after the completion of the study.

Proposed Instrumentation

The researcher collected quantitative data through electronic surveys and from records maintained by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC; including related entities and cooperating state conventions), including Annual Church Profiles. Additionally, the researcher administered electronic surveys incorporating the Level 5 Leadership Scale (L5LS), a preexisting instrument developed by Reid (2012), to acquire data and quantitatively measure the Level 5 Leadership of participating SCPLs. The L5LS was the primary instrument used in this study. These sources provided the necessary data to explore whether a correlation existed between the Level 5 Leadership of SCPLs and church growth.

As an initial matter, the researcher requested access to ACPs and other data maintained by the SBC to identify qualifying churches. Once the researcher identified qualifying churches, the researcher examined available data, including church websites and reports, or contacted the churches to determine if they employ an SCPL who would be willing and able to participate in the study. This initial inquiry will included screening criteria to establish whether an SCPL would qualify. Specifically, the screening questions established whether the SCPL (1) served in his current position for at least five years, (2) served in his current position from at least 2015 – 2019, and (3) reports directly to the senior pastor or leader of the church. The negation of any one of these three qualifying criteria precluded the SCPL from participating in the study. Those SCPLs who qualified to participate in the study received the full electronic survey, which will include the L5LS.

The Level 5 Leadership Scale

The electronic survey incorporated the L5LS. The L5LS is a preexisting instrument designed to determine whether an organizational leader qualifies as a Level 5 Leader and quantitatively measure the leader's Level 5 Leadership, which is reflected as their Level 5 Leadership Score. The L5LS was developed by Reid (2012). The researcher sought permission to use the L5LS from its developer, which was granted on April 3, 2023.

The L5LS measures the two constructs of Level 5 Leadership – personal humility and professional will. Specifically, the L5LS assesses five characteristics of each construct to determine whether a leader qualifies as a Level 5 Leader. In evaluating the leader's personal humility, the L5LS examines whether the leader (1) is genuine, (2) is humble, (3) is a team player, (4) has a servant attitude, and (5) does not seek the spotlight (Reid, 2012; DeNeal, 2019). In evaluating the leader's professional will, the L5LS examines whether the leader (1) has an intense resolve, (2) is dedicated to the organization, (3) is a clear catalyst in achieving results, (4) has a strong work ethic, and (5) is self-motivated (Reid, 2012; DeNeal, 2019).

The L5LS is scored using a ten-point semantic differential scale, on which 1 indicates the leader does not reflect the characteristic (“not at all”), and 10 indicates the leader strongly reflects the characteristic (i.e., “exactly”; Reid, 2012; DeNeal, 2019). The responses to each of the five characteristics undergirding the two primary constructs of Level 5 Leadership (personal humility and professional will) were then tabulated to determine the participating SCPL's Level 5 Leadership Score. Notably, for each participating SCPL, four to six scores were generated as the survey was completed by the SCPL and three to five of his colleagues. Because the L5LS is an observer-rater instrument, requiring four to six responses pertaining to each participant bolstered the reliability of the data (DeNeal, 2019, p. 69). Finally, the scores generated for each

participant were averaged to calculate the Level 5 Leadership Score of the participating SCPL (for each construct) and determine whether they qualify as a Level 5 Leader.

Level 5 Leadership is dichotomous – one is either a Level 5 Leader or not (Collins, 2001; Reid, 2012; DeNeal, 2019). In evaluating whether a leader qualified as a Level 5 Leader, Reid (2012) determined that the leader must score 7.5 or higher on both personal humility and professional will. Thus, a leader who scored below 7.5 on either construct was not considered a Level 5 Leader (Reid, 2012; 2017; DeNeal, 2019). However, after consulting Reid regarding his study of lead pastors, DeNeal (2019) determined that a score of at least 8.5 on both personal humility and professional will was appropriate due to the “higher than normal tendency” (87%) of lead pastors to qualify as Level 5 Leaders (DeNeal, 2019, p. 86). Similarly, in anticipation that SCPLs would also receive disproportionately high Level 5 Leadership Scores, the researcher used a standard of 8.5. Consequently, only those participants who scored 8.5 or higher on both constructs of Level 5 Leadership were considered Level 5 Leaders for this study.

Validity and Reliability of the L5LS

In using a preexisting instrument, it is important to describe its established validity and reliability to demonstrate that its use is appropriate and that it truly measures what it purports to measure (Roberts, 2010, p. 151; Creswell, 2014, p. 160). In developing the L5LS, Reid (2012) established its validity and reliability. Reid (2012) examined the relevant literature and relied on survey data, expert panel review, and statistical analysis to identify the ten characteristics of Level 5 Leadership that represent its two primary constructs and comprise the L5LS. In establishing the instrument’s validity, Reid (2012) considered its content validity, construct validity, and criterion-related validity and determined that the L5LS was a statistically validated

instrument that accurately measured Level 5 Leadership (pp. 31, 56). Likewise, DeNeal (2019) observed, “All validity assessments demonstrated the L5LS to be viable and effective” (p. 69).

Reid (2012) also effectively established the reliability of the L5LS. To ensure the L5LS accurately, consistently, and predictably measures Level 5 Leadership, Reid (2012) utilized Cronbach’s alpha to evaluate the internal consistency reliability of the L5LS (pp. 30-31). Reid et al. (2014) explained:

The final 10-item instrument to measure Level 5 Leadership contains five items that capture personal humility and five items that capture professional will. Cronbach’s alpha equaled .83 for personal humility and .83 for professional will. The result exceeded the threshold of .800 that DeVellis (2012) established indicating very good reliability (p. 29).

Thus, Reid (2012) demonstrated the validity and reliability of the L5LS in quantitatively evaluating and measuring the Level 5 Leadership of organizational leaders. The L5LS is the only validated instrument for measuring Level 5 Leadership (DeNeal, 2019, pp. 9, 34). At the time of this study, the L5LS is still relatively new and has only been utilized in two previous academic studies (cf., DeNeal, 2019, p. 47). DeNeal (2019) considered its application to lead pastors. This study was the first to use the L5LS to measure the Level 5 Leadership of SCPLs.

Research Procedures

As previously noted, before beginning this research, the researcher sought approval from Liberty University’s IRB. The researcher also ensured that the study complied with all ethical standards of research, related federal mandates, and university policies and procedures. After receiving approval from the IRB to proceed, the researcher followed the following four-step process in conducting the research.

First, the researcher requested access to Annual Church Profiles (ACPs) and other data maintained by the SBC (or associated entities) and analyzed the data to identify qualifying churches (Appendix A). The churches that qualified for this study were those that submitted an

ACP to the SBC for the years 2015-2019, reflecting an average weekly worship attendance of at least 2,000 people during that time, and maintained an average weekly worship attendance of at least 2,000 people in reporting year 2019. The researcher also attained data from the ACPs pertaining to the church growth metrics that served as the dependent variables in the study – average weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions. To qualify for this study, the churches need not have experienced growth in these areas. By including all qualifying Southern Baptist megachurches, regardless of their growth in these areas, the researcher will be better equipped to analyze whether the Level 5 Leadership of SCPLs in these churches correlated to church growth or a lack thereof.

Second, once the researcher identified qualifying churches, the researcher examined available data or contacted the churches to determine if they employed an SCPL who might participate in the study. When the researcher identified an SCPL who might have qualified to participate in the study, the researcher invited the SCPL to participate via email and provided them with additional information about the nature of the project, ethical parameters, and potential risks and benefits (Appendix B). The researcher also provided information regarding informed consent. Those willing to participate were asked to return an executed informed consent form and to provide the names and email addresses of five colleagues (supervisors, peers, or subordinates) who could be invited to complete a survey regarding the SCPL's leadership style (Appendix E). The SCPL was also sent a link to an electronic survey that was facilitated by Qualtrics and included a self-assessment utilizing the L5LS (Appendix F). SCPLs who failed to respond received a reminder email every five business days but did not receive more than three reminder emails (Appendix C). The researcher also contacted unresponsive SCPLs by telephone to personally invite them to participate in the study (Appendix D).

Third, the researcher invited those identified by SCPLs as potential responders to participate in the study and provided them with the same type of information previously provided to the participants (Appendix G). The initial email to the responders included a link to an electronic survey that was facilitated by Qualtrics (Appendix J), which also included an executable informed consent form as a prerequisite to completing the survey (Appendix I). The survey asked the responders to assess the SCPL utilizing the L5LS. Responders who failed to respond will receive a reminder email every five business days but did not receive more than three reminder emails (Appendix H).

Finally, the researcher analyzed the data as further described in the following section. The researcher intends for his findings to be generalizable to the population of SCPLs serving Southern Baptist megachurches. Additionally, the researcher is hopeful his study will be helpful to churches of various denominations and sizes, their lead pastors, and their SCPLs as they seek to accomplish the Great Commission.

Data Analysis and Statistical Procedures

This section will describe how the data was analyzed and how the researcher utilizes the data to answer the research questions. This quantitative correlational study aimed to determine if a relationship exists between SCPLs' Level 5 Leadership and church growth. For purposes of this study, church growth is reflected by annual average weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions. The data was collected from ACPs submitted to the SBC and via electronic surveys incorporating the L5LS. The data was analyzed using electronic survey software (either Qualtrics), Microsoft Excel, and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The researcher used statistical procedures to determine whether there is

a correlation between the variables. The researcher then made analytical generalizations to apply his findings to the population.

The data relied upon to identify qualifying churches and pertaining to the three church growth metrics (annual average weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions) was collected from ACPs submitted to the SBC and other reliable data sources made available by the SBC. This data was available in numerical form and was entered into the above-referenced data analysis tools for statistical analysis. The church growth metrics served as the dependent variables for this study. The researcher also used Microsoft to calculate the percentage of growth (or decline) in attendance, baptisms, and contributions during the relevant time period.

The data pertaining to SCPLs' Level 5 Leadership Scores was collected from participants and three to five other colleagues (responders) identified by the participants who agreed to assess the participant's leadership. The data was collected via an electronic survey that incorporates the L5LS. In answering the survey, each participant generated a Level 5 Leadership Score for themselves. Additionally, the related responders generated a Level 5 Leadership Score for the participant. The cumulative ratings of the participant and the responders were averaged, and the mean of the ratings represented the Level 5 Leadership Score for the participant. Notably, because Level 5 Leadership is dichotomous, the participant was only be considered a Level 5 Leader if their mean scores for both personal humility and professional will were equal to or greater than 8.5.

Once the researcher tabulated the Level 5 Leadership Scores (of each construct) for each participant, the researcher used Microsoft Excel and SPSS to analyze the data. In answering Research Question 1, the researcher calculated the percentage of the participants who qualified

as Level 5 Leaders. The researcher also reported the number of qualifying SCPLs who were invited to participate in the study, completed the survey, and failed to complete the survey.

In this study, the independent variable is dichotomous – a participant is either a Level 5 Leader (L5P) or they are not (NL5P). Thus, in testing Level 5 Leadership against the dependent variables, L5P = 1 and NL5P = 0. However, in analyzing the data, the researcher tested the two constructs of Level 5 Leadership – personal humility and professional will – against the dependent variables because “dichotomous variables are not generally adaptable to correlational assessments” (DeNeal, 2019, p. 83). The researcher used descriptive statistics to assess whether there is a correlation between the two primary constructs of Level 5 Leadership and the church metrics representing the dependent variables in this study.

To answer Research Questions 2 – 4, the researcher used a Pearson product-moment correlation statistic to explore whether there is a correlation between the independent variable and each dependent variable individually (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018, pp. 324-325, 334; DeNeal, 2019, p. 82). To answer Research Question 5, the researcher used a factorial multivariate multiple regression statistical test to relate the SCPL’s leadership style to the dependent variables collectively (DeNeal, 2019, pp. 73, 82). This test is appropriately used when testing one independent variable against two or more dependent variables.

The statistical tests were used to determine if the null hypotheses can be rejected, thus revealing a correlative relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variables, individually and collectively.

Once the researcher statistically analyzed the data, employing both descriptive and inferential statistics, the researcher interpreted the data, presented research findings, and identified any correlations among the variables. The researcher then presented analytical

generalizations in applying his findings to the total population of SCPLs serving Southern Baptist megachurches. The researcher proposes analytical generalizations that he hopes will be helpful to other churches and church leaders in a broader population.

Chapter Summary

This study contributes to the fields of ecclesiology, organizational leadership, church leadership, and church growth by exploring whether SCPLs who demonstrate Level 5 Leadership objectively and measurably contribute to church growth. Chapter 1 of this dissertation describes the research concern, including a background of the problem, a statement of the problem, and a purpose statement. Chapter 2 provides a survey of the literature giving rise to this study and identifies a significant gap in the literature. Specifically, it outlines a theological framework incorporating church growth, Christian leadership, and pastoral leadership. It also describes the underlying theoretical framework, integrating CGT, PLT, SCLT, and L5LT. Additionally, the literature review discusses precedent studies and related literature regarding the megachurch phenomenon. Finally, Chapter 3 provides an overview of the research design, including the researcher's quantitative correlational method. This chapter also described the population that was the subject of this study and the total population sampling technique that was used due to the anticipated size of the population. It then discussed the limitations on generalization and the ethical considerations pertaining to the study. Finally, this chapter addressed the instrumentation, research procedures, data analysis, and statistical procedures to be used by the researcher. The researcher hopes this study will serve the church and its leaders well as they labor to accomplish Jesus Christ's Great Commission.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to determine if a statistically significant relationship exists between the leadership effectiveness of Second-Chair Pastoral Leaders (SCPLs) considered to be Level 5 Leaders as conceptualized by Level 5 Leadership Theory (L5LT) and measured by the Level 5 Leadership Scale (L5LS) and church growth as reflected by annual average weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions for Southern Baptist megachurches averaging at least 2,000 in weekly worship attendance in comparison to growth realized by Southern Baptist megachurches led by SCPLs not considered to be Level 5 Leaders. The researcher hypothesized that SCPLs who demonstrate the two primary qualities of Level 5 Leadership – personal humility and professional will – significantly influence and contribute to church growth. If true, the findings of this study should help churches and lead pastors as they seek an SCPL who can best support their mission and work. Additionally, the findings of this study should better equip SCPLs in need of a leadership theory and paradigm that will help guide their ministries.

Chapter Four reiterates the research questions and hypotheses underlying this study. Then, it provides an overview of the data analysis performed and the resultant findings. In conclusion, this chapter provides an evaluation of the research design.

Research Questions

RQ1. What percentage of SCPLs of Southern Baptist megachurches averaging at least 2,000 in weekly worship attendance is perceived to be Level 5 Leaders as measured by the L5LS (reflecting both personal humility and professional will)?

RQ2. What relationship, if any, exists between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and annual average weekly worship attendance?

RQ3. What relationship, if any, exists between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and annual total baptisms?

RQ4. What relationship, if any, exists between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and annual total financial contributions?

RQ5. What relationship, if any, exists between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and average weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions?

Hypotheses

H₀₁: None established.

H₀₂: There is no relationship between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and annual average weekly worship attendance.

H₀₃: There is no relationship between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and annual total baptisms.

H₀₄: There is no relationship between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and annual total financial contributions.

H₀₅: There is no relationship between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and average weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions.

Compilation Protocol and Measures

This section briefly describes the procedure and statistical tests employed by the researcher to analyze the data for this quantitative correlational study. The statistical tests used to analyze the data were selected as optimal for answering the underlying research questions.

First, the researcher collected archived data maintained by the Southern Baptist Convention and its affiliated or associated entities (SBC), including Lifeway Research. Lifeway Research provided a complete list of all qualifying Southern Baptist megachurches that reported at least 2,000 in average worship attendance in the reporting year 2019. After consultation with a designated representative of the SBC's Executive Committee, the researcher reviewed the historical data reflected in the Annual Church Profiles (ACP) or comparable reports submitted by

each qualifying megachurch to the SBC. The researcher then recorded the data pertaining to the key performance indicators (or church growth metrics) examined in this study for each year during the relevant period and organized the data using Microsoft Excel. In evaluating the change in each key performance indicator, the researcher calculated the percentage of growth (or decline) from 2015 to 2019.

The researcher then collected data from participants and additional respondents (colleagues of participating SCPLs) serving in qualifying churches using the Qualtrics survey platform. The online survey included the L5LS, which was used to assess the SCPLs' Level 5 Leadership. The L5LS is scored using a ten-point semantic differential scale to rate ten leadership characteristics. The data collected through Qualtrics was then exported to Microsoft Excel and further organized and analyzed. In determining the SCPLs Level 5 Leadership Score, the average scores for each leadership characteristic underlying the two primary leadership constructs of personal humility and professional will were calculated. Then, the mean scores of the ten characteristics were again averaged to calculate the scores for personal humility and professional will. Only SCPLs who scored at least 8.5 on both personal humility and professional will were considered Level 5 Leaders.

The researcher transferred the data into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 29) for further analysis and testing. To protect the confidentiality of responses, the researcher disassociated names from responses during the coding, recording, and organizing process.

The researcher then analyzed the descriptive statistics, particularly the mean scores for personal humility and professional will, for each participating SCPL to answer Research Question 1 by determining how many SCPLs qualified as Level 5 Leaders.

The researcher used inferential statistics to answer the remaining Research Questions. Because the independent variable is dichotomous and therefore not appropriately adaptable to this correlational study, the researcher tested the two constructs of Level 5 Leadership – personal humility and professional will – against each dependent variable.

In answering Research Questions 2 – 4, the researcher used a Pearson product-moment correlation statistic to analyze whether a statistically significant relationship existed between the independent variables and each dependent variable among all participating SCPLs, Level 5 SCPLs only, and Non-Level 5 SCPLs only. To account for varying sizes of the megachurches included in the study, the independent variables were measured against the percentage change in the dependent variables over five-years. Additionally, using a Fisher's z-test, the researcher examined whether there was a statistically significant difference between the influence of Level 5 Participants (L5Ps) and Non-Level 5 Participants (NL5Ps) on church growth.

To answer Research Question 5, the researcher used a factorial multivariate multiple regression statistical test to evaluate the entire model. Specifically, the researcher tested whether a statistically significant relationship existed between the two independent variables (personal humility and professional will) and the three dependent variables and, if so, whether there was a statistically significant difference between the effect L5Ps and NL5Ps had on average weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions.

Sample Data

The researcher utilized a non-probability total population sampling technique. As a purposive sampling technique, total population sampling is intended to yield analytical generalizations about the population rather than statistical generalizations extrapolated from a representative sample of the population (Laerd Dissertation, n.d.; Yin, 2015, pp. 104-106;

Džinić, 2015, p. 17). Such analytical generalizations may verify theoretical postulates about a population and could even be applied to a broader “superpopulation” (Alexander, 2015; Džinić, 2015, p. 17).

The population for this study included SCPLs who served in qualifying Southern Baptist megachurches from 2015 to 2019 and whose churches submitted an Annual Church Profile to the SBC (or cooperating state convention) for the relevant period. According to Lifeway Research, 167 Southern Baptist megachurches qualified for this study.³ Seventy-four of the SCPLs invited to participate in this study did not meet its criteria – 70 because they had not served in their position long enough to qualify for the study, and four because they serve in a collaborative co-pastor structure and do not report to a lead pastor.⁴ Thus, there was a total potential population of 93 qualifying SCPLs. Twelve SCPLs declined to participate in the study. Another 39 SCPLs did not respond to the survey. Forty-two qualified SCPLs acknowledged that they met the criteria for the study and responded to the survey. Accordingly, the total response rate of SCPLs represented 45% of the population. However, 10 of the responding SCPLs did not receive a minimum of three evaluations from their identified colleagues, and seven of the responding SCPLs only provided a self-evaluation. Therefore, those 17 SCPLs were excluded from the sample.

Accordingly, the final research sample was comprised of 25 qualified SCPLs ($n = 25$), representing 26.88% of the total population. Because the unique population of SCPLs serving in Southern Baptist megachurches is so small, a very high response rate would be required to satisfy traditionally accepted standards of sample size, confidence level, and margin of error

³ The First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas was excluded from this study because the researcher serves as its SCPL.

⁴ This was confirmed by personal communication with the researcher in response to his recruitment emails, data submitted to the SBC, or data available online via the church websites or the SCPLs' LinkedIn profiles.

(specifically, 75 of 93 or 81%). However, since this study involved a census of the total population and those participating represent a material percentage of the total population considered, the findings outlined below should be considered *practically significant* and “meaningful in a real-world sense of importance” (Mertler et al., 2022, p. 14).

Data Analysis and Findings

In an effort to take a census of the total population, the researcher contacted every Southern Baptist megachurch that reported an average annual worship attendance of at least 2,000 to the SBC in the reporting year 2019. As noted above, 25 qualifying SCPLs, representing 26.88% of the total population, responded to the online survey and received at least three additional evaluations from colleagues.

The researcher calculated the scores for the two constructs of Level 5 Leadership for each of the participating SCPLs. As reflected in Table 3, the lowest personal humility score was 7.56, and the highest personal humility score was 9.76, with the mean being 8.82. The lowest professional will score was 8.05, and the highest professional will score was 9.87, with the mean being 9.32. Because Level 5 Leadership is dichotomous – one either is or is not a Level 5 Leader – a participant must have scored at least 8.5 on personal humility and professional will to be classified as a Level 5 SCPL (L5P = 1, NL5P = 0).

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics: Personal Humility and Professional Will

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal Humility	7.56	9.76	8.82	0.6051
Professional Will	8.05	9.87	9.32	0.4866

N = 25

While the scores for the underlying leadership qualities were generally close to the mean, there were four qualities with greater variability in their scores, which more significantly influenced the final Level 5 Leadership Scores. Relating to Personal Humility, the average scores for “Doesn’t Seek the Spotlight” ranged from 5.80 to 10.00 with a standard deviation of 1.05, and the average scores for “Humble” ranged from 6.20 to 9.83 with a standard deviation of 0.94. Relating to Professional Will, the scores for “Clear Catalyst” ranged from 6.50 to 10.0 with a standard deviation of 0.81, and the scores for “Intense Resolve” ranged from 6.75 to 9.83 with a standard deviation of .76. Table 4 reflects the descriptive statistics for the underlying leadership characteristics comprising the Level 5 Leadership Scores.

Table 4*Descriptive Statistics: Underlying Leadership Characteristics*

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal Humility				
Humble	6.20	9.83	8.23	0.9380
Genuine	8.00	10.00	8.99	0.4975
Servant Attitude	7.75	10.00	8.89	0.6597
Team Player	7.80	10.00	9.03	0.6508
Doesn't Seek Spotlight	5.80	10.00	8.93	1.0504
Professional Will				
Self-Motivated	8.25	10.00	9.54	0.4362
Intense Resolve	6.75	9.83	8.89	0.7616
Strong Work Ethic	8.25	10.00	9.55	0.4616
Clear Catalyst	6.50	10.00	8.81	0.8052
Dedication to the Organization	9.00	10.00	9.72	0.2848

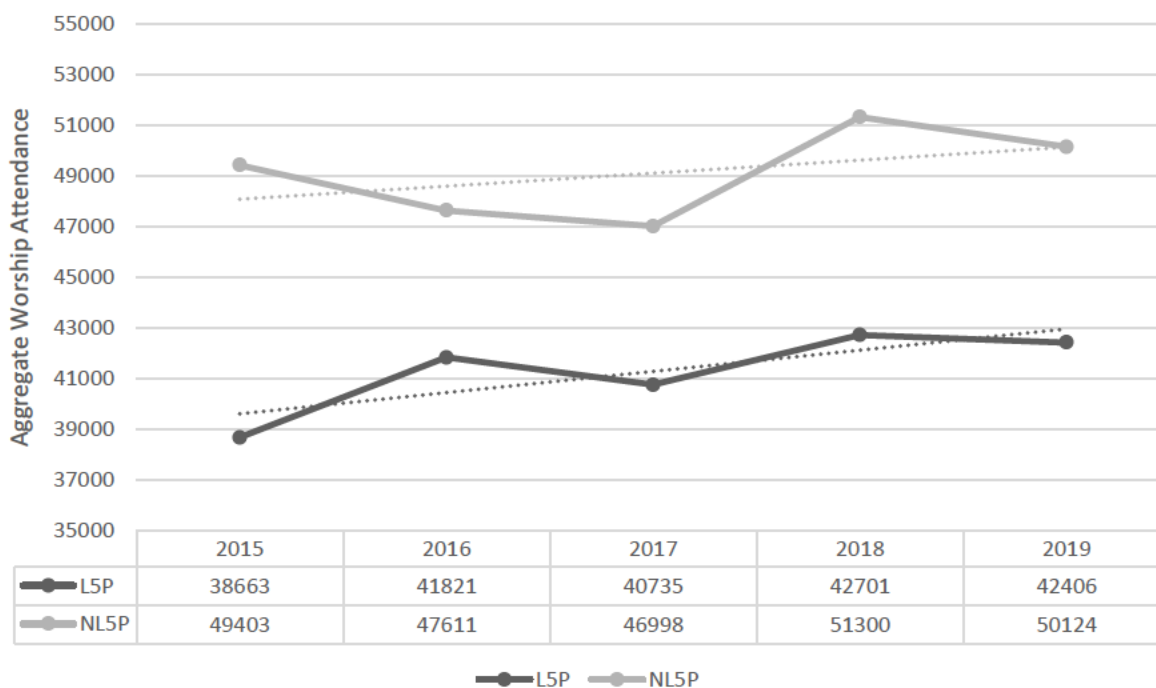
$N = 25$

The researcher also analyzed historical data reflecting the three dependent variables – average worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions – for each of the churches represented by a participating SCPL. After determining which SCPLs qualified as Level 5 Leaders, the researcher divided the Participants into two groups (L5P and NL5P), and aggregated the data for each group to develop descriptive statistics summarizing the growth (or lack thereof) experienced in churches led by Level 5 SCPLs (L5P) in comparison to those led by Non-Level 5 SCPLs (NL5P).

Over the five-year period examined in this study, worship attendance in both the L5P and NL5P groups increased. In total, worship attendance for the L5P group increased by 3,743 (an average annual increase of 936), and worship attendance for the NL5P group increased by 721 (an average annual increase of 180). These increases represented 9.68% growth in worship attendance in the L5P group (averaging 2.43% annually) and 1.46% growth in worship attendance in the NL5P group (averaging 0.49% annually). Thus, an initial review of these descriptive statistics would indicate the L5P group outperformed the NL5P as measured by worship attendance, though these findings do not necessarily reveal any statistically correlated relationships. Figure 1 reflects the aggregate weekly worship attendance for the L5P group in comparison to the NL5P group from 2015-2019.

Figure 1

Comparison of Aggregate Weekly Worship Attendance for L5P and NL5P Groups

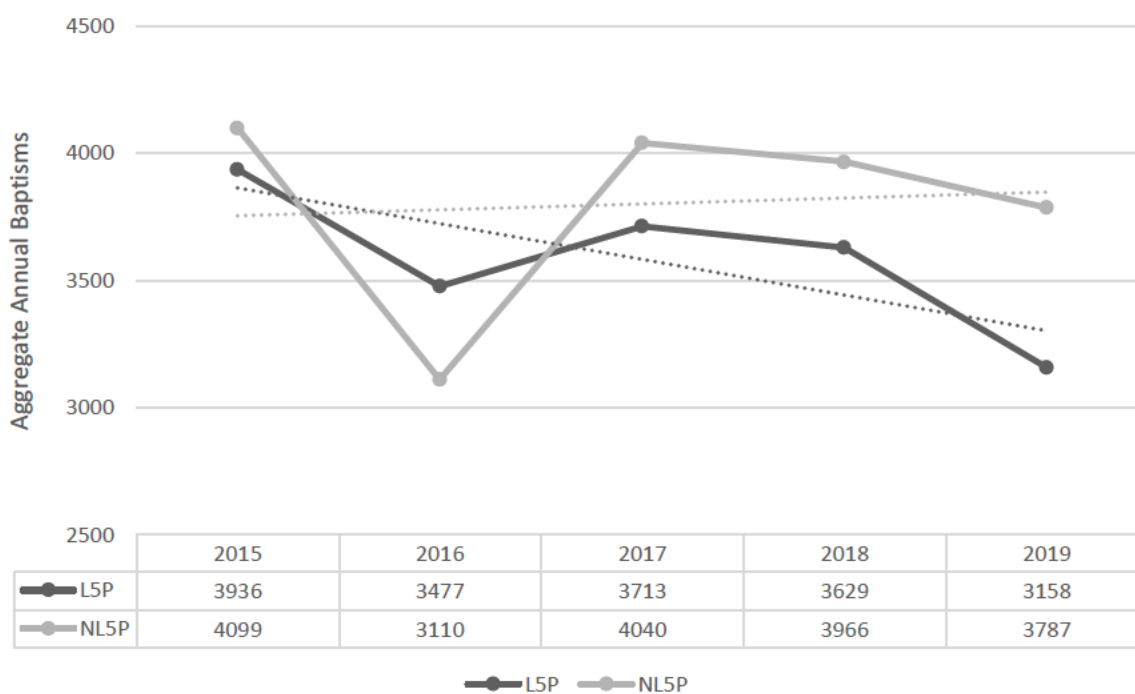


An evaluation of the total aggregate annual baptisms during the same five-year period revealed a sobering result – the number of baptisms reported by both the L5P and NL5P groups

declined. In 2019, although worship attendance had increased, the L5P group reported 778 fewer baptisms than it did in 2015 (a decrease of 19.77%). Likewise, the NL5P group reported 312 fewer baptisms than it did in 2015 (a decrease of 7.61%). Moreover, over the five-year period, the L5P group averaged 195 fewer baptisms each year (averaging an annual decline of 5.03%), and the NL5P group averaged 78 fewer baptisms each year (averaging an annual decline of .14%). Again, although these descriptive statistics do not reveal correlative relationships (which were analyzed in individual churches), they do indicate there may be a broader problem that needs to be addressed as the church works to accomplish the Great Commission by making disciples and *baptizing* them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19-20). Figure 2 reflects the aggregate annual total baptisms for the L5P group in comparison to the NL5P group from 2015-2019.

Figure 2

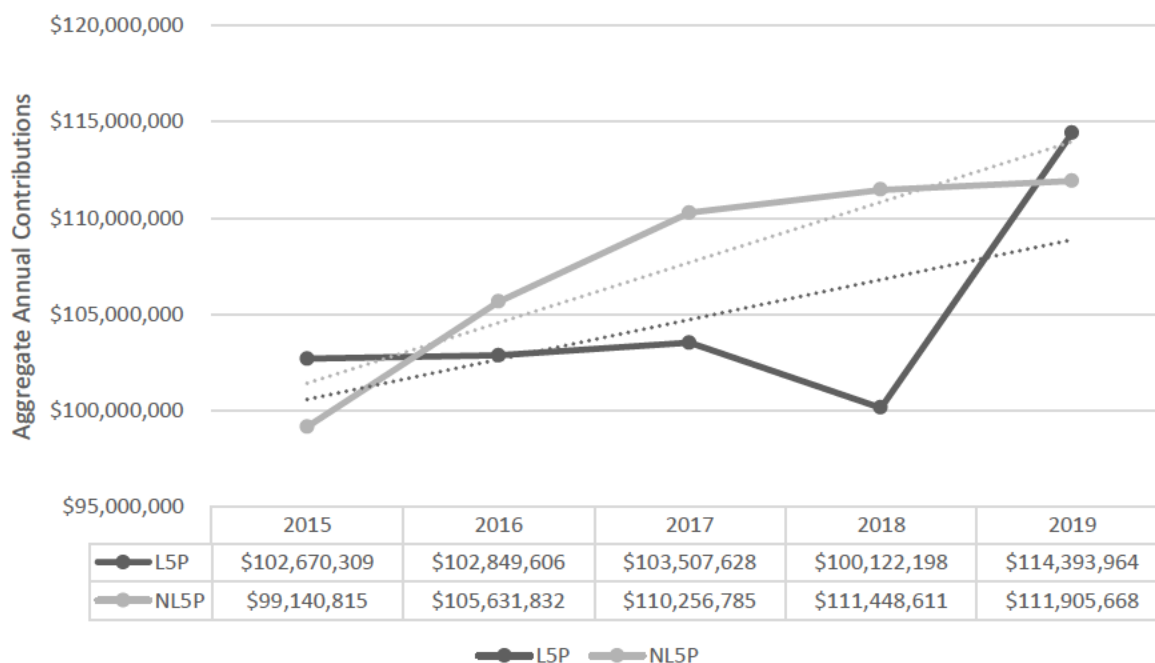
Comparison of Aggregate Annual Total Baptisms for L5P and NL5P Groups



Generally, like worship attendance, average annual financial contributions increased from 2015 to 2019 for both the L5P and NL5P groups. In 2019, the L5P group received \$11,723,655 more in financial contributions than it received in 2015 (an increase of 11.42%). Similarly, the NL5P group received \$12,764,853 more than it did in 2015 (an increase of 12.88%). The L5P group of eight churches averaged a collective \$2,930,913 more in financial contributions each year (an average annual increase of 2.95%). The NL5P group of 10 churches averaged a collective \$3,191,213 more each year (an average annual increase of 3.10%).⁵ Figure 3 reflects the aggregate annual financial contributions for the L5P group in comparison to the NL5P group.

Figure 3

Comparison of Aggregate Annual Financial Contributions for L5P and NL5P Groups



⁵ In both the L5P and NL5P groups, three churches failed to report financial contributions during one intermediate year (2016-2018). In aggregating the data for these groups, to account for the missing values, the researcher utilized the mean of the financial contributions given to that church in the immediately preceding and succeeding years, which is appropriate when missing one value in a subset available data (Newman, 2014, p. 393; Newgard, 2015, p. 941; Wei-Chao & Chih-Fong, 2020).

These summative comparisons reveal descriptive statistics that provide a broader picture of trends in Southern Baptist megachurches during the five-year period considered in this study. On average, worship attendance and annual financial contributions increased each year for both the L5P and NL5P groups, while annual total baptisms decreased each year for both groups. These descriptive statistics also reflect the underlying data reported by individual churches, which was analyzed in answering the research questions guiding this study. Those findings are outlined in the following section.

Research Question One

Research Question 1 sought to determine what percentage of SCPLs serving in Southern Baptist megachurches could be considered Level 5 Leaders as conceptualized by L5LT. Level 5 Leadership is dichotomous – one either is or is not a Level 5 Leader. Thus, as an independent variable, Level 5 Participants (L5P) = 1 and Non-Level 5 Participants (NL5P) = 0. To qualify as a Level 5 Leader, participants must have scored at least 8.5 in both constructs of personal humility and professional will. Of the 25 participating SCPLs included in this study, 13 participants (52% of the sample) qualified as Level 5 Leaders, and 12 participants (48% of the sample) did not qualify as Level 5 Leaders. This finding yielded two balanced groups for comparison. Table 5 reflects the Level 5 Leadership Scores for each of the participants.

Table 5*Second-Chair Pastoral Leaders' Level 5 Leadership Scores*

SCPL	Personal Humility	Professional Will	Level 5 Leader
SC10643	8.440	9.200	No
SC14356	8.650	8.450	No
SC20542	9.120	9.800	Yes
SC30513	8.350	8.750	No
SC31851	9.633	9.400	Yes
SC35453	8.167	9.867	No
SC37321	9.280	8.440	No
SC44646	8.367	9.200	No
SC48328	8.800	9.300	Yes
SC53322	9.667	9.600	Yes
SC58047	9.650	9.750	Yes
SC65436	9.000	8.050	No
SC66591	8.400	9.400	No
SC67202	7.560	9.800	No
SC67509	8.050	9.100	No
SC78230	8.933	9.333	Yes
SC80380	9.750	9.750	Yes
SC84314	8.833	9.500	Yes
SC85657	8.760	9.640	Yes
SC86064	8.840	9.760	Yes
SC89100	9.760	9.400	Yes
SC91904	8.333	8.900	No
SC93681	9.200	9.667	Yes
SC94051	9.033	9.200	Yes
SC97365	7.920	9.840	No

N = 25

Thus, about half (52%) of the SCPLs who participated in the study were considered Level 5 Leaders while the others did not qualify as Level 5 Leaders. This finding is consistent with DeNeal's (2019) study of lead pastors, which identified 58% of his sample as Level 5 Leaders. It also supports Collins' (2001) assertion that Level 5 Leadership is not necessarily rare but can be identified and cultivated in potential leaders (p. 37).

Research Question Two

Research Question 2 sought to determine whether a statistically significant relationship existed between the Level 5 Leadership (personal humility and professional will) of SCPLs and an increase (or decrease) in average weekly worship attendance. The researcher hypothesized that an SCPL who demonstrated Level 5 Leadership could positively influence average weekly worship attendance. Thus, Null Hypothesis 2 stated there is no relationship between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and annual average weekly worship attendance.

Of the 25 SCPLs included in the sample, 22 of them served in churches that reported annual average weekly worship attendance in 2015 and 2019, such that the researcher could measure the increase in worship attendance. The three non-reporting churches were excluded from the analysis for RQ2. Thus $n = 22$. Of these 22 participants, 10 qualified as L5P, and 12 were characterized as NL5P.

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was utilized to determine whether there was a correlation between the leadership effectiveness of the 22 remaining SCPLs and the increase in average weekly worship attendance during the relevant period. Because Level 5 Leadership is a dichotomous independent variable ($L5P = 1$, $NL5P = 0$) and not conducive to correlative analysis, both constructs of Level 5 Leadership, personal humility and professional will, were measured as independent variables against the dependent variable of average weekly worship attendance.

Among all participants (including 10 L5P and 12 NL5P), there was no statistically significant relationship between either personal humility ($r = .259$, $p = .0244$) or professional will ($r = -.084$, $p = .891$) and annual average weekly worship attendance.

Likewise, when analyzed separately, there was no statistically significant relationship between the personal humility ($r = -.050, p = .891$) or professional will ($r = .209, p = .562$) of Level 5 Leaders and average weekly worship attendance. Neither was there a statistically significant relationship between the personal humility ($r = .466, p = .127$) or professional will ($r = -.447, p = .145$) of Non-Level 5 Leaders and average weekly worship attendance. Tables 6, 7, and 8 reflect the relationships (or lack thereof) between the independent variables and average weekly worship attendance among all participants, L5P only, and NL5P only, respectively.

Table 6*Relationship between Level 5 Leadership and Worship Attendance (All Participants)*

	Personal Humility	Professional Will	Worship Attendance
Personal Humility	1	0.024	0.251
Professional Will		1	-0.367
Worship Attendance			1

$N = 22$

Table 7*Relationship between Level 5 Leadership and Worship Attendance (Level 5 Leaders)*

	Personal Humility	Professional Will	Worship Attendance
Personal Humility	1	0.180	-0.050
Professional Will		1	0.209
Worship Attendance			1

$N = 10$

Table 8

Relationship between Level 5 Leadership and Worship Attendance (Non-Level 5 Leaders)

	Personal Humility	Professional Will	Worship Attendance
Personal Humility	1	-0.827**	0.466
Professional Will		1	-0.477
Worship Attendance			1

N = 12

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

Therefore, Null Hypothesis 2 was not rejected. No statistically significant relationship was found between a SCPL's Level 5 Leadership and average weekly worship attendance.

Interestingly, the literature revealed that scholarly studies have generally failed to demonstrate empirical evidence that effective pastoral leadership contributes to an increase in worship attendance – this study is no exception. While it may be reasonable to assume pastoral leadership is a contributing factor, this study did not find a correlative relationship between the Level 5 Leadership of SCPLs and average weekly worship attendance.

Research Question Three

Similarly, Research Question 3 sought to determine whether a statistically significant relationship existed between the Level 5 Leadership (personal humility and professional will) of SCPLs and an increase (or decrease) in annual total baptisms. The researcher hypothesized that an SCPL who demonstrated Level 5 Leadership could positively influence the number of annual total baptisms. Thus, Null Hypothesis 3 stated there is no relationship between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and annual total baptisms.

Of the 25 SCPLs included in the sample, 22 of them served in churches that reported annual baptisms in 2015 and 2019, such that the researcher could measure the increase in baptisms. The three non-reporting churches were excluded from the analysis for RQ3, so $n = 22$. These were the same 22 churches that reported sufficient data pertaining to Research Question 2. Thus, 10 were L5P, and 12 were NL5P.

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to test Null Hypothesis 3 and determine whether there was a correlation between the leadership effectiveness of the 22 remaining SCPLs and the growth in number of baptisms (in 2015 and 2019).⁶ Among all participants (including 10 L5P and 12 NL5P), there was no statistically significant relationship between either personal humility ($r = .251, p = .260$) or professional will ($r = -.367, p = .093$) and total baptisms.

When analyzed separately, there was no statistically significant relationship between the personal humility ($r = .071, p = .846$) or professional will ($r = -.322, p = .365$) of Level 5 SCPLs and baptisms.

Among Non-Level 5 SCPLs, while there was no statistically significant relationship between their personal humility ($r = .328, p = .297$) and total baptisms, there was a statistically significant *negative* relationship between professional will ($r = -.643, p = .024$) and total baptisms. This finding indicates a high degree of correlation (Cohen, 1977, p. 81).

⁶ To account for a potential fluctuation in the number of baptisms in a single year (i.e., 2015 vs. 2019), the researcher also measured the independent variables against average annual percentage change (increase or decrease) in number of total baptisms for the relevant period. This analysis reflected that no statistically significant relationship existed between the personal humility ($r = -.006, p = .981$) or professional will ($r = -.406, p = .061$) among all participants, no statistically significant relationship existed between the personal humility ($r = .184, p = .611$) or professional will ($r = -.187, p = .604$) among all Level 5 SCPLs only, and no statistically significant relationship existed between the personal humility ($r = .207, p = .519$) or professional will ($r = -.387, p = .214$) among Non-Level 5 SCPLs only.

Therefore, Null Hypothesis 3 was rejected because there is a statistically significant relationship between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5Ps and annual total baptisms. Specifically, among Non-Level 5 SCPLs, there is a statistically significant *negative* relationship between professional will and an increase in annual total baptisms.

Tables 9, 10, and 11 reflect the relationships (or lack thereof) between the independent variables and the difference in annual total baptisms in 2015 and 2019 among all participants, L5P only, and NL5P only.

Table 9

Relationship between Level 5 Leadership and Baptisms (All Participants)

	Personal Humility	Professional Will	Baptisms
Personal Humility	1	0.024	0.251
Professional Will		1	-0.367
Baptisms			1

N = 22

Table 10

Relationship between Level 5 Leadership and Baptisms (Level 5 Leaders)

	Personal Humility	Professional Will	Baptisms
Personal Humility	1	0.180	0.071
Professional Will		1	-0.322
Baptisms			1

N = 10

Table 11

Relationship between Level 5 Leadership and Baptisms (Non-Level 5 Leaders)

	Personal Humility	Professional Will	Baptisms
Personal Humility	1	-.0827**	0.328
Professional Will		1	-0.643*
Baptisms			1

N = 12

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)*

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

However, using the Fisher's r-to-z transformation and Fisher's z-test for a two-tailed test, the difference between the correlation between the professional will of Non-Level 5 SCPLs and baptisms, and the correlation between the professional will of Level 5 SCPLs and baptisms (which was also in the negative direction) was not statistically significant ($z = -.85, p = .3953$).

These findings reveal that when an SCPL does not qualify as a Level 5 Leader because they lack personal humility, there is a negative correlation between their professional will and the number of baptisms reported by the church. In other words, where there is a Non-Level 5 SCPL, the higher their professional will, the fewer the baptisms in their church.

Research Question Four

Research Question 4 examined whether a statistically significant relationship existed between the Level 5 Leadership (personal humility and professional will) of SPCLs and an increase (or decrease) in annual total financial contributions. The researcher hypothesized that an SCPL who demonstrated Level 5 Leadership could positively influence annual total financial contributions. Null Hypothesis 4 stated there is no relationship between the leadership

effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and annual total financial contributions.

Of the 25 SCPLs included in the sample, 18 of them served in churches that reported sufficient data regarding financial contribution to properly measure the growth during the relevant period. The seven non-reporting churches were excluded from the analysis for RQ4, so $n = 18$. Included in this sample were 8 L5Ps and 10 NL5Ps, relatively comparably sized groups.

Again, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to test Null Hypothesis 4 and determine whether there was a correlation between the leadership effectiveness of the 18 remaining SCPLs and the growth in financial contributions from 2015 to 2019. Among all participants (including 8 L5P and 10 NL5P), there was no statistically significant relationship between either personal humility ($r = .426, p = .078$) or (professional will ($r = -.319, p = .197$) and an increase in total annual financial contributions.

When analyzed separately, among Level 5 SCPLs, there *was* a statistically significant relationship between their personal humility and total annual financial contributions ($r = .786, p = .021$) at a traditional significance level of .05 for a 2-tailed test. A correlation at this level should be considered a large effect or high degree of correlation (Cohen, 1977, p. 81). There was no statistically significant relationship between the professional will ($r = -.007, p = .988$) of Level 5 SCPLs and financial contributions.

Neither was there a statistically significant relationship between personal humility ($r = .390, p = .266$) or professional will ($r = -.555, p = .096$) and financial contributions among Non-Level 5 SCPLs.

Therefore, Null Hypothesis 4 was rejected because there is a statistically significant relationship between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and

measured by the L5LS and annual total financial contributions. Specifically, among Level 5 SCPLs, there is a statistically significant positive relationship between their personal humility and an increase in total annual financial contributions.

Tables 12, 13, and 14 reflect the relationships (or lack thereof) between the independent variables of personal humility and professional will and the growth in total annual financial contributions among all participants, L5P only, and NL5P only.

Table 12

Relationship between Level 5 Leadership and Financial Contributions (All Participants)

	Personal Humility	Professional Will	Contributions
Personal Humility	1	0.024	0.426
Professional Will		1	-0.319
Contributions			1

N = 18

Table 13

Relationship between Level 5 Leadership and Financial Contributions (Level 5 Leaders)

	Personal Humility	Professional Will	Contributions
Personal Humility	1	0.180	0.786*
Professional Will		1	-0.007
Contributions			1

N = 8

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 14*Relationship between Level 5 Leadership and Financial Contributions (Non-Level 5 Leaders)*

	Personal Humility	Professional Will	Contributions
Personal Humility	1	-0.827**	0.390
Professional Will		1	-0.555
Contributions			1

*N = 10**** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

However, using the Fisher's r-to-z transformation and Fisher's z-test for a two-tailed test, the difference between the correlation between the personal humility of Level 5 SCPLs and financial contributions and the correlation between the personal humility of Non-Level 5 SCPLs and financial contributions was not statistically significant ($z = 1.11, p = .267$).

These statistical tests showed that where there is a Level 5 SPCL, there is a statistically significant positive correlation between the SCPL's personal humility and financial contributions. That is, the greater the SCPL's personal humility, the more money was given to their church. This was not true of the churches led by Non-Level 5 SCPLs. While the difference between the two groups is not necessarily statistically significant, it is certainly worth noting as practically significant and important in the real world (Mertler et al., 2022, p. 14).

Research Question Five

Finally, Research Question 5 evaluated the entire model as a whole and considered whether a statistically significant relationship exists between the two primary constructs of Level 5 Leadership, personal humility and professional will, together (the independent variables), and average weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions, collectively (the dependent variables). The researcher hypothesized that there

would be a positively correlated relationship between SCPLs' Level 5 Leadership and church growth as measured by the three dependent variables. Thus, Null Hypothesis 5 stated there is no relationship between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and average weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions.

To perform this analysis, each of the independent variables had to be categorized as including two sub-groups – Level 5 and Non-Level 5 (L5P = 1, NL5P = 0). A factorial multivariate multiple regression was performed to determine the effect of Level 5 Leadership, both (1) personal humility (L5P or NL5P) and (2) professional will (L5P or NL5P), on (A) average weekly worship attendance, (B) annual total baptisms, and (C) annual total financial contributions. The factorial multivariate analysis is an appropriate means of examining scenarios involving two or more categorical independent variables and two or more quantitative dependent variables (Mertler et al., 2022, pp. 22, 133).

Of the 25 SCPLs included in the sample, seven served in churches that were missing data from their annual reports from the years 2015 to 2019, such that the researcher could not measure the effect of the dependent variables on all three dependent variables during those years. The seven churches with missing data were excluded from the analysis for RQ5. Thus $n = 18$.

Of the 18 SCPLs included in the analysis, eight qualified as L5Ps, and 10 were considered NL5Ps. Specifically, while 16 of the SCPLs scored at least 8.5 on the professional will, only 8 of the SCPLs scored at least 8.5 on both personal humility *and* professional will.

Levene's test for homogeneity of variance and Box's test for homogeneity of covariance indicated that the null hypotheses were not rejected and homogeneity was assumed. The results of the multivariate tests indicated that the interaction effect between personal humility and

professional will was not statistically significant (Roy's Largest Root = .000, $F(3, 12) = .000$, $p = 1.00$). When evaluating the entire model, neither were the main effects of personal humility (Roy's Largest Root = .335, $F(3, 13) = 1.453$, $p = .273$) or professional will (Roy's Largest Root = .122, $F(3, 13) = .528$, $p = .671$) as categorical independent variables statistically significant.

A factorial MANOVA was also performed to evaluate the effect of Level 5 Leadership (L5P vs. NL5P) as a single independent variable on the dependent variables, collectively. As previously noted, of the 18 SCPLs included, 8 were L5Ps and 10 were NL5Ps. Levene's and Box's tests indicated homogeneity was assumed. The MANOVA results likewise reflected no statistically significant relationship between Level 5 Leadership and the dependent variables, collectively (Roy's Largest Root = .213, $F(3, 14) = .996$, $p = .423$).

Therefore, Null Hypothesis 5 was not rejected.

The researcher evaluated the entire model to discover whether more complex correlative relationships might be revealed when the interaction of all variables were considered. For example, even though the researcher did not discover a relationship between either personal humility or professional will and worship attendance in answering Research Question 2, this test enabled the researcher to explore whether an interaction of personal humility and professional will might influence worship attendance (and the other dependent variables). In other words, while the Pearson product-moment correlation statistic separately measured the effect of each independent variable under certain conditions, the factorial multivariate multiple regression test measured the effect of both independent variables *simultaneously*. However, because these tests did not evidence any interaction effect, it is appropriate to focus on the main effects (personal humility and professional will), individually, and the correlative relationships (or lack thereof) revealed in answering Research Questions 2 – 4.

Evaluation of the Research Design

This non-experimental, quantitative correlational study explored whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the Level 5 Leadership capabilities of Second-Chair Pastoral Leaders and church growth as measured by three traditional key performance indicators or metrics – average weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions. As the first study to quantitatively examine whether SCPLs might positively influence church growth, this study did reveal at least some statistically significant correlative relationships that should be further examined.

The quantitative approach to this study provided some clarity regarding the somewhat ambiguous concepts of Level 5 Leadership and church growth by examining objective measures of both variables. The primary statistical tests employed – both the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and the factorial multivariate multiple regression – were appropriate for examining whether such relationships exist. While a correlational study does not necessarily support causality findings, it does support reasonable predictions regarding variable behavior, which this study helped reveal (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018, p. 148; Curtis et al., 2016, p. 24).

Because the population studied was relatively small (potentially 93 qualifying SCPLs), the researcher was able to use a total population sampling technique, which would not often be feasible if conducting a correlational study involving a larger population. The total population sampling technique typically provides “deep insights into the phenomenon” being studied and “a reduced risk of missing potential insights” (Laerd Dissertation, n.d.). Thus, by having almost 27% of the total population represented as the sample in this study, the findings could be considered “practically significant” and supportive of analytical generalizations applicable to the total population (Mertler et al., 2022, p. 14; Yin, 2015, p. 106).

However, while total population sampling is intended to yield analytical generalizations about a population rather than statistical generalizations that might be extrapolated from a sample, the representative sample would fall short of meeting traditionally accepted standards of sample size, confidence level, and margin of error. Specifically, this study would have required a sample size of 75 participants (81% of the population) to support a confidence level of 95% with a margin of error of 5%. The actual sample of 27% would result in a margin of error of 16.85%, thus weakening the argument that the study's findings are generalizable.

The online survey proved an efficient and effective means of gathering information from participants and respondents, and the Level 5 Leadership Scale had previously been established as valid and reliable. While self-evaluations may contain some personal bias, any potential bias was offset by gathering additional evaluations from colleagues. This resulted in two relatively comparable groups of SCPLs characterized as Level 5 Leaders and Non-Level 5 Leaders. Likewise, this result supported the decision to use DeNeal's (2019) higher standard of 8.5 rather than Reid's (2012) original standard of 7.5 to account for a potentially higher-than-normal tendency in characterizing pastoral leaders as Level 5 Leaders.

Unfortunately, 17 SCPLs who met the criteria to participate in the study and responded to the survey had to be excluded from the sample because they either did not identify colleagues who could evaluate their leadership or failed to garner sufficient responses from the colleagues they did identify. If those 17 SCPLs had been included, the sample would have represented almost half of the total population (45%), which would have strengthened the study's findings.

The timing of this study presented some unique challenges pertaining to the design. This study examined church growth over a five-year period (2015-2019) and required that participating SCPLs have served in their current position for at least those five years. While this

is a relatively short period to consider in a correlational study, it was selected because previous studies showed the average tenure of pastors ranged from four to nine years, and the average tenure of executive pastors is 5.5 years (Rainer, 2014; Fretwell, 2021; Pepper, 2009). The issue of tenure was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which negatively affected church growth measures in 2020, requiring the researcher to focus on the five years preceding the pandemic rather than the immediately preceding five years. Thus, since this study was completed in 2023, participating SCPLs will have served at least eight years in their current positions, further limiting the representative response. Indeed, among the 167 Southern Baptist megachurches that qualified to be included in this study, at least 70 SCPLs did not qualify for participation based on tenure. If the researcher had been able to examine the immediately preceding five years (2018-2022), the study likely would have garnered greater participation.

The design could also be adjusted to strengthen its generalizability to more churches. This study focused on megachurches in the Southern Baptist Convention, a relatively small population. The vast majority of churches are much smaller than those examined. According to Rainer (2023), the average weekly attendance of a church in 2023 is 60. While this study's findings are arguably generalizable and applicable to churches of all sizes and denominations, a much greater number of churches and SCPLs could be included by expanding the parameters of the population. Such an adjustment might bolster the study's findings and generalizability.

Finally, while a strength of the research design was its quantitative approach, this study could benefit from a mixed-method approach. Specifically, a mixed-method design could be used to help further explain the quantitative data and results (Creswell, 2014, p. 12). A qualitative follow-up could explore participating SCPLs' responsibilities more deeply and provide greater insight into the identified correlations.

In summary, though there are certainly opportunities to improve the research design, the quantitative correlational design of this study effectively accomplished its purpose of examining whether a relationship might exist between the Level 5 Leadership qualities of SCPLs and church growth. It contributed findings to the fields of church growth and leadership that are worth exploring further, as outlined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

This chapter provides the research conclusions drawn from the data, results, and findings outlined in the previous chapter. It begins with a reminder of the research purpose and research questions that undergirded and guided this study. It includes a discussion of research conclusions associated with each research question and considers theoretical, empirical, and practical implications and applications of the findings and conclusions. The chapter also discusses potential limitations of the study and includes recommendations for further research. It concludes with a final summary of the study and closing thoughts from the researcher.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study is to determine if a statistically significant relationship exists between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs considered to be Level 5 Leaders as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and church growth as reflected by annual average weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions for Southern Baptist megachurches averaging at least 2,000 in weekly worship attendance in comparison to the growth realized by Southern Baptist megachurches led by SCPLs not considered to be Level 5 Leaders.

Research Questions

RQ1. What percentage of SCPLs of Southern Baptist megachurches averaging at least 2,000 in weekly worship attendance is perceived to be Level 5 Leaders as measured by the L5LS (reflecting both personal humility and professional will)?

RQ2. What relationship, if any, exists between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and annual average weekly worship attendance?

RQ3. What relationship, if any, exists between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and annual total baptisms?

RQ4. What relationship, if any, exists between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and annual total financial contributions?

RQ5. What relationship, if any, exists between the leadership effectiveness of SCPLs as conceptualized by L5LT and measured by the L5LS and average weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions?

Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications

This study explored whether a statistically significant relationship exists between the Level 5 Leadership qualities of SCPLs and the growth of the churches they serve as measured by average annual weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions. It sought to survey the total population of SCPLs serving in Southern Baptist megachurches from 2015 to 2019, whose churches submitted an Annual Church Profile to the Southern Baptist Convention (or associated entity). The researcher used the L5LS to measure the two constructs of Level 5 Leadership – personal humility and professional will – and determine what percentage of the population might qualify as Level 5 Leaders. A Pearson product-moment correlation statistic was used to explore whether a statistically significant correlative relationship exists between SCPLs’ Level 5 Leadership and the three above-listed traditional church growth measures. A factorial multivariate multiple regression statistical test was used to examine the entire model and explore whether statistically significant relationships existed among the two independent variables and three dependent variables collectively.

The test of the entire model did not reveal any statistically significant relationships, and no statistically significant relationships pertaining to average weekly worship attendance were discovered. The study did reveal (a) a negative correlation between professional will and total baptisms where a Non-Level 5 SCPL is present and (b) a positive relationship between personal humility and total financial contributions where a Level 5 SCPL is present. Thus, the null hypotheses relating to baptisms and financial contributions were rejected. Although the

differences between the identified correlative relationships and those of comparison groups were not statistically significant, they could be considered practically significant and “relevant in a real-world sense of importance” (Mertler et al., 2022, p. 14).

Accordingly, based on the results of this study, the researcher concluded:

1. Approximately half of SCPLs demonstrate a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will characteristic of Level 5 Leaders, with personal humility being the characteristic that most distinguishes Level 5 Leaders from comparison leaders.
2. While it may be reasonable to assume that effective pastoral leadership is probably correlated with worship attendance, there remains little empirical evidence to support this assertion.
3. When a SCPL lacks personal humility, a heightened sense of professional will may be detrimental to church growth, particularly as measured by baptisms, a key metric directly related to new spiritual growth in any congregation.
4. When a SCPL demonstrates both personal humility and professional will characteristic of Level 5 Leadership, their leadership may positively influence church growth, particularly as measured by financial contributions, a metric that has often been associated with the SCPL’s role and administrative responsibilities.
5. There is little *statistical* evidence that Level 5 SCPLs influence church growth significantly more than Non-Level 5 SCPLs, but it is reasonably *practical* to contend
 - (a) SCPLs who demonstrate Level 5 Leadership could greatly benefit the church and
 - (b) highly ambitious SCPLs who lack personal humility could inhibit the work of the church.

Research Conclusion One

Approximately half of SCPLs demonstrate a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will characteristic of Level 5 Leaders, with personal humility being the characteristic that most distinguishes Level 5 Leaders from comparison leaders. The uniqueness of L5LT and those leaders who demonstrate its qualities is found in the “paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will” (Collins, 2001, p. 20). However, Collins (2001) argues that potential Level 5 Leaders are not necessarily rare (pp. 36-37). In fact, he believes many have the potential to evolve to Level 5 (p. 37). He notes:

“[T]he capability resides within them, perhaps buried or ignored, but there nonetheless. And under the right circumstances . . . they begin to develop. . . . The problem is not, in my estimation, a dearth of potential Level 5 Leaders. They exist all around us, if we just know what to look for. And what is that? Look for situations where extraordinary results exist but where no individual steps forth to claim excess credit. You will likely find a potential Level 5 Leader at work” (p. 37).

The results of Research Question 1 align with L5LT and Collins’ belief that humble, diligent, effective Level 5 Leaders can be found if one knows where and how to look for them. In studying the total population of SCPLs eligible for participation in this study, the researcher found 52% – more than half the population – were considered Level 5 Leaders, while 48% were not characterized as Level 5 Leaders. This finding is fairly consistent with DeNeal’s (2019) study of lead pastors, which found 58% of participants to be Level 5 Leaders.

The results of Research Question 1 also undergird Collins’ (2001) argument that L5LT is distinct from other leadership theories because it recognizes a unique blend of personal humility and professional will – a duality often lacking in larger-than-life, celebrity leaders most recognized in the world today. Even among SCPLs – a ministerial role that by its very nature requires submission to another leader – *humility* stood as the distinguishing factor. A large

majority of the participants (88%) did not lack professional will (the mean score being 9.32), but 36% of participating SCPLs scored less than 8.5 in personal humility.

This finding differs from some of the literature that would suggest professional will could be considered the “most important trait” of Level 5 Leadership (Collins & Hansen, 2011, p. 32; DeNeal, 2019, pp. 26, 90). Instead, it seems many relatively effective leaders possess a high level of professional will, but fewer possess both the professional will and personal humility characteristic of Level 5 Leadership. This study, however, does support DeNeal’s (2019) conclusion that it is the *dynamism* of the two constructs that sets the Level 5 Leader apart.

Since the sample examined in this study represents almost 27% of the total population of SCPLs serving in Southern Baptist megachurches, its findings should be considered practically significant and representative of the population. The results of Research Question 1 indicate approximately half (or 52%) of SCPLs serving in Southern Baptist megachurches could be characterized as Level 5 Leaders and that the greatest differentiator between Level 5 Leaders and comparison leaders is their personal humility.

Research Conclusion Two

While it may be reasonable to assume that effective pastoral leadership probably influences with worship attendance, there remains little empirical evidence to support this assertion. Bosch (2020) notes that church attendance has been considered one of the “ABCs of ministry” (along with baptisms and cash) (pp. 122-123; Fillinger, 2009). CGT has long emphasized the importance of counting people and has recognized the importance of effective pastoral leadership to church growth (McGavran, 1990; DeNeal, 2019, pp. 56-59, 63). Yet, empirical studies have yielded mixed results and little evidence supporting this contention.

Neither do the results of Research Question 2 reflect a statistically significant relationship between the Level 5 Leadership of SCPLs and average weekly worship attendance.

As DeNeal (2019) noted, however, even though no statistically significant relationship has been found between Level 5 Leadership and church attendance, “it would be a mistake to conclude leadership, in general, is a noncausal factor to church growth” (p. 97). In other words, even though there is little statistical evidence that pastoral leadership contributes to church growth, logic dictates that it undoubtedly does.

Research Conclusion Three

When a SCPL lacks personal humility, a heightened sense of professional will may be detrimental to church growth, particularly as measured by baptisms – a key metric directly related to new spiritual growth in any congregation. L5LT, SCLT, and PLT all emphasize the importance of personal humility. Collins (2001) describes Level 5 Leaders as “self-effacing individuals who displayed the fierce resolve to do whatever needed to be done to make the company great” (p. 21). Similarly, Heenan and Bennis (2000) describe second-chair or subordinate leaders as those who faithfully “do the work, even if they receive little of the glory” (Heenan & Bennis, 2000, p. 3). Bonem and Patterson (2005) recognize that second-chair leaders must be willing to subordinate their own dreams to those of the first chair for the good of the organization and its mission (p. 5). Likewise, Rainer (2005) describes the most effective pastoral leaders as possessing a “compelling modesty” and being “modest, humble, quiet, others-centered, [deflecting of] accolades, and open to criticism” (pp. 39-40).

Each of these leadership theories also warns against leaders who demonstrate great ambition but little humility. Non-Level 5 Leaders are often talented and ambitious, but their ambition is for their own success and ultimately leads to the decline of the organizations they

serve – under their tenure or the next (Collins, 2001, pp. 29-30, 35). Bonem and Patterson (2005) caution second-chair leaders to be wary of “the ego factor,” noting, “If your role is behind the scenes but you feel a need to be in a highly visible position, tensions are likely to escalate” (P. 49). In discussing effective pastoral leadership, Rainer (2005) observed that less effective leaders serving in comparison churches were often eager to tell of their own accomplishments, but rarely demonstrated humility (pp. 59-60).

The results of Research Question 3 suggest that leadership characterized by ambition without personal humility is not only ineffective, but detrimental. Among all participants, when examined together, there was no statistically significant relationship between Level 5 Leadership qualities and baptisms. Neither was a relationship found when considering Level 5 Leaders only. However, when examining Non-Level 5 Leaders only, there was a statistically significant *negative* relationship between professional will and total baptisms. In other words, where there is a Non-Level 5 Leader who fails to demonstrate personal humility, the higher their professional will, the fewer baptisms are recorded in the church. This finding makes logical and biblical sense. When a SCPL lacks humility and operates out of selfish ambition, the church is likely to experience tension, strife, and division that hinders its mission.

The results of Research Question 3 also undergird broader principles of Christian leadership – specifically, Sanders’ (2007) “Master’s Master Principle” (pp. 21-27). Quoting the pastor-theologian, A.W. Tozer, Sanders (2007) observes:

“The man who is ambitious to lead is disqualified. . . . the true leader will have no desire to lord it over God’s heritage, but will be humble, gentle, self-sacrificing, and altogether ready to follow when the Spirit chooses another to lead” (p. 30).

Sanders (2007) further notes that “spiritual goals can be achieved only by spiritual people who use spiritual methods” (p. 32). Of all measures of church growth, baptisms may be the one most directly related to new spiritual growth in the church – that is, the salvation of unbelievers

who have become children of God. As such, it should be quite alarming to churches and pastoral leaders that this spiritual work might be quelled by the selfish ambition of a second-chair pastoral leader lacking humility.

Research Conclusion Four

When a SCPL demonstrates both personal humility and professional will characteristic of Level 5 Leadership, their leadership may positively influence church growth, particularly as measured by financial contributions, a metric often associated with the SCPL's role and administrative responsibilities. L5LT holds that it is the unique "paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will" that distinguishes Level 5 Leaders from their counterparts (Collins, 2001, p. 21). Collins (2005) argued that these types of leaders can also be found making a significant difference in the social sectors, including religious organizations and churches. Specifically, Collins (2005) notes that Level 5 Leaders in the social sectors are "ambitious first and foremost for the cause, the movement, the mission, the work – not themselves – and they have the will to do whatever it takes . . . to make good on that ambition" (p. 11).

The results of Research Question 4 seem to support Collins' contention that a Level 5 Leader who demonstrates both personal humility and professional will can significantly contribute to the church. In exploring whether a relationship existed between the Level 5 Leadership of SCPLs and financial contributions, the researcher found no such relationship when examining all participants together or when examining Non-Level 5 Leaders only. However, among Level 5 Leaders, there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the personal humility of Level 5 SCPLs and growth in annual total financial contributions. That is, where there is a Level 5 SCPL who demonstrates both personal humility and professional will, the greater their humility, the more financial contributions were received by the church.

This finding would seem to undergird Bosch's (2020) position that churches and lead pastors might not fully understand the demands on pastoral leaders and the opportunities associated with hiring an SCPL like an executive pastor (p. 72). While this researcher does not necessarily agree with Bosch's (2020) characterization of SCPLs as administrators, the researcher and Bosch would likely agree that – of the church growth metrics considered – financial contributions are most commonly directly related to the role and responsibility of the SCPL, particularly executive pastors (i.e., Bonem, 2016b). Indeed, Bosch (2020) contends the “fiscal end state” of the organization and the proper stewardship of financial resources may be the “ideal performance model” for executive pastors serving as SCPLs. Whether due to proper stewardship, financial acumen, donor confidence, or other factors, there appears to be a strong correlation between the Level 5 Leadership of SCPLs and financial contributions.

The results of Research Question 4 may be likened to the biblical account of Joseph – the world's greatest second-chair leader. After Joseph learned humility and reliance on God, Pharaoh recognized him as a “discerning and wise” leader capable of stewarding the resources of all Egypt (Gen. 41:37-45). Likewise, lead pastors splintered by the demands of pastoral ministry might do well to find a discerning and wise SCPL who demonstrates both personal humility and professional will to assist with some of his responsibilities, particularly those related to financial matters of the church.

Research Conclusion Five

There is little *statistical* evidence that Level 5 SCPLs influence church growth significantly more than Non-Level 5 SCPLs, but it is reasonably *practical* to contend (a) SCPLs who demonstrate Level 5 Leadership could greatly benefit the church and (b) highly ambitious SCPLs who lack personal humility could inhibit the work of the church. The entire model was

analyzed using a factorial multivariate multiple regression statistical test. This test considered whether a correlation existed between two independent variables (personal humility and professional will) and three dependent variables (average weekly worship attendance, annual total baptisms, and annual total financial contributions) but did not reveal any statistically significant correlative relationships. Since this test did not reveal an interaction effect, one should consider the main effects individually, as reflected in Research Conclusions 2 – 4.

As outlined above, those results revealed that where there is a Non-Level 5 SCPL lacking humility, a heightened degree of professional will or ambition could negatively affect the number of baptisms in the church, and where there is a Level 5 SCPL demonstrating both personal humility and professional will, those with greater humility could more positively influence total financial contributions. The results of Research Questions 3 and 4 are complimentary. While it is important for a SCPL to demonstrate a high degree of professional will, personal humility seems to distinguish those who contribute to church growth from those who detract from it.

However, in both cases, the correlative relationships did not differ from comparison groups at a statistically significant level. Meaning, the difference between the correlation between the professional will of Non-Level 5 SCPLs and baptisms, and the correlation between the professional will of Level 5 SCPLs and baptisms was not statistically significant. Likewise, the difference between the correlation between the personal humility of Level 5 SCPLs and financial contributions and the correlation between the personal humility of Non-Level 5 SCPLs and financial contributions was not statistically significant.

That said, statistical significance is not the only standard by which findings should be measured. One must also consider the practical significance of the findings. Mertler et al. (2022) explain:

“[P]ractical significance is defined as the extent to which statistical results are meaningful in a real-world sense of importance. No statistical test can tell a researcher if an obtained effect is large enough to be important in a particular field of study. This requires the application of subject area expertise and an individual’s substantive experience in the field. In that case, the question the researcher needs to ask is, ‘Is the effect large enough to care about?’” (p.14).

The findings and conclusions of this study should be considered practically significant. Both of the correlative relationships identified were great enough to be considered as having a large effect or high degree of correlation (Cohen, 1977, p. 81). Additionally, since this study involved a census of a total population, the researcher is not necessarily seeking to extrapolate statistical generalizations from a sample but instead to make analytical generations based on a representative response. Even when individual units had to be excluded because their churches had not reported particular data points, the sample still represented almost 20% of the total population. Additionally, the researcher’s experience in the field serving as an SCPL in a Southern Baptist megachurch for almost a decade would be consistent with these findings. Based on his experience, research, and observation, the researcher would agree that an SCPL who is highly driven but lacks humility could negatively influence a church and even hinder its spiritual work of seeking and saving the lost. On the other hand, an SCPL that demonstrates the type of personal humility and professional will characteristic of Level 5 Leadership could significantly contribute to a church’s ability to raise and steward financial resources. Therefore, the researcher believes the correlative relationships revealed in this study are certainly “large enough to care about” and worthy of further investigation.

Theoretical Implications

The two constructs of Level 5 Leadership – personal humility and professional will – have often been considered individually as desirable qualities in leaders, but L5LT recognizes their paradoxical blend as the secret to a leader’s success (Collins, 2001). This study advances

L5LT by demonstrating that professional will not balanced by personal humility can actually be detrimental to the mission of an organization, but that their combination can contribute to the organization's growth, success, and financial sustainability. This study, however, challenges the notion that professional will may be the "most important trait" of Level 5 Leadership (cf., Collins & Hansen, 2011, p. 32; DeNeal, 2019, p. 90). Rather, personal humility appears to be the greatest differentiator. Still, consistent with L5LT, personal humility does not stand alone as the determining factor. It was only when leaders also demonstrated a high level of professional will that their personal humility – or a lack thereof – was shown to make a difference. This dyadic dynamic is what distinguishes L5LT from other theories that also emphasize the importance of humility (cf., Greenleaf, 2007).

More specifically, this study indicates the combination of personal humility and professional will may be especially important to the SCPL. Both SCLT and PLT emphasize the importance of humility. The study indicates that an SCPL who is ambitious for the mission of the church but also demonstrates personal humility may contribute to church growth, but a driven SCPL lacking personal humility may hinder church growth.

Empirical Implications

Historically, L5LT has been criticized as being overly vague and ambiguous with little objective means for determining who might qualify as a Level 5 Leader. In response to this critique, Reid (2012) developed the Level 5 Leadership Scale, which can be used to empirically identify Level 5 Leaders. In the only other subsequent study to use the L5LS, DeNeal (2019) applied L5LT to lead pastors and explored whether a relationship existed between their Level 5 Leadership and church growth. DeNeal's (2019) study did not reveal any statistically significant

correlative relationships, but DeNeal maintained it would be a mistake to assume leadership does not influence church growth (p. 97). This study supports his contention.

Indeed, this study advances the argument that a leader who demonstrates personal humility and professional will can significantly contribute to organizational achievement – including church growth. This finding is also consistent with Collins’ (2005) belief that L5LT applies in the social sectors and the church. Likewise, while Bosch (2020) was unable to garner quantitative statistical data to support his argument that SCPLs (specifically, executive pastors) “could be crucial to the performance of fast-growing churches,” this study supports the conclusion of his mixed-methods study that the SCPL is “associated with church performance generally, and church growth specifically” (p. 125).

Practical Implications and Application

In practice, this study will (a) help churches better understand how SCPLs might contribute to church growth, (b) assist lead pastors in identifying important traits in potential SCPLs, (c) provide SCPLs with a biblical, theological, and theoretical framework that could provide guidance as they strive to serve the Lord, their churches, and their lead pastors.

Practical Implications for Churches

Although many scholars and practitioners have examined the importance of pastoral leadership to church growth, relatively little scholarly or popular literature has considered the importance or contribution of the SCPL. Having recognized the dearth of quantitative analysis regarding SCPLs, Bosch (2020) sought to demonstrate that churches would benefit from hiring an executive pastor. Although Bosch (2020) was not able to present quantitative findings to statistically support his position, the qualitative findings in his mixed-methods study led him to conclude that executive pastors significantly contribute to church growth and performance. This

study supports his findings and advances the argument that churches will benefit from adding a capable SCPL to their staff. This study may also help churches better understand where and how the SCPL might best contribute to church growth. Litfin (1982) noted, “There are few vocations that splinter a man like the pastoral ministry” (p. 57). It seems the apostles found this to be true even in the earliest days of the church (Acts 6:1-7). This study suggests that SCPLs who demonstrate Level 5 Leadership may be especially helpful in raising, stewarding, and/or administrating the financial resources of the church. Such an SCPL could help free the lead pastor to further devote himself to the “prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4).

Practical Implications for Lead Pastors

This study could assist lead pastors in identifying the right SCPL to come alongside them in pastoral ministry. When evaluating a potential SCPL, most lead pastors likely inherently know an ideal candidate will demonstrate both Christlike humility and passion for the mission of the church. This study quantitatively supports that instinct and provides a means for evaluating those qualities. The L5LS may serve as an effective tool for selecting an SCPL, whether administered as a self-evaluation or peer evaluation. It may also serve as a means of further developing someone already serving as a SCPL. Additionally, this study serves as a warning to lead pastors who might be tempted to hire a highly driven SCPL who lacks personal humility, having demonstrated that such a combination could be detrimental to the church.

Practical Implications for Second-Chair Pastoral Leaders

SCPLs will benefit from a biblical, theological, and theoretical framework that will help them make sense of their complex role and responsibilities. Many SCPLs face an identity crisis as they fill “the most misunderstood clergy position of all time” (McCullar, 2009, p. 12). A review of the literature, however, reflects that God often calls and works through second-chair

leaders, that they should be considered biblical pastors, and that they contribute much to the mission of the church. The results of this study empirically and quantitatively support what is revealed in the literature. As such, this study provides a framework that SCPLs may find beneficial as they serve the Lord, their churches, and their pastors. Specifically, this study suggests that a SCPL may do well to operate at the intersection of SCLT, L5LT, and PLT. Recognizing their calling as a biblical pastor, the SCPL who embraces the paradoxical nature of their subordinate-leader role and demonstrates the personal humility and professional will characteristic of Level 5 Leadership can significantly contribute to church growth and support the ministry and mission of the church. Moreover, if Collins (2001) is correct that many have the potential “to evolve to Level 5,” these qualities and capabilities can be further developed and cultivated in the SCPL desirous of growth. This would certainly be true of the believer as the Holy Spirit works in him to equip him for every good work to which he is called (2 Cor. 9:8; 2 Tim. 2:21; 3:16-17).

Research Contribution

This study explored whether SCPLs who demonstrate the Level 5 Leadership qualities of personal humility and professional will might influence church growth. While other studies have examined the leadership styles of lead or senior pastors in relation to church growth, little scholarly work has considered the critical role of the SCPL. This is one of the very few studies to examine whether SCPLs might contribute to church growth or church performance. It is also one of the only studies that sought to quantitatively evaluate their contribution.

Likewise, among the sparse scholarly work regarding L5LT, this study is only the second to quantitatively measure the Level 5 Leadership qualities of organizational leaders using Reid’s (2012) Level 5 Leadership Scale. It is the first study to use the L5LS to quantitatively measure

the Level 5 Leadership of SCPLs and consider whether those who demonstrate personal humility and professional characteristic of Level 5 Leadership contribute to church growth. It is also the first study to use the L5LS to successfully demonstrate the existence of a statistically significant correlation between Level 5 Leadership and organizational performance indicators.

The findings and conclusions of this study contribute to the fields of church leadership and church growth. This study revealed that where there is a Non-Level 5 SCPL lacking personal humility, their professional will was negatively correlated with the total number of annual baptisms recorded. This study also showed that where there is a Level 5 SCPL who demonstrates both personal humility and professional will, there was a positive correlation between their humility and total financial contributions. Together, these findings demonstrate that an SCPL who exhibits the unique paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will might contribute to church growth but that an ambitious SCPL who lacks humility could actually hinder church growth.

Research Limitations

This section provides an overview of identified threats to internal and external validity, discusses steps the researcher took to minimize such threats, and considers the researcher's confidence that his findings and conclusions are generalizable to the population examined in this study or to a broader population of pastoral leaders. Threats to internal validity threaten a researcher's ability to draw correct inferences from the data about a population (Creswell, 2014, p. 174). Threats to external validity arise when researchers draw incorrect inferences from the data and seek to generalize them to other persons, settings, or situations (Creswell, 2014, p. 176).

Threats to Internal Validity

The passing of time and historical events can unduly influence the outcome of a study (Creswell, 2014, p. 174; Flanagan, 2021, p. 126). In this study, historical events were especially disruptive. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected almost every measure of church growth in unprecedented ways, forcing most churches to discontinue in-person worship for some time and to regather and rebuild their congregations in the days following. Thus, this study could not consider the years immediately preceding the study but focused on the five years preceding the pandemic (2015-2019). This issue was exacerbated by the relatively short tenure of pastoral leaders – particularly SCPLs. In fact, 42% of SCPLs serving in the 167 megachurches considered in this study did not qualify to participate based on their tenure. While the primary threat of historical events to internal validity was minimized by considering the five years before the pandemic, the influence of these worldwide events is unavoidable.

The process for selecting participants can also threaten internal validity (Creswell, 2014, p. 175). The outcome of a study can be influenced by the selection of participants that might predispose them to share certain characteristics or to yield particular results. This threat is of more concern when the researcher is using a probability sampling technique such that he can draw inferences from the sample to a broader population. In this study, the researcher used a non-probability, purposive total population sampling technique *because* the population studied was relatively small and was already known to share uncommon characteristics. Thus, the sample should be representative of the population. Still, there could be some concern that those who chose to participate share certain characteristics, and those who chose not to participate share other characteristics, thereby influencing the results.

Threats to External Validity

Potential threats to external validity include incorrectly drawn inferences regarding the participants themselves (Cresswell, 2014, p. 176). This “interaction of selection and treatment” threatens external validity when the narrow characteristics of participants should prevent the researcher from generalizing their findings to a broader population. As previously noted, this study intentionally considered a narrowly defined total population and representative sample known to share uncommon characteristics. This study also involved delimitations and assumptions designed to emphasize shared qualities and minimize differences that could otherwise influence the results of the study. As such, the results of the study should be generalizable to the subject population. The researcher believes the research findings and conclusions could also be informative and beneficial to a larger “superpopulation” of SCPLs. However, many other factors, including theological differences, job responsibilities, church governance, and church size, could affect their generalizability to a broader population.

Further Research

This study sought to quantitatively examine whether SCPLs who effectively demonstrate Level 5 Leadership positively influence church growth. It also presented opportunities for further research, six of which are recommended by the researcher in this section.

This study should be repeated more than five years after its completion to consider a period uninterrupted by historical events like the COVID-19 pandemic to confirm and bolster its findings. This would allow a future researcher to consider the immediately preceding five years and could garner participation from a greater number of SCPLs who are not disqualified based on their tenure. The researcher chose to evaluate church growth over five years, a relatively short period of time for a correlative study, because previous studies showed the average tenure of

senior and executive pastors serving in megachurches ranged from 4 to 5.5 years (Rainer, 214; Pepper, 2009). However, because the COVID-19 pandemic significantly interfered with almost any measure of church growth, the researcher was precluded from considering the five years immediately preceding this study. Instead, the researcher examined church growth from 2015 – 2019, the years preceding the pandemic. As such, fewer SCPLs qualified to participate in the study because many had not served in their position long enough to meet the criteria. This problem may have been further exacerbated by a social phenomenon resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, which has become known as “The Great Resignation,” during which a record number of Americans – almost 100 million people – resigned from their jobs in 2021 and 2022 (Borenstein, 2021; Iacurci, 2023). By reproducing this study in the future, a researcher might be able to conduct the study without the interference of these types of significant events, consider more current data, and have a larger available population and sample.

Relatedly, approximately 42% of SCPLs invited to participate in this study had not served in their roles long enough to qualify for the study. Future research should consider why SCPLs typically have relatively short tenures and the potential implications for churches. This study and the precedent literature suggest that high-performing subordinate leaders can significantly contribute to the church and be instrumental in accomplishing the Great Commission. However, the average tenure of these pastoral leaders is approximately 5.5 years (Pepper, 2009). Generally, longer-term pastoral tenures are more effective and better for the church than shorter-term tenures (Rainer, 2019). Therefore, churches should evaluate why they are not retaining pastoral leaders longer and what might be done to extend their ministries so they can make more significant contributions to the church’s mission.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic was somewhat disruptive to this study, it will also produce innumerable opportunities for further study. In relation to this study, a future researcher might explore the effect of the pandemic on church growth metrics. The researcher might also consider the roles and responsibilities of pastoral leaders – particularly SCPLs – who led their churches through the pandemic or other times of crisis and the character traits or leadership qualities that distinguished the most effective leaders from others. For example, a researcher might explore whether churches led through the pandemic by SCPLs who demonstrated Level 5 Leadership fared better or recovered more quickly than those led by Non-Level 5 SCPLs.

This study could also be completed using a mixed-methods approach, which would enable a researcher to delve more deeply into quantitative findings by learning more about the specific roles and responsibilities of participating SCPLs and their influence on particular church growth measures. Researchers commonly used mixed-methods approaches to develop complementary or more complete data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018, p. 260). A researcher might use an explanatory sequential mixed-method design by reproducing the quantitative analysis of this study and following up with participants by conducting qualitative interviews to explore how individual SCPLs relate to certain church growth metrics (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018, pp. 261-263). For example, in considering a church that has experienced a significant increase in financial contributions, a researcher might discover a Level 5 SCPL who assumes responsibility for financial management, resource allocation, or fundraising. Such qualitative data could shed more light on the quantitative results and might strengthen this study's findings.

The generalizability of this study to a broader population could be improved by expanding its focus beyond a relatively small group of Southern Baptist megachurches to include smaller churches in the SBC or other denominations. There are approximately 500,000 Christian

congregations in the United States (Rainer, 2017). Rainer (2023) notes that “the median attendance of a church in 2023 is 60.” As such, the 167 Southern Baptist megachurches that qualified for this study are unique and share some uncommon characteristics, which made a total population sampling technique reasonable and feasible (Laerd Dissertation, n.d.). Their uniqueness, however, does raise questions about whether the findings of this study are generalizable to most churches.

By broadening the population, future research could strengthen the generalizability of the study. For example, while the smallest churches may not employ a SCPL because of budgetary or practical constraints, a future study might consider churches that averaged at least 500 in worship attendance. Such churches would typically still employ a SCPL in some capacity, and their inclusion would significantly enlarge the population. A researcher could likely acquire archived data, including a list of those churches, in the same manner as this study. In surveying a much broader population, a future study might also better meet traditional thresholds of statistical significance, which would require a lower response rate in securing a statistically representative sample. Thus, the researcher would be able to draw statistical generalizations from the sample and extrapolate them to the broader population. This type of study could confirm the researcher’s findings are applicable to churches other than megachurches and provide additional insight regarding church growth principles and strategies.

Finally, a review of the aggregate data for both the L5P and NL5P groups revealed a sobering trend that warrants an examination. Both groups experienced an increase in worship attendance and financial contributions from 2015 to 2019 but reported a decline in annual baptisms. Even though it is encouraging for any church to realize increased attendance and giving, it is concerning that many churches may not actually be growing through increased

conversions of the lost. Future research should explore why some churches appear to be growing while baptizing fewer new believers each year, what factors might be contributing to that decline, and what might be done to reverse this trend. As McGavran (1968) observed, healthy church growth requires the “salvation of souls” and “baptism of bodies” (p. 336).

Summary

This study found that there is some correlation between the Level 5 Leadership qualities of SCPLs and church growth. In Southern Baptist megachurches, when there was a Non-Level 5 SCPL who demonstrated professional will but lacked personal humility, there was a negative correlation between the SCPL’s professional will and total annual baptisms. On the other hand, when there was a Level 5 SCPL who exhibited both personal humility and professional will, there was a positive correlation between the SCPL’s personal humility and total annual financial contributions. Together, these findings indicate that SCPLs who embody the personal humility and professional will characteristic of Level 5 Leadership can positively influence church growth, but those lacking personal humility may actually hinder church growth and health.

Ultimately, this study points to the truth of Scripture regarding church growth and leadership. It aligns with Jesus Christ’s paradoxical teachings on leadership – that the Christian leader is to be a humble servant (Matt. 20:25-28). It also reflects that God can use such leaders to advance His cause, even if they are serving in a subordinate role. Yet, like many studies before it, this study failed to reveal a statistically significant relationship between leadership and the number of people in the pews. This researcher agrees with DeNeal (2019) that one reason it may be difficult to empirically demonstrate such a relationship is that church growth necessarily involves an “intrinsically divine or spiritual element” not measurable by the sciences (p. 96). This Bible seems to emphasize this truth. In Acts 2:47 (an oft-cited verse in support of the

appropriateness of counting people), Luke notes that it was *the Lord* who added to the number of the church those who were being saved. Likewise, Paul reminded believers that God may choose to work through leaders, but it is *only* God – no man – who grows His church. In 1 Corinthians 3:16, the apostle said, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.” Today, if Paul considered the research questions explored in this study, he would likely be quick to remind the researcher and the readers that the first-chair leader might plant the seed, and the second-chair leader might water the seed, but it is only God who grows His church.

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APPENDICES**APPENDIX A****DRAFT EMAIL REQUESTING ACCESS TO DATA**

Dear [Name],

As a graduate student at Liberty University, I am conducting a research project and need your assistance. My name is Ben Lovvorn. I serve as the Executive Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, and am a doctoral candidate in the Rawlings School of Divinity. I am researching the influence of second-chair pastoral leadership on church growth in Southern Baptist megachurches.

I am writing to request your permission to access data contained in regularly submitted reports, including Annual Church Profiles submitted to the [Name of the Convention or Organization], reflecting certain metrics. Specifically, I am seeking information related to churches' average annual worship attendance, total annual baptism, and total annual financial contributions from 2015-2019.

This data will be used to identify churches that average more than 2,000 in weekly worship attendance so that I can invite qualifying second-chair pastoral leaders to participate in the study. Those second-chair pastoral leaders who choose and consent to participate in the study will be asked to complete a short electronic survey regarding their leadership style and to provide the names of colleagues who might also complete the survey. No information identifying churches or participants will be shared as part of this study.

Thank you in advance for considering my request. I greatly appreciate it! If you are willing to provide access to this information, would you please confirm your permission by responding to this email? If you have any questions, please contact me directly at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

In His Service,

Ben Lovvorn
Executive Pastor, First Baptist Church of Dallas
Doctoral Candidate, Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University

APPENDIX B**DRAFT EMAIL INVITING PARTICIPANTS TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY**

Dear [Potential Participant],

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research regarding the influence of second-chair pastoral leadership on church growth in Southern Baptist megachurches as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree. The purpose of my research is to explore whether there is a relationship between the Level 5 Leadership qualities (as conceptualized by Jim Collins in *Good to Great*) of second-chair pastoral leaders and church growth. This study will be the first to quantitatively measure the Level 5 Leadership qualities of second-chair pastoral leaders, and I am writing to invite you to join my study.

Participants must (1) be a second-chair pastoral leader (defined as a paid church staff member who reports directly to the lead pastor, has formal authority over other staff members, and has responsibility for leading, managing, and/or administrating a significant portion of the church's ministry), (2) serve in a Southern Baptist megachurch that (A) is a member of the Southern Baptist Convention, (B) submitted an Annual Church Profile for the years 2015-2019, and (C) maintained an average weekly worship attendance of at least 2,000 people in reporting year 2019, (3) have served in your current position for at least five years, and (4) have served in your current position from January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2019 (the relevant time period of the study). Participants will be asked to complete a short electronic survey that should take you less than ten (10) minutes to complete. The survey includes a self-evaluation of your Level 5 Leadership. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

To participate, please click here [\[redacted\]](#)

[\[redacted\]](#) to complete the study survey.

A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to electronically sign and submit the consent document prior to completing the survey.

Sincerely,

Ben Lovvorn

Executive Pastor, First Baptist Church of Dallas

Doctoral Candidate, Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University

O: [redacted]

E: [redacted]

APPENDIX C

DRAFT FOLLOW-UP EMAIL INVITING PARTICIPANTS TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY

Dear [Potential Participant],

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research regarding the influence of second-chair pastoral leadership on church growth in Southern Baptist megachurches as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree. Last week, an email was sent to you inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you to respond by completing a short electronic survey if you would like to participate. The deadline for participation is [Date].

Participants will be asked to complete a short electronic survey that should take you less than ten (10) minutes to complete. The survey includes a self-evaluation of your Level 5 Leadership. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

To participate, please click here [\[Redacted\]](#) to complete the study survey.

A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to electronically sign and submit the consent document prior to completing the survey.

Sincerely,

Ben Lovvorn
Executive Pastor, First Baptist Church of Dallas
Doctoral Candidate, Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University
O: [Redacted]
E: [Redacted]

APPENDIX D
DRAFT FOLLOW-UP VERBAL SCRIPT INVITING
PARTICIPANTS TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY

Hello [Potential Participant],

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research regarding the influence of second-chair pastoral leadership on church growth in Southern Baptist megachurches as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree. The purpose of my research is to explore whether there is a relationship between the Level 5 Leadership qualities of second-chair pastoral leaders and church growth. This study will be the first to quantitatively measure the Level 5 Leadership qualities of second-chair pastoral leaders, and if you meet my participant criteria and are interested, I would like to invite you to join my study.

Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a short electronic survey that should take you less than ten (10) minutes to complete. The survey includes a self-evaluation of your Level 5 Leadership. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

Would you like to participate?

[Yes] Great, could I confirm your email address so I can send you the link to the survey?

[No] I understand. Thank you for your time. [Conclude the conversation.]

A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to electronically sign and submit the consent document prior to completing the survey.

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions?

APPENDIX E

DRAFT SURVEY: INFORMED CONSENT AND SCREENING QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS (SECOND-CHAIR PASTORAL LEADERS)

Title of Project: A Correlational Study: Second-Chair Leaders' Level 5 Leadership Score and Church Growth Among Southern Baptist Megachurches.

Researcher: Martin Benjamin Lovvorn, Doctoral Candidate, Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University.

Invitation to Participate. You are invited to participate in this study. To participate, you must (1) be a second-chair pastoral leader (defined as a paid church staff member who reports directly to the lead pastor, has formal authority over other staff members, and has responsibility for leading, managing, and/or administrating a significant portion of the church's ministry), (2) serve in a Southern Baptist megachurch that (A) is a member of the Southern Baptist Convention, (B) submitted an Annual Church Profile for the years 2015-2019, and (C) maintained an average weekly worship attendance of at least 2,000 people in reporting year 2019, (3) have served in your current position for at least five years, and (4) have served in your current position from January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2019 (the relevant time period of the study).

Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

Purpose of the Study. The purpose of the study is to explore whether there is a relationship between the Level 5 Leadership qualities (as conceptualized by Jim Collins in *Good to Great*) of second-chair pastoral leaders and church growth. This study will be the first to quantitatively measure the Level 5 Leadership qualities of second-chair pastoral leaders.

Participation. If you are willing to participate, you will be asked to complete a short electronic survey that should take you less than ten (10) minutes to complete. The survey includes a self-evaluation of your Level 5 Leadership.

Benefits. Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include: The findings of this study will support second-chair pastoral leaders, senior or lead pastors, and churches seeking to most effectively fulfill their callings and accomplish the Great Commission. Moreover, this study will meaningfully contribute to the fields of ecclesiology, organizational leadership, church leadership, and church growth by advancing the theoretical development and understanding of these fields of study. It will also contribute to the epistemological understanding of Level 5 Leadership Theory.

Potential Risks. The researcher anticipates minimal risks for those who participate in this study, which means the risks are equal to those you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected? The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Your participation and responses will be kept confidential and known only to the researcher. To protect your privacy and that of your colleagues, all personally identifiable information will be replaced with numerical codes.
- Otherwise, any documentation that personally identifies you or your colleagues will be maintained as secure electronic or physical files only accessible by the researcher for five years after the study and will then be destroyed.

Voluntariness. Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University, your employer, or any other institution. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from this study? If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Questions. The researcher conducting this study is Martin Benjamin Lovvorn. If you have any questions you may contact him directly at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Joe Easterling, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant? If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

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

Consent to Participate in Study

I have read and understood the above information. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have received answers to any questions. I consent to participate in the study.


<i>Electronic Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
[Type Name]	[mm/dd/yyyy]

APPENDIX G**DRAFT EMAIL INVITING COLLEAGUES TO RESPOND TO SURVEY**

Dear [Colleague],

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research regarding the influence of second-chair pastoral leadership on church growth in Southern Baptist megachurches as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree. The purpose of my research is to explore whether there is a relationship between the Level 5 Leadership qualities (as conceptualized by Jim Collins in *Good to Great*) of second-chair pastoral leaders and church growth. [Name of Participant], a second-chair pastoral leader, has chosen to participate in this study, and has provided your name and email address so that you could be invited to complete a short electronic survey assessing [his/her] Level 5 Leadership qualities.

If you are willing to respond, you will be asked to complete an electronic survey that should take you less than ten (10) minutes to complete. The survey includes an evaluation of the Level 5 Leadership qualities demonstrated by the second-chair pastoral leader who has agreed to participate in this study. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

To respond, please click here 

 to complete the study survey.

A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to electronically sign and submit the consent document prior to completing the survey.

Sincerely,

Ben Lovvorn

Executive Pastor, First Baptist Church of Dallas

Doctoral Candidate, Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University

O: 

E: 

APPENDIX H

**DRAFT FOLLOW-UP EMAIL INVITING
COLLEAGUES TO RESPOND TO SURVEY**

Dear [Colleague],

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research regarding the influence of second-chair pastoral leadership on church growth in Southern Baptist megachurches as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree. Last week, an email was sent to you inviting you to participate to this research study. [Name of Participant], a second-chair pastoral leader, has chosen to participate in this study, and has provided your name and email address so that you could be invited to complete a short electronic survey assessing [his/her] Level 5 Leadership qualities. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you to respond by completing a short electronic survey if you would like to participate. The deadline for participation is [Date].

If you are willing to respond, you will be asked to complete an electronic survey that should take you less than ten (10) minutes to complete. The survey includes an evaluation of the Level 5 Leadership qualities demonstrated by the second-chair pastoral leader who has agreed to participate in this study. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

To respond, please click here 

 to complete the study survey.

A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to electronically sign and submit the consent document prior to completing the survey.

Sincerely,

Ben Lovvorn

Executive Pastor, First Baptist Church of Dallas

Doctoral Candidate, Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University

O: 

E: 

APPENDIX I

DRAFT SURVEY: INFORMED CONSENT FOR RESPONDERS (COLLEAGUES)

Title of Project: A Correlational Study: Second-Chair Leaders' Level 5 Leadership Score and Church Growth Among Southern Baptist Megachurches.

Researcher: Martin Benjamin Lovvorn, Doctoral Candidate, Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University.

Invitation to Participate. A second-chair pastoral leader, has chosen to participate in this study, and has provided your name and email address so that you could be invited to complete a short electronic survey assessing [his/her] Level 5 Leadership qualities. To participate, you must be a colleague of the above-named participant (as a supervisor, peer, or subordinate) at the church where he is employed as a pastor.

Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

Purpose of the Study. The purpose of the study is to explore whether there is a relationship between the Level 5 Leadership qualities (as conceptualized by Jim Collins in *Good to Great*) of second-chair pastoral leaders and church growth. This study will be the first to quantitatively measure the Level 5 Leadership qualities of second-chair pastoral leaders.

Participation. If you are willing to participate, you will be asked to complete an electronic survey that should take you less than ten (10) minutes to complete. The survey includes an evaluation of the Level 5 Leadership qualities demonstrated by the second-chair pastoral leader who has agreed to participate in this study.

Benefits. Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include: The findings of this study will support second-chair pastoral leaders, senior or lead pastors, and churches seeking to most effectively fulfill their callings and accomplish the Great Commission. Moreover, this study will meaningfully contribute to the fields of ecclesiology, organizational leadership, church leadership, and church growth by advancing the theoretical development and understanding of these fields of study. It will also contribute to the epistemological understanding of Level 5 Leadership Theory.

Potential Risks. The researcher anticipates minimal risks for those who participate in this study, which means the risks are equal to those you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected? The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Your participation and your responses will be kept confidential and known only to the researcher. To protect your privacy, all personally identifiable information will be replaced with numerical codes.
- Otherwise, any documentation that personally identifies you will be maintained as secure electronic or physical files only accessible by the researcher for five years after the study and will then be destroyed.

Voluntariness. Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University, your employer, or any other institution. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from this study? If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Questions. The researcher conducting this study is Martin Benjamin Lovvorn. If you have any questions you may contact him directly at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Joe Easterling, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant? If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

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

Consent to Participate in Study

I have read and understood the above information. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have received answers to any questions. I consent to participate in the study.

<i>Electronic Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
[Type Name]	[mm/dd/yyyy]

